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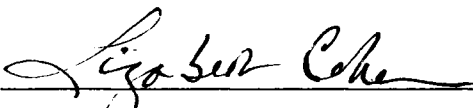
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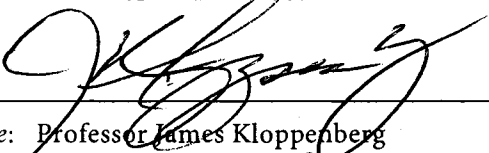
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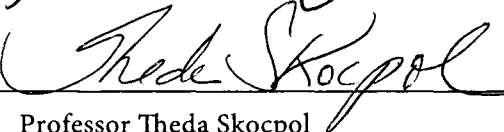
The Movement for "Good City Government": Municipal Leagues, Political
Science, and the Contested Meaning of Progressive Democracy, 1880-1930

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The Movement for “Good City Government”:
Municipal Leagues, Political Science, and the Contested Meaning of Progressive Democracy,
1880-1930

A dissertation presented

by

Ariane Mary Aphrodite Liazos

to

The Department of History

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the subject of
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Harvard University
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Abstract

This dissertation utilizes the movement to restructure American cities, regarded by contemporaries as “experiment stations” for innovations in government, to explore the contested meaning of democracy in Progressive era. Municipal reform brought together a coalition of diverse individuals who shared in the conviction that the creation of more simplified and efficient municipal structures was a necessary prerequisite for a broadening of the scope of local government. In order to demonstrate that this coalition is the key to understanding municipal reform as a national phenomenon, this dissertation combines a wide variety of sources: case studies of five cities (Oakland, CA; Fort Worth, TX; Toledo, OH; Norfolk, VA; Worcester; MA), national data on the adoption of structural innovations, the archival papers and publications of the National Municipal League, and influential works of municipal political science. Adopting an inter-disciplinary approach, it combines political and intellectual history with the insights of institutionalism and American Political Development in the social sciences.

Examining theoretical debates among political scientists, elite reformers, and local political actors in connection with specific structures created to embody their ideals of democracy, this dissertation is both an intellectual and an institutional history of municipal reform. It connects debates concerning the scale of modern democracy with the movement

for municipal “home rule”; debates concerning the appropriate role of groups with efforts to replace ward-based with at-large council elections; and debates concerning the need to balance efficiency and democracy with campaigns to adopt commission and city manager charters. In so doing, it draws on municipal reform to understand one of the central paradoxes of Progressivism. In the 1890s, many reformers expressed their faith that democratic ideals and institutions could be remodeled to meet the demands of changing social and economic conditions. By the 1920s, however, many former Progressives had become disillusioned with democracy and turned towards technocratic models of government that relied heavily on trained experts and rejected the notion that ordinary citizens could participate in a meaningful way in the determination of public policy. An exploration of the municipal side of this transformation does much to explain how and why it occurred.

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When visiting five cities, I was able to make use of the valuable materials pertaining to urban history found in local public libraries only with the patient assistance of many talented and knowledgeable librarians: in Oakland, California, the librarians of the Oakland History Room and the Magazine and Newspaper Section of the Main Branch of the Oakland Public Library; in Fort Worth, Texas, the librarians of the Genealogy, History, and Archives Unit and Periodicals and Government Documents at the Central Branch of the Fort Worth Public Library; in Toledo, Ohio, the librarians of the Local History and Genealogy Department at the Central Branch of the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library; in Worcester, Massachusetts, the librarians in charge of the Local History and Genealogy Collection and the Magazines and Newspapers Division of the Central Branch of the Worcester Public Library; and finally in Norfolk, Virginia, the librarians of the Sargeant Memorial History Room at the Kirn Memorial Library of the Norfolk Public Library and Marietta Cowart and City Clerk R. Breckenridge Daughtrey of the City Clerk's Office in City Hall. The research branches of the New York Public Library also contain extensive holdings pertaining to cities

throughout the country, and I would like to thank the staff of the Humanities and Social Sciences Branch and the Science, Industry and Business Library for their help. Finally, I would like to thank the staff of the Archives of the Auraria Library in Denver, Colorado, which holds the papers of the National Municipal League.

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Introduction

American Cities: Conspicuous Failure or the Hope of Democracy?

British scholar and statesman James Bryce, in his landmark study *The American Commonwealth* (1888), claimed that “the government of cities is the one conspicuous failure of the United States.” He emphasized the ways in which the “evils” of “extravagance, corruption, and mismanagement” were detrimental to “the welfare of the people.”¹ This critique of municipal government as a “conspicuous failure” became the most frequently quoted description of American cities at the close of the nineteenth century. Yet by 1900, a new and dramatically different opinion of cities had begun to emerge among political observers. Frederic Howe, a prominent municipal reformer who had studied with Bryce at Johns Hopkins, proclaimed cities “The Hope of Democracy.” For Howe, democracy encompassed more than the right to vote, more than a “government by public opinion.” It included a wider social vision in which the people of the city would consciously unite and work together to solve shared problems posed by urban living conditions. He celebrated the potential of the city as an “agency of government” marked by “[t]he ready responsiveness of democracy.” Urban politics, increasingly concerned “with the elevation of the standard of living, with equality of opportunity, [and] with the uplifting of life,” anticipated “a movement for human society more hopeful than anything the world has known.” Howe concluded that “when the scope of the city is borne in mind, the possibilities of this new power of conscious, organized democracy are apparent...”²

¹ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, Vol. I. (1888; reprint, with an introduction by Gary L. McDowell, Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1995), 572.

² Frederic C. Howe, *The City: The Hope of Democracy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons: 1905), 7-8, 171, 301-3. On his time at Johns Hopkins, see Frederic C. Howe, *The Confessions of a Reformer* (1925; reprint,

This dramatic transformation in the estimation of the potential of city government owed much to the movement for municipal reform. Municipal reform quickly became a cause célèbre in the 1890s, with nearly everyone who was anyone in reform circles lending support. When reformers from New York and Philadelphia issued a call in 1893 for a national conference to discuss “the rapidly growing demand for honest and intelligent government in American cities,” approximately one hundred of the foremost reformers of the day signed the call, from E.L. Godkin and Charles Eliot Norton to Richard Ely, Washington Gladden, and Moorefield Story. Those attending the conference formed the National Municipal League, an organization that continued to attract prominent individuals for decades to come and took the lead in what would become a national movement for the creation of “good city government.”³ By 1910, Charles Beard and many other leading Progressives had come to agree with Howe regarding the promise of American cities. According to Beard, “It may be, after all, that the American city, which Mr. Bryce thought to be our greatest failure, will prove to be the ‘the hope of democracy.’”⁴

Municipal Reform and Progressivism

Municipal reform was in many ways a microcosm of the wider Progressive movement, often pioneering causes that would later be launched on a wider stage. Many Americans viewed cities as innovators paving the way for new roles of government. With

Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1988), 3, 5, 22-34. As a doctoral student from 1889-92, Howe studied political economy, history, and jurisprudence.

³ Frank Mann Stewart, *A Half Century of Municipal Reform: The History of the National Municipal League* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), 201-03.

⁴ Charles A. Beard, *American City Government: A Survey of Newer Tendencies* (New York: Century Co., 1912), 3.

the urban population expanding rapidly and rural populations declining, most observers assumed that cities would soon dominate national life. In 1880, only twenty-one percent of the population lived in urban areas. By 1920, for the first time, the majority of Americans (fifty-one percent) lived in cities.⁵ Howe believed that a Progressive city would “expand its activities ... in response to the developing demands of the community” and “assume new burdens ... as it justifies its abilities to perform them.” “Every city,” he argued, would “be an experiment station, offering new experiences to the world.”⁶ In *The Promise of American Life* (1909), one of the most influential books of the period, Herbert Croly wrote that the public was willing “to accept much more advanced ideas in this field of municipal reform than it is in any other part of the political battle-field.” Celebrating the “vitality” and “progress” of municipal reform, Croly emphasized the importance of the many “experiments” that looked to “an increasingly responsible municipal organization” to assume wider “economic and social functions.” He felt that such advances would benefit the nation as a whole, concluding that “the American city will become in the near future the most fruitful field for economically and socially constructive experimentation; and the effect of the example set therein will have a beneficially reactive effect upon both state and Federal politics.”⁷

American cities served as “experiment stations” for electoral reforms. Many electoral reforms advocated on the state and even national level to weaken the grip of parties on the political and administrative realms of government were also adopted by municipalities. Not only did proponents of municipal charter revision promote the adoption of commission and

⁵ Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Volume I – Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 43.

⁶ Howe, *The City*, 301-03.

⁷ Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989 [1909]), 349.

city manager forms of local government to replace the traditional mayor-council system and centralize administrative decision making, they also sought to restructure electoral districts, establish direct primaries, institute ballot reform, secure systems of proportional representation in legislative bodies, and institute the initiative, referendum, and recall.⁸ Supporters of these reformers envisioned them as part of a larger crusade to destroy a partisan system that allowed “special privileges” and “unnatural monopolies” to corrupt government. In municipalities, these charges applied to franchises granted to private companies known as public service corporations for the provision of public utilities. With the adoption of electoral reforms that would prevent collusion among businessmen and elected officials, government would be freed to undertake new functions, first in cities and then in the wider nation.⁹

Scholarly treatments of municipal reform are also a microcosm of the larger historiography of Progressivism. For nearly a hundred years, scholars debating the meaning of Progressivism have long faced the challenge of making sense of the wide range of reformers who identified themselves as Progressives at the turn of the twentieth century. Early interpretations of “the Progressive movement,” often written by participants, portrayed it simply as reformers leading an uprising of “the people” against “the interests.” From this

⁸ The commission plan replaces the mayor and council with a single, small commission of five to seven members, typically elected in non-partisan, at-large elections, who assume both executive/administrative and legislative duties. The city manager plan elects only a commission or council, which assumes legislative duties and appoints a professional city manager to head the entire municipal administration and appoint all other officials.

⁹ Robert H. Bremner describes the campaign of the civic revivalists in Ohio “for municipal ownership of public utilities” as “the urban side of the national antitrust movement.” See Robert H. Bremner, “The Civic Revival in Ohio: Municipal Ownership and Economic Privilege,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 9, no. 4 (July 1950): 477. Historian Richard L. McCormick, arguing against the organizational synthesis of Samuel Hays and Robert Weibe (discussed below), reasserted that the “The Discovery That Business Corrupts Politics” was indeed an important component in the moral outrage that fueled Progressive reform. McCormick specifically highlighted the centrality of this line of analysis in the writings of such “leading progressives” as Frederic C. Howe and Lincoln Steffens, both specialists on municipal issues. See Richard L. McCormick, “The Discovery That Business Corrupts Politics: A Reappraisal of the Origins of Progressivism,” *The American Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (April 1981): 247-74.

perspective, municipal reformers mobilized urban voters to destroy corrupt machines and institute more democratic and efficient systems of local government.¹⁰ By the mid-twentieth century, these early interpretations were challenged by historians claiming that middle-class reformers and organized groups of businessmen and professionals in fact used Progressive reforms to further their own interests and/or universalize their own ideals.¹¹ This reading of Progressivism partly developed out of analyses of municipal reform. Samuel Hays and James Weinstein presented proponents of structural reforms as elite businessmen and professionals who sought to eliminate the influence of the largely-immigrant working class from local politics in order to further their own self-interest and/or secure municipal institutions that conformed to their own narrow ideals of democratic participation. According to these studies, members of organizations like chambers of commerce employed the rhetoric of popular government to support such charter reforms as at-large elections and commission and city manager plans of government. Despite the inclusion of provisions for the initiative, referenda, and recall, these reforms removed policy questions from popular politics and thereby reduced the influence of immigrant and working-class constituencies in municipal government.¹² Contrasting these “structural reformers” with “social reformers”

¹⁰ For one of the original versions of this interpretation of Progressivism, see Croly, *The Promise of American Life*; Herbert Croly, *Progressive Democracy* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publications, 1998 [1914]). For a historical treatment, see Daniel Aaron, *Men of Good Hope: A Story of American Progressives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951). For its application to the origins of the municipal reform movement, see Clifford W. Patton, *The Battle for Municipal Reform: Mobilization and Attack, 1875-1900* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Learned Affairs, 1940).

¹¹ For analyses arguing for the centrality of the middle class in Progressive reforms, see Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955). For the organizational interpretation, see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Re-interpretation of American History, 1900-1916* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1963); Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

¹² This reading of municipal reform was an important component of the organizational synthesis. James Weinstein's work on the spread of the commission and city manager movements argued that these plans were tools of organized business. Business interests, Weinstein suggested, joined together in order to promote these models of charter reform that, after adoption, resulted in the domination of city government by businessmen.

who were more concerned with the welfare of urban residents, Melvin G. Holli later argued that members of the former group shared a distrust of popular democracy that led them to believe that municipalities should be run by educated experts rather than the masses of urban voters.¹³

By the end of the twentieth century, scholars of urban history had increasingly rejected such quasi-conspiratorial analyses of municipal reform. While businessmen motivated by self-interest and/or anti-democratic proclivities undeniably often worked to secure new charters in the Progressive era, mounting evidence suggested that the story was more complicated. Early studies relied heavily on national magazines, the publications of trans-local reform organizations, and later accounts written by social scientists in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s to detail the rise of structural reform as early as the 1900s and 1910s, presenting a uniform, national story that left no room for local, state, or regional variations.¹⁴ Yet political scientist Amy Bridges suggested that regional economic and political variations begin to explain the success of organized groups of businessmen in gaining local support for

Samuel Hays presented a similar argument about the origins of at-large elections, describing the move from ward-based to city-wide representation as a deliberate effort led by a rising upper class to create a new form of government that was at once more rational and efficient and less subject to the influence of particular interests, especially those of the immigrant working class. See Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (October 1964): 157-69; James Weinstein, "Organized Business and the City Commission and Manager Movements," *The Journal of Southern History* 28, no. 2 (May 1962): 166-82. Weinstein's article was later republished as "The Small Businessman as Big Businessman: The City Commission and Manager Movements" in his *The Corporate Ideal and the Liberal State* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 92-116. For the influence of Hays and Weinstein on later scholarship, see Bradley Robert Rice, *Progressive Cities: The Commission Government Movement in America, 1901-1920* (Austin: University of Texas, 1977), xvi-xvii.

¹³ Melvin G. Holli, *Reform in Detroit: Hazen S. Pingree and Urban Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), xii-xiii, 161-70. Though most of Holli's book was about Detroit, he applies his distinction between social and structural reform more broadly in chapter eight. Martin Schiesl presented a more nuanced analysis but still simply concluded that municipal reformers valued efficiency and economy over democratic participation. Such structural reformers, according to Schiesl, set out to make city government more efficient by reorganizing administrative departments and creating bureaucratic systems that relegated policy questions to the realm of trained, technical experts. See Martin Schiesl, *The Politics of Efficiency: Municipal Administration and Reform in America, 1880-1920* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 2-4.

¹⁴ While Hays did refer to movements for charter reform in Des Moines, IA and Pittsburgh, PA, the majority of his sources were not local ones. See Holli, *Reform in Detroit*; Hays, "The Politics of Reform"; Weinstein, "The Small Businessman."

charter revision. In cities of the southwest, according to Bridges, weak party organizations and a lack of available local capital enabled businessmen to act as political leaders and convince fellow residents that restructuring local government would attract much-needed outside investments in their communities.¹⁵ Social scientists making use of statistical analysis to determine national patterns has also concluded that nativism and class conflict were not decisive factors in the adoption or rejection of reform charters.¹⁶ Several historical studies of individual cities also revealed that immigrants, African Americans, union leaders,

¹⁵ Amy Bridges, *Morning Glories: Municipal Reform in the Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 18-19, 54-69. On the partisan roots of regional variations in the adoption of Progressive reforms generally, see Martin Shefter, "Regional Receptivity to Reform in the United States," *Parties and the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 169-94.

¹⁶ Several accounts by social scientists in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s attempted to use statistical analysis to test the traditional account of municipal reform as supported by business elites and opposed by immigrants and other working-class constituencies. Wolfinger and Field framed their study as a test of Edward C. Banefield and James Q. Wilson's influential theory contrasting a middle-class ethos of "public-regardingness" with an immigrant ethos of "private-regardingness" concerning expectations of local government. Studying 309 cities with a population of 50,000 and over in 1960, they concluded: "When the relationship between ethnicity and form of government is examined *within* regions, this control eliminates most of the apparent relationship" (318) and therefore that the "salient conclusion to be drawn from these data is that one can do a much better job of predicting a city's political forms by knowing what part of the country it is in than by knowing anything about the composition of its population" (326). See Raymond E. Wolfinger and John Osgood Field, "Political Ethos and the Structure of City Government," *The American Political Science Review* 60, no. 2 (June 1966): 306-26. Because Wolfinger and Field and subsequent statistical studies did not historicize their findings, however, largely using data from 1930 or later, Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice used statistical analysis to examine the influence of various social and demographic factors in the Progressive Era. Their findings, however, were for the most part statistically weak. Moreover, they controlled for region rather than using it as a dependent variable. See Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice, "Political Environment and the Adoption of Progressive Municipal Reform," *Journal of Urban History* 1, no. 2 (February 1975): 149-75.

Alternatively, David Knoke, in examining the spread of reforms in the 267 largest American cities from 1900-42, concluded that "regional difference" arose "not from social compositional differences of regions' cities but from some type of imitation or contagion effect as represented by the level of neighboring regional cities previously adopting reform government" (1337). See David Knoke, "The Spread of Municipal Reform: Temporal, Spatial, and Social Dynamics," *American Journal of Sociology* 87, no. 6 (May 1982): 1314-39. Yet Knoke's somewhat ahistorical conclusion ignored the context of American political development. Urban politics were closely tied to and limited by larger state and national political parties, regional economies, and state laws. Only by taking these several factors into account can we understand why region mattered. At the conclusion of their study, Wolfinger and Field hypothesized along these lines: "Most eastern and midwestern cities were important communities in the 19th century.... Their political institutions were well established and had seen hard service in the first generation of industrialization. Politicians generally had vested interests in maintaining the existing forms and most political actors had at least developed means of dealing with those forms.... Most southwestern and western cities were villages, at best, until the early twentieth century, when new municipal government forms were all the rage. We think that regional differences in the age if cities may explain a good deal of the striking regional variations in form of government, type of ballot, and method of electing councilmen" (326).

socialists, and other working-class constituencies often formed alliances with business leaders and supported movements for charter revision.¹⁷

Though these studies contradicted the business-dominated interpretation of municipal reform, they did not reconnect the topic to the nature of Progressive reform as a larger phenomenon despite the fact that prominent Progressives such as Howe and Croly argued for its centrality to the wider movement. To an extent, this omission was not unintentional. In the 1970s and 1980s, a period of historical writing in which micro-histories replaced grand narratives, many scholars simply rejected the claim that a single identifiable, Progressive movement ever existed.¹⁸ As such, it was hardly surprising that the accounts of charter reform by historians in these years tended to examine only individual cities, emphasizing the importance of unique local conditions without connecting their findings to events in other cities or other reforms.¹⁹ More recently, however, with a rising interest in cultural history

¹⁷ While studies of municipal elections and urban policies demonstrated that the urban working class in cities across the country often provided decisive support for reforms, there have not been similar, nation-level studies arguing for the centrality of working-class support with regard to charter revision. For an early example regarding municipal elections, see John D. Buenker, *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1973). For examples of working-class and/or minority support of charter revision in individual cities, see James J. Connolly, "The Politics of Municipal Reform," *The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism: Urban Political Culture in Boston, 1900-1925* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 77-104; Robert A. Burnham, "Reform, Politics, and Race in Cincinnati and the City Charter Committee, 1924-1959," *Journal of Urban History* 23, no. 2 (January 1997): 131-163; Seth M. Scheiner, "Commission Government in the Progressive Era: The New Brunswick, New Jersey, Example," *Journal of Urban History* 12, no. 2 (February 1986): 157-79; Richard G. Miller, "Forth Worth and the Progressive Era: The Movement for Charter Revision, 1899-1907," *Essays on Urban American*, ed. Margaret Francine Morris and Elliott West (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 89-126. Weinstein mentioned – but dismissed as anomalous or inconsequential – several instances in which more democratically-inclined reformers and socialist leaders advocated structural reforms. He even at one point admitted: "All commissions aimed to reduce costs and increase services, and, since these were their first principle, most followed a policy of planning and municipal ownership of some, if not all, utilities. To a large degree, therefore, the programs of the various business groups which led the commission and manager movements had point in common with those of many social reformers, even those of the Socialists." See Weinstein, "The Small Businessman," 93-94, 112-15.

¹⁸ For those arguing against the existence of a Progressive movement, see Daniel T. Rogers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History* 10, no. 4 (1982): 113-32; Peter Filene, "An Obituary for the Progressive Movement," *American Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1970): 20-34. For a discussion of the popularity of micro history in this period, see Thomas Bender, "Wholes and Parts: The Need for Synthesis in American History," *Journal of American History* 73, no. 1 (1986): 120-36.

¹⁹ For examples, see Maureen A. Flanagan, *Charter Reform in Chicago* (Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1987) and Scheiner, "Reform, Politics, and Race in Cincinnati," 157-79.

and the history of ideas, historians have resurrected the search for the common threads that united Progressives, focusing on the underlying, often malleable stylistic and ideological traits shared by all.²⁰ In returning to municipalities, the “experiment station” of Progressivism, this dissertation expands our understanding how many of these shared assumptions about the potential of government enabled divergent political actors to unite in support of specific reforms.

Municipal Reform, Coalitions, and the Expansion of the Local State

This dissertation argues that municipal reform in the Progressive era brought together a coalition of diverse reformers who shared a conviction that the creation of more simplified and efficient municipal structures was a necessary prerequisite for the expansion of the functions of local government.²¹ Much of the variety among those who considered

²⁰ An early example of such an attempt is Richard L. McCormick, “Progressivism: A Contemporary Reassessment,” *The Party Period and Public Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 263-88 (originally published in 1982). Three more recent examples include Connolly, *The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism*; Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003); Eldon J. Eisenach, *The Lost Promise of Progressivism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994). McCormick focuses on the “basic characteristics that were common ... to many (and probably all) progressive reforms.” Among several identified, McCormick particularly emphasized social scientific style of investigation, based on data-gathering and analysis, typically undertaken through voluntary associations, that attempted to uncover the truths that would recreate harmony among competing interests (269, 271, 284-87). McGerr argues for the centrality of class, arguing that the Progressive reformers “intended nothing less than to transform other Americans ... in their own middle-class image” (xiv, xv). Connolly, in contrast, views Progressivism more as “a style of political behavior, a motif of public action that took many meanings” and was used by many social groups. This style was marked by “the theme of a united action against corrupt forces,” with varying groups of Progressives presenting “themselves as the leaders of a communal response to the actions of illicit interests and the problems of urban-industrial life” (8). Finally, Eisenach, seeking “to restore intellectual, moral, and institutional coherence to the new ideas and new identities called into being by Progressive intellectuals and reformers,” focuses on the importance of a nationalist over a rights-based discourse in Progressive ideology (2-5).

²¹ In arguing for the importance of a coalition based on the connection between structural reform and functional expansion, I am emphatically not agreeing with the “functionalist” argument that the adoption of these types of charter reforms was in fact the only way that cities could undertake new programs but rather to recognize that a wide variety of contemporaries believed this to be true. Functionalism now largely refers to a paradigm in sociology and to a lesser extent political science popular in the mid twentieth century that argued that social

themselves Progressives and the seeming contradictions among the diverse reforms that they advocated can be reconciled by envisioning Progressivism not as a singular, unified movement but rather as a series of shifting, dynamic, loose coalitions.²² It is a mistake to present Progressive municipal reformers as a uniform and static group, as did Hays and Weinstein. In neglecting the real divisions among them, we fail to explore dynamics of the coalitions they created and consequently to appreciate the often unintended consequences of

structures exist to perform functions that fulfill societal needs. Two seminal texts include Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (New York: The Free Press, 1951) and Kingsley Davis and Wilbur E. Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification," *American Sociological Review* 10, no. 2 (1944): 242-49. While they never identified themselves as functionalists, many municipal political scientists of the period increasingly discussed municipal government as an instrument for fulfilling certain functions to meet the needs of urban residents. One article published in 1968 even insisted that what political scientists then called functionalism was in fact "a continuation of the original paradigm" initiated by the founders of political science in the 1890s, 1900s, and 1910s (380). See Martin Landau, "The Myth of Hyperfactualism in the Study of American Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (September 1968): 378-99.

Kenneth Fox detailed the emergence of what he terms a functionalist theory of municipal government in this period. He defined this theory as the assumption that because cities constitute communities, their "physical, social, and economic conditions ... necessitated the performance of a set of essential 'functions' by a municipal government. Formulations of the theory then provided a specific supporting argument for each of the major functional categories of the centralized, functionally departmentalized model" (xix). Fox, however, for the most part was not critical of their assumptions about municipal government, describing their administrative reforms simply as "innovations" and neglecting any real consideration of the many groups that challenged their assumptions at the time. See Kenneth Fox, *Better City Government: Innovation in American Urban Politics, 1850-1937* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977). For a similarly functionalist treatment of municipal reform, see Joseph L. Tropea, "Rational Capitalism and Municipal Government: The Progressive Era," *Social Science History* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 137-58.

²² Here, I agree with John D. Buenker, who argued that a line of analysis that understands Progressivism as a movement marked by "shifting coalitions" rather than a monolithic or unified program had "the potential for reconciling most ... conflicting interpretations and of encompassing nearly all of the groups, values and programs that were plainly at work" (31). See John D. Buenker, untitled essay, *Progressivism*, by John D. Buenker, John C. Burnham, and Robert M. Crunden (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1977), 31-69. In *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform*, Buenker also argued that the immigrant working class typically associated largely with boss-ridden urban machines actually supported much state-level reform legislation. A number of more recent studies have similarly explored the dynamics of coalitions among a variety of groups, including middle-class and elite reformers, policy experts, labor leaders, members of the working-class, and farmers, to explain the course of Progressive reforms on the local, state, and national levels. For an account of the important role that public policy experts played in bringing together elites reformers and members of the working-class to elect reform candidates in cities, see Kenneth Finegold, *Experts and Politicians: Reform Challenges to Machine Politics in New York, Cleveland, and Chicago* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). On the role that "politically mobilized farmers" played in forming alliances with the urban working class for national legislation to regulate the economy, see Elizabeth Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). On the alliances between labor leaders and middle-class reformers seeking various reforms in Chicago, see George Leidenberger, *Chicago's Progressive Alliance: Labor and the Bid for Public Streetcars* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006).

their reforms and the lost opportunities to secure alternative outcomes.²³ In focusing on these coalitions, we can investigate the many ways in which Americans living at the turn of the twentieth century attempted to expand government into realms that required increasingly complex administrative arrangements without sacrificing their commitments not only to popular accountability in government but also to popular participation in government.

Recent historical scholarship emphasizes cities as important locations of the expansion of the state in the Progressive era. Public welfare had long been considered the province of local rather than state or national government, and with the rapid increase of urban populations, American cities, often inspired by European examples, experimented with new forms of governmental activism. Public enterprise frequently began at the local level, with cities across the country attempting to create municipally-owned transportation systems as well as gas and electric plants. Municipal courts were pioneers in the transformation of the criminal justice system, using law a means of social control to regulate family life and public morality. Municipalities also attempted to regulate many other areas of local life, monitoring sanitary conditions in the name of public health and licensing a variety of local businesses in the name of the public good. Yet this extension of the scope of local government was not without controversy, for the growth of municipal enterprises reduced the

²³ In arguing that we need to attempt to abandon hindsight in order to understand more fully the original intentions of many municipal reformers, I follow the lead of James Kloppenberg's study of the philosophers and social theorists who developed the theories that would later underpin the welfare state. Kloppenberg writes: "I want to examine the theorists of social democracy and progressivism in part to disconnect their ideas from certain developments they could neither anticipate nor prevent.... Much of the criticism leveled against social democratic and progressive theorists, born of a coupling between the slick condescension accompanying hindsight and the easy imputation of unstated motives, reveals a failure of historical imagination masquerading as tough-minded savvy." See James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 5.

reach of the market, transferring many goods and services from the private to the public realm.²⁴

In the case of municipal charter reform, political actors with widely different understandings of democracy came together to argue for the reorganization of local government in order to facilitate the implementation of new programs. According to Clinton Rogers Woodruff, one of the period's most knowledgeable individuals on municipal reform as the secretary of the National Municipal League for over twenty years, "[t]he tendency to enlarge the scope of the city's functions ... has unquestionably been the chief impetus of the movement, first for the commission form of government and then for its later development, the commission-manager form."²⁵ Supporters of an expanded sphere of local action often felt that before new programs could be undertaken, municipal political institutions needed to be reformed. In this light, the dichotomy between "social" and "structural" reformers breaks down, for many leaders in cities actively worked for both types of reforms. Samuel Jones and Brand Whitlock of Toledo, Ohio, two of the most prominent mayors cited as social reformers, actively promoted the need for administrative consolidation through charter reform to enact their programs.²⁶

This coalition functioned on many levels, and only by exploring the interactions among the many diverse groups who supported charter revision can we begin to understand the paradoxes of the movement for municipal reform. On the national level, academics and

²⁴ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Era* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 112-59. See esp. 112-16. On municipal courts, see Michael Willrich, *City of Courts* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003). On public enterprises, see Gail Radford, "From Municipal Socialism to Public Authorities: Institutional Factors in the Shaping of American Public Enterprise," *Journal of American History* 90, no. 3 (December 2003): 863-90.

²⁵ Clinton Rogers Woodruff, "Present Phases of the Municipal Situation," *National Municipal Review* IV, no. 1 (January 1915): 3. "Commission-manager" was an early name for the city manager plan. For more on the evolution of this form of government and the change in the name, see chapter seven.

²⁶ Holli, *Reform in Detroit*, 162, 169. For Jones' involvement in charter reform, see chapter four, for Whitlock's, see chapter six.

elite reformers came together in the National Municipal League where they carefully formulated an agenda that only proposed structural reforms to create “good city government” without specifying the details of governmental activities in order to avoid alienating individuals with divergent political convictions. On the local level, businessmen and social reformers sometimes found they shared similar goals. Local business leaders, hoping to attract investors and further the economic development of their cities, wanted municipal governments to undertake the physical improvements (of streets, sewers, etc.) they felt necessary for commercial expansion.²⁷ Yet other supporters of municipal reform hoped to widen the scope local government for very different purposes, aspiring to use municipalities as agents of social welfare, focusing on programs that would improve the living conditions and educational and social opportunities of urban residents. In some cases, the specific goals of these groups overlapped. Improving public water supplies was good for business and public health alike. In other cases, they diverged sharply, often over the volatile issue of public ownership. Regardless, many came to view the structural reform of urban government, primarily through the revision of municipal charters, as a necessary first step. Although they may have ultimately sought different ends, for a time at least they agreed on the means, and they often used the authority found in the National Municipal League, as an avowedly non-partisan organization, to defend these means as politically-neutral tools that would allow for an expansion of services.

Though at first many urban residents were unconvinced by such claims, the widespread popular outrage following the revelations of corruption involved in the granting of franchises to public service corporations that followed the publication of Lincoln Steffens’ exposés drew many urban voters to the cause of structural reform. Steffens brought the

²⁷ Bridges, *Morning Glories*, 47-51; Weinstein, “The Small Businessman,” 95, 106.

“franchise problem” to a national audience in a ground-breaking series of articles published in *McClure’s Magazine* from October 1902 to November 1903, reprinted as *The Shame of the Cities* the following year. Here, he chronicled the widespread “boodle” and “graft” involved in the granting of municipal franchises and contracts for the provision of utilities in large cities such as St. Louis, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.²⁸ Popular outrage over the role that public service corporations played in the corruption of local politics came to outweigh previous concerns that administrative centralization was inherently anti-democratic. The argument of reformers that such centralization was in fact more democratic because it would yield municipal administrations more subject to popular control became convincing to many working-class constituencies. Many urban residents also believed that the initiative, referendum, and recall, the “direct democracy” devices typically associated with commission government, would off-set such centralization and enable voters to control the provision of utilities and transportation, whether by improved regulation of the process of granting franchises or the establishment of municipally-owned plants. As a committee appointed by the National Municipal League reported in 1911, the popularity of the commission plan resulted from the perception that it was “more democratic (i.e., sensitive to public opinion)” than the mayor-council form.²⁹

Although local women’s organizations were initially not prominent champions of structural reform, female reformers shared in the desire to increase the reach of municipalities. When working to expand city government, members of women’s reform leagues and clubs tended to cooperate with elected officials regarding specific requests (such

²⁸ Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004 [1904]).

²⁹ National Municipal League, *The Commission Plan and Commission-Manager Plan of Municipal Government: An analytical study by a committee of the National Municipal League* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1914), 2, 6-8.

as the hiring of female police officers or the improvement of public parks) rather than embark on campaigns for structural reform.³⁰ Yet in so doing, they expressed similar hopes about the potential of city government. Jane Addams, a national leader in the settlement house movement, wrote that “the most vigorous effort at governmental reform, as well as the most generous experiments in ministering to social needs, have come from the largest cities.” Though never an active leader in the movement for charter revision, she lamented the fact that current political structures prevented cities from becoming more of a positive force in the daily lives of urban dwellers. According to Addams, many “carefully prepared city charters” prevented municipalities from meeting the expanding “social needs” of modern cities.³¹ Most contemporary scholarship on women’s activism in American cities explores the differences between male and female reformers, and unquestionably men dominated most efforts to achieve “good city government” while women dominated settlement work and other efforts to improve public health and urban living conditions.³² Nevertheless, these differences did not preclude women’s support for various structural and administrative reforms. Particularly after the enfranchisement of women in 1920, women’s groups in many cities emerged as prominent supporters of movements for charter revision.³³

³⁰ For examples of this style of activism in Fort Worth, Texas see “Council Session Was a Busy One,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 18, 1906, p. 3; “Police Matron May Be Given by Council,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, August 14, 1904, p. 21; “City Council,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, August 6, 1904, p. 6; “Chief Rea Favors Employment of a Matron,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, July 8, 1904, p. 8.

³¹ Jane Addams, “Problems of Municipal Administration,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 10, no. 4 (January 1905): 428, 444.

³² Camilla Stivers, *Bureau Men and Settlement Women: Constructing Public Administration in the Progressive Era* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000); Maureen Flanagan, “Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman’s City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era,” *American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (October 1990): 1032-50. For the discussion of women’s activism in cities as “municipal housekeeping,” Paula Baker, “The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920,” *American Historical Review* Vol. 89, No. 3 (June 1984): 620-47.

³³ Harold A. Stone, Don K. Price, and Kathryn A. Stone, *City Manager Government in the United States: A Review After Twenty-Five Years* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1940), 41; “Women Unite in Manager Campaign,” *Oakland Post-Enquirer*, March 28, 1930, p. 28; “Both Sides Perfecting Charter Fight

In order to demonstrate that this coalition based on reforming structure to facilitate the expansion of government is the key to understanding municipal reform as a nation-wide phenomena, this dissertation combines a wide variety of sources: case studies of five cities, national data on the adoption of structural innovations, the archival papers and publications of the National Municipal League, and influential works of municipal political science. In so doing, it traces the creation and trajectory of this coalition on a number of levels, exploring the complicated interactions among political scientists, elite reformers, and local political actors. As numerous local and regional studies have demonstrated, many variables influenced the fate of charter reform, including class tensions, the unique political conditions of individual cities, the dynamics of partisan politics, state laws, and regional political and economic variations. Ultimately, however, none of these variables alone is sufficient to explain the widespread interest in charter reform in cities across the nation. Moreover, all were closely connected to the underlying issue of the relationship between the structure and purpose of municipal government.

By examining multiple attempts at reform in both eastern cities, where reformers often failed to secure the adoption of new charters, alongside those in cities farther south and west, where reformers were more successful, this dissertation reveals that the ability of reformers to convince voters that structural reform would enable municipalities to provide new and improved services was the key to the success – or failure – of movements for charter reform.³⁴ As early as the 1920s, data published by bureaus of municipal research

Forces,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 18, 1924, p. 6; “Name Charter Workers,” *Fort Worth Press*, November 15, 1924, p. 6.

³⁴ In selecting these case studies, I intentionally avoided the largest cities because the commission plan and the city manager plan were generally not considered appropriate for such cities, nor were councils elected entirely by at-large elections. In order to explore more fully structural changes in American cities, I focused on five mid-sized cities where these reformers were seriously considered. For a summary of the charters adopted in these cities, see Appendix I.

demonstrated significant regional variations in the adoption of commission and city manager charters and the abolition of wards and parties (see Appendix 7C). In cities of the west and southwest such as Oakland, California and Fort Worth, Texas urban populations were initially more united in their anger towards public service corporations, typically seen as outsiders and often tied to larger railroad conglomerates such as Southern Pacific, and as a result, unions and commercial organizations came together to work for commission charters.

In midwestern cities such as Toledo, Ohio, success also depended upon the ability of reformers to convince voters that charter reforms would improve popular control over the provision of utilities and public transportation and thereby facilitate the implementation of new programs. Initially, Mayor Samuel Jones, a dedicated social reformer, attempted to do so but failed in 1901. Only as public anger over the services provided by the local street-railway company exploded later in the decade was his successor, Brand Whitlock, able to lay the foundations for the adoption of a new charter in 1914. Local unions were somewhat divided over the proposal, and though Toledoans adopted a new charter providing for the initiative and referenda, they elected to retain the mayor-council form of government rather than adopt either the commission or manager plans.

In cities on the east coast, north and south, stronger parties and state-level regulation of cities made it more difficult for reformers to convince voters that the adoption of new charters would improve or expand municipal services. In Norfolk, Virginia, the initial attempt of a group of reformers dominated by local businessmen to increase the appointive powers of the mayor to aid in preparation for the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition failed in the face of opposition by organized labor and the established local Democratic Party organization, both of which had powerful allies in the general assembly. Only during World

War I, when Norfolk underwent rapid economic expansion as a naval and shipping center, were reformers able to secure the adoption of a city manager charter. Regional pride also played a role, for nearby Staunton, Virginia claimed to have “invented” the plan. Finally, in Worcester, Massachusetts, with an entrenched two-party system and a strong system of state regulation of municipal charters, public utilities, and railroads, reformers, despite multiple attempts, were not able to convince voters, who were for the most part satisfied with local services, to abandon the mayor-council form and ward-based, partisan elections.

In all these cities, whether or not voters chose to adopt revisions, the debates surrounding charter campaigns revealed the extent to which local political actors seriously considered the relationship of proposed structural reforms to larger questions about the true meaning of democracy. The dilemma of how to retain a system of democratic self-government in a modern society that required government to undertake increasingly technical programs lay at the heart of a wide variety of Progressive reforms. By analyzing the dynamics of the alliances formed to restructure municipalities, this dissertation improves our understanding of how and why a more technocratic strand of democratic thought, only one of the many in the Progressive era, became dominant and was then institutionalized in local government in the 1920s and beyond.

The Contested Meaning of Democracy in the Progressive Era

This dissertation utilizes the reform of American cities, recognized by contemporaries as “experiment stations” for innovations in government, as a window through which to explore the contested meaning of democracy in the Progressive era. By examining the

theoretical debates among political scientists, elite reformers, and local political actors in connection with the specific structures they created to embody their ideals of democracy, it is both an intellectual and an institutional history of municipal reform.³⁵ Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, it combines political history and the history of ideas with the insights of institutionalism and American Political Development in the social sciences. In so doing, it draws on municipal reform to explore some of the fundamental questions regarding the paradoxes of Progressivism.

In the early years of the twentieth century, a wide variety of Americans expressed their faith that democratic ideals and institutions could be remodeled to meet the demands of rapidly changing social and economic conditions. By the 1920s, however, many former Progressives had become disillusioned with democracy and turned increasingly towards technocratic models of government that relied heavily on trained experts and rejected the notion that ordinary citizens could participate in a meaningful way in the determination of public policy. By examining three main theoretical debates concerning democracy alongside the resulting municipal institutions created, we gain insight into how the optimism of the Progressive years turned into the disillusionment of the 1920s. It was not coincidental that a nascent form of pluralism, recognizing groups as having legitimate and often competing goals in a democracy, and technocratic theories marked by a distrust of average citizens, both solidified in the 1920s, and an exploration of the municipal side of these debates does much to explain how and why this occurred.

³⁵ In formulating this argument, I am following Amy Bridges's work that presents charter reforms as creating the political institutions that establish what political scientists call the "staging grounds" or "rules of the game" for electoral participation." According to Bridges, "The analytic effort is to understand how the rules influence both the strategies and tactics of the players, and styles of governance." See Bridges, *Morning Glories*, pp. 12-16.

First, reacting to the increasing complexity and interconnectedness of economic and social life that accompanied large-scale industrialization, immigration, and urbanization, Progressives debated the appropriate balance between the national, state, and local levels of government in a polity founded on the ideal of popular and democratic self-government. Though many envisioned modern democracy as closely tied to the collective fate of the nation as a whole, others resisted this nationalization and claimed that democracy required decentralization and greater “home rule” for cities. In *The Promise of American Life*, a book that partly inspired Theodore Roosevelt’s “New Nationalism,” Croly rejected the individualistic ethos of Jeffersonian democracy, arguing instead for a new democracy founded on dedication to a public (national) interest. For Croly, this type of democracy necessitated a strong, central state to work for the common good. As a result, though he celebrated “the American city” as a site “for economically and socially constructive experimentation,” he maintained that the ultimate solutions to contemporary problems were to be found at the national level. Given that commercial and manufacturing enterprises in urban areas were part of “the national economic system,” cities could not “deal effectively with certain of the fundamental social questions.” Disagreeing with reformers such as Howe, Croly concluded that cities were not “the exclusive ‘Hope of Democracy,’ because the ultimate democratic hope depends on the fulfillment of national responsibilities.”³⁶

Alternatively, other leading Progressives emphasized the importance of democracy on the local level and argued that cities needed greater autonomy, even in the modern world. Philosopher John Dewey recognized that given the fact that Americans of his day resided in a “continental nation state,” joined together not only by political bonds but also technological

³⁶ Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 349. On Croly’s influence on Theodore Roosevelt, see Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, 314. Eldon Eisenach discusses the national emphasis of Progressivism in *The Lost Promise of Progressivism*.

revolutions in communication and transportation, the local, communal self-government envisioned by many of our nation's founders was in many ways no longer feasible. Nevertheless, Dewey believed that in order for Americans to come together and form a truly democratic, national "Great Community," they needed to begin with a revitalization of local, face-to-face democratic communities.³⁷ The movement for home rule in American cities was on one level based on a similar understanding of democracy.³⁸ Supporters of home rule blamed the excessive interference of state legislatures in municipal affairs for the corruption and inefficiency plaguing municipal government. Yet for many supporters, allowing cities to control their own affairs was about much more than correcting a flawed system of state regulation. Howe described the movement for home rule as "a struggle for liberty" and "a demand on the part of the people to be trusted, and to be endowed with the privileges of which they have been dispossessed." Achieving home rule would result in the "enlargement of democracy," because, according to Howe, "democracy can best work out its problems when government is responsible, as well as responsive, to the immediate community which it serves."³⁹ Like Howe, Jane Addams believed that an increase in autonomy would enable

³⁷ John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1954 [1927]). See esp. 110-42, 185-219. See also Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 313-15.

³⁸ The concept of home rule, however, initially relied on the assumption that once cities were freed from corrupting external influences, urban residents would unite under the banner of good city government. Early advocates of home rule understood city charters as fundamental laws representing a homogeneous and unified public will, rejecting the possibility of legitimate heterogeneous interests. Historian Jon Teaford describes the first two state constitutions that provided for home rule in the 1870s in these terms. He writes: "City charters were to represent the homogenous public interest and not the heterogeneous special interests of a polyarchic city. The original home-rule provisions, in fact, represent a nostalgic attempt to construct a consensual, immutable foundation for an urban American that was ephemeral and divided." See Jon C. Teaford, *The Unheralded Triumph: City Government in America, 1870-1900* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 107.

³⁹ Howe, *The City*, 160-169, 313. As Howe explained: "Home rule would produce variety in municipal administration rather than uniformity. We should thus have in every state a number of experiment stations of administration, taxation, and social betterment, each seeking a solution of its local problem and each contributing to the political experience of the country.... Variety, not uniformity, is what we need" (169). From this perspective, participatory local self government and the resulting diversity of opinion was integral to democracy.

municipalities to take on a more positive role in the lives of their residents, defining “local self-government” as “the ‘right locally to determine the scope of the local government,’ in response to the local needs as they arise.”⁴⁰

Though many urban residents agreed with the broad goal of allowing cities greater self-rule, when faced with the question of how to create political institutions to secure such autonomy divisions surfaced. Most municipal reformers celebrated the ideal of a revitalization of popular interest in local government, but the concept of home rule presented a something of a conundrum. Many supported home rule in the abstract but also worked to create uniform structures for local government. In joining together to form a National Municipal League, reformers across the country expressed their conviction that there was a shared, national interest in improving city government. They believed that American cities shared common problems and common solutions and that solving those problems would benefit the nation as a whole. To this end, the League issued a Municipal Program in 1899 intended to “embody the essential principles that must underlie successful municipal government” by proposing uniform structures of local government.⁴¹ The Program proposed a system that granted cities wide powers to determine the content of local policy but also created a uniform system of local government, defining home rule as a matter of function rather than structure, and local proponents of the Program implicitly agreed. Opponents, however, often resisted such “external” and “theoretical” models, arguing that charters needed to be tailored to individual communities. Moreover, many immigrant and working-

⁴⁰ Addams, “Problems of Municipal Administration,” 427.

⁴¹ *Municipal Program: Report of a Committee of the National Municipal League, Adopted by the League, November 17, 1899, Together with Explanatory and Other Papers* (New York: The Macmillan Company: 1900), xi; “Proceedings of the Louisville Conference and Third Annual Meeting,” *Proceedings of the Louisville Conference for Good City Government and the Third Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League Held May 5, 6, and 7, 1897* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1897).

class residents rejected the notion that home rule primarily encompassed administrative reform and local charter revision, instead emphasizing the right of city dwellers to decide on policies regarding the sale and consumption of alcohol without the interference of state legislatures dominated by rural temperance advocates.⁴²

Second, Progressives attempted to reconcile the undeniable existence of diverse and often competing groups in society with their inherited ideal of a singular public good as the foundation of a democratic polity. By 1900, particularly in urban areas, the presence of multiple groups with different goals was obvious to most observers, as organized groups of women, workers, immigrants, racial minorities, and businessmen all acted collectively in various ways. Most reformers, however, still believed that they could unify those groups into a single, organic public and restore a degree of consensus in urban politics.⁴³ In the coming years, many Progressives continued to strive for this goal, defending their programs for reform as the work of a united “people” battling selfish “interests,” for there could only be only one legitimate public interest. Among political theorists, however, an alternative understanding of the role of groups in a democratic society began to solidify. Building upon the pragmatic philosophy of William James and John Dewey, political theorists started to develop a theory of democracy that rejected the ideal of a unified popular will or sovereignty as the foundation of a unitary state. This critique supported the position of those who resisted the nationalization of democracy and advocated a more decentralized, federal

⁴² On competing interpretations of home rule, see Thomas R. Pegram, “Defining Home Rule: Mainstream Reform, Alternative Culture, and the Chicago City Charter Movement,” *Partisans and Progressives: Private Interest and Public Policy in Illinois, 1870-1922* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 87-119. Despite such divisions in cities and the hopes of Howe and others for a deeper democratic meaning, by the late 1910s the term “home rule” increasingly became synonymous with state constitutional provisions granting cities the right to frame and adopt their own charters without interference. See Howard Lee McBain, *The Law and Practice of Municipal Home Rule* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), v.

⁴³ Phillip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 8-11.

conception of political decision-making. The legitimation of plural interests, however, did not yet become a normative theory of liberal democracy, with most group theorists continuing to argue that democratic society required a unified community on some level. Nevertheless, by the 1920s the idea that political institutions needed to be designed to ensure the representation of distinct groups had begun to take hold.⁴⁴

Political theorists were not the only ones to wrestle with the appropriate representation of groups in a democratic system. Municipal reformers and other urban political leaders also confronted this question when revising charters. When leaders of labor unions, women's organizations, and racial and ethnic minorities demanded to participate in the revision of charters, they rejected the claim that disinterested leaders could represent a singular common good of the entire community and insisted that their groups had their own interests that needed to be protected. In protesting the exclusion of African Americans from a charter revision committee in Atlanta, Georgia in 1913, an editorial in the *Atlanta Independent* declared that every "citizen body" was "entitled to representation" and that to deny any group this right violated "a fundamental principle of popular government."⁴⁵

When charter revision committees turned their attention to the methods for the election of councilors, the issue of the representation of groups surfaced again. Proposals for systems of proportional or minority representation in councils clearly reflected a belief in the

⁴⁴ John G. Gunnell, "Making Democracy Safe for the World: Political Science between the Wars," *Modern Political Science: Anglo-American Exchanges Since 1880*, ed. Robert Adcock, Mark Bevir, and Shannon C. Stimson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 137-57; John G. Gunnell, "The Declination of the State and the Origins of American Pluralism," *Political Science in History: Research Programs and Political Traditions*, ed. James Farr, John S. Dryzek, and Stephen T. Leonard (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 19-40.

⁴⁵ "Charter Revision," *The Atlanta Independent*, February 1, 1913, p. 4. The editorial argued: "We should have representation on the Committee on Revision; at least one man should be there from the Negro citizen body for the purpose of pointing out to his associates the real needs of those he represented. He has as much right to representation as the Jew, the Irish, the German, the Italian and the other members making up the cosmopolitan community." For a discussion of the demand of the Central Labor Union of Norfolk, Virginia to participate in the revision of the city charter, see chapter four.

legitimacy of competing group interests. Those who sought to replace ward-based council elections with at-large elections, in contrast, defended the latter system as a means to restore a degree of lost unity to local politics. When residents of Toledo were considering a new charter in 1901, one member of the commission that drafted the proposed charter argued that at-large elections would make it possible “to elect men who will be truly representative of the entire body of the citizens” and “legislat[e] for the best interests of the city as a whole.”⁴⁶ Another member of the commission, however, vehemently disagreed, maintaining that a small council elected at-large “is not large enough to be fairly representative of the many import interests and sections ... of a great and growing city like Toledo.” In contrast, he advocated a council that provided “for minority representation, and for that of any great interest whether it be political, religious, social, mercantile, racial or industrial.” Without such representation, a council “is not only not democratic, but it lacks the very power of reflecting the popular will.”⁴⁷ Yet as this reference to “the popular will” suggests, as among theorists, local political leaders who argued for the legitimacy of group interests continued to adhere to the notion of an underlying common good. It was this belief that generated such widespread support for the “direct democracy” measures in cities. The initiative and referenda were predicated on the belief in existence of a singular public will that could unite to challenge corrupt special interests undermining the common good.⁴⁸

Third, Progressives debated whether or not it would be possible to create a government to serve the needs of an urban, industrial society that was both efficient and

⁴⁶ “The Proposed City Charter - Julian Tyler of the Commission, Replies to Critics,” *Toledo Blade*, October 31, 1901, p. 1.

⁴⁷ “The Proposed City Charter - Judge Morris Points Out the Weak Points in the Instrument,” *Toledo Blade*, October 25, 1901, pp. 1, 6.

⁴⁸ Daniel T. Rogers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics since Independence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 183-85.

democratic. Most agreed that as government expanded its reach into new realms, more of the details of governance needed to be delegated to trained professionals but were not clear on how to accomplish this and retain an appropriate degree of popular control. A. Lawrence Lowell, political scientist and President of Harvard University, championed the need for “expert administrators in popular government.” He insisted that “[i]f democracy is to be conducted with the efficiency needed in a complex modern society it must overcome its prejudice against permanent expert officials as undemocratic.”⁴⁹ Charles Beard agreed that a greater dependence on experts was necessary, but he also raised the essential question of “whether democracy and efficiency are inherently irreconcilable.”⁵⁰ For Beard, Lowell, and many of their contemporaries, the answer was that they were not incompatible if only we determined the proper balance between the political and the administrative sides of government. While most agreed with this principle in theory, its application proved far more difficult. The need for trained engineers to construct roads and bridges was widely accepted, but the need for professional administrators to oversee and coordinate all municipal departments sparked more controversy, and the line between the determination and the execution of public policy became less clear.

Debates regarding the appropriate role of “experts” in a democracy often raged in cities because of the rapid expansion of municipal activities. In the 1880s and 1890s, administrative reform typically focused on the adoption of merit-based civil service systems while electoral reform centered on various methods to secure the election of “good” men to office. By the 1910s, administrative and electoral reform came together in the city manager

⁴⁹ A. Lawrence Lowell, “Expert Administrators in Popular Government,” *American Political Science Review* 7, no. 1 (February 1913): 46, 51-55.

⁵⁰ Charles A. Beard, “Training for Efficient Public Service,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 64 (March 1916): 215-18, 220.

plan. Campaigns to elect moral, upright citizens had been replaced by efforts to appoint trained professionals to administrative positions. Reformers initially proposed the “strong mayor” plan of local government as the best means to secure administrative efficiency, arguing that the mayor should be allowed to appoint many officials currently elected by popular vote (i.e. coroners, clerks, sheriffs). Political scientist Frank Goodnow explained that American cities applied the “elective principle” inappropriately. Quoting a speaker from a conference of the National Municipal League, Goodnow concluded: “Where you want skill, you must appoint; where you want representation, elect.”⁵¹ This principle lay at the heart of the short ballot movement that was based on the claim that reducing the number of elective officers would achieve greater accountability.

Yet despite the popularity of such arguments among many elite reformers and academics, others rejected this line of reasoning as inherently antidemocratic. According to Jane Addams, attempts to solve the problems of local government “by giving more power to administrative officers” reflected a distrust of “the will of the people.”⁵² Similarly, when the Good Government Association of Norfolk attempted to secure the adoption of a charter that widened the appointive powers of the mayor in 1906, one citizen proclaimed that such a system would create “a one man oligarchy.” An editorial in the *Norfolk Public Ledger* agreed, warning that “the unfortunate tendency to centralization of power is a thing to be closely watched by the people.”⁵³ In short, not all agreed that appointing administrative officials was acceptable in a democratic system.

⁵¹ Frank J. Goodnow, *Municipal Problems* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897), 181-86.

⁵² Addams, “Problems of Municipal Administration,” 427.

⁵³ “The New Charter,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 19, 1906, p. 4; “Fight Charter in Legislature,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 17, 1906, p. 11.

Reformers next turned to the commission and then to the city manager plans of government. Although most scholarship neglects to distinguish between these two forms of government, many academics and elite reformers who supported the city manager plan did not approve of the commission plan. In abolishing the mayor and the council and replacing both with a single commission of only five members, the commission plan (first adopted in Galveston, Texas in 1901) was intended to centralize both power and accountability in a single body. In so doing, it fused both the administrative and legislative functions of government. The elected commissioners determined and executed public policy as the both legislators and the heads of the administrative departments of the municipality. Many questioned the advisability of entrusting elected “lay” people with administrative power, and these critics would come to prefer the city manager plan. This new plan (first adopted in Staunton, Virginia in 1908) retained an elective council for legislative purposes but allowed the council to appoint a city manager to oversee the entire municipal administration and appoint all other officials. For many, the manager plan provided the ideal solution – a democratically elected council would make decisions regarding municipal policy while a professionally-trained “expert administrator” would ensure that those policies were efficiently carried out efficiently. Trained professionals rather than elected lay people would now run government. As Richard S. Childs, leader of the short ballot movement and architect of the city manager plan, explained, the “old remedy” that hoped to encourage “good citizens to go into politic” was “sound in theory, but unworkable in practice, for a wholesome citizenry has much else to do.”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Richard S. Childs, “The Short Ballot Principle in the Model Charter,” *A New Municipal Program* ed. Clinton Rogers Woodruff (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1919), 112.

In the 1920s, after the Progressive era had come to a close, political theory came to focus on the need for greater centralization and greater efficiency in government but at the same time, somewhat paradoxically, on the need to institutionalize the representation of multiple groups. Acceptance of the existence of competing groups in modern society did not necessarily engender arguments for a more inclusive or participatory democracy. Ironically, despite their elitism many municipal reformers in the 1890s who rejected the notion that there could be any legitimate interests other than a singular public interest were more committed to increasing public participation in local government. They hoped that through charter revision they could create structures that would stimulate wider popular interest in local affairs. Some early theorists of pluralism, expressing faith in average citizens, argued that the presence of groups necessitated a decentralization of decision-making. For others, however, the recognition of their presence led to a distrust of citizens as purely self-interested that in turn justified the need for greater centralization of governmental administration under the direction of trained experts.⁵⁵ For many technocrats in the 1920s, the acceptance of group theory as an explanation for political behavior did not result in the abandonment of a belief in the existence of a deeper common good, only the ideal that public deliberation would unearth that good. Instead, disinterested professional experts would determine public policy to benefit the general welfare on behalf of citizens incapable of rising above their own selfish motivations. While Howe, Addams, and many others had believed that the expansion of the scope of municipal activities would encourage citizens to participate in local affairs in a more meaningful way, for the technocrats of the 1920s municipalities became mere

⁵⁵ According to Gunnell, political scientist Harold Laski used a pluralist conception of groups to reject the ideal of unitary sovereignty and to argue for a division of sovereignty through a more federated political system. Social worker Mary Parker Follett similarly argued for a political system based on “the organization of men in small groups” that would form the basis of a larger democratic community. See Gunnell, “The Declination of the State and the Origins of American Pluralism,” 26-28.

providers of services to residents who participated only as groups of self-interested consumers. And though Childs and his supporters believed that the reforms they espoused would deepen popular control of government, the city manager plan became seen as the perfect institutional form to create government by professional administrators.

Municipal Reform, American Civic Voluntarism, and Political Science

A Coalition of Structural Reformers

To explain how this reading of democracy came to dominate the 1920s, this dissertation combines the local case studies discussed above with an examination of the alliances formed among political scientists and reformers the National Municipal League. To maintain a coalition of individuals with diverse political convictions, these leading reformers and scholars only addressed the reorganization of municipal structure and refused to take official positions on the more divisive issue of the proper scope of local governmental activity. Regardless of their intentions, however, in so doing they laid the groundwork not only for the technocratic vision of city government that delegated policy-related decision-making to appointed experts but also for the professionalization of reform organizations themselves.

Chapter one argues that an analysis of the organizational context of municipal reform is vital to explaining the dynamics of this coalition. The explosion of local municipal leagues in cities across the country the 1890s can only be understood fully when placed in the context of the larger history of voluntary associations in the United States. Civic associations have

always played a prominent role in Progressive historiography but usually in terms of the reforms that they espoused rather than their organizational structures. Most studies of municipal politics heavily rely on publications of the National Municipal League without considering the context and nature of their sources.⁵⁶ More recently, however, institutionalism has encouraged political scientists, sociologists, and, to a lesser extent, historians, to treat these groups as organizations that in their very structures participated in the Progressive reevaluation of civic participation.⁵⁷ Institutional scholarship has begun to demonstrate the ways that changes in the structures and goals of civic associations were just as vital to the redefinition of democracy as were the electoral reforms of the Progressive era.

Municipal reform associations played a central role on the local level in the Progressive challenge to political parties that sparked a transformation of the way in which ordinary citizens participated in politics. In the 1890s a variety of organizations began to challenge local parties as leaders of public opinion. Nationally, groups such as the National Municipal League challenged the trans-local function of parties, encouraging both reformers and local politicians to view the issues facing their cities as unrelated to state and national politics while at the same time closely connected to the affairs of other cities. The members of the National Municipal League were organizations, and the League worked to unite

⁵⁶ The only book-length study not published by the League itself is Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*.

⁵⁷ Institutionalism as a method of inquiry defines institutions not only as formal laws, governmental bodies, and organizations, but also as the informal norms, conventions, and modes of behavior and discourse that are fundamental to the functioning of a polity. It studies the manner in which institutions thus defined shape both the constraints on and opportunities for reform, emphasizing the often contingent and accidental nature of new creations. While recognizing the importance of social and economic forces, it focuses on the role of institutions in altering the distribution of power across groups and in forming opportunities for new groups to attain power. See Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17-18, 78-82; Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C. R. Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies* XVIV (1996): 936-57; Philip Ethington and Eileen McDonagh, "The Eclectic Center of the New Institutionalism," *Social Science History* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 467-509; David Brian Robertson, "The Return to History in the New Institutionalism in Political Science," *Social Science History* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 1-36.

municipal reform associations across the country on the basis of a shared commitment to “good city government.” In individual cities, municipal reform associations, business organizations, and city-wide unions all sought to replace parties as local political leaders. Though avowedly non-partisan, they were not non-political, and most actively participated in local elections and/or lobbied local councils concerning a wide variety of issues. Typically presenting themselves as representatives of the public interest, most also felt that they had a right to participate in the revision of municipal charters.

Chapter two begins to explore the role of political scientists in municipal reform, arguing that the rise of the realist movement in the discipline inspired many scholars to participate in the “real” world of politics outside academia by contributing to these types of reform organizations. The classic accounts of urban structural reform as dominated by business interests either dismissed or vastly oversimplified the role played by political ideology.⁵⁸ Most current work on urban politics now takes the relationship between ideology and practice more seriously, and the active participation of many intellectuals and scholars in urban reform movements attests to the influence of academic discourse on a variety of Progressive efforts.⁵⁹ In the discipline of political science, with interest in the reform of

⁵⁸ Calling for greater care to be made in distinguishing between “ideology” and “practice,” Hays argued that when business groups claimed to want to expand popular involvement in decision-making, it was merely “a political tactic, . . . a device to secure immediate political victory.” Hays, “The Politics of Reform,” 167, 169. Holli also carelessly grouped all of the “theorists” of structural reform together, ignoring the real and often public debates among scholars about the ideal structures of urban political institutions neglecting to make a distinction between the original intent of their ideas and how they were later interpreted by reformers. He cited James Bryce, Frank Goodnow, William Bennet Munro, and Albert Shaw as some of the most prominent theorists of structural reforms. Though the careers of these four men overlapped to an extent, the height of their influence came at very different times over a forty year period, and Holli made no mention of this context. More importantly, in generalizing among all his figures, he misrepresented important aspects of the theories of several of them. Goodnow, for example, did not concur with the popular analogy between municipal and business corporations and he did not support the strong-mayor model of local government (see chapter three). Also, in many ways Shaw, who disagreed publicly with Goodnow, cannot be characterized as a structural reformer (see chapter two). Holli, *Reform in Detroit*, 163-79.

⁵⁹ Recent studies of the involvement of social scientists and other academically trained experts in various reform movements during the Progressive era include John Louis Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement: Social Science and*

municipal political institutions on the rise in the 1890s, many scholars increasingly sought public roles as neutral authorities eager to share their expertise with the wider population. They shied away from direct participation in partisan politics because they felt it would compromise their impartiality. Municipal reform organizations presented the perfect opportunity for scholars who sought to become publicly active, providing a venue to be at the same time direct participants in and impartial analysts of the political process. Moreover, reformers across the country cited political scientists active in the National Municipal League as impartial authorities in order to present structural reforms as politically neutral mechanisms that would simply enable local governments to undertake new tasks with greater efficiency while simultaneously remaining popularly accountable.

Chapter two also argues that contested theories regarding the concept of administration among political scientists provide one key to understanding the creation – and later disintegration – of the alliance among supporters of municipal structural reform. In calling for scholars to consider more than formal legal structures by turning their attention to the actual functioning of political institutions, the realist movement also caused many political scientists to turn their attention to the administrative side of government. The expansion of the range of functions assumed by municipalities, requiring larger and more complex administrative structures, fostered widespread interest in city government. Yet close reading of the writings of several leading political scientists illuminates a key difference of opinion over whether political science should focus on the structures of

Progressive-Era Reform in New York City (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Finegold, *Experts and Politicians*, 3-14. For more on the relationship between academic theory and urban reform, see Helene Silverberg, “A Government of Men’: Gender, the City, and the New Science of Politics,” *Gender and American Social Science: The Formative Years*, ed. Helene Silverberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 156-84; Michael H. Frisch, “Urban Theorists, Urban Reform, and American Political Culture in the Progressive Period,” *Political Science Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 295-315.

municipalities (i.e. their relation to the state, the powers of the mayor and the councils) or their functions (i.e. the construction of streets and sewers, the provision of utilities, etc.). While early discussions of function openly promoted the expansion of the range of activities of local government, political scientists soon turned to Frank Goodnow's distinction between the two roles of government – the political and the administrative – to redirect the discussion of function away from advocacy and towards the now depoliticized realm of administration. Chapter three demonstrates that the National Municipal League followed the lead of scholars and chose to concentrate on structural reforms rather than the more potentially divisive details of functional expansion. The National Municipal League's *Municipal Program* (1899), a model of city-state relations and internal municipal organizations, avoided such divisiveness by presenting a system of municipal structures that, according to its authors, would enable individual cities to expand their functions as they saw fit.

Municipal Reform and Civic Participation

Though municipal reform associations were unquestionably elitist by contemporary standards, they were committed to a vision of civic democracy that required the active participation of “the people” to improve municipal government. Efforts to revitalize civic interest in public affairs were central to many strands of Progressivism, particularly in cities. Many activists were passionately committed to what one recent study has termed the ideal of a “Democratic Public” in which “local publics,” organized in various deliberative and educational institutions, would form the basis of all future political reforms. Frederic

Howe's vision of cities as "The Hope of Democracy" relied on such an understanding of the role that citizens should play in city politics.⁶⁰

While the leaders of most municipal reform associations were not as deeply devoted to this ideal, it did shape their beliefs and their agendas. Many believed that formal structural changes could facilitate the realization of such a participatory democracy. The movement for home rule, based on the belief that greater self-government would generate deeper interest in municipal affairs, was partly an attempt to achieve this goal. Moreover, leaders of the National Municipal League expressly presented their Municipal Program in this light. As Horace Deming, an active member and later Chair of the Council of the League, explained in a talk on "Public Opinion and City Government under the Proposed Municipal Program," "[n]o scheme of city government" could improve conditions without developing "an effective and general interest among the voters themselves in the actual conduct of the public affairs of the city."⁶¹

Municipal reform associations themselves were partly intended to generate such interest in local affairs, albeit an interest that was to be guided by society's "natural leaders." Moreover, in its early years, the National Municipal League had worked to generate widespread popular involvement in municipal reform through its network of affiliated organizations, hoping to spark a civic revival and deeper popular interest in city government. No less an authority than James Bryce, over twenty years after declaring municipal government a "conspicuous failure," celebrated the achievements of "organizations in which

⁶⁰ Kevin Mattson, *Creating a Democratic Public: The Struggle for Urban Participatory Democracy during the Progressive Era* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 8, 31-36. Mattson, however, ultimately emphasizes Howe's later shortcomings in his commitment to a democratic public. See p. 46.

⁶¹ Horace E. Deming, "Public Opinion and City Government under the Proposed Municipal Program," *Proceedings of the Columbus Conference for Good City Government and Fifth Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League Held November 16, 17, 18, 1899* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1899), 77 ; Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 206.

good citizens have banded themselves together” in American cities. These groups, according to Bryce, functioned as “organs of an alert and enlightened public opinion, stirring up the spirit of the people and impelling by the pressure of opinion the municipal authorities.” As a result, Bryce optimistically concluded, “In nearly all the cities the sky is brighter, the light is stronger. A new spirit is rising.”⁶²

The reality of the experiences of these municipal reform associations, however, was very different. While they were extremely popular in the 1890s and 1900s, appearing in the majority of larger cities across the nation, there is no evidence that most ever achieved large memberships. Broadly defined goals of achieving “good city government” did not attract most urban residents, and, as chapter four reveals, in the 1890s and early 1900s charters proposed to centralize administrative powers in the office of the mayor either were rejected or adopted only with significant compromises. Citing the authority of political scientists and the National Municipal League, municipal reform associations presented reforms as politically neutral, as simply tools that would yield more efficient administration of local government. Yet in many cases, a variety of local political actors contested this claim, regarding plans for administrative centralization as a threat to popular democracy.

Chapter five argues that nationally, however, political scientists and the leaders of the National Municipal League continued to attempt to maintain an alliance among a diverse body of reformers by refusing to take an official stance on “the franchise problem” (the issue that most animated urban residents throughout the country) and by discussing the functions of municipalities only in terms of the depoliticized realm of administration. The League never endorsed municipal ownership as the solution to the corruption involved in the

⁶² Quoted in Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “American Municipal Tendencies,” *National Municipal Review* 1, no. 1 (1912): 18-19.

granting of “special privileges” to public service corporations, nor did it take a uniform stance on whether state regulatory commissions or alternative localized forms of control would provide a superior means of regulation. Members of the League themselves could not agree on these issues, some ardently supporting municipal ownership under systems of home rule and others state regulatory boards staffed by professional experts. To avoid the issue, the League maintained its original position, promoting a variety of structural reforms that it claimed would then allow individual municipalities to make their own decisions regarding the “political” matter of which functions they would undertake.

Yet as chapter six contends, the popularity of the commission plan, particularly in cities of the west and southwest, was due in large part to the ability of local reformers to connect this structural reform to the “franchise problem” on which national reformers refused to take a stand. In almost every city across the country, the provision of public utilities and transportation dominated local politics in the first decades of the twentieth century. Promoters of the commission plan argued that it would enable cities to achieve greater popular control over these municipal services and thus enable cities to undertake new programs without the fear of corruption by public service corporations. Without the active support of large memberships, reform associations formed alliances with minority parties, central labor unions, federations of local (mostly craft-based) unions, and commercial groups to secure the adoption of charters, and such alliances were most successful when reformers connected structural reforms to specific local grievances regarding public service corporations.

The League would continue to claim that its commitment to democracy remained unaltered, but the transformation in its own organizational structures detailed in chapter

seven illuminates the extent to which the goals of the League had changed. While the League had originally aspired to be a federation of local organizations, bringing together leaders of reform associations to share ideas regarding both methods and ideals, by the second decade of the twentieth century its leaders decided to professionalize the organization. In the 1890s, most of the members were indeed local reform groups. By the 1910s, most were individuals, followed by libraries and universities.⁶³ In part, this shift was a reflection of the failures of local organizations to thrive. But it was also a reflection of a conscious decision on the part of the League's leaders to professionalize the organization and even the entire cause of municipal reform itself. The League no longer warmly welcomed local "laymen" to participate in its conferences, but rather increasingly functioned as a venue for experts alone to discuss municipal problems and for the publication of authoritative literature that students and local political actors, who no longer attended League conferences, could consult at public and university libraries. In 1910, the League ceased issuing the proceedings of its annual conferences "for Good City Government." Two years later, it began publishing the *National Municipal Review*, modeled after academic journals.⁶⁴

Chapter seven also argues that the emergence of a new style of municipal reform association in these years was indicative of this same trend. Bureaus of municipal research emerged as organizations to be staffed by professional experts who would undertake investigations of city government on behalf of the general public. In so doing, they critiqued the emphasis of charter reformers on the political rather than the administrative structures of government as a failure to recognize that effective popular control depended not upon the election of honest candidates but rather on securing the services of trained experts. In order

⁶³ See Appendices 1A and 7A.

⁶⁴ Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 147-52.

to assert their own authority as such scientific experts, leaders of the bureaus also disparaged the work of other municipal reform associations as inefficient and sometimes self-interested and portrayed their own bureaus not as voluntary but rather as professional organizations. In this quest to replace voluntary organizations staffed by amateurs with professional bureaus staffed by trained experts, the bureau movement further distanced the work of women's municipal reform organizations from the largely male world of structural reform.⁶⁵

Political scientists also became more critical of voluntary organizations. Social scientists' involvement in reform in the Progressive era was marked by a tension between a vision of science as a democratizing force, promoting open-ended deliberation open to all, and science as an elitist enterprise, in which intellectually superior practitioners would use their knowledge to shape and even control public-policy decisions.⁶⁶ In the field of municipal political science, a turn towards the latter perspective began to solidify in the 1910s. Textbooks on municipal government now included discussions of reform associations and other civic groups that stressed their dangers and limitations, portraying them as partisan, self-interested groups unqualified to speak for the wider public. Some scholars such as Charles Beard continued to defend the importance of participatory voluntary organizations and remained committed to balancing efficiency and democracy in the administration of government.⁶⁷ On the whole, however, by the end of the Progressive era the meaning of political science's commitment to public activism had been transformed. Political scientists no longer aspired to educate citizens through participation in voluntary organizations and other civic endeavors, focusing their energies instead on training professional experts to administer government.

⁶⁵ Stivers, *Bureau Men and Settlement Women*.

⁶⁶ Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement*, 12-13.

⁶⁷ See chapter seven.

In the 1910s the National Municipal League also revised its Municipal Program, recommending the new city manager plan in place of a mayor-council form of government. The New Program embodied A. Lawrence Lowell's call for a greater reliance on "expert administrators in popular government."⁶⁸ Yet regardless of claims that the underlying commitment to democracy was the same in both the original and the new programs, the meaning of democracy had clearly changed. The first Municipal Program was intended to create structures that would both encourage and demand that urban residents take a deeper interest in local affairs. The New Municipal Program, in sharp contrast, was designed to demand less rather than more from citizens, requiring them only to vote for city councilors to fulfill their duties as citizens. Statements that structural reforms needed to be accompanied by a revival of popular interest in local affairs had vanished. Though reformers and political scientists in the League still hoped to propose governmental structures with the potential to facilitate functional expansion while maintaining popular democratic control, the meaning of such control had changed. The New Municipal Program relied on the role of administrative experts rather than representative councils to frame their work as democratic, and democracy came to mean municipally-owned utilities, improvements in public welfare, and the adoption of a short ballot rather a more participatory system of government.

Finally, the epilogue turns to 1920s and considers the long-term effects of the governmental institutions and models of civic participation created by the movement for "good city government." At the start of the Progressive era, many reformers believed that democratic ideals and institutions could be remodeled to meet the demands of the rapidly changing conditions of modern society. By the 1920s, however, many former Progressives had become disillusioned with democracy and turned towards technocratic models of

⁶⁸ Lowell, "Expert Administrators in Popular Government," 45-62.

government that relied heavily on trained experts and rejected the notion that ordinary citizens could participate in a meaningful way in the determination of public policy. An exploration of the municipal side of this transformation does much to explain how and why it occurred.

Chapter 1

The Emergence of Municipal Reform Associations, 1880-1900

In January of 1893, *Century Illustrated Magazine*, one of the most popular monthly magazines of the day, published “The Cosmopolis City Club,” a short-story by Washington Gladden, minister, author, and prominent supporter of the Social Gospel. Gladden’s story began with a meeting of five men – a factory owner, a lawyer, a schoolmaster, a carpenter, and a minister – in the public library in the city of “Cosmopolis.” They had gathered to discuss the prospects of obtaining funds from the city council to purchase new books for the library. Reginald Payne, the lawyer, had relayed their request to council president “O’Halloran” and “Herr Schwab, of the ways and means committee.” Reporting back to the group, he said their response was clear: “Millions for boodle, but not one cent for books.” Tired of rampant corruption and inefficiency in their local government, Sam Hathaway, the carpenter, declared that it was time to take action and form an “organization of the industrious and respectable people of this city, to secure good government.” His friends agreed, and they resolved to meet again in two weeks time, each bringing ten associates, to form an organization dedicated to “intelligent and well-considered action upon municipal affairs.”¹

When the larger group assembled, they founded the Cosmopolis City Club. While the Club would not be a municipal party that ran candidates to compete with Democrats and Republicans in local elections, the organizers agreed to require all members to sign “a declaration that in municipal affairs party politics should be ignored.” At the same time, they also resolved that the Club would be “an educational more than a political association.”

¹ Washington Gladden, “The Cosmopolis City Club: Why and How the Club Was Organized,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* XLV, no. 3 (January 1893): 396-98.

As Payne explained, they would publicize their discussions and investigations, and in so doing “public opinion would be created and purified.” Such “constant agitation” would “pressure ... the managers of both parties” and “induce them to give us better candidates.” In short, the Club would function as an educator, guiding public participation in municipal affairs by providing citizens with information about local parties and public officials.²

The following week, the Club held its first official meeting and elected “Judge Hamlin” president. In his acceptance speech, Hamlin quoted James Bryce’s *The American Commonwealth*, a popular text on the political system of the United States. In one of the most widely cited passages, Bryce condemned urban government as “the one conspicuous failure of the United States.” Explaining this failure, Hamlin reminded his listeners that Bryce did not blame “the humbler classes” for they were “generally ready to follow when ... patriotically led,” but rather “the upper classes” whose “apathy and short-sightedness” prevented them from leading as they should. Hamlin whole-heartedly agreed. Corruption and inefficiency existed in American cities because “the natural leaders of society” – the “educated men, the professional men, the active businessmen of our cities” – neglected their duty to lead their communities and to take charge of municipal government. Working through the City Club, Hamlin and his associates planned to rectify this failure, to fulfill their duty to lead. And in so doing, Hamlin was sure that they would stimulate public interest in municipal affairs and create popular demand for better city government. As he told his audience, “I trust, gentlemen, that this club may do something to awaken in the minds of our citizens the sentiment of municipal patriotism.”³

² *Ibid.*, 400.

³ *Ibid.*, 404-06.

In cities across the country, urban residents formed dozens of similar groups in the 1890s, claiming like the men in Gladden's story that they were fed up with the inefficiency and corruption of their local governments. In Norwalk, Connecticut, the founders of the Citizen's League declared that they banded together to combat to the growing influence of saloons in local politics, while the organizers of the Civic Federation of Galesburg, Illinois said that they united after a "vicious element" stole an election to gain control of the city government in order to open a race track. From the Committee of Public Safety in St. Louis, Missouri to the Municipal League of Schenectady, New York, urban residents throughout the United States claimed to have organized municipal reform associations in response to local instances of electoral fraud and crooked and inept government.⁴ Indeed, most accounts of the establishment of such associations leave one with the impression that local factors alone instigated their creation.

Yet the timing of their formations and the similarities of their structures and goals suggests otherwise. Electoral fraud and corruption in urban government did not suddenly, dramatically, and uniformly rise in every city across the country in the late 1880s and early 1890s. What was new, however, was the perception that something needed to – and could – be done to eliminate these problems. By 1894, there were already more than fifty such leagues in the country, focusing largely on organized efforts to end corruption and institute business-like, non-partisan local governments by "educating" public opinion on municipal matters.⁵ In that year, a group of reformers met in Philadelphia to hold a "National Conference for Good City Government" where delegates of local organizations and other

⁴ See the entries by local groups in William Howe Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements in the United States* (New York, Chicago, and Toronto: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1895), 47-133.

⁵ Tolman's 1895 study includes fifty-six organizations in his list of "Municipal Reform Movements," but there were undoubtedly many more. See Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements*, 47-133.

“invited guests” presented and discussed papers on the municipal conditions of their home cities. Here reformers agreed on the need to remove state and national parties from municipal elections and to stimulate public interest in local affairs. They also agreed on the need to coordinate individual efforts through some sort of permanent national association.⁶ Those who attended the conference resolved to take the lead and organized the National Municipal League as a federation of local reform groups.⁷ Within five short years, the League’s membership included over one hundred organizations in thirty states and the District of Columbia (see Appendix 1A), and the League’s secretary estimated that there were “upwards of two hundred organizations working in this country for the betterment of municipal government.”⁸ In joining together in a national federation, the member organizations of the National Municipal League not only made a statement that there was a shared, national interest in improving city government but also declared themselves representatives of that national interest.⁹

This explosion of local municipal leagues can only be understood fully when placed in the context of the larger history of voluntary associations in the United States. The founders of most civic groups in American history have not worked in isolation, creating completely new types of organizations. Rather, recent scholarship on American voluntarism, greatly influenced by theories of institutionalism in the social sciences, argues that organizers

⁶ National Municipal League, *Proceedings of the National Conference for Good City Government, Held at Philadelphia, January 25 and 26 1894, Together with a Bibliography of Municipal Government and Reform and a Brief Statement of Objects and Methods of Municipal Reform Organizations in the United States* (Philadelphia: The Municipal League, 1894), i-iv.

⁷ “Reform in City Government – National League May Bring about Changes,” *New York Times*, January 27, 1894, p. 5.

⁸ Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “A Year’s Advance,” *Proceedings of the Columbus Conference for Good City Government and the Fifth Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League, Held November 16, 17, 18 1899* (Philadelphia: The National Municipal League, 1899), 171, 186.

⁹ Eldon Eisenach argues that the creation of national voluntary associations was important to the nationalist element of Progressivism, with reformer creating “parastate” institutions that “claimed to speak for and to establish on a voluntary basis what they claimed to be the collective and the national community....” See Eldon Eisenach, *The Lost Promise of Progressivism* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1994), 5, 10, 17-18.

of new groups have built upon familiar models of action, and the creators of these municipal leagues, well aware of events transpiring in other cities, were no exception to this rule.¹⁰ Early reform groups were publicized in newspapers and popular monthly magazines, and they spread through personal contacts and networks as well. The result was that these groups, formed as part of a rising national interest in urban government, shared similar languages, organizational structures, tactics, understandings of local politics, and goals.

The structure of political parties also influenced the emergence of municipal reform associations as permanent forces in urban politics. The fixation on the need to create formal organizations in order to challenge local party politicians was in large part a response to the perception that municipal parties were increasingly highly organized “machines” themselves. To fight machines, reformers decided that they needed associations as systematic and entrenched as those of their opponents. Moreover, by the end of the nineteenth century Americans had begun to experiment with new means by which organized groups might participate directly in politics. A variety of groups that felt frustrated and marginalized by mainstream party politics experimented with a form of organization once associated only with corrupt corporate interests: lobbying.¹¹ The urban reformers who founded municipal

¹⁰ Institutional scholarship has done much to expand our understanding of the scope, structure, and dynamics of organizational life in different periods in American history. Institutional scholar explores the way the institutions, from the formal laws of government to the informal rules and norms of civil society, have shaped political identities and action over time. Whether they limit the range of possible activities or inspire alternative ways of organizing, institutions have influenced the ways in which Americans understand what it means to participate as a citizen and affect change in a democracy. See Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17-18, 78-82. In reference to institutionalism and civic organizations, see Theda Skocpol, Marshall Ganz, and Ziad Munson, “A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States,” *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 3 (Sept. 2000): 527-46; Sheri Berman, “Civil Society and Political Institutionalism,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 40, no. 5 (March/April 1997): 562-74.

¹¹ See, for example, Elisabeth S. Clemens, *The People’s Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890-1925* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1-4. Clemens argues that farmers, workers, and various women’s groups pioneered lobbying in these years, and, in so doing, contributed to the legitimization of direct involvement in the policy process and to the birth of a new understanding of politics in which plural interests were a vital component of the democratic process rather than

leagues, disgusted with the actions of parties in local affairs, similarly felt marginalized from the major available institutional form of political participation, the local Republican and Democratic Parties. As such, if they wanted to affect the course of municipal government they needed to organize alternative paths of leverage.¹² Envisioning themselves as nonpartisan, high-minded civic leaders seeking to mold public opinion, these reformers set out to form municipal leagues in the name of the good of the entire city. The belief that through careful and continuous organizing outside of parties urban reformers could gain control over the reigns of local government rapidly took hold.

Municipal reformers did not only form local organizations to compete with local parties, they also joined those organizations together in larger federations, most notably the National Municipal League, to achieve wider influence and power. Local parties had ties to state and national partisan organizations that provided them with access to resources far beyond the reach of a single, unattached local reform association. With this in mind, reformers created larger coalitions of their own to challenge the dominance of such parties in municipal politics. For much of the history of the United States, American political institutions have favored groups and movements that coordinated endeavors at different levels of government. As a result, the most common model for voluntary organizations has been the federated structure of our government, with groups forming tripartite networks of

a perversion of *the* public good/welfare. Clemens' study is framed by institutionalism. Clemens combines "historical institutionalism," in which institutions act "as systems of constraint," and "the institutionalism or organizational theory," in which they act as "the scripts and templates that inform practical action," in order "to explain the historical production of a political world where individuals follow scripts of self-interested utility maximization and where formal political institutions not only accommodate but elicit such behavior." She argues that "organized groups are not simply vehicles for the expression of preexisting interests but constitute templates for collective identity or arenas in which preferences and values are discovered" (1, 4, 11).

¹² See Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson, "A Nation of Organizers" for a discussion of how marginalized groups have sought to form voluntary associations as a means of achieving political power. They argue that that "sociological institutionalism" suggests that "innovative adaptations ... are likely when ambitious but somewhat marginalized organizers ... confront unprecedented challenges or opportunities and are able to draw upon a new 'repertoire' of collective action" (533).

national, state, and local branches. Although this form dates back to the early republic, in the aftermath of the Civil War it became increasingly popular, used by veterans associations, farmers' alliances, women's groups, and unions. The supralocal ties provided by the federated model not only combined the efforts and resources of local branches, they also facilitated connections among Americans across the country with similar interests who did not know each other personally.¹³ Municipal federations did not follow the tripartite model exactly – most were coalitions of a variety of reform groups in individual cities or states that joined together in the name of improved local government. Nevertheless, these types of federations and the National Municipal League empowered their members by providing connections to wider groups of individuals with a shared commitment to eliminating partisan influence in local elections and improving city government.

During the Progressive era, national federations devoted to single issues would become one of the most popular models of reform.¹⁴ One of the forerunners of this type of organization, the National Civil Service Reform League (NCSRL), played an influential role in the creation of the National Municipal League. Formed at a conference in 1881, the NCSRL united civil service reform associations from across the country. Together, they combined forces and waged an educational campaign to garner mass support for the replacement of the patronage system in the administration of government with one based on merit and competitive exams. Their widely-publicized successes on the federal and later state levels in the 1880s made them a well-known example of successful political activism. Moreover, most civil service and municipal reformers shared a common aversion to the

¹³ *Ibid.*, 531-42.

¹⁴ Examples include the National Popular Government League, National Short Ballot Association, National Civic Federation, National Birth Control League, National Child Labor Committee, National Conference on City Planning, National Consumers' League.

spoils system, claiming that it did not create popular accountability in the administration of government, as its supporters maintained, but rather the corruption of party politics and a bureaucracy composed of inefficient and inept public officials. As a result, many also shared in the belief that parties, tainted by their dependence on patronage, were no longer capable of serving the public as effective political leaders. Reform associations, they hoped, would step in and take over the didactic function of parties, waging their own educational campaigns to garner public support on important issues that would then force elected officials to adopt needed changes. National federations such as the National Municipal League and the NCSRL were integral to such plans for large-scale agitation.

Local municipal reform associations were also intended to serve an educational purpose and lead public opinion on all matters pertaining to the governments of their cities. Their founders created them as institutions through which they could realize their idealized conception of leadership and popular participation in a democratic system. These ideals were strongly influenced by newer ways of thinking about the formation of knowledge. Like many of their contemporaries, municipal reformers at the close of the nineteenth century emphasized a process of inquiry rather than predetermined principles as the true foundation of knowledge. Most, however, still believed that investigation and discussion led to the discovery of specific facts that would then yield widespread consensus.¹⁵ For urban reformers, adherence to this approach to learning inspired the formation of reform groups. These organizations were created as vehicles through which leading citizens could come together and, by means of research and dialogue, discover the essential elements for

¹⁵ An important contemporary essay on inquiry and knowledge was Charles Sanders Peirce's "The Fixation of Belief," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (November 1877): 1-15. See also Thomas Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Authority* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 101-04.

improving city government that they would then communicate to the wider public.

Reformers expected that once the people understood the causes and solutions for the problems confronting municipal government, the people would unite as enthusiastic supporters of their movement.

Reformers thus hoped that through their municipal associations they could restore a degree of consensus in urban politics, for though they recognized the existence of diverse groups in cities they still believed that they could unify those groups into a single public.¹⁶ Most municipal reformers were native-born, Protestant businessmen and professionals. They tended to view cities as organic entities, composed of interdependent but inherently unequal groups.¹⁷ Though they desired the participation of all classes and ethnic (and sometimes racial) groups in public discussions, this professed inclusiveness was constrained by their own sense of duty as the “better” element to lead the wider public. It was also limited by their conviction that honest, economical, non-partisan government was a universally agreed upon goal. Some historians have argued that municipal reformers valued efficiency and economy over democratic participation, others even more strongly that municipal reform was simply a guise for businessmen to take over local government to better their own financial interests.¹⁸ As a result, these authors fail to contextualize their analyses with serious discussions of the democratic commitments of their subjects. Municipal reformers deeply believed that their goals were universal and that it was their duty as the natural leaders in a democracy to help an otherwise divided public to transcend their differences and unite

¹⁶ Phillip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 8-11.

¹⁷ Robert A. Burnham, “The Boss Becomes a Manager: Executive Authority and City Charter Reform, 1880-1929,” *Making Sense of the City: Local Government, Civic Culture, and Community Life in America*, ed. Robert A. Fairbanks and Patricia Mooney-Melvin (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001), 76, 78.

¹⁸ For details, see the discussion of the historiography of municipal reform in the introduction.

around these shared ends. Though their elitism undoubtedly offends most modern readers, they played a major role in shaping both formal and informal urban political institutions. A deeper appreciation of their perspectives on democracy is crucial to understanding of the structural context in which both a nascent pluralism and the technocratic theories of government that solidified in the 1920s emerged.

The Origins of Municipal Reform Associations in the 1870s and 1880s

From the end of the Civil War through the early 1880s, when dissatisfied citizens joined together to reform urban government, they did so most often by organizing temporary committees. Only a tiny segment of urban residents participated in these committees, which were almost exclusively composed of elite businessmen and professionals. They typically emerged in response to the exposure of corruption by the press and focused on removing those culpable from public office and in some cases prosecuting them in the courts. After achieving these goals, they then dissolved until a new scandal surfaced. In Philadelphia, critics organized a Committee of Fifty Eight, a Committee of Sixty Two, and a Committee of One Hundred in a period of less than twenty years. In perhaps the most well known case, in 1871 outraged New Yorkers responded to the revelations in the *New York Times* of the widespread theft of city funds by Boss William Tweed and Tammany Hall by forming the Committee of Seventy. After the Committee brought down Tammany Hall, the most infamous ring in the country, its members soon disbanded. Thereafter, reformers in New York and elsewhere tended to form ad hoc committees during the municipal campaign season, parting ways after the elections. These committees focused on exposing abuses and

fraud by political candidates and office holders but did not develop any positive programs of their own.¹⁹

This style of activism reflected a conception of politics in which corruption resulted from the actions of a few dishonorable individuals, joined together in a ring, rather than any larger systemic problem with the governmental system. In the 1860s and 1870s, as scandal after scandal erupted among politicians of both parties, reformers described those responsible as “rings.” Rings were understood to be groups of corrupt individuals who subverted the political system for their own personal gain at the expense of the public good. In contrast to the ring, the term “machine,” which emerged in the late 1870s, was based on an understanding of political corruption as originating in complex organizational structures rather than the scheming of a few unethical individuals. A machine described a highly organized branch of a party run by professionals who rigidly controlled the political system, usually of an urban area, in their own self interest. Although critics exaggerated the power and effectiveness of machines, both the Democratic and Republican Parties developed increasingly elaborate structures after the Civil War. In an era marked by industrialization, the machine served as a powerful symbol of these expanding networks, suggesting great strength and control. Machine imagery also relied on conceptions of social class, with bosses dominating easily-manipulated masses of urban working-class voters. Combating these machines thus would require careful study of the dynamics of urban politics.²⁰

¹⁹ Jon C. Teaforde, *The Unheralded Triumph: City Government in America, 1870-1900* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 193-94; David Israel Aronson, “The City Club of New York, 1892-1912,” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1975), 12-18; Frank Mann Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform: The History of the National Municipal League* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), 11.

²⁰ James J. Connolly, “From Ring to Machine: The Evolution of Urban Political Reform Language in Gilded Age America,” (paper presented to the Boston Seminar on Urban and Immigration History), September 2003, 1-6, 12-20. *New York Times* quoted on page 6. Connolly also argues that critiques of rings, in faulting only a few corrupt individuals, were compatible with republican understandings of a singular, unified public good.

As the imagery of the ring gave way to that of the machine, so too did the temporary committee give way to the more permanent reform association. Municipal reformers, increasingly perceiving urban parties as united, tightly-controlled machines, decided that the only way they could fight such organizations was with comparable organizations of their own. Initial attempts to form more enduring and entrenched reform groups had begun by the early 1880s. In one notable effort Theodore Roosevelt, then a young New York state assemblyman, organized the City Reform Club in 1882 to fight Tammany Hall, whose defeat at the hands of the Committee of Seventy a decade earlier had proved to be only temporary.²¹ As he explained in “Machine Politics in New York City,” an article written for *Century* magazine four years later, without “steady work and much attention to detail” the “ordinary people” would “always be beaten by the organized army of politicians.” He ridiculed those who did not want to create formal reform associations, believing instead that a “spontaneous uprising” of the people would defeat the machine. For, according to Roosevelt, “absolutely no good work can be done in politics without an organization.”²² Gustav Schwab, a founding member of the German-American Reform Union, agreed, declaring that “...without organization, experience has taught us, we shall be powerless against our well disciplined opponents, who derive their power from the spoils.”²³

By the late 1880s, one of the most readily available models of successful political organization in the United States was the movement for civil service reform, spearheaded by the National Civil Service Reform League. This movement hoped to replace party patronage

Machines, in contrast, recognized more enduring divisions among citizens and thus implicitly also a more pluralistic understanding of politics.

²¹ Robert Muccigrosso, “The City Reform Club: A Study in Late Nineteenth-Century Reform,” *The New York Historical Society Quarterly* LII, no. 3 (July 1968): 239.

²² Theodore Roosevelt, “Machine Politics in New York City,” *Century* XXXIII, no. 1 (November 1886): 74, 82.

²³ Quoted in Edward Grosse, “The German-American Reform Union,” *The Triumph of Reform: A History of the Great Political Revolution, November Sixth, Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-Four* (New York: The Souvenir Publishing Company, 1895), 185, 259.

with a civil service system based on merit and competitive exams. After several abortive beginnings in the 1870s, opponents of the spoils system came together to form the New York Civil Service Reform Association in 1880. This association, the outcome of a series of letters in the *Nation* advocating an organized society to educate the masses on the superiority of the merit system, inspired the formation of similar groups in over a dozen cities within less than a year. From its inception, the New York Association encouraged the establishment of “Affiliated Societies,” hoping to coordinate the efforts of local organizations and mold a national movement. In 1881, working in conjunction with groups in Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts, the New York Association organized and widely publicized a conference that brought together thirteen civil service reform groups from across the country. At this conference, these men formed the National Civil Service Reform League (NSCRL).²⁴ The NSCRL, according to a founding resolution, would serve “as a centre of correspondence” and facilitate “such united action as circumstances may demand.”²⁵

The NCSRL was instrumental in the passage of the landmark Pendleton Act and subsequent state and national level civil service legislation not only through its direct lobbying of elected officials but also through its self-conscious campaign of publicity to shape public opinion in favor of a civil service. According to an article in the *New York Times* in 1881, “The movement is designed not only to represent to the President the views of the associations regarding civil service, but particularly to impress the public with the nature and importance of this reform.”²⁶ Leaders and members of the NCSRL worked to foster massive public support for reform that would compel elected officials to pass favorable

²⁴ Ari Hoogenboom, *Outlawing the Spoils: A History of the Civil Service Reform Movement, 1865-1883* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 186 - 189, 211; Frank Mann Stewart, *The National Civil Service Reform League: History, Activities, and Problems* (Austin: University of Texas, 1929), 26-28.

²⁵ “Civil Service Reformers,” *New York Times*, August 12, 1881, p. 5.

²⁶ “Civil Service Reform,” *New York Times*, November 11, 1881, p. 5.

legislation. The assassination of President Garfield at the hands of a disaffected office seeker provided just the propaganda tool they needed to do so. They published and distributed pamphlets, wrote letters to candidates for public office, offered prizes for essays in high schools and colleges, organized public addresses by prominent reformers, and sent representatives to speak before congressional committees. They spent thousands of dollars printing and distributing a circular detailing the late President's sympathetic views on civil service reform.²⁷ At every step, they made sure that newspapers across the country printed articles detailing their work.²⁸ In the end, they achieved their goal of garnering public support for their cause in order to pressure politicians to reform the patronage system. A recent study of the passage of the Pendleton Act conclusively demonstrates that Congressmen from districts with branches of the League were overwhelmingly more likely to vote for the Act than those from districts without them.²⁹

These two perspectives – that urban parties were becoming highly organized machines and the attribution of the achievements in civil service reform to the efforts of the NCSRL and its affiliates – converged by the late 1880s to inspire the formation of a new style of municipal reform association across the country. Clearly, these factors were not the only reasons for the rising interest in urban government, but they were central to why this interest took the form of that it did. The temporary committees of the previous two decades

²⁷ Stewart, *The National Civil Service Reform League*, 30-32, 41; Hoogenboom, *Outlawing the Spoils*, 211-13.

²⁸ For examples of the wide coverage of the National Civil Service Reform League in newspapers across the country in the early 1880s, see "Civil Service Law: A Damper on Democratic Officerseekers' Hopes," *Los Angeles Times*, December 30, 1884, p. 1; "Political Notes," *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 12, 1883, p. 6; "Civil Service Reform – Views of Candidates," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 5, 1882, p. 10; "Civil Service Reform Simple Simons," *The Washington Post*, April 23, 1882, p. 1.

²⁹ Sean M. Theriault, "Patronage, the Pendleton Act, and the Power of the People," *The Journal of Politics* 65, no. 1 (February 2003): 61. Theriault's larger argument centers on the direct power of the people through elections. He claims that the people made their support of civil service reform abundantly clear in the midterm congressional elections of 1882 by voting against Republican candidates who did not support reform. The Pendleton Act, then, was an example of an "attentive and united" public successfully forcing elected officials to vote for legislation that was not beneficial to incumbent politicians (50, 61-66).

would soon be replaced with permanent reform associations with more complex infrastructures.

The Spread and Structure of Municipal Reform Associations in the 1890s

“...any reform movement in this city to be very really successful must be permanent. The experience of 1870 contained a very valuable lesson to this point. When the citizens went back to work, Tammany sprang rapidly to existence again and became more powerful than ever; so that it became apparent that if it was to be overthrown and kept out of control of the city, it must be met with a persistence and a system equal to its own. It is to this policy that the City Club and the Good Government Clubs owe their existence.”

E.L. Godkin, *The Triumph of Reform*, 1895³⁰

The founding of the City Club of New York provides an excellent example of the way in which the image of the machine and the successes of civil service reform groups supplied the organizational models that inspired the formation of more permanent municipal associations by the early 1890s. As noted, in the 1880s Tammany Hall regained control of city hall, and early efforts at organized opposition (such as Roosevelt’s City Reform Club) never attracted wide followings, remaining largely ineffectual. The founders of the City Club were determined to accomplish more, launching an aggressive membership campaign in 1892 that attracted over 650 socially prominent New Yorkers within months, drawing much attention from the press.³¹ An article in *The Nation* praised the members of the Club for their decision “to organize against Tammany” and to form a “permanent organization in the interest of good city government.”³² Many believed that one of the reasons Tammany and

³⁰ E.L. Godkin, “Introductory,” *The Triumph of Reform*, 5.

³¹ David Israel Aronson, “The City Club of New York,” 36-39, 75.

³² “The Proper Work of the City Club,” *The Nation* 54, No. 1399 (April 21, 1892): 296-7. Interestingly, much as a series of articles in *The Nation* had called for a permanent civil service reform association over a decade earlier, an 1890 article called for a “Systematic” and “Continuous” municipal society in New York, two years before the formation of the City Club. See “A New Municipal Society Wanted,” *The Nation* 51, No. 1326 (December 18, 1890): 475.

other machines were so successful was that they were social clubs as well as political associations, that they provided places for members to spend their leisure time. As such, the City Club was in part a social club, maintaining its own club house that included various social spaces as well as a library, reading room, and publication office. But it was also intended to serve an educational purpose and provide a meeting ground for members of various types of reform groups.³³ According to the articles of incorporation in 1892, the City Club provided a place for those who believed in “honesty and efficiency in the administration of city affairs,” “in severing municipal from National politics,” and “in procuring the election of fit persons to city offices” to meet and exchange views.³⁴ Like civil service reformers a decade earlier, the organizers of the City Club hoped that by bringing together reformers from different groups they could educate each other and the public and garner support for their cause.

The City Club also encouraged the formation of like-minded associations and worked to join such groups together in federations. The Committee on Cooperation with Affiliated Organizations was one of the most active in the Club, and despite some internal disagreements, it took the lead in promoting the formation of a network of district-based Good Government Clubs throughout the City intended to attract a wider base of support for municipal reform. Like the City Club, the Good Government Clubs were founded on broad principles of non-partisanship and honest and efficient municipal government, but unlike the City Club, they were more directly involved in electoral politics. While these Good Government Clubs got off to a slow start, with only four small clubs formed by the spring of 1893, their successes in pressuring both parties to nominate more acceptable candidates in

³³ Aronson, “The City Club of New York,” 52-62, 78-9.

³⁴ Quoted in James W. Pryor, “The City Club,” *The Triumph of Reform*, 256.

the fall elections attracted much attention. In 1894, the City Club organized the four existing clubs into a Confederated Council of Good Government Clubs, and by 1895, there were over twenty clubs in New York City with over 10,000 members.³⁵ The Club also initiated the creation of the “Municipal League of the State of New York,” a federation of all urban non-partisan organizations in cities throughout the state.³⁶ In working to combine the efforts of reform groups in the city and the state, the City Club hoped to achieve wider influence and the ability to check the parties in New York and Albany.

The influence of the City and Good Government Clubs spread beyond New York City as well, and this influence illustrates the process by which dissatisfied urban residents across the country decided to form municipal reform associations of their own. Through coverage in local newspapers and national magazines, citizens in cities throughout the United States learned about the activities of reform groups in other urban areas, particularly in larger cities such as New York. In the summer of 1892, the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, in an article detailing the founding and structure and the City Club of New York, praised the Club, adding that there was “urgent need for just such an organization ... in Chicago.” The writers at *Century Illustrated Magazine* agreed that the City Club should be emulated, suggesting that its organizers “ought to find imitators in all other large cities of the land.”³⁷

³⁵ Aronson, “The City Club of New York,” 66-70, 101, 115-17, 133-35, 140, 146. The division within the City Club centered on the issue of direct involvement in politics. Critics feared that since the Good Government Clubs would be more directly involved in electoral politics, they would undermine the official position of non-partisanship as well the reputation and “moral purity” of the City Club. By organized according to assembly districts, feared would become a political party (101, 121).

³⁶ “Aimed at the Spoils System,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1894, p. 9; “For Better Rule in Cities,” *New York Times*, May 18, 1894, p. 8; “With a New Constitution,” *New York Times*, April 5, 1894, 4.

³⁷ “A New Movement in Municipal Reform,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 21, 1892, p. 28. “A New Movement in Municipal Reform,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* XLIV, no. 3 (July 1892): 474. During the investigations of the Lexow Committee, the City and Good Government Clubs received even more attention by the national press. See, for examples, “In the Name of Reform,” *The Washington Post*, February 5, 1895, p. 1; “Reform is the Cry,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 5, 1895, p. 1.

Personal networks also played an important role in the spread of the club model, as in Syracuse, NY where the Municipal Reform Club was founded in response to a direct appeal from the City Club for support for pending legislation pertaining to New York City in the state legislature. Personal networks may even have spread this model as far as Berkeley, California. According to William Howe Tolman's 1895 study of municipal reform movements, in Berkeley "two or three recent comers from the Eastern States who were in touch with the movements for municipal reform there" met with local residents, who had previously viewed the state of municipal affairs as "hopeless," and founded the Good Government Club of Berkeley.³⁸ Through these networks and coverage in the press, urban residents learned of clubs forming in other cities. This knowledge combined with their discontent with local politics to inspire them to form municipal reform groups of their own.

Tolman's *Municipal Reform Movements in the United States* provides further evidence that the club model originating in New York was very influential in the formation of early municipal reform associations. William Howe Tolman was the secretary of the City Vigilance League of New York, an organization founded in 1892 to expose corruption among public officials that soon expanded its purposes to include wider studies of the social, economic, and political conditions affecting municipal life.³⁹ *Municipal Reform Movements*, likely a study sponsored by the League, was a survey of reform organizations across the country that included descriptions of fifty-six municipal associations. According to Tolman, the book aimed "to bring together, for comparison and selection, the salient and essential points of all the reform movements" so that those forming organizations in new cities could benefit from "the successful experience of other communities." The data presented

³⁸ Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements*. 98,118.

³⁹ E.M. Lyman, "The City Vigilance League, New York City," *The Triumph of Reform*, 101.

suggested that this had already begun to happen. Most of the organizations were founded within a few years of each other, and their structures were remarkably similar.⁴⁰

These structures demonstrate the desire of reformers to unite disparate individuals and organizations in order to become powerful and enduring forces in municipal politics. Of the fifty six included, only four went by the transitory name “committee of...,” most of the rest choosing to call themselves “city clubs,” “municipal leagues,” or “citizens’ associations.” The vast majority were governed by executive committees that appointed the departments or standing committees that undertook the real work of the organizations. While most of the secretaries were voluntary, a few were even paid professionals. Several of the groups worked to form wider networks, often organizing clubs on the ward level, much like the Confederated Good Government Clubs in New York. The Civic Federation of Chicago, for example, attempted to coordinate the efforts of a variety of civic organizations, and it likely inspired the organization of the Civic Federations of Galesburg, Illinois and Detroit, Michigan in the fall of 1894.⁴¹

Reformers also came together to form the National Municipal League in 1894. While the National Municipal League grew out of a conference organized by the City Club of New York and the Municipal League of Philadelphia in 1894, in many ways it was also inspired by the example of the National Civil Service Reform League.⁴² Soon after the passage of the

⁴⁰ Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, the president of the City Vigilance League, wrote an introductory chapter for the book. It also includes thirteen “movements for civic betterment” and eight women’s municipal reform groups in its survey. Of the 56 groups listed, 43 (77%) were founded between 1891 and 1894. Quotation from Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements*, 9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 47-133.

⁴² Much like the NCSRL, the National Municipal League may have formed partly in response to an article in the *Nation*. In 1893, the *Nation* wrote that Herbert Welsh of the Philadelphia Municipal League reported that his organization “was working in the same line with men in all the other large cities of the country, who encounter the same discouraging obstacles and have the same intricate problems to solve; and he urged that, if it clearly perceived this fact, it would ‘work with a sense of generous rivalry, of enthusiasm, of careful thought and patience, far greater than that which marks its efforts now.’” The *Nation* went on to add: “The *Boston Herald*

Pendleton Act, which applied only to the federal administration, civil service reformers had turned their attention to dismantling the spoils system in the states and municipalities as well.⁴³ As a result, while over one hundred leading reformers officially endorsed to the Philadelphia Municipal League's formal call for the First National Conference for Good City Government, it was not surprising that the names of top civil service reformers were particularly prominent.⁴⁴ A history of the NCSRL in 1929 listed seven men as the key leaders of the civil service movement: William Curtis, Dorman P. Eaton, Carl Schurz, Everett P. Wheeler, Charles J. Bonaparte, Richard Henry Dana, and William Dudley Foulke.⁴⁵ All of these men, except Curtis, who had died in 1892, signed the call for the Conference and were actively involved in municipal reform. Even more strikingly, two were influential leaders in both the National Civil Service Reform League and the National Municipal League. Bonaparte, great-nephew of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte and a prominent lawyer in Baltimore, organized the Civil Service Reform Association of Maryland in 1881 and was one of the original founders of the NCSRL. He went on to serve on several important committees and as Chair of the Council from 1901-1905. He was also one of the most influential early leaders of the National Municipal League, chairing the Executive Committee from 1894-1903 and then serving as president from 1903-1910.⁴⁶

carries this idea a step farther by suggesting an organization of these bodies in different cities in the shape of a national municipal-reform league, which might meet in an annual congress for the discussion of the various important questions in which they are interested; holding that an interchange of views could not fail to be of great service in placing at the command of all a knowledge of the work for municipal reform in each city. This suggestion is well worth the consideration of municipal reformers." *The Nation* 57, No. 1478 (October 26, 1893): 298.

⁴³ "A Review of Reform," *New York Times*, August 7, 1884, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 13, 15, 119.

⁴⁵ Stewart, *The National Civil Service Reform League*, 9.

⁴⁶ Eaton, Schurz, and Wheeler, all New Yorkers, were active leaders in the New York Civil Service Reform Association, the National Civil Service Reform League, the City Club, and the Good Government Clubs. Eaton played an important role in the fight against the Tweed Ring and went on to write a book on municipal government. He and Wheeler, both lawyers, drafted a civil service bill that became the Pendleton Act. Schurz was president of both the New York Civil Service Reform Association and the NCSRL from 1893-1900, and he

Not only did many individual civil service reformers play a leading role in municipal reform, but the NCSRL as an organization also provided direct aid to the National Municipal League in the early years.⁴⁷ In the 1890s, the NCSRL repeatedly printed circulars soliciting new members for the Municipal League and detailed reports of its conferences for “Good City Government” in the pages of its own official journal, *Good Government*.⁴⁸

Representatives of the NCSRL also frequented National Municipal League’s annual conferences. In 1894, president Carl Schurz presented a paper on “The Relation of Civil Service Reform to Municipal Reform,” and secretary William Potts offered a toast entitled “Civil Service Reform in City Government.”⁴⁹ Over the years, the two organizations

spoke on “The Relationship of Civil Service Reform” at the Conference for Good City Government in 1894. Dana, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, was yet another founder of the NCSRL who also organized civil service reform association in his home state. He served as Chair of the Council and then President of the NCSRL in the first quarter of the twentieth century, and during these same years, he served on four separate committees for the National Municipal League. Finally, Foulke of Richmond, Indiana, was at different times president of both the NCSRL and the National Municipal League. See Aronson, “The City Club of New York,” 18-9, 52, 101; Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 51, 76, 95, 119, 123, 233, 202-3, 206; Stewart, *The National Civil Service Reform League*, 13-7, 36-7, 105, 174, 270-1; *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XIV, No. 12 (June 15, 1895): 1; “Civil Service Reform: Views of the National Civil Service Reform League,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1882, p. 3; “Civil Service Reform: Annual Meeting of the National League at Newport,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1882, p. 3; “Civil Service Reformers,” *New York Times*, August 12, 1881, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Many state and local municipal leagues were also members of the NCSRL, including the Civic Federation of Chicago, the Municipal League of Milwaukee, and the Municipal League of Pennsylvania. See “Progress of the Reform,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1894, p. 16.

⁴⁸ See “The National Municipal League,” *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XVI, no. 5 (May 15, 1897): 61-62; “The National Municipal League,” *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XVI, no. 4 (April 15, 1897): 50; “The National Municipal League,” *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XIV, no. 13 (July 15, 1895): 182; “For Good City Government,” *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* VXI, no. 12 (June 15, 1895): 163-72; “The Month,” *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XVI, No. 12 (June 15, 1895): cover page; “The National Municipal League,” *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XIV, no. 11 (May 15, 1895): 155-57; “Recruiting the National Municipal League,” *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XIV, no. 1 (July 15, 1894): 6. Schurz chaired the Committee on Publication of this journal in these years, and Bonaparte and Dana were on the Committee as well. *Good Government* also publicized the activities of the Good Government Clubs of New York. See “Memoranda,” *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XIV, no. 13 (July 15, 1895): 185-86; “Memoranda,” *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XIV, no. 7 (January 15, 1895): 100; “Memoranda,” *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XIV, no. 1 (July 15, 1894): 11.

⁴⁹ Charles Schurz, “The Relation of Civil Service Reform to Municipal Reform,” *Proceedings...1894*, 8-9, 123-33; William Potts, “Civil Service Reform in City Government,” *Proceedings of the Second National*

continued to support each other's work, collaborating on several joint committees on administrative topics.⁵⁰

With such strong networks of support, the National Municipal League quickly grew to be a truly national organization. In only five years, the League quadrupled its membership, growing from thirty-two organizations in 1894 to 129 in 1899 (see Appendix 1A). Moreover, contradicting the traditional depiction of municipal reform as a primarily a Northeastern and Midwestern phenomena, the membership of the League roughly matched the concentration of the urban population in the country. In fact, although in 1894 Northeastern cities were slightly over represented, by 1899 Western cities were actually over represented (see Appendix 1B). The member organizations of the League were overwhelmingly reform groups by 1899, although a small minority (thirteen per cent) were commercial bodies. Only two were clearly women's organizations, but many of the other organizations likely admitted women.⁵¹ In short, by 1899 the National Municipal League had become a powerful, national network binding together local reform organizations in urban areas throughout the country.

**The Goals of Municipal Reform Associations:
Honesty, Efficiency, Economy, and the Elimination of Parties in Local Government**

Conference for Good City Government Held at Minneapolis, December 8 and 10, 1894 and of the First Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League and of the Third National Conference for Good City Government Held At Cleveland, May 29, 30 and 31, 1895 (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1895), 67-68.

⁵⁰ Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 119.

⁵¹ Of the fifty-six groups listed in Tolman's 1894 survey, almost half admitted women. According to my count, 19 did not admit women, 14 did admit women, 3 did not prohibit women, and 20 did not comment on whether or not they admitted women. Tolman also listed 8 organizations composed entirely of women in a separate section. See Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements*, 47-133, 167-181. Also, at the first National Conference for Good City Government, the participants unanimously voted to admit women to the National Municipal League. See *Proceedings ... 1894*, 18-20.

In explaining their primary objectives, most municipal reform associations claimed that they intended simply “to promote honest, efficient, and economical government.”⁵² Such statements, of course, implied that existing municipal government was just the opposite – dishonest, inefficient, and wasteful. Accordingly, many local groups began with activities designed to uncover the root of these problems. To do so, they operated as self-appointed watchdogs. This form of activism was popular well before the 1890s, but it remained a central endeavor for many organizations at the close of the century. In one example, the Citizens’ Association of Chicago organized as a guardian of the people’s welfare in 1874, but its members continued in this vein as late as 1893, declaring their intent to keep “*the public advised* at all times of attempts to infringe their rights.”⁵³ Newer groups formed in the 1890s also worked as investigatory agencies in the name of the public good. One focus was electoral fraud, with groups scrutinizing allegations of irregularities in municipal elections, such as St. Louis’s Committee of Public Safety, organized in the fall of 1894 to investigate the records of candidates, election judges, recorders of voters, and heelers. Another emphasis was abuses of power by elected officials. *The Nation* reported that the “true mission” of the new City Club of New York was “the exposure of public abuses and the prosecution of official violators of the law.”⁵⁴

Most of the members of newer groups, however, felt that such tactics, the mere exposure of corruption and fraud, were not sufficient to bring about the changes they desired. In the past, reformers had believed that if they simply informed the public of transgressions by corrupt individuals, the people would respond by electing better men into office who

⁵² See Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements*, 47-133 for many examples. This particular quotation comes from the constitution of the Good Government Club of Yonkers, NY. See pp. 99-100.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 82-85 and *The Nation* 56, no. 1438 (January 19, 1893): 40.

would in turn create the honest, efficient, and economical government they so desired. And so, often paralleling the decision to create more permanent organizations rather than temporary committees, many reformers also decided that they needed to make more constructive suggestions about how to create better city government rather than simply critiquing and exposing the shortcomings of the status quo. The question that remained was just exactly how they proposed to do so.

These municipal reform associations were not Law and Order Leagues, also popular in the 1890s, dedicated to ensuring the enforcement of the law, sometimes working with local officials but more often organizing their own investigations and raids. They also were not charitable or philanthropic bodies devoted to urban social reform, although many of their members were involved in such work.⁵⁵ Nor were they commercial bodies, committed to the expansion of local infrastructures to facilitate commercial development. To this end, local Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce shared with municipal reform groups the desire to improve city government, and a few even joined the National Municipal League.⁵⁶ Yet municipal reformers felt the need to create associations distinct from all these other types of groups because they believed that there was a need for organizations exclusively dedicated to improving the structures of municipal government.

⁵⁵ Many individuals, however, were involved in these activities, and some hoped to involved municipal reform associations in this type of work. Edmond Kelly, a founder of the City Club of New York, declared at the First National Conference for Good City Government: "I do not believe in divorcing philanthropy from politics. Philanthropy, politics and religion should all be engaged in teaching the same lesson – self-government; in doing the same work – lifting up the poor; and by the poor I do not mean only those that are poor in pocket; I mean also those that are poor in the qualities which make up a man and a citizen.... I contend that when we take the hand of a fellow-creature to lift him out of want, poverty or crime, we should not let go his hand till we have raised him to the level of the franchise, which he is destined to exercise. And this is what I believe to be the ultimate mission of our Good Government Clubs." See Edmond Kelly, "The Municipal Government of New York," *Proceedings ... 1894*, 109-10.

⁵⁶ See Appendix 1A. 17 of the 128 members of the National Municipal League in 1899 were commercial bodies.

For almost all municipal leagues, the first step on the way to creating a positive program for city government was the removal of parties from local affairs. Antiparty sentiment had existed in the United States since the early 1800s, playing on fears that corrupt “interests” would harm the common good of the republic. In the years after the Civil War, however, antipathy towards parties developed a new life. At no time had parties been so powerful, dominating every level of government, but at the same time, revelations of corruption in the Gilded Age sparked a new wave of anti-partisanship.⁵⁷ Moreover, as the expansion of governmental offices created ever increasing opportunities for patronage, opposition to the spoils system and support for civil service reform grew.

As municipal reformers expanded their programs beyond the exposure of corrupt individuals, they came to hold a larger systemic problem accountable: the presence of national and state parties in municipal politics. By the late 1880s, calls to separate municipal from state and local elections had begun to appear in the press, and by the early 1890s, the belief that parties had no place in local elections was quite popular in reform circles.⁵⁸ Speaking at the First National Conference for Good City Government, Edmond Kelly, a founder of the City Club of New York, declared, “We must unite on the principle that municipal government can be separated from party politics, and organize so as to give expression to this principle at the polls.”⁵⁹ Clinton Rogers Woodruff, the secretary of the National Municipal League and in this role arguably the leading expert on municipal leagues

⁵⁷ Richard L. McCormick, “Anti-Party Thought in the Gilded Age,” *The Party Period and Public Policy: American Politics from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 228-59.

⁵⁸ Clifford W. Patton, *The Battle for Municipal Reform: Mobilization and Attack, 1875-1900* (Washington, DC: American Council on Public Affairs, 1940), 45. See also “Separate City Elections,” *The Nation* Vol. 58, no. 1510 (June 7, 1894): 422-23; “Separate City Elections,” *The Nation* 40, No. 1034 (April 23, 1885): 338-39; “Separate Municipal Elections,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* XXXVII, no. 3 (January 1889): 472-73; “Municipal Patriotism,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* XXXV, no. 2 (December 1887): 325-26.

⁵⁹ Edmond Kelly, “The Municipal Government of New York,” 5, 103-10.

of his day, agreed, and he believed that despite their diversity in “form and methods” that all organizations agreed that the first requirement for “true and permanent reform” was “the separation of state and national parties from municipal affairs, and the elimination of partisanship from municipal business.”⁶⁰

In a paper presented at the First Conference for Good City Government, Moorfield Storey of Boston articulated the rationale for the elimination of parties from local politics espoused by many urban reformers of the day. He claimed that “the issues of national politics” were “entirely outside the questions” of municipal government. All “honest men” agreed on the need for “clean streets, good sewers, efficient police, a good fire department, the proper regulation of street railways, and other like questions,” but the presence of parties in local elections created artificial divisions among voters. Party “henchmen” relied on the diversion created by such divisions to acquire the spoils of municipal administration.⁶¹ In short, the aim of reformers – to unite urban voters across party lines – was based on an understanding of municipal government as apolitical, as a mere matter of administrative efficiency devoid of substantive divisions.

This rejection of a legitimate role for parties in local politics begins to explain the strong ideological connection between municipal reform and civil service reform. Municipal reformers justified their call for non-partisan local elections with the claim that parties were interested in city politics because of opportunities for patronage rather than because of any legitimate ideological divisions. But they also used this critique of parties in their plea for the establishment of a civil service system in municipal administration. In fact, according to Secretary Woodruff of the National Municipal League, after the removal of parties from

⁶⁰ Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “The Progress of Municipal Reform, 1894-95,” *Proceedings ... 1895*, 311.

⁶¹ Moorfield Storey, “The Municipal Government of Boston,” *Proceedings ... 1894*, 4, 61-71.

municipal elections, the second “essential” point upon which all municipal leagues agreed was the “eradication of the spoils system and the substitution of the merit system for that of favoritism.”⁶² Many municipal reform associations began with efforts to establish a civil service system in their local governments. In Milwaukee, the Municipal League, formed in the spring of 1893, immediately commenced a campaign to expand the civil service system beyond the police and fire departments to encompass other municipal offices. In the face of great opposition from “the agents of machine in both parties,” according to John A. Butler, President of the League, their civil service bill died in a committee of the common council.⁶³

While some reform associations worked to weaken partisan machines through the establishment of a municipal civil service, others engaged in more direct involvement in the electoral process. Most often they did so by examining the records and backgrounds of candidates and publicly endorsing only those who they felt were qualified to hold office regardless of partisan affiliation.⁶⁴ In this way, groups such as the Cambridge, Massachusetts’ Library Hall Association hoped “to secure the nomination and election of proper candidates for municipal offices.”⁶⁵ Some municipal leagues went further and ran “non-partisan” tickets of their own.⁶⁶

Educational Campaigns

⁶² Woodruff, “The Progress of Municipal Reform, 1894-95,” 311. See also Patton, *The Battle for Municipal Reform*, 48-49.

⁶³ “Minutes of the First Annual Meeting of the Board of Delegates of the National Municipal League held in Cleveland, Ohio,” *Proceedings ... 1895*, 195-98.

⁶⁴ Patton, *The Battle for Municipal Reform*, 44.

⁶⁵ Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements*, 102.

⁶⁶ Patton, *The Battle for Municipal Reform*, 44.

Although such direct electoral involvement was not uncommon, educational campaigns designed to garner public support were the far more popular means of agitation for non-partisanship in local politics. Much like their allies in the civil service reform movement, municipal reformers intended their organizations to replace parties in as molders of public opinion on important political questions. At the second National Conference for Good City Government in December 1894, Herbert Welsh, the son of a banker from Philadelphia who devoted his life to various reform movements, explained that the first task of “effective Municipal Leagues or associated Good Government Clubs” was “educational.” Such education required that “the community ... be instructed systematically and continuously – not spasmodically – by speakers, by pamphlets, through the columns of the press, by personal conversation, [and] by parlor meetings” both “as to the general purposes of the League” and “the general needs of the city.”⁶⁷ The Milwaukee Municipal League embodied this style of activism, for according to its President, John A. Butler, it began its efforts to expand the local civil service with a “period of education,” of “agitation spent ... issuing pamphlets and holding public meetings.”⁶⁸ The Milwaukee League, like so many of its counterparts across the country, worked to circumvent the party system and create a new style of political organization in which reformers gathered the pressure of public opinion through mass meetings, petitions, and the mobilization of the press on behalf of their cause.⁶⁹

Although municipal reform associations were predominantly male, most viewed women as powerful allies in their educational aspirations. Excluded from elections, women’s

⁶⁷ Herbert Welsh, “Municipal Leagues and Good Government Clubs,” *Proceedings ... 1895* 146-53. Biographical information from David J. Pivar, “Theocratic Businessmen and Philadelphia Municipal Reform, 1870-1900,” *Pennsylvania History* 33, no. 3 (1966): 297.

⁶⁸ “Minutes of the First Annual Meeting of the Board of Delegates,” *Proceedings ... 1895*, 194.

⁶⁹ David Thelen, *The New Citizenship: Origins of Progressivism in Wisconsin, 1885-1900* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972), 168.

political activism relied on direct appeals to the public, often in the name of expert research and investigation.⁷⁰ While male and female organizations would later develop divergent goals, in these early years many men and women were united in a shared discontent with the role of parties in municipal government.⁷¹ Women were a small but visible presence at conferences of the NML, and every year the program included a speech on the “woman’s standpoint.” These speeches claimed that while men and women shared the same commitment to awakening a deeper sense of civic duty among citizens, women were especially suited to educational work because, without the right to vote, they were not tied to parties and could act as “disinterested” citizens. These speeches also referred to city government as a matter of “municipal housekeeping,” a common expression that suggested that the primary task of cities and homes alike was to create a clean and safe environment.⁷² Although male reformers more often compared cities to business corporations, both these models presented municipal government as apolitical and therefore not a legitimate subject of partisan contestation and political debate.

Women’s municipal reform groups tended to emphasize the importance of education even more so than their male or co-ed counterparts. Not only were women’s groups particularly interested in municipal government as it pertained to public schools, they also stressed the importance of the educational service provided by their organizations.

According to Cornelia Frothingham, secretary of the women’s Civic Club of Philadelphia,

⁷⁰ See Clemens, *The People’s Lobby*, 184-234.

⁷¹ Maureen Flanagan’s study of the City Club of Chicago and the Women’s City Club of Chicago, founded in 1903 and 1910, respectively, argues that men and women of the same class idealized the good city in different ways. Men tended to view the city as a business, focusing on efficiency and economy in the provision of services, while women tended to view it as an agent of public welfare. See Maureen A. Flanagan, “Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman’s City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era,” *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (October 1990): 1032-50.

⁷² Mary E. Mumford, “The Relation of Women to Municipal Reform” *Proceedings ... 1894*, 9-10, 134-43; Maria B. Sanford, “Woman’s Work in Reform,” *Proceedings 1895*, 40-44; C. A. Runkle, “Good City Government from a Woman’s Standpoint,” *Proceedings ... 1895*, 236, 500-07.

“We women believe that serious permanent results can only be obtained through *education*. And acting upon this belief, we intend to devote ourselves to the collecting of such facts as bear upon the development of disinterested citizenship.” The (women’s) Civic League of New York agreed, declaring the “examination into the aims and functions of the city government,” “the gathering of intelligent reports,” and “the suggestions of schemes of improvement” to be among its central objects.⁷³

With this emphasis on gathering “facts” and conducting “examinations,” the educational style of political action paralleled the emergence of the social sciences, together marking a new way of thinking about knowledge and inquiry. Academic investigation increasingly was based on the premise that truth resulted from a process of real-world inquiry rather than reasoning from theoretical abstractions.⁷⁴ While some scholars were moving towards a pragmatic understanding of all truths as contextual, most still believed that inquiry and discussion would lead to widespread consensus. In the realm of municipal reform, although some characterized investigation as an open-ended process, most believed that it would reveal a single truth that reformers would then convey to the public.⁷⁵ Groups such as the Municipal Club of Decatur, Illinois and the Municipal League of Grand Rapids, Michigan, both declared their intent “to make a thorough and scientific investigation of the correct principles of local self-government ... and to collect and publish all appropriate

⁷³ Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements*, 168-69, 176-80.

⁷⁴ See note 15.

⁷⁵ This generalization did not, of course, apply to all those involved in municipal reform. Albion Tourgee, celebrated civil rights lawyer, addressed members of the NML at an 1894 convention on the subject of good citizenship. “The great value and truth of a democratic government,” Tourgee said, “is that it cannot be worked out by any preconceived theory; but going on from day to day we meet the day’s problems and do our duty by finding some solution for them. We do not follow the cut and dried theory, but accomplish by our own devices what needs to be done.” Speech by Hon. Albion Tourgee, “The Recruiting Sergeant in the Army of Good Citizenship,” *Proceedings ... 1895*, 246.

information on the defects and needs of our city government.”⁷⁶ To accomplish this, many organizations even hired experts to conduct their investigations.⁷⁷ These investigations usually resulted in the “discovery” that the elimination of parties from local affairs would eliminate corruption, and such findings were usually followed by concerted campaigns to educate the public as to this fact. Accordingly, New York’s Council of Confederated Good Government Clubs focused much of its energy on “preparing the public mind to support a non-partizan [sic] municipal ticket.”⁷⁸

In its early years, the NML did not take an official stance as a proponent of non-partisan local elections, claiming instead that it simply provided a permanent venue for reformers from across the country to come together and exchange ideas and experiences. Their yearly Conferences for Good City Government were integral to this mission. The conferences of the National Civil Service Reform League, begun over a decade earlier, likely in part inspired this form of meeting. In 1881, the *New York Times* reported that a national civil service conference had been called to exchange “thoughts and ideas from different parts of the country on the subject of civil service reform,” and the associations that came together at that conference decided to form the NCSRL.⁷⁹ Thirteen years later, the *Times* reported that the municipal reformers meeting at the first National Conference for Good City Government in Philadelphia had decided to form a “permanent agency” to continue “the comparison of views, the exchange of experiences, and the discussion of methods” begun there. Within months they formed the National Municipal League.⁸⁰ In the years that

⁷⁶ Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements*, 106-07, 110-12, 114-15.

⁷⁷ For example see Albion Small, “The Civic Federation of Chicago,” *American Journal of Sociology* 1, no. 1 (July 1895): 82, 100-02.

⁷⁸ Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements*, 91-93.

⁷⁹ “Civil Service Reformers,” *New York Times*, August 12, 1881, p. 5.

⁸⁰ “To Better Home Government,” *New York Times*, May 29, 1894, p. 2; “Reform in City Government,” *New York Times*, January 27, 1894, p. 5.

followed, even though many individuals advocated non-partisanship in their speeches, over half the papers at the NML conferences were presented as reports on the “municipal conditions” of various locales, continuing the work of simply providing attendees with information about circumstances and events in other cities.⁸¹ The NML introduced the published proceedings of its fourth conference by reminding readers that the League sought only “to promote the free and full discussion of the difficult problems of municipal government, wisely avoiding any *ex-cathedra* utterances.”⁸² In this way, both the NCSRL and the NML claimed that the function of civic federations was simply to promote open-ended discussion among interested parties otherwise divided by geography.

The NML also hoped to serve as an educator by instructing members about how to proceed as reformers, how to serve their communities as leaders. Writers for the *Nation* described one conference of the NML as “invaluable,” commending it for bringing together a certain “class of people” to discuss “the best means of bringing influence to bear on the voters in favor of better city government.”⁸³ Secretary Woodruff celebrated the role of the League in “educating the active workers in new fields.” The League’s constitution made this point even more clearly, stating the need “to multiply the numbers, harmonize the methods and combine the forces” of all who desired “united action and organization” in the name of good government.⁸⁴ In short, the NML organizers hoped its conferences would bring together reform associations from different cities from across the country and then unify them into a national movement by discerning the best tactics for use on the local level.

⁸¹ See *Proceedings of the Third National Conference for Good City Government and the Second Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League, Held at Baltimore, May 6, 7 and 8, 1896* (Philadelphia: The National Municipal League, 1896); *Proceedings... 1895*; *Proceedings... 1894*. In these years they also distributed thousands of pamphlets. In the first year alone, they distributed 24,000 copies of their first four pamphlets. See Woodruff, “The Progress of Municipal Reform, 1894-95,” 304-12.

⁸² *Proceedings ... 1896*, iv.

⁸³ *The Nation* 58, no. 1492 (February 1, 1894): 76.

⁸⁴ Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “A Year’s Work for Municipal Reform,” *Proceedings ... 1896*, 70.

Yet it was clear from the start that the NML intended these yearly meetings to do more than just encourage dialogue and coordinate tactics. The NML's official stance of objectivity must be viewed in the context of the conviction of its members that reformers had already demonstrated the universal need for non-partisan local elections. From their perspective, parties could play no legitimate role in municipal politics because city government was an apolitical matter of administration. The starting point for all discussions, then, was that parties had to be eliminated, and it was in this context that municipal reformers could reconcile their professed openness with their agitation for non-partisanship. Outside observers clearly viewed the NML as a vocal proponent of non-partisan municipal politics. In an article in *Good Government*, the NCSRL congratulated an NML conference for "hammer[ing] into the head and conscience of the average voter" with "ceaseless iteration" the message of nonpartisanship in municipal elections.⁸⁵ In this context, the NML's educative mission was not just a matter of promoting discussion, but also educating the wider public about the need to eliminate parties from local politics.

Members also viewed the NML as a vehicle for raising awareness, intending their yearly conferences to draw attention to the problems facing municipal government and in so doing remind urban residents of their civic duties. Much like the NCSRL had a decade earlier, the organizers of the NML hoped that by drawing attention to their cause, they would encourage the people to participate and effect needed changes. At the first Conference for Good City Government, George Burnham, Jr., president of the Municipal League of Philadelphia, said that reform was not possible without "an awakening of the public conscience" that would cause citizens to devote "serious attention to their political duties,"

⁸⁵ "The Month," *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XVI, no. 12 (June 15, 1895): cover page.

while James C. Carter, president of the City Club of New York, celebrated the conference as just such a mark of “a rising tide of civic patriotism.”⁸⁶ Indeed, the League publicized the Conference in the following months in these terms. The printed proceedings hailed the Conference as “successful from every point of view,” claiming that it had “awakened renewed interest” in municipal reform, rousing “from apathy and indifference” those not previously involved and intensifying “the zeal of those already engaged in the work.”⁸⁷

Public Opinion and Popular Participation

The desire to generate public interest in municipal reform derived from the widespread belief in the power of public opinion in the political system of the United States. Yet while most late-nineteenth-century Americans agreed that in a democracy, public opinion ruled, they did not agree as to how that opinion was, or should be, formed. Washington Gladden once told an audience of members of the NML that public opinion was “only the aggregate opinion of all the people.” He went on to stress the importance of all individuals forming and expressing “clear opinions” in order for “good *public* opinion” to coalesce. Nevertheless, in his model, public opinion, good or bad, was the mere sum of individual opinions.⁸⁸ Others disagreed, arguing that some citizens played a larger role than others in the formation of public opinion. In *The American Commonwealth*, British statesman and scholar James Bryce wrote that public “opinion does not merely grow; it is also made.” While most Americans, busy with other concerns, only hold “passive” views on

⁸⁶ George Burnham Jr. and James C. Carter, quoted in *Proceedings ... 1894*, 1-4.

⁸⁷ “Introduction,” *Proceedings ... 1894*, iv.

⁸⁸ Washington Gladden, “Influence upon Officials in Office,” *Proceedings ... 1894*, 162-63.

public matters, “there is also the active class, who occupy themselves primarily with public affairs, who aspire to create and lead opinion.”⁸⁹

Across the country, leaders of most municipal reform associations saw themselves in this light, as the “active” citizens who would lead public opinion. From their perspective, civic leaders like themselves, working through municipal reform groups, would direct popular participation in local politics. Over and over, local municipal leagues officially declared their intention to foster public sentiment sympathetic to their own views of good municipal government. As the Good Government Club of Berkeley explained, they not only aspired “to keep before our citizens the necessity of their interest in public affairs,” but also “to discuss and shape public opinion upon all the questions which relate to the proper government of Berkeley.”⁹⁰ Similarly, the Civic Federation of Detroit planned to “shape public opinion on all questions relating to the municipal government” and “organize the public conscience and bring it to bear upon existing evils.”⁹¹ And the Citizens’ Association of Albany hoped “to mold public sentiment from chaotic clamor into well-defined purposes of redress.”⁹² These groups and many others understood it to be both the right and the duty of municipal reform associations to instruct and organize the public as to the proper course of action in city affairs. Although they believed in the power of public opinion in a democratic polity, theirs was a public opinion lead by elites. Moreover, nativism and racism often worked in conjunction with such elitism to limit those even included as legitimate members of the public.

⁸⁹ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 3 vols. (1888; reprint, with an introduction by Gary L. McDowell, Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1995), 914.

⁹⁰ Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements*, 97-99.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 51-52.

Yet the degree of elitism among leaders of municipal reform associations varied widely, even within a single organization. In one example, Edmond Kelly, an influential founder of the City Club of New York, expressed his hope that the affiliated Good Government Clubs of New York would welcome “men in every degree of wealth or poverty.” In the same years, James C. Carter, president of the City Club of New York and the National Municipal League, voiced his belief that the “extreme development and application of the principle of democratic government” that allowed “the ignorant and unthinking multitudes of different nationalities” to vote was responsible for the problems facing municipal government.⁹³

Not all groups advocated a deferential role for the wider public in municipal reform. Others hoped to make their organizations more inclusive, to use them to bring together diverse urban residents in the name of better government. According to John A. Butler, president of the Municipal League of Milwaukee, leagues should work “to protect and reinforce the true bond of popular fellowship and sympathy, by uniting as many as possible of all political faiths in the work; all reputable men who will subscribe a satisfactory pledge.”⁹⁴ In this ideal, municipal reform associations functioned as venues where representatives of all groups came together as equals. This represented an alternative, more participatory understanding of the relationship between civic associations and public opinion in which they facilitated open discussion and communication rather than providing vehicles for “active” men to come together and lead the public. The goal of inclusiveness was so integral to many municipal reform associations that founders termed them “federations” to

⁹³ Edmond Kelly, “The Municipal Government of New York,” 106; James C. Carter, “President’s Annual Address,” *Proceedings ... 1895*, 276.

⁹⁴ John A. Butler, “A Plea for the Moral High Ground in Municipal Reform,” *Proceedings ... 1894*, 231.

underscore the message that these groups were to be coalitions of diverse groups of urban residents and interests.

The Civic Federation of Chicago, founded in 1893 was undoubtedly the most well-known such group, serving as a model for similar federations in other cities, particularly in the Midwest.⁹⁵ Those who initiated the federation, including businessmen, female activists, labor leaders, and social workers, hoped that it would serve as a vehicle for improving not only municipal government but also urban life and inter-group relations more generally by facilitating communication and cooperation among Chicago's diverse residents.⁹⁶ They created an intricate, multi-layered organization intended to represent as many groups in the city as possible, broken down into an executive committee of sixteen, a central council of one-hundred divided into several standing committees, and thirty-four ward councils with sub-committees of their own.⁹⁷ In describing the Federation to an audience at a NML convention, Albion Small, a sociologist at the University of Chicago, emphasized the fact that it was "a true federation; a committee of committees; an association of associations." In combining groups that varied "greatly in specific purpose," the Federation recognized that only by coordinating activities could they "make up the total of successful municipal

⁹⁵ According to Tolman, the Civic Federation of Chicago was formed in February of 1894, and by the fall of that year Civic Federations of Galesburg, IL and Detroit, Michigan had also been organized. Tolman, *Municipal Reform Movements*, 77-81. The Municipal League of Omaha, Nebraska was also modeled on the Civic Federation of Chicago. Rev. Gregory J. Powell, "Municipal Condition of Omaha," *Proceedings ... 1895*, 421. San Francisco also had a Civic Federation by 1895. Isaac T. Milken, "Municipal Condition of San Francisco," *Proceedings ... 1895*, 452. Finally, monthly magazines covered the activities of the Civic Federation of Chicago. See "Municipal Reform Methods in Chicago," *The Nation* 60, No. 1557 (May 2, 1895): 342-43; "Municipal Reform Methods in Chicago," *The Nation* 70, No. 1822 (May 31, 1900): 411-12.

⁹⁶ Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform," 36.

⁹⁷ Remarks by Wm. A. Giles of the Civic Federation of Chicago, *Proceedings ... 1895* 18-19; Albion Small, "The Civic Federation of Chicago: A Study in Social Dynamics," *American Journal of Sociology* 1, no. 1 (July 1895): 80-81, 84. In its early years, the program of the Federation included wider philanthropic and labor-related concerns, but the specific problem of municipal government remained central.

action.”⁹⁸ In this model, the role of a Civic Federation was not to lead public opinion, but to facilitate its formation by bringing people together to discuss their mutual concerns.

Competition for Leadership: Labor and Commercial Organizations in Municipalities

Municipal reform associations were not the only groups seeking to replace parties in local politics as public leaders. Labor and commercial organizations in particular also increasingly became directly involved in local politics at in the 1880s and 1890s, organizing in ways that paralleled the style of municipal reform groups. And though they primarily represented the interests of their constituents, they also aspired to speak for the good of the entire community.

The expansion of Central Labor Unions (CLUs), federations of local (mostly craft-based) unions in individual cities, at the close of the nineteenth century was analogous to the spread of municipal reform associations, particularly in terms of the emphasis placed on the value of organization. Washington Gladden, in his fictitious account of the founding of the Cosmopolis City Club, actually claimed that municipal reformers learned the power and value of organization from unions.⁹⁹ Much as municipal reformers claimed to have formed associations to combat increasingly organized partisan machines, CLUs maintained they needed to unite “to combat the ever growing encroachments of organized and consolidated Capital.”¹⁰⁰ Throughout the country, in their constitutions and by-laws CLUs declared the

⁹⁸ Albion W. Small, “Civic Federation of Chicago,” *Proceedings ... 1895*, 478.

⁹⁹ Gladden, “The Cosmopolis City Club,” 398.

¹⁰⁰ *Constitution and By-Laws of the Central Labor Union of New York and Vicinity* (New York: Concord Co-operative Printing Company, 1887), 3.

importance of “organizing and concentrating” the efforts of individual unions and the working-class more broadly.¹⁰¹

Previously, individual unions joined together in committees forming temporary coalitions to achieve specific goals. By the 1880s, however, these unions began to form more permanent federations and establish CLUs. Although uniting unions within an individual city was the primary organizational goal of local CLUs, these groups were also embedded in wider trans-local networks. Across the country, CLUs shared similar structures, typically consisting of five to ten elected officers and several standing committees. In some cases, representatives of CLUs joined together in state conferences, and, after a burst of organizing in the 1890s, by the end of the century CLUs from seventy-nine cities had affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.¹⁰²

Although CLUs functioned primarily as unions, dedicated to collective bargaining and the advancement of the interests of workers, they also aspired to broader leadership roles in their communities similar to those of municipal reform association and commercial organizations. Yet while such groups confidently asserted that their organizations were dedicated to the good of all residents of their cities, CLUs expressed a more complex understanding of their roles. Embracing a pluralist conception of politics, they openly worked to represent the interests of the working class as a distinctive group. While municipal reformers spoke of the need to lead public opinion as society’s natural leaders,

¹⁰¹ For examples, see *ibid.* and *Constitution and By-Laws of the Central Labor Union of Philadelphia and Vicinity* (Philadelphia: The New Era Cooperative Press, 1902), 3; *Constitution and By-Laws of the Central Labor Union of Cleveland, O.* (Cleveland: Chas. Lezius, 1899), 1.

¹⁰² William Maxwell Burke, “History and Functions of Central Labor Unions,” *Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law*, ed. The Faculty of Political Science at Columbia University (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), 40-57; State Conference of Central Labor Unions of Massachusetts, *Report for 1889 of the Legislative Committee of the State Conference of Central Labor Unions* (no publishing information available, c. 1889). This pamphlet can be found at the Humanities and Social Sciences branch of the New York Public Library.

CLU officials spoke of the need “to mold public opinion in favor of Labor.”¹⁰³ At the same time, however, CLUs also tended to present themselves as dedicated to the overall prosperity of their communities. According to a contemporary study of CLUs, “The Central Labor Union claims a right to public recognition along with the various commercial organizations, as it wishes to co-operate in all movements looking to the public welfare.”¹⁰⁴ In this way, CLUs attempted to balance a pluralist understanding of politics as based on multiple group interests with persistent assumptions about the existence of a singular common good.

Despite the claims of CLUs that they were not “political” bodies, these organizations openly and eagerly became deeply involved in municipal politics.¹⁰⁵ CLUs made such statements largely to make clear that they did not intend to function as political parties and put forward candidates for election to public offices. Many also declared themselves to be strictly non-partisan, indicating that they would not formally declare their support of any political party.¹⁰⁶ Such declarations, however, did not mean that CLUs did not attempt to influence the policy decisions of elected officials. While Worcester’s CLU maintained that it was “opposed to entering any political party,” it also stated that it would “use its influence with the law-making power to secure favorable labor legislation.”¹⁰⁷ Moreover, many CLUs included statements in support of a variety of municipal reforms in their platforms, most

¹⁰³ *Constitution and By-Laws of the Central Labor Union of New York and Vicinity*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Burke, “History and Functions of Central Labor Unions,” 87.

¹⁰⁵ According to Burke, “The Central Labor Union is not a political body, but it claims the right of expressing and exercising its views, rights and principles on all issues affecting the right of labor and the brotherhood of man, and of carrying the same into effect in such legislative manner as the body deems beneficial to the wage-earners of the community.” See *ibid.*, 89.

¹⁰⁶ For examples see *Constitution of the Central Labor Union of Boston and Vicinity* (Boston: Allied Printer and Trades Council, 1900), 4; *Constitution, By-Laws, and Rules of Order of the Central Labor Union of Lawrence and Vicinity* (Lawrence, MA: Eagle and Tribute Print., 1894), 4.

¹⁰⁷ “History of the Central Labor Union of Worcester and Vicinity,” *Official Souvenir for Grand Parade and Demonstration of the Combined Labor Bodies of Worcester and Vicinity* (Worcester: The Central Labor Union and Building Trades Council of Worcester, 1891?).

often favoring public ownership of utilities.¹⁰⁸ In short, while most CLUs did not run candidates for election or endorse either party, they did not hesitate to support specific policy issues in the interests of their constituents.

Local commercial bodies interestingly lagged behind unions in forming regional, state, and national alliances.¹⁰⁹ In the first decade of the twentieth century, local business associations increasingly joined together to form single chambers of commerce. Chambers of commerce in larger cities began to attract national attention as chambers in smaller towns looked to them for advice and sought to emulate their activities. Soon many groups initiated contact with counterparts in neighboring cities and began to form regional alliances, but it was not until 1912 that the Chamber of Commerce of the United States was formed.¹¹⁰

Regardless of their later move towards trans-local organization, commercial bodies acting independently in individual cities were often deeply involved in municipal politics by the 1880s and 1890s. As these groups undertook campaigns to attract outside investments to develop local infrastructures and facilitate the economic development of their cities, they became more deeply involved in the affairs of municipal government.¹¹¹ Commercial groups looked to municipalities to provide improved streets, sanitation, sewerage, water supplies, and harbor improvements. If they found local officials unwilling or unable to provide these

¹⁰⁸ Burke, "History and Functions of Central Labor Unions," 90; "Union Labor Men Want Municipal Ownership," *Virginian Pilot*, November 14, 1905, p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ Chambers of commerce increasingly replaced boards of trade as the primary business organizations in most cities. Though a national Board of Trade had been organized in roughly 1870, it appears not to have been flourishing by the turn of the century, with only fifty members sending delegates to a national convention in 1903. See "National Board of Trade," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 13, 1903, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ Robert H. Wiebe, *Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), 19, 22, 36-41.

¹¹¹ Amy Bridges makes this argument for Southwestern cities in this period (c. 1890-1920), noting that commercial organizations worked not only on specific improvement projects but also became involved in more expansive urban planning programs. See Amy Bridges, *Morning Glories: Municipal Reform in the Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 47-51.

amenities, organized business leaders became involved in municipal reform.¹¹² As noted, some groups even joined the National Municipal League. Commercial bodies comprised thirteen per cent of the League's membership by 1899. Many also assumed the lead in movements for charter reform in their respective cities. In the early 1890s, the Board of Trade and the Commercial Club in Louisville joined forces to draft a new charter to be sent to the state legislature, and in Denver, the Chamber of Commerce did so after a wide reading of "the literature of other reformers."¹¹³ In these ways and many others, though officially apolitical organizations, commercial bodies actively participated in local politics.

Alongside municipal reform associations and central labor unions, commercial bodies were becoming an alternative vehicle for participation in urban politics. Declaring themselves to be nonpartisan, they too typically claimed to speak for the welfare of the entire city. Their leaders and members tended to view themselves as uniquely suited to take the lead in municipal government. They presented their participation in local affairs not merely as beneficial to commercial interests but also to the welfare of the city as a whole, assuming that what was good for business was good for the entire community. One leader in the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce described recent efforts to achieve a more "progressive administration of [municipal] affairs" in these terms. He informed members of the National Municipal League that "[n]ever in the history of Cleveland [have] businessmen been more united in laboring for public benefits; never [have] they given so freely of their time and counsel for the general welfare."¹¹⁴ Frederick C. Howe, an active participant in reform

¹¹² For example, Riverson Ritchie, "Commercial Organizations and Municipal Reform," *Proceedings of the Louisville Conference for Good City Government and the Third Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League Held May 5, 6 and 7, 1897* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1897), 120-24

¹¹³ Frank N. Hartwell, "Municipal Condition of Louisville," *Proceedings ... 1895*, 217, 391-96; Platt Rogers, "Municipal Condition of Denver," *Proceedings ... 1895*, 223, 424-31.

¹¹⁴ Ritchie, "Commercial Organizations and Municipal Reform," 120, 124.

circles, later described the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce in this light, commending its “non-political” yet “public” work to educate the community regarding “city affairs” and “civic obligation.”¹¹⁵ In short, in their efforts to displace parties as leaders in local politics, municipal reform associations competed with both unions and commercial organizations in their efforts to educate voters and shape public opinion.

Conclusion

Municipal reform groups continued to come together and join the National Municipal League in the years to come. League conferences were well attended and widely publicized. Countless other reformers dedicated to a wide variety of urban issues copied the model of uniting local groups into national federations. By 1903, there were already at least three other national organizations dedicated to improving municipal government alone.¹¹⁶ Through these networks, such organizations not only drew national attention to the problems facing American cities, they also facilitated the nationalization of municipal problems by bringing together reformers from across the country to discuss their mutual concerns and experiences. The result was a transformation in the way in which many Americans conceived of urban government and local democracy, making it a national rather than a local concern, a shared problem with a shared solution.

The leaders of the National Municipal League soon moved to nationalize urban government further, deciding that the time for open-ended discussion was over and that they

¹¹⁵ Frederick C. Howe, “Cleveland’s Education through its Chamber of Commerce,” *Outlook* 83:13 (July 28, 1906): 739-49.

¹¹⁶ These included the League of American Municipalities, the American League for Civic Improvement, and the American Society of Municipal Improvements. See “Union of Civic Societies,” *The Independent* 54, no. 2821 (December 25, 1902), 3106.

were ready to determine the best form of government for all cities throughout the country. In 1895, Carter, the League's president, expressed his hope that they would come together and ascertain "the best method" of reform. The next year, he announced that the time had come for the League to make "some definite and solid conclusions" and, based on "extensive information" and "the results of discussion and investigation," "recommend a suitable plan of practical action."¹¹⁷ Others agreed, and in 1900 the League published its Municipal Program, a statement of ideal city-state relations and a model municipal charter intended to embody the universal principles of good city government.

Municipal reform organizations were not originally created to reform city charters.¹¹⁸ As this chapter has demonstrated, they first focused on ending corruption and eliminating the role of parties in local elections, and they intended to do so largely through educational campaigns that would awaken greater public interest in municipal affairs. Yet as they interacted with other organized groups in local politics, from parties to unions to commercial bodies, they encountered widespread interest in increasing municipal activities. Now, rather than speaking of honest and efficient government as an end in and of itself, it became a means towards the larger goal of expanding the scope of local government. Central labor unions promoted municipally-owned utilities and other social welfare programs, and boards of trade and chambers of commerce advocated the development of local infrastructure. Municipal reformers varied widely, supporting programs for municipal expansion at all ends of the spectrum. But they also viewed themselves as mediators who would find common

¹¹⁷ James C. Carter "President's Annual Address," *Proceedings ... 1896*, 44-45; James C. Carter, "President's Annual Address," *Proceedings ... 1895*, 267.

¹¹⁸ See *The Nation* 58, no. 1492 (February 1, 1894): 76 on the lack of interest in charters in the early NML: "It was very noteworthy, too, that in the discussion very little, in fact no, attention was bestowed on charters or distribution of powers. Nearly every address was devoted to the best means of bringing influence to bear on the voters in favor of better city government." See also Storey, "The Municipal Government of Boston," 61-71: "Finally, no charter, however skillfully framed, will accomplish its purpose without public spirit, which is the willingness to sacrifice something which one values for the public good."

ground and thereby recapture a lost harmony among divided urban constituencies. To create this unity, reformers set out to determine the common requirements for good city government upon which all would agree. In drafting a Municipal Program, they decided to enlist the leading national experts in municipal government, found in the emerging discipline of political science, to produce a model set of institutions for municipalities. What began as a movement to end corruption and awaken a higher sense of civic duty would soon become a movement for the structural reform of city government.

Chapter 2

Political Scientists and Urban Reform: Realism and Municipal Political Science in the 1890s

In 1900, an editorial in the *New York Times* commended the National Municipal League's recently published Municipal Program as "an experiment in the very best line of political education" that deserved "the highest praise." Contrasting the work of the League with that of previous municipal reformers, the *Times* noted that the Program was not narrow, dedicated to a single "cure-all" or "panacea," but rather the "result of the study, labor, and thought of many able and experienced men" working with great "patience and intelligence." The *Times* encouraged any of its readers who hoped better "to understand ... the chief difficulties in our city management and ... the best reasoned ways of dealing with them" to purchase the Program, "a really valuable set of suggestions regarding the essential points" of municipal government.¹

The "able and experienced men" selected to draft the Program embodied the League's efforts to include both "practical men of affairs" and "students and investigators." The "practical" men were Horace E. Deming, George W. Guthrie, Charles Richardson, and Clinton Rogers Woodruff, all lawyers and businessmen as well as active leaders in municipal reform circles. The "students and investigators" were Frank J. Goodnow, a professor of Administrative Law at Columbia, Leo Stanton Rowe, a professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, and Albert Shaw, the editor of the *Review of Reviews* who held a PhD in political science from Johns Hopkins University.²

¹ "The Municipal Programme," *The New York Times*, February 24, 1900, p. 6.

² Frank Mann Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform: The History of the National Municipal League* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), 28-29; Lloyd Graybar, *Albert Shaw of the Review of Reviews: An Intellectual Biography* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press), 16-29.

Despite this attempt to differentiate “practical” reformers and scholars, the biographies of the chosen participants reveal that the line between public activism and academic scholarship was as yet unclear. Their organizational affiliations and published writings alone indicate just how strongly these two worlds overlapped. Not only were all seven members of the National Municipal League in the 1890s, six would later join the American Political Science Association (APSA).³ Goodnow and Rowe both held academic positions and served as presidents of the APSA and the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, respectively.⁴ Though both penned largely academic books and articles, they also occasionally published articles in non-academic newspapers and magazines.⁵ Goodnow was also a public figure in reform politics in New York, a founder of the City Club and later the New York Bureau of Municipal Research and an influential member of Theodore Roosevelt’s charter commission in 1900.⁶ Albert Shaw was not only an editor and the author of two extremely popular books on municipal government in Europe, he was also a member of over a dozen reform organizations in New York City in the 1890s. Despite the fact that he never held an academic position, he too served as president of the American

³ Only Guthrie did not appear on the membership list. See “Members of the Association,” *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* 5 (1908): 7-23.

⁴ On Rowe, see Mark T. Berger, “Civilising the South: the U.S. Rise to Hegemony in the Americas and the Roots of ‘Latin American Studies,’ 1898-1945,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 12, no. 1 (January 1993): 8-9, 36; “Report of the Academy Committee on the Sixth Annual Meeting,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 20 (July 1902): 295. Rowe was born in 1872 and received his undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He then spent two years studying in Germany at the University of LaHalle, and in 1894 he returned to the University of Pennsylvania. By 1904, he was a full professor and department head, and he held these positions till 1917.

⁵ For examples, see Frank J. Goodnow, “Editorials by the Laity; Increase in Power of the Executive,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 14, 1906, p. B5; Frank J. Goodnow, “The National Municipal League’s Municipal ‘Program,’” *The Independent* 51, no. 2661 (November 30, 1899): 3228-30; Frank J. Goodnow, “Prussian Municipal Government,” *The Independent* 41, no. 2112 (May 23, 1889): 5-6. Rowe’s publications in popular journals were about Latin American politics, which in the years after the publication of the Municipal Program eclipsed his interest in municipal politics in the United States. For early examples, see L.S. Rowe, “The Awakening of Bolivia,” *The Independent* 68, no. 3071 (October 10, 1907): 861-62; L.S. Rowe, “The Era of Good Feeling in South America,” *The Independent* 68, no. 3068 (September 19, 1907): 686-91; L.S. Rowe, “Significance of the Porto Rican Problem,” *North American Review* 173, no. DXXXVI (July 1901): 35-40.

⁶ Lurton W. Blassingame, “Frank J. Goodnow and the American City” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1968), 14, 17.

Political Science Association.⁷ Deming was both a practicing lawyer and an extremely active leader in municipal reform circles in New York who also published several articles in the *American Political Science Review* and wrote a book on municipal government.⁸ Finally, Woodruff, as the secretary of the National Municipal League, came to be regarded as an expert in academic as well as reform circles, publishing dozens of articles and reviews for the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* and also several articles in *Political Science Quarterly*, and the *American Journal of Sociology*.⁹

In undertaking such a mix of professional and public roles in the 1890s, men such as these hoped to rectify what James Bryce called one of the gravest weaknesses of the of the American democratic system. In *The American Commonwealth* (1888), Bryce concluded that neither “political arrangements nor ... social and economic conditions” attracted the “best intellects and loftiest characters into public life.” As discussed in chapter one, he recognized that popular opinion played a powerful role in the American system of governance, but he stressed the important role of the few men who led public opinion, the members of the “active class” who concerned themselves with “public affairs.”¹⁰ But just who exactly were these men? When Bryce spoke at Johns Hopkins as a visiting lecturer, he

⁷ Lloyd J. Graybar, *Albert Shaw of the Review of Reviews*, 84; “Presidential Address,” *American Political Science Review* 1, no. 2 (February 1907): 177-86.

⁸ Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 29; Horace Deming, *The Government of American Cities* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1909); Horace Deming, “Municipal Nomination Reform,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 25 (March 1905): 1-15; Horace Deming, “A Municipal Program,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 17 (May 1901): 35-47.

⁹ For examples, see Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “The Municipal League of Philadelphia,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 3 (November 1905): 336-58; Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “The Nationalization of Municipal Movements,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 21 (March 1903): 100-08; Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “Philadelphia Street-Railway Franchises,” *American Journal of Sociology* 7, no. 2 (September 1901): 216-33; Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “The Complexity of American Governmental Methods,” *Political Science Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (June 1900): 260-72; Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “Executive Power and Constitutional Amendment,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 14 (November 1899): 60-64; Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “Protection of Workingmen – Legislation for the Protection of Working Men,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 14 (July 1899), 99-105.

¹⁰ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 3 vols. (1888; reprint, with an introduction by Gary L. McDowell, Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1995), 909-15, 1250-60.

implored professors and students to realize “the need of the scholar in politics.” Frederic Howe, who was a doctoral student at Hopkins when Bryce lectured, later remember that Bryce, reminding students of their “responsibility” and “duty,” “said that America, with no leisure class devoted to statecraft, as in Great Britain, was to be saved by the scholar.” Bryce inspired students to believe that through their own “disinterested service” they could realize “the ultimate ideal” of “the scholar in politics” and thereby provide the necessary leadership to solve the “political ills” of the day and save democracy.¹¹

Bryce’s appeal to scholars resonated with a special intensity in the nascent field of political science. With the founding of professional historical, economic, and sociological associations in the 1880s and 1890s, many scholars sought to distance themselves from conceptions of inquiry that equated investigation with reform.¹² This division came later in political science. The American Political Science Association was the last of the major social science associations to be formed in 1903. As the study of politics steadily took shape as separate discipline, distinct from law, sociology, economics, and history, practitioners worked to determine the parameters of their work and purpose of their profession. Political scientists confronted the dilemma of how to be both academics and leaders, for on the one hand, they sought to produce objective, scientific scholarship, while on the other, they sought to serve as public leaders by instructing citizens about their civic duties and guiding the course of political development.¹³

¹¹ Frederic C. Howe, *The Confessions of a Reformer* (1925; reprint, Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1988), 3, 5, 8, 22, 28, 57. Howe was a doctoral student from 1889-92. He studied political economy, history, and jurisprudence.

¹² Thomas Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Authority* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 101-04, 168-210.

¹³ Most histories of political science recognize this tension to an extent but tend to view the desire to serve as public leaders largely in educational terms, citing programs designed to inculcate a sense of civic duty among citizens. There is less emphasis on the desire to be leaders consulted by elected officials and reformers. See Stephen T. Leonard, “The Pedagogical Purposes of a Political Science,” *Political Science in History*, ed. James

The rise of the realist movement was an important impetus towards direct involvement in politics. This methodological critique called for abstract philosophical discussions to be replaced with detailed studies of “real” politics, for scholars to consider more than formal legal structures and turn their attention to the actual functioning of political institutions. The concept of the State, once treated as a near transcendental organic entity, became a governmental system with discrete branches to be studied. American political institutions, previously portrayed only as timeless and perfect ideals, became dynamic bodies, developing alongside a changing society and economy. Such an evolutionary understanding of political structures inspired many political scientists to attempt to become involved directly in this process of change, to have a role in shaping the future forms that government would take. Through their own detailed and impartial studies of past and present institutions, political scientists felt they were uniquely qualified to undertake analyses that would yield prescriptive programs for development.

Municipalities played a central role in the realist critique because they provided an opportunity to apply new methodological principles and to act as expert authorities to be consulted in the process of institutional reform.¹⁴ Scholars not only studied municipalities because of their reputation as corrupt and in need of reform but also as a branch of the larger

Farr, John S. Dryzek, Stephen T. Leonard (New York, NY: Cambridge, University Press, 1995), 67-74; David M. Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 66-70; Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus, *The Development of American Political Science: From Burgess to Behaviorism* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1967), 15-21, 42-48; Bernard Crick, *The American Science of Politics: Its Origins and Conditions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1959), xii, 21-36.

¹⁴ Both Michael Frisch and Helene Silverberg argue for the centrality of municipal reform for political scientists' desire to be of use and consequence in the real world of politics. Frisch, however, presents political scientists as more ideologically motivated, while Silverberg presents their public involvement as more calculated and instrumental, serving their larger ambitions for professional development. Michael H. Frisch, “Urban Theorists, Urban Reform, and American Political Culture in the Progressive Period,” *Political Science Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 295-315 (esp. 303); Helene Silverberg, “‘A Government of Men’: Gender, the City, and the New Science of Politics,” *Gender and American Social Science: The Formative Years*, ed. Helene Silverberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 156.

a governmental system. The relationship between municipal corporations and state governments became an important component of treatments of the American State. Moreover, the rising interest in administration also fostered a greater awareness of the significance of municipalities. The expansion of the range of functions assumed by urban government necessitated larger and more complex administrative structures. Discussions about the appropriate role of popular political participation in administrative decisions shaped discussions about how to reform the structure of municipal governments. Questions regarding the organization of the local system of government – about the powers of the mayor and council, about which officials were to be elected and appointed, and about the appropriate scope of governmental activities – all centered around the issue of how to create an administrative system that was at once efficient and free of corruption while also subject to popular control. In short, municipal government, with its perceived failings, its complicated relation to state government, and its importance in the growing field of administration, provided an ideal venue for political scientists to participate in important public political questions of the day, to establish their usefulness as professional experts.

Reform organizations such as the National Municipal League provided the perfect opportunity for scholars who sought to become publicly active. They provided a venue to be at the same time direct participants in and impartial analysts of the political process. Their realist principles compelled them to engage in studies of politics beyond the record of official legal documents, to use techniques of investigation and experience to probe the real working of institutions beyond formal laws. But their scientific aspirations also impelled them to act as unbiased observers. Political scientists shied away from direct participation in partisan politics because they it felt would compromise their position impartial authorities. Chapter

one detailed the emergence of the National Municipal League and hundreds of local leagues and good government clubs in the 1890s. Repudiating partisanship, these organizations were intended to undertake objective investigations to discover the principles of good city government and then organize public opinion in support of reform. Given such stated goals, reform organizations presented the perfect institutional form for political scientists to realize their public ambitions.¹⁵ Attending conferences, presenting papers, and participating in discussions organized by municipal reform associations allowed political scientists to establish themselves as expert specialists worthy of consultation on one of the most pertinent reform issues of the day. When the National Municipal League invited leading municipal political scientists to participate in the drafting of a Municipal Program intended to for the first time elucidate the “the essential principles that must underlie successful municipal government” and devise “a working plan or system ... for putting such principles into practical operation,” they eagerly agreed.¹⁶

This chapter analyzes the role of realism in the rise of municipal political science, and the following chapter turns to the influence of the work of the three leading “students” of political science on the Municipal Program. Together, they reveal the ways in which the Program served as important purpose for municipal political science and for municipal reformers alike. A close reading of the writings of Goodnow, Rowe, and Shaw illuminates a key difference of opinion over whether political scientists should focus on the structures of municipalities (i.e. their relation to the state, the powers of the mayor and the councils) or

¹⁵ While studies of the governmental system had moved beyond formal institutions to include political parties, bosses, and machines, they did not yet include voluntary associations and would not until c. 1910. Parties, then, were now more or less formally part of the political process and thus off limits to scholars; voluntary organizations remained apart and somehow still influential. The National Municipal League and similar voluntary groups thus enabled political scientists to realize their dual goals.

¹⁶ “Proceedings of the Louisville Conference and Third Annual Meeting,” *Proceedings of the Louisville Conference for Good City Government and the Third Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League Held May 5, 6, and 7, 1897* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1897), 6-7.

their functions (i.e. the construction of streets and sewers, the provision of utilities, etc.). While early discussions of function openly promoted the expansion of the range of activities of local government, political scientists soon turned to Goodnow's distinction between the two roles of government – the political and the administrative – to redirect the discussion of function away from advocacy and towards the now depoliticized realm of administration. The Program followed Goodnow's lead, and in so doing embodied a style of public activism that allowed political scientists to participate only as neutral experts imparting their knowledge of universally agreed upon apolitical fundamentals rather than as interested partisans advocating contested ideals.

Political Science in the 1880s and 1890s: The Emergence and Influence of Realism

From the founding of their profession as an academic discipline, political scientists faced the dilemma of balancing their commitments to scholarship and to political activism. Inspired by the German model of higher education that encouraged students to pursue their own interests and engage in original research, many American scholars returned from studies abroad to establish graduate programs of study at universities in the United States in the late 1800s. John W. Burgess founded the most well-known and influential of the schools of political science at Columbia University in 1880. The program at Columbia focused on scholarship but also aimed to prepare students to be public servants and leaders in America's democratic system. Concerned with the corruption of Gilded Age politics and interested in the movement for civil service reform, many political scientists also intended to use their discipline to train personnel for the administrative positions in the government. In short, as a profession, political science aspired to be involved directly in the political process but also to

develop as an academic discipline by creating scholars who would carry out investigations and accumulate data to further the objective “science” of politics.¹⁷

Scientific aspirations were the foundation of the goal of impartiality. Adherents of scientism hoped that by applying the methodology and concepts of the natural sciences to their own work, they could uncover facts about the political realm. For some, such an application encompassed abandoning preconceived ideals and engaging in a mode of inquiry that was objective and dispassionate and stressed original research and the collection of factual data. For others, it was part of an effort to discover fixed laws of politics. Initially, references to such laws derived from an application of Euclidian geometry and Newtonian physics to political life, but with the rising influence Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution in the natural sciences, students of politics soon began to apply evolutionary rather than mechanical models to their subject matter as well.¹⁸

For many, adopting an evolutionary paradigm in their studies involved the use of the historical-comparative method. For much of the nineteenth century, American academics utilized a deductive approach to reasoning, determining political truths based on *a priori* principles. In contrast, by the later 1800s, many increasingly advocated an inductive approach that insisted that scholars approach their subjects without preconceived notions about the generalizations that would arise from their analyses of the facts. Advocates of the

¹⁷ See note 13. Also, for more on the founding of the Political Science Department at Columbia specifically, see Hoxie, R. Gordon, *A History of the Faculty of Political Science, Columbia University* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955).

¹⁸ John S. Dryzek and David Schlosberg, “Disciplining Darwin: Biology in the History of Political Science,” *Political Science in History*, ed. James Farr, John S. Dryzek, Stephen T. Leonard (New York, NY: Cambridge, University Press, 1995), 127-28; Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 261; Dwight Waldo, “Political Science: Tradition, Discipline, Profession, Science, Enterprise,” *Political Science: Scope and Theory*, ed. Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1975), 28; Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science*, 60-69; Somit and Tanenhaus, *The Development of American Political Science*, 77; Martin Landau, “The Myth of Hyperfactualism in the Study of American Politics,” *Political Science Quarterly* 83, No. 3 (Sept. 1968): 383, 386, 390. For a detailed discussion of the influence of Darwinian ideas, see Crick, *The American Science of Politics*, 37-70.

inductive approach believed that only through careful examination and analysis of historical documents and/or detailed comparisons with other the governments of other countries (primarily European) could political scientists establish generalizations about the real world of politics.¹⁹ One important consequence of such detailed historical studies, inspired by evolutionary models, was a newfound assertion that political institutions were not fixed and ideal structures but rather dynamic participants in the evolving world of politics. By gathering and examining the “facts” of historical development, political scientists hoped to uncover the laws of progress.²⁰

The historical-comparative method, however, was not the only one available to political scientists, for as early as the 1880s a realist critique of the method had begun. Realism in political science further encouraged practitioners to make connections with the contemporary world of politics. Figures as prominent as Woodrow Wilson and James Bryce faulted practitioners of the historical-comparative approach for getting lost in detailed examinations of official documents and manuscripts and consequently producing only descriptive, legalistic accounts of formal institutions. Instead, they argued that political scientists needed to move beyond archival work and engage in a sort of field work, observing and talking to real political actors in the contemporary world.²¹

Bryce’s *The American Commonwealth*, with its detailed descriptions of the institutions of American government, including the party system, was a forerunner of this realist style. In his introduction to this massive three volume work, Bryce clearly presented his study as a work of political science of the realist vein, claiming “I have striven to avoid

¹⁹ Somit and Tanenhaus, *The Development of American Political Science*, 30-31.

²⁰ Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, 71, 260-65.

²¹ Waldo, “Political Science: Tradition, Discipline, Profession, Science, Enterprise,” 29-30; Somit and Tanenhaus, *The Development of American Political Science*, 69-71.

the temptations of the deductive method, and to present simply the facts of the case ... letting them speak for themselves rather than pressing upon the reader my own conclusions.” He felt that new descriptions of the United States were needed periodically because of the rapid pace of change, with new problems, ideas, and institutions to be explored. As such, *The American Commonwealth* did not contain a historical treatment of its subject, which lay beyond its scope. Bryce’s “chief aim” was contemporary – to present “a full and clear view of the facts of today.” And yet at the same time Bryce still hoped to make a larger contribution that went beyond the moment in which he wrote, to uncover some of the “general truths in social and political science,” the “laws of political biology.”²²

The influence of *The American Commonwealth* on the discipline of political science at the close of the nineteenth century cannot be overestimated. Not only was it very enthusiastically received by both the public and academia alike, it quickly became the most popular textbook on American politics in courses in colleges and universities.²³ This popularity was likely due at least in part to Bryce’s elevated vision of the proper function of political science. His expectation for the discipline presented schools of political science as analogous to schools of law, equally dedicated to academic scholarship and wider public practice. Political scientists were to be both scholars and activists.²⁴

There could be more than a small element of anti-democratic elitism in this understanding of the role of the scholar, for in elevating the value of experts, some political

²² Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 1-10.

²³ Frederic Howe later remembered that as a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University, *The American Commonwealth* “was at that time a work of Biblical authority” and noted that when Bryce “visited our seminar on politics, professors and students accepted his opinion as beyond and above question.” See Howe, *The Confessions of a Reformer*, 3. See also Anna Haddow, *Political Science in American Colleges and Universities, 1636-1900*, ed. and intro. by William Anderson (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1939), 249-250.

²⁴ Kenneth Fox, *Better City Government: Innovation in American Urban Politics, 1850-1937* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), 38-39.

scientists relegated the public to a very circumscribed role in the process of government. Like Bryce, Woodrow Wilson argued that political scientists should serve as intermediaries between the American people and their elected representatives, educating the public about its needs and its proper role as authoritative critic of the system.²⁵ Both in his academic work and his contributions to more popular publications, Wilson publicized his fears of the perils of excessive democracy.²⁶ In the “Character of Democracy in the United States,” published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1889, Wilson argued, “This vast and miscellaneous democracy of ours must be led; its giant faculties must be schooled and directed. Leadership cannot belong to the multitudes.” He explained that in America, “the sovereignty of the people” is really only a very limited sort of sovereignty, one that that merely “passes judgment or gives sanction.” Moreover, the large-scale of modern American democracy, according to Wilson, “necessitates the exercise of persuasive power by dominant minds in the shaping of popular judgments....”²⁷

The question that remained was how exactly political scientists hoped to exert their leadership as the “dominant minds,” how they planned to shape popular opinion. The expansion of governmental administration provided a sphere where political science hoped to assert its authority. By training civil servants and other specialists, political scientists hoped to exert their influence over this growing branch of the government through the propagation of the ideals of rational, disinterested service on behalf of the common good.²⁸ Many scholars, however, hoped to mold a far wider number of Americans. Text books and courses

²⁵ Raymond Seidelman, *Disenchanted Realists: Political Science and the American Crisis, 1884-1984*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 45, 52.

²⁶ Terence Ball, “An Ambivalent Alliance: Political Science and American Democracy,” *Political Science in History*, ed. James Farr, John S. Dryzek, Stephen T. Leonard (New York, NY: Cambridge, University Press, 1995), 44-47.

²⁷ Woodrow Wilson, “Character of Democracy in the United States,” *Atlantic Monthly* LXIV, no. CCCLXXXV (November 1889): 577-88. Quotations from p. 586.

²⁸ Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, 279.

on American government in high schools, colleges, and universities would perform the task of educating Americans about their duties as citizens. Participation in the major movements of the day – for the initiative and referendum, the direct election of senators, reform of the civil service, and the restructuring of municipal corporations – also helped political scientists to realize their aspirations as public leaders.²⁹

Yet when they sought to participate directly in political movements, they did not do so through political parties, but rather through “apolitical” reform associations. As part of their efforts to move beyond official laws and formal institutions of government and to examine the more informal world of “real” or “actual” politics, by the 1890s political scientists recognized the important function of parties, both in terms of their official structures and the unofficial bosses and rings that often controlled them.³⁰ Yet in their published treatments of the American political system, political scientists continued largely to ignore the role of voluntary organizations.³¹ In the field of municipal politics, not only did they ignore the strong role played by women’s activism in voluntary organizations in American cities, they also neglected the avowedly “non-partisan” municipal reform associations.³² Not viewing these organizations as partisan, and therefore political, was

²⁹ Waldo, “Political Science: Tradition, Discipline, Profession, Science, Enterprise,” 32-34.

³⁰ Landau, “The Myth of Hyperfactualism in the Study of American Politics,” 381-82.

³¹ Not until approximately 1910 did textbooks on municipal political science begin to discuss voluntary associations.

³² In an essay about political science and urban reform, Helene Silverberg argues that political scientists hoped to use rising interest in municipal reform to realize their aspirations to be public leaders. She faults the literature on municipal reform and the literature on the history of political science for ignoring gender and for assuming that academic descriptions of what constituted politics simply described a general consensus. Yet as Silverberg notes, the formative years of political science as a profession were also a period when women’s activism in voluntary and civic organizations, particularly in urban areas, challenged accepted notions of the how one could participate in the political process, previously held to be only through formal parties and elections. Silverberg thus goes on to ask why political science ignored women’s political involvement in such groups, why they defined popular political participation only in terms of parties and elections. Recognizing the mutual interaction between political science and municipal reform, her answer is partly that because political scientists wanted to be involved in municipal reform to make their profession influential outside academia, they accepted the narrow, gendered definition of politics put forth by reformers. Yet Silverberg’s claim that political

essential for scholars who wanted to at once be involved in politics and impartial and unbiased. For as long as organizations such as the National Municipal League and its hundreds of local affiliates through the country remained excluded from their definitions of political, political scientists were free to attend their meetings, present proposals, and guide their activities. In this way, then, participation in reform movements shaped the ideological content of political science, encouraging them to continue to ignore the very real position of urban reform organizations in the urban politics.

Later historians of political science have debated the extent to which the realists were able to realize their methodological goals, either congratulating them for beginning the move away from exclusive attention to formal laws and institutions or criticizing them for arriving at a still narrow understanding of political forces that only added parties to official forms without recognizing the myriad other relevant social and economic factors.³³ Yet perhaps the more important questions are why political scientists expanded their understanding of the meaning of political to include some factors and not others and what effect these inclusions and omissions had on their scholarship. It was obvious to many of their contemporaries that the proliferation of voluntary organizations and particularly those interested in matters of public policy was creating a new way for citizens to participate in the politics outside of the partisan electoral process.³⁴ Yet their own involvement in civic associations dedicated to urban reform prevented them from viewing the political nature of such groups. In order to justify their own involvement in these organizations, municipal political scientists had to

scientists ignored women's activities through such associations because "they did not have a direct male counterpart" is not entirely accurate. Women's organizations in cities, claiming apolitical, nonpartisan status and simple interest in furthering public welfare, in some ways did have a male counterpart in the municipal leagues and good government clubs of male reformers. See Silverberg, "A Government of Men," 156-59.

³³ Landau, "The Myth of Hyperfactualism in the Study of American Politics," 381-82.

³⁴ See Elisabeth S. Clemens, *The People's Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890-1925* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1-4.

believe that these groups were apolitical and devoted entirely to unearthing universal facts and truths necessary to attain good government.

Realism and the Development of Municipal Political Science, 1882-1900

While the realist movement ignored civic organizations, it did for the first time encourage political scientists to consider seriously the function of municipalities and political parties in the larger American system of government. Previously, critics had dismissed parties and urban machines as corrupt aberrations from the ideal republican government established by the founders.³⁵ Bryce, again, did much to change this line of analysis.³⁶ His account of urban politics and party bosses quickly became one of the most-cited sections of *The American Commonwealth*, particularly his contention that “the government of cities is the one conspicuous failure of the United States.” Although Bryce argued that the large pool of “ignorant” immigrant voters in cities bore much of the responsibility for the failures of municipal government, his analysis moved beyond this nativist critique with a discussion of the structural flaws of political institutions, including parties. When he argued that “[i]t must not be supposed that the members of rings, or the great bosses themselves are wicked men” and rather that “[t]hey are the offspring of a system,” he was self-consciously formulating a provocative argument.

³⁵ Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, 274.

³⁶ In a review of *The American Commonwealth*, Woodrow Wilson greatly praised Bryce and his systematic and unbiased approach, particularly in his section on “The Party System,” which he described as “the crowning achievement of the author’s method.” According to Wilson, for the first time, students of politics now had access to “a careful, dispassionate, scientific description of the ‘machine’” and “an accurately drawn picture of ‘bosses.’” Wilson did, however, fault Bryce for not including enough historical background, which he felt to be the fact that the book did not do enough to go beyond laws and institutions and address “the growth of the national idea and habit.” See Woodrow Wilson, “Bryce’s American Commonwealth,” *Political Science Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (March 1889): 159, 162-67.

Accordingly, when explaining the causes of the “conspicuous failure” of American cities, Bryce began with the problem of the “incompetence” and corruption of local officials but quickly moved on to discuss structural problems. He felt that such flaws as the interference of state legislatures in municipal matters, the lack of clear lines of responsibility and accountability in urban government, and the excessive number of elected positions all posed serious problems for cities. Greatly exacerbating all of these problems, however, was the party system itself. For the spoils system and other “[o]pportunities for illicit gains rising out of the possession of office” were major factors in the growth of rings and bosses in American cities.³⁷

Recognizing that much of *The American Commonwealth* consisted of general descriptions of America’s political institutions, Bryce included an entire section of “Illustrations and Reflections” to underscore his main arguments. The lead chapter in this section, written by Frank J. Goodnow, supported Bryce’s overview of machines with an account of “The Tweed Ring in New York City.”³⁸ Goodnow, although a relatively unknown lecturer in administrative law at Columbia University when he wrote the chapter on the Tweed Ring, soon became one of the most influential political scientists in the country on the basis of his pioneering work in municipal politics and administration.³⁹

³⁷ Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 572-575, 785, 794, 841.

³⁸ Frank J. Goodnow, “The Tweed Ring in New York City,” in *The American Commonwealth*, Vol. II., by James Bryce (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1888), 335-353. This chapter, as written by Goodnow, appeared only in the first edition of *The American Commonwealth* because it instigated a libel suit. Bryce revised it, tempering its tone and bolder assertions, and included it in the third edition in 1910. “Publisher’s Note,” *The American Commonwealth*, 3 vols. (1888; reprint, with an introduction by Gary L. McDowell, Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1995), xxxi. Bryce included several such chapters written by research assistants and relied on information provided by countless others in the chapters he wrote himself. Many prominent public figures were among those who aided Bryce in the gathering of data for his study – Thomas Cooley, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Woodrow Wilson, and Theodore Roosevelt to name only a few. McDowell, “Introduction,” xiv.

³⁹ Blassingame, “Frank J. Goodnow and the American City,” 9-11; Munroe Smith, “The Professional Life of Frank Johnson Goodnow,” *The Johns Hopkins Alumni Magazine* II (November 1913-June 1914): 277.

*The City as Part of the Governmental System:
Municipal-State Relations in the Writings of Frank J. Goodnow*

Goodnow's interest in municipalities developed out of his background in law. He graduated from Columbia Law School in 1882 and worked as a clerk for Judge John F. Dillon before he began his academic career. The experience of working with Dillon likely influenced Goodnow's later work greatly, for Dillon's published writings on urban government played an integral role in the rise of municipal affairs as popular and dynamic subfield of political science. Dillon, a renowned legal scholar, believed that municipalities were not autonomous political entities but rather subordinate creatures of the state.⁴⁰ Dillon's rule thus permitted only a very limited sphere of action for city government by claiming that municipalities possessed only the powers expressly permitted or clearly implied by their charters. Previous legal doctrine had bestowed upon state courts the power to review charters and thus to determine the scope and structure of municipal law. Dillon's rule granted this right to state legislatures, making municipal law a political rather than a legal subject.⁴¹ Goodnow, with his legal background and experience working for Dillon, was perfectly positioned to develop a new field of municipal affairs for the discipline political science.⁴² When offered the opportunity to travel to Europe in 1882 to pursue further study

⁴⁰ David J. Barron, "The Promise of Cooley's City: Traces of Local Constitutionalism," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 147, no. 3 (January 1999): 8-14. Dillon's ruling is quoted on page 8.

⁴¹ Fox, *Better City Government*, 25-33.

⁴² Helene Silverberg presents a slightly different account of political science's interest in municipal affairs. With law schools expanding and professionalizing in the 1880s and also increasingly exploring constitutional matters, political scientists realized that they were losing their exclusive claim to this domain. Dillon's rule and its implication that municipal law was a legislative as opposed to judicial concern made municipal affairs a topic for political rather than legal experts. According to Silverberg, political scientists, opportunistically working to carve out a professional niche, "set out to make this territory their own. Frank J. Goodnow ... was the first political scientist to recognize this opportunity for his discipline." See Silverberg, "'A Government of Men,'" 166.

and upon his return fill a vacant position in administrative law at Columbia's School of Political Science, he accepted.⁴³

Although Goodnow's early works show little indication of the liberal Progressive politics he would advocate by the 1910s, the methodology he employed clearly marked him as an innovator within the discipline of political science.⁴⁴ In Europe, he studied at the University of Berlin and the Ecole Libre de Sciences Politiques in Paris. He was greatly influenced by the Professor Rudolph von Gneist in Berlin, particularly his insights about the need to go beyond formal, legal institutions and explore the administrative structure in order to understand the real workings of government.⁴⁵ His early articles on English local government clearly demonstrate these influences, with their critical discussion of English institutions not as an ideal system but rather as a somewhat haphazard amalgam of historical developments and innovations, with political changes following social and economic changes.⁴⁶

Yet while Goodnow's emphasis on the gap that often separated the formal and actual systems of government was provocative, his early works focused almost exclusively on the reform of the structure of government without discussing the objectives and functions of those structures. Not until 1909 would his work on municipal government more fully

⁴³ Smith, "The Professional Life of Frank Johnson Goodnow," 277.

⁴⁴ Later political scientists would critique Goodnow and other early realists for not realizing their stated goals. While they advocated transcending mere abstract discussions of theory and formal considerations of legal doctrine, in their own work they focused mainly on governmental institutions and political parties. Nevertheless, their interest in uncovering the actual locations of power as opposed to those defined by constitution and statute alone marked a significant advance. See Landau, "The Myth of Hyperfactualism in the Study of American Politics," 380-81.

⁴⁵ Blassingame, "Frank J. Goodnow and the American City," 9-10.

⁴⁶ Frank J. Goodnow, "Local Government in England," *Political Science Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (Dec. 1887): 638-665; Frank J. Goodnow, "The English Local Government Bill," *Political Science Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (June 1888), 311-33.

address social and economic forces in urban politics.⁴⁷ His near exclusive discussion of governmental institutions without regard to social and economic contexts in which they functioned is in part explained by Goodnow's intention to write as an apolitical and objective academic, not a reformer, as a scientist focused on only the most concrete institutions.

Interest in the institutions of municipal government can be understood only as part of larger discussion about the concept of the state and its usefulness for political science. The concept of the state, originating in Continental Europe, particularly Germany, helped to differentiate political science from the other social sciences and the law, providing it with a distinct subject matter. The state did not simply signify the government but rather a more abstract, organic conception of the political community in a given nation.⁴⁸ For political scientists like John Burgess, the state was the transcendent spirit of the people of a nation, an *a priori* ideal rather than something to be found in the institutions of the government.⁴⁹

Rejecting conceptions of the state based on natural law and social contract theories, political scientists increasingly understood the state as the source of power and sovereignty out of

⁴⁷ Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, 259; Blassingame, "Frank J. Goodnow and the American City," 78; R.T. Daland, "Political Science and the Study of Urbanism," *American Political Science Review* 51, no. 2 (1957): 494. Blassingame even goes so far as to claim, "As always, when venturing on economic or social ground was vulnerable, if not demonstrably incorrect. He consequently wrote very little about the economic and social aspects of city government." Some of these early works do, however, make brief mention of social and economic forces, although they do not present a consistent position. For example, echoing the nativism present in much of *The American Commonwealth*, Goodnow's chapter on the Tweed Ring stated that "The middle classes, which had thus far controlled the municipal government, were displaced by an ignorant proletariat, mostly of foreign birth, which came under the sway of ambitious political leaders and was made to subserve [sic] schemes of political corruption such as had not before been conducted on American soil." See Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 335. Yet in an essay published a year later, Goodnow spoke of the potential of the Prussia's new administrative structures to end "conflict between social classes," later specifically mentioning that the nobility and bourgeoisie tended to "crush" the "laboring classes ... under enormous burdens." See Frank J. Goodnow, "Local Government in Prussia I," *Political Science Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (December 1889): 649, 651. This analysis implies that Goodnow assumed reforming structure could bring about an improvement in the function of local government, even if he did not discuss the latter at any length.

⁴⁸ John D. Gunnell, "The Declination of the 'State' and the Origins of American Pluralism," *Political Science in History*, ed. James Farr, John S. Dryzek, Stephen T. Leonard (New York, NY: Cambridge, University Press, 1995), 21.

⁴⁹ Frisch, "Urban Theorists, Urban Reform, and American Political Culture in the Progressive Period," 299.

which the law developed.⁵⁰ Additionally, part of the larger move towards realism involved a desire to treat the state less as a speculative ideal and more as a real subject to be examined empirically, less as an indivisible, organic body and more as an entity with distinctive components.⁵¹ Newer research thus centered on such tangible and discrete topics as public law, administration, and municipalities.⁵²

For Goodnow, such understandings of the State helped him to view municipalities as part of the governmental system, and, as such, he began to explore the nature of the relationship between local, state, and national government. According to Goodnow, to discover “what the city really is,” one must “treat the city rather as part of the governmental system than as an isolated phenomenon.”⁵³ The most prominent topic running through Goodnow’s early work on local government was the nature of the relationship between the central (or state) and local government. He began to explore this theme in his writings on the Tweed Ring and English local government, but it was not until his work on Prussian municipalities that Goodnow developed his own ideal of appropriate city-state relations.

The connection between Goodnow’s interest in municipalities and in administrative structures becomes clear in his admiration of the Prussian system of local government. In a series of essays for *Political Science Quarterly* in 1889 and 1890, Goodnow explained that unlike in the United States, where, as per Dillon’s rule, municipal corporations were only authorized to undertake actions expressly granted in their charters, the Prussian system granted municipalities general powers to control their own affairs and regulated matters of

⁵⁰ William Novak, “The Legal Origins of the Modern American State” (paper presented at Harvard Business School, 2003), 24.

⁵¹ Leonard, “The Pedagogical Purposes of a Political Science,” 74-75.

⁵² Frisch, “Urban Theorists, Urban Reform, and American Political Culture in the Progressive Period,” 301-302. See also John D. Gunnell, “The Declination of the ‘State’ and the Origins of American Pluralism,” 21-23; Leonard, “The Pedagogical Purposes of a Political Science,” 74-75; Waldo, “Political Science: Tradition, Discipline, Profession, Science, Enterprise,” 30-32; Crick, *The American Science of Politics*, 26.

⁵³ Quoted in Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, 275.

common concern through central *administrative* rather than *legislative* control. Goodnow felt that this arrangement provided municipalities with autonomy to determine their own needs while enabling the central authority to control those functions that municipalities carried out on behalf of the central state.⁵⁴ This system combined powerful councils on the local level with centralized administrative control on the state level. It allowed states to regulate only uniform administrative matters, retaining legislative decision-making for political matters in cities.

Expanding upon his early interests in the relations of the central state to the municipality, Goodnow published *Municipal Home Rule* in 1895. Although other academics had recognized the relations of the states and the cities as contributing to the shortcomings of urban government, Goodnow was the first to devote detailed and thorough study to the topic.⁵⁵ With this first book on the urban problems in the United States, Goodnow established himself as one of the foremost experts on the laws governing American cities. *Municipal Home Rule* remained the authority on the topic for over twenty years.⁵⁶ Here, he rejected Dillon's rule and presented an alternative legal definition of the municipality in the United States. Goodnow believed that municipalities performed two functions, acting both as organizations for the satisfaction of local needs and as agents of the state. According to Goodnow, this dual nature provided the key to a fuller understanding of American cities – on the one hand private corporations devoted to the needs of local populations, while on the other agents of the state, governmental institutions concerned with the general welfare. In

⁵⁴ Frank J. Goodnow, "Local Government in Prussia I," *Political Science Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (December 1889): 665-66; Frank J. Goodnow, "Local Government in Prussia II," *Political Science Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (March 1890), 150.

⁵⁵ See, for example, William M. Ivins, "Municipal Government," *Political Science Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (June 1887), 291-312. Ivins discussed the need to divide more clearly the two functions of municipalities – the public and governmental versus the private and corporate (295-298, 304).

⁵⁶ Blassingame, "Frank J. Goodnow and the American City," 44, 53-54.

this context, he recognized the right of states to act in matters of a public and governmental nature. The problem was that legislatures had forgotten that municipalities also dealt with matters that were purely private and corporate. When states attempted to regulate purely “local matters,” they infringed “upon the domain of municipal home rule.”⁵⁷ Therefore, while Goodnow dismissed those advocating complete municipal home rule as naïve given the exigencies of modern government, he provided many reformers with a more sophisticated, nuanced basis for advocating a wider sphere of local autonomy.⁵⁸

*Cities Defined:
Structure, Function, and the Scope of Municipal Political Science in the work of
Frank J. Goodnow, Albert Shaw, and Leo S. Rowe*

The definition of cities played an important role in determining the scope and subject matter of municipal political science. While Goodnow’s argument for the dual nature of cities was provocative in that it directly challenged Dillon’s rule, thereby justifying the need for a sphere of home rule, it was also narrow and legalistic. Critics felt that such a definition ignored the more intangible quality of urban life. In contrast, these detractors portrayed cities as social and cultural organisms, communities of individuals bound together by a sense of civic pride.⁵⁹ In part, this division mirrored the larger realist transformation of political science as a profession, with older, more abstract ideals of the State giving way to treatments

⁵⁷ Frank J. Goodnow, *Municipal Home Rule: A Study in Administration* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1895), 15, 18, 43, 54. Goodnow summarized “the sphere of home rule or local, private action assigned to municipal corporations by the American law” as “merely the powers to undertake and maintain public works of peculiar interest to them, and to acquire and hold property both for the purposes of such public works and for the general purposes of revenue” (229).

⁵⁸ Anwar Hussain Syed, *The Political Theory of American Local Government* (New York: Random House, 1966), 94-98.

⁵⁹ Historian Michael Frisch identifies the two major schools of thought on the nature of municipalities as the “cultural organicist” model and Goodnow’s dual agents of the state/organs for the satisfaction of local needs formulation. See Frisch, “Urban Theorists, Urban Reform, and American Political Culture in the Progressive Period,” 304.

of the American polity as a governmental system. Many scholars in the 1890s in fact described cities in both organic and legal terms in their writings. Yet as the influence of the realist movement grew, a more divisive split among municipal political scientists emerged in the debate over structure versus function.

The debate over whether political scientists should focus on the structures of municipalities (i.e. their relation to the state, the powers of the mayor and the councils) or their functions (i.e. the construction of streets and sewers, the provision of utilities) illuminates the struggle of political scientists to balance advocacy and objectivity. Almost without exception, political scientists supported some form of expansion in local government. Yet the specialized study of the legal structure of political institutions was integral to the formation of political science as a discipline, part of claiming this territory as belonging to schools of politics rather than law. Moreover, the careful description and classification of the organization of municipal corporations helped frame politics as a subject of science. Accordingly, those who wrote largely about municipal structures, particularly Goodnow, claimed the status of objective and scientific scholars. Those who emphasized functions, in contrast, more openly advocated a wider sphere of local activity. Yet discussions of function also logically emerged from the realist goal of examining the actual workings of government beyond the formal legal structures.

Both groups turned to European cities to frame their prescriptive writings as objective analyses. European organizational comparisons played a similar role for structural and functional political scientists alike.⁶⁰ Scholars could argue that their proposals to reform the legal foundations of the American city were not unprecedented and radical, but rather founded on centuries of European experiences. Rather than framing their work with the

⁶⁰ For more on the use of the term “functionalism” in political science, see note 21 in the introduction.

abstractions of political theory and philosophy, they were able to utilize European examples in constructing their arguments about the shortcomings, and in rare cases, the strengths, of municipalities in the United States. They could cloak their prescriptive analyses in the language of comparative science, realism, and experience and even universalize their conclusions as fundamental to good city government everywhere.

Both the division between emphases on structure and function and the tension between scholarship and advocacy are illuminated in the published dialogue among three of the most prominent experts in municipal political science. Goodnow and Albert Shaw both served as presidents of the American Political Science Association. Yet Goodnow, with his largely academic publications and his position as a professor of administrative law, represented the legal and academic faction of municipal political science, focusing almost exclusively on structure. Albert Shaw, more of a public intellectual, combined a strong academic background with his work as editor of the *Review of Reviews* and the publication of several books aimed at both popular and academic audiences. In this role, Shaw openly critiqued those scholars and reformers who focused exclusively on structure and freely advocated the expansion of municipal functions. Leo S. Rowe, a third prominent municipal political scientist, mediated between these two positions.

In an essay that probed the nature of political science as a discipline, Rowe called for the study of a more “dynamic politics” that examined political institutions not in a vacuum but in their wider ideological, economic, and social contexts. He insisted that their scholarship “must go beyond the organized political forms.” He went on to explain the ideological component to this call, citing the need to explore “the relation between institutions and ideas” and “the adjustment of such institutions to the needs of the

community.” At the same time, he urged his fellow political scientists to pay close attention to “economic facts,” “economic relations,” and “new standards of conduct” in society. The way to achieve this, Rowe concluded, was to focus on function: “We must examine political institutions, primarily with reference to the functions they are intended to perform in a particular environment.”⁶¹

Though Rowe’s own writings on municipalities were largely technical descriptions of administrative departments, they also openly advocated the expansion of municipal functions as part of the author’s vision of democratic progress. His study of Philadelphia’s gas supply was extremely detailed in its description of complex legal structures, but it also made the author’s faith in what he termed the potential of the “relation between municipal activity and social progress” quite clear. He celebrated the effectiveness of public gas works in English, Scottish, and German cities and even claimed that the “future of our democratic institutions” in America depended on our ability to “develop an equally efficient administration.”⁶²

Rowe’s hopes for the potential of the municipalities made clear that he felt the reorganization of formal structures was not sufficient to bring about change. He stressed the importance of “social solidarity and civic responsibility” in urban public life and concluded “that the problem of city government ... involves more than the question of governmental organization or reorganization. Its successful solution requires ... such a change in the life and thought of the people as will bring an increasing number of city services into organic, vital relations with the daily life, the pleasures and recreations of the whole population.”⁶³

⁶¹ L. S. Rowe, “The Problems of Political Science,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 10 (September 1897): 25, 38.

⁶² L. S. Rowe, “The Municipality and the Gas Supply, as Illustrated by the Experience of Philadelphia,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 11 (May 1898): 23.

⁶³ L. S. Rowe, “The City in History,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 5, no. 6 (May 1900): 744-45.

Like Rowe, Albert Shaw began with an organic conception of cities to argue for an expansion of municipal functions. In *Municipal Government in Great Britain* and *Municipal Government in Continental Europe*, both published in 1895, the same year as Goodnow's *Municipal Home Rule*, Shaw wrote about European cities more in moral and ethical than legal terms. He celebrated the growing spirit of collectivism in modern cities as well as the increasing awareness of the role of cities as "political and social organisms" that played important roles in the physical and social welfare of their people.⁶⁴

Shaw also passionately argued for the need to focus on the functions of municipalities. From his perspective, the "mechanism of municipal government is a secondary matter."⁶⁵ Shaw explained that in his books he had "tried to explain intelligibly the structure and working of the municipal machinery" but added that he "considered it a no less essential part of my task to describe the transformation of street-systems, and the measures by which death rates have been reduced." He went on to explain that he felt this emphasis was so important because American reformers had "lost sight of the aims and objects of government in striving after good government as an end in itself." Excessively focused on "the structure and the mechanism" of municipalities, they "perpetually" reorganized local governments without devoting any real thought to their purpose. Shaw contrasted the endeavors of American reformers with those of the "Germans of our generation" who had "taken their old framework of city government as they found it" and

⁶⁴ Albert Shaw, *Municipal Government in Great Britain* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901 [1895]), 8.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Era* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 133.

had “proceeded to use it for new and wonderful purposes, ... not allowing its defects to paralyze the varied activities of the household.”⁶⁶

As this assessment of German cities begins to suggest, Shaw used European models to support his call to reform American municipalities.⁶⁷ Despite his protests and claims that Americans “must deal with our own problems in our own way,” Shaw clearly felt Americans had much to learn from European municipal endeavors. Shaw’s faith in the potential benefits of European models was founded on his belief that the challenges facing American and European cities were fundamentally “similar in all their essential characteristics.” For this reason, Shaw hoped that Americans would learn from “the lessons European cities have to teach,” would be willing to gain “all possible enlightenment from the experience of others.” He hoped that “through the process of comparison and induction,” we would be able “to establish certain fundamental principles and methods that must have place in the wide and permanent ordering of the affairs of any modern industrial community, in whatever portion of the world.” And for Shaw, these “fundamental principles” clearly involved an expansion in the scope of municipal government, and he hoped that a “general familiarity with their attempts and achievements ... might stimulate [Americans] to adopt broader and more generous municipal programs.”⁶⁸ While Shaw as a public figure openly advocated a dramatic increase in the activities undertaken by municipalities, he repeatedly sought to

⁶⁶ Shaw, *Municipal Government in Great Britain*, vi-vii, 8, 304-5; Albert Shaw, *Municipal Government in Continental Europe* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906 [1895]).

⁶⁷ Historian Daniel T. Rogers thoroughly documents the wide range of subjects for which American politicians and reformers felt that European models and ideas were potentially applicable and even beneficial from the 1870s through the start of the Second World War. He also notes the important position of urban areas in such exchanges, because for the Progressives cities, alive with “social possibilities,” were integral to the “the transatlantic revolt against laissez-faire.” After detailing the widespread influence of Shaw and other like-minded writers, Rogers concludes that the example of European municipalities was pivotal in the shift from programs of reform dedicated only to “honest” and “efficient” government to those advocating more active, positive programs for municipalities, an expansion in the functions of local government. See Rogers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 3-4, 112-13, 137.

⁶⁸ Shaw, *Municipal Government in Great Britain*, vii, 2, 18-19.

frame the potential of such an increase as one that had been proven by real-world European experiences.

Goodnow and Rowe both published reviews of Shaw's two books, and while Rowe favorably assessed their value, Goodnow was more critical. In the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Rowe celebrated Shaw's treatments of the "economic problems" and "the social activities" of municipalities as useful not only "to the student of local institutions" but also "to the economist and sociologist."⁶⁹ Goodnow, of course, vehemently disagreed with Shaw's dismissal of the importance of structure. Although his review of Shaw's *Municipal Government in Great Britain* in *Political Science Quarterly* praised many aspects of the book, Goodnow criticized Shaw for not recognizing the important structural differences between British and American municipalities that allowed the former to attain "good municipal government." He faulted Shaw for not paying "sufficient attention" to the detriments of "the fact of continual legislative interference" in the United States.⁷⁰ Further developing this critique of Shaw's treatment of urban government in his review of *Municipal Government in Continental Europe*, Goodnow openly stated that Shaw's critical attitude towards the interest of the American reformer in "structure and mechanism" detracted "from the value of both books." He highlighted Shaw's "tendency to look with indifference if not scorn on the details of municipal organization,"

⁶⁹ L. S. Rowe, review of *Municipal Government in Great Britain*, by Albert Shaw, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 5 (May 1895): 146, 148-49. Rowe's review of *Municipal Government in Continental Europe* reiterated this assessment, noting that even more that the previous was "an examination of Continental cities and city life from the social and economic rather than from the administrative point of view" and that it contained valuable information for "the sociologist, the economist and statistician." See L. S. Rowe, review of *Municipal Government in Continental Europe*, by Albert Shaw, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 7 (May 1896): 116-17.

⁷⁰ Here, he also questioned Shaw's assessment that the English practice of separating "the general functions of government over which the legislature or some central authority must exercise a control, from the purely local business in which the municipal corporation should have a pretty free hand" was "unsound." For Goodnow, this "differentiation of function" provided the key to the superiority of British local government. See Frank J. Goodnow, review of *Municipal Government in Great Britain*, by Albert Shaw, *Political Science Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (March 1895): 172-73.

particularly pointing to the insufficient emphasis on the importance of the administration and “the relation of the Continental city to the central government.”⁷¹

For Goodnow, there could be no discussion of function without structure, for only with the correct structures could municipalities undertake the necessary functions. As he made clear in his early articles on English and Prussian local government and in *Municipal Home Rule*, Goodnow believed cities needed a sphere of home rule, free from legislative interference by the state, in order to perform the functions necessary for the welfare of the local population. “Proper organization of municipal institutions, selection of competent and upright municipal officers, and civic patriotism are all necessary.” But without first ascertaining “the sphere of municipal government” and securing “an ample degree of local autonomy,” Goodnow felt that “little progress in municipal government reform” would be possible.⁷² As these statements suggest, while Goodnow would never devote the detail to the functions of urban government that Shaw did, he did not totally dismiss their importance. While Shaw argued that the focus of reformers on structure took valuable attention and energy away from the real purposes of municipalities, Goodnow felt that good structure was a precursor to accomplishing the necessary and beneficial functions of city government.

Yet despite their clearly divergent styles and interests, Goodnow, like Shaw, also grounded his claims about the solutions for the problems facing American cities with European examples.⁷³ As we have seen, his arguments about the dual nature of cities and

⁷¹ Frank J. Goodnow, review of *Municipal Government in Continental Europe*, by Albert Shaw, *Political Science Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (March 1896): 158-60.

⁷² Goodnow, *Municipal Home Rule*, 272.

⁷³ Rogers’ analysis of the influence of European models correctly highlights their importance in mounting arguments to expand the functions of municipalities, but he neglects their similar importance in arguments for structural reform. According to Rogers, American reformers did not have to base their arguments on abstract economic theories as they worked to expand the legitimate boundaries of city government. “What the European precedents did was to give the American urban progressives a set of working, practical examples.” Yet Rogers also claims that these reformers, in making their case for functional expansion, minimized the importance of

appropriate city-state relations grew out of his studies of English and Prussian cities. He began *Municipal Home Rule* by telling his readers that he would include references to European municipalities throughout the text “in order to ascertain if we may hope to learn anything from the experiences of those who have had the same problems as we have had to solve, and who, it seems to be generally admitted, have been more successful than we have been in their solution.”⁷⁴ He strongly advocated comparative analyses, in one article complimenting the architect of a Prussian local government bill for formulating his plans based on a careful study “of the laws of other countries” and on “experience” rather than his own “inner consciousness.”⁷⁵ The examples to be found in the experiences of European cities enabled Goodnow to present his prescriptive analyses under the veil of scholarly objectivity.

Rowe admired Goodnow’s work here and in *Municipal Home Rule* as realizing his ideals of quality scholarship in political science. His review of *Municipal Problems* said as much, celebrating the two books as together “the first systematic attempt to determine the position of the municipality in our political system” and reserving for Goodnow “an exceptional place in the literature of American political institutions.” He identified *Municipal Problems* as “in the main a legal discussion” but went on to praise the manner in which Goodnow approached legal matters, adding that he had “happily avoided the great danger in this method of treatment, namely, that of considering one part of a system isolated from the other institutions to which it belongs, and of which it forms a part.” Additionally,

structure because the organization of European cities was completely different. See Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 143-44. While this assessment may apply to Shaw, it does not apply to Goodnow and others. Goodnow, as we have seen, repeatedly emphasized the ways in which American and European cities were organized differently.

⁷⁴ Goodnow, *Municipal Home Rule*, 10.

⁷⁵ Goodnow, “Local Government in Prussia I,” 649.

he admired Goodnow's inclusion of a discussion of the theories upon which the legal structures of municipalities and his resulting recognition "that a change in the organization of our municipal governments rests upon a modification of our political ideas and of the method of reasoning in municipal matters."⁷⁶

In part due to this legalistic style, Goodnow more than Shaw was able firmly to establish his assessment of municipal structures and city-state relations as an objective work of political science. Treatments of function, still prone to more overt sponsorship, continued to walk the line between scholarship and public advocacy. In Goodnow's next project, however, he promoted a new way to discuss municipal functions within a framework of scientific neutrality. With the concept of administration, political scientists would find a tool to discuss municipal functions as an apolitical matter involving only the revelation of the fundamental and universal laws of government.

**Politics and Administration:
Goodnow's "Fundamental Theory" of Municipal Government**

The Concept of Administration

In 1900, with the publication *Politics and Administration: A Study in Government*, Goodnow established himself as one of the leading political scientists of the day, reaching well-beyond the subfield of municipal political science. Here, he defined the two purposes of government as politics, the expression of the people's will, and administration, the execution

⁷⁶ L.S. Rowe, review of *Municipal Problems*, by Frank J. Goodnow, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 11 (March 1898): 116-18.

of that will.⁷⁷ This theory directly stemmed from his previous work on municipalities, but its influence was so widespread that it is generally credited with spearheading the entire field of public administration.⁷⁸ Although it was pivotal in claiming the growing field of administration as part of the domain of political science, Goodnow's famous distinction also played a leading role in the depoliticization of administration, the functional side of government. In so doing, it shaped future debates about how to balance the need for democratic accountability and technocratic expertise in governmental administration.

Before Goodnow, Woodrow Wilson pioneered the study of administration by political scientists as part of the move towards realism. His writings on administration reflected his conviction that political science needed to move beyond abstract ideals and contend with practical questions of the daily functioning of government. They also supported his belief that government must adapt to keep up with the changing needs of society. He felt that Americans concentrated too much on the process of making the Constitution, which was long completed, and too little on the construction of the administration, which was an important contemporary endeavor.⁷⁹

In an article entitled "The Study of Administration" (1887), Wilson outlined his views. Administration was "government in action," and, in the face of social change, it was "everywhere putting its hands to new undertakings." Wilson, who believed that governments evolved through stages of development, portrayed the State here not a static ideal, but rather something that changed over time as its duties expanded. The administration was the most dynamic sphere of government at this time and thus most in need of careful study and

⁷⁷ Frank Goodnow, *Politics and Administration: A Study in Government* (1900; reprint with an introduction by John A. Rohr, Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publications, 2003), 18.

⁷⁸ Waldo, "Political Science: Tradition, Discipline, Profession, Science, Enterprise," 81, 105.

⁷⁹ Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, 274-75.

organization. America's democratic culture and its elevation of public opinion as the source of political sovereignty made an efficient administrative system more difficult to form here than under European monarchical systems. Nevertheless, Wilson advocated a centralized administration with large powers as found in many countries in continental Europe. He reconciled the needs for bureaucratic consolidation and democratic control by insisting that the administrative realm lay outside the sphere of politics. Administration, the simple application and execution of the law, required a concentration of power but also of responsibility, with public opinion acting as an informed and authoritative, but not meddling, critic.⁸⁰

Much like Wilson, Goodnow came to the study of administration through his realist convictions. Goodnow began *Politics and Administration* with the standard critique that most governmental scholars studied only official laws and structures and thus failed "to get back of formal governmental organization and examine the real political life of the people." He went on to suggest "the character of a governmental system is determined just as much by extra-legal as by legal institutions." Echoing Rowe's call for a "dynamic politics" that did not treat political institutions as constants, Goodnow's wrote that as soon a constitution was ratified, "political forces begin at once to interpret it and amend it until the actual political system becomes, almost without the knowledge of the people, quite different from the system as outlined in the constitution itself." The result was that "the actual system of government may be changed long before the formal government is changed." The evolutionary process

⁸⁰ Woodrow Wilson, "The Study of Administration," *Political Science Quarterly* II, no. 2 (June 1887): 197-222. Quotations from pp. 198, 202

particularly applied to the growth of administrative systems outside formal constitutional law.⁸¹

In arguing that there were only two functions of government - the expression of the people's will and the execution of that will, Goodnow challenged Montesquieu's premise of a separation of powers between the judicial, executive, and legislative branches of government. In theory, the function of expression fell to the legislative branch and of execution to the judicial and executive branches. In practice, however, Goodnow realized that it was impossible to create completely separate organs to carry out these functions. The problem was that the American constitution attempted to incorporate the "somewhat nebulous" theory of separation of powers as a formal and "rigid legal doctrine." Inflexibly applied, this theory became "unworkable and unapplicable" in practice because "governmental power cannot be clearly apportioned." For example, Goodnow pointed to the presidential veto, which brought the executive into the legislative sphere. He thus concluded that "while the two primary functions of government are susceptible of differentiation, the organs of government to which the discharge of these functions is intrusted cannot be clearly defined."⁸² In other words, for Goodnow, the distinction between politics and administration was a functional one, not a description of separate branches of government.

Politics and Administration developed out of Goodnow's theories on municipalities, particularly state-city relations, and as such, his application of his ideas about the need for separation and integration are clearest when applied to this topic. Goodnow began by explaining to his readers the dual nature of municipalities as agents of the state and organizations for the satisfaction of local needs. When considered alongside the present

⁸¹ Goodnow, *Politics and Administration*, 1-7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 11, 16, 20-21.

condition of legislative centralization and administrative decentralization, Goodnow argued that the American system was both illogical and impracticable. If the state legislature passed a policy opposed by urban residents, the municipal administrative organs might simply not carry it out. In other words, the body that expressed the state will had no way to ensure its execution.⁸³

Goodnow offered his plan of administrative centralization and legislative decentralization as a solution that would ensure both a more effective means of exercising state power and a more significant degree of local autonomy. The state had to maintain some control over municipalities in their role as agents of the state. If it exercised that control through an administrative branch, the state could simply make sure that municipalities did not violate any of the general provisions of powers granted them. Municipalities, in turn, had a greater opportunity to decide how to implement those administrative provisions.⁸⁴

Goodnow argued that municipalities were primarily administrative entities. By this, he did not mean that bureaucrats rather than politicians should control urban governments. Instead, recognizing that fact that municipalities only had the power to pass ordinances and not laws, they therefore could not be considered sovereign, Goodnow sought to secure the widest degree of autonomy possible for cities as administrative agents. In this way, even though he did not represent municipalities as political arms expressing the will larger state government, he created a sphere of local decision making to express local will on how to execute state policies.⁸⁵

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 47-71. Frisch, "Urban Theorists, Urban Reform, and American Political Culture in the Progressive Period," 308-11 is also especially useful in sorting out Goodnow's rather complicated, often unclear argument.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Municipal Problems: The Executive and the Legislative

The relation between the political and the administrative in Goodnow's thinking also becomes clearer if we look back to *Municipal Problems*, published three years earlier in 1897. While *Municipal Home Rule* had made the case for an expanded sphere of local autonomy, with this book Goodnow turned to the question of how a city should govern itself within that sphere. He began by asserting that the limitations of urban governments derived from the fact that most of charters were not based on any "fundamental theory," but rather an amalgam of "all the great waves of general political thought which have swept over the country during the past century." He went on to specify that despite a nominal adherence to the principle of separation of powers, "in hardly any city ... has there really been a clear distinction made between what is really administrative and executive and what is legislative in character."⁸⁶ For Goodnow, in this precursor to *Politics and Administration*, the key to improving municipal government thus lay in more clearly separating the legislative and executive functions of government.

Goodnow discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the two most common forms of municipal charters in relation to their execution of these two functions. The first method, known as the board system, developed in the mid-nineteenth century alongside the deterioration of the city council. An effort to create a more enduring organizational structure, this plan attempted to solve the problem of the incoming mayor re-staffing the entire administration of a city government upon entering office. It created boards that managed or oversaw different branches of municipal activity (sanitation, police, parks, etc.). Members served staggered terms so that no new mayor could ever entirely reconstitute a board. In

⁸⁶ Frank J. Goodnow, *Municipal Problems* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897), 15-16.

many ways, Goodnow admired this system. He felt that it created a more permanent body of administrative officials with fewer ties to party politicians. Regardless, he faulted the board system for blurring legislative and administrative roles in municipalities. Despite the fact that such boards were never intended to serve as deliberative bodies, as the councils lost their legislative powers the boards were left to formulate policies as well as carry them out. Additionally, in many cities the boards were also forced to carry out state administrative functions as well as municipal ones, further confusing the demarcation of responsibility and authority in municipal government.⁸⁷

As a result, despite his admiration for many aspects of the board system, Goodnow gave a *very* qualified endorsement to the competing federal plan not as the “ideal” form of local government but rather as “a necessary stage in our development.” The federal plan compared the structure of municipal government to that of our national government, likening the council to congress and the mayor to the president. Goodnow, however, insisted that such a comparison was “based on a totally false analogy” because presidential appointments were largely political in nature and therefore did not require permanent tenure in the way that the administrative mayoral appointments in a municipality did. Under the federal system, then, municipalities were not able to achieve the permanent workforce necessary to produce an efficient administration. Nevertheless, Goodnow recognized that the federal system produced several desirable results. The mayor’s wide powers of administrative appointment clarified lines of responsibility in government would allow the average voter to hold the mayor accountable for the performance of the administration. In this way, Goodnow argued that the federal system allowed for stronger popular control of municipal government.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 252-53, 256, 260-62.

Moreover, its clear division of powers restored the possibility for a stronger council, but at the same time one that was more clearly confined to purely legislative matters.⁸⁸

While many reformers simply interpreted the federal plan as a justification for increasing mayoral control over municipal administration, Goodnow's explanation also included a call for a stronger council, which he believed was the foundation of representative government. He argued that a strong council helped to maintain the important distinction between the legislative and administrative branches of government, explaining that the "result of the destruction of the city council and the transfer its powers to administrative officers or boards" was "the intrusion of politics into administration." While others cited the corruption and incompetence of the municipal council as a justification diminishing its position in urban government, Goodnow also faulted the interference of state and national politics. Building on his earlier discussions of city-state relations, Goodnow argued that as state legislatures assumed control over what was once the domain of local self-government, municipal councils lost their powers to organize the administration, appoint officials, control finances, and even pass local legislation. The legislatures, viewing the city solely as an agent of the state, neglected to allow it the necessary powers to also act as organizations for the satisfactions of local needs. In order to meet local needs, a city needed to be able to formulate "a local policy which should be determined by some local *legislative* body, if the principles at the basis of representative government are to be applied in the case of the city." Simply put, Goodnow argued that stronger city councils were essential for the survival of the representative system in American cities.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 251, 256-58.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 6, 9, 28, 220, 235-46.

Goodnow therefore concluded that if we adhered to the principles of local self-government, of popular representative government, and of the separation of the legislative from administrative functions of government, then “we cannot avoid the conclusion that a city council is a necessary part of the municipal organization.”⁹⁰ And as Goodnow was careful to add, his conclusions on the need for a strong council were not based on these theoretical principles alone, but mainly on his own observations of “actual” realities in Europe. For, as he concluded his chapter on “The City Council,”

Let the council be confined to questions of policy, and let the administration of that policy be entrusted to a permanent force of officials, actuated by technical and more or less professional motives, and the problem of municipal government is far on the way towards its solution. Whatever may be the law on the subject, that is the actual condition everywhere, both in England the Continental Europe, where municipal government is successful.”⁹¹

Municipal Problems: Parties and Public Participation

The involvement of state and national political parties in local elections captivated reformers as perhaps the greatest source of municipal problems. While many of his contemporaries impugned universal suffrage for the election of incompetent and corrupt party politicians, Goodnow instead blamed “the imperfect character” of America’s representative and partisan systems.⁹² He recognized the important role played by political parties in America’s system of divided powers, agreeing with Henry Jones Ford’s assessment

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 170-71, 193-94.

of parties as coordinating America's otherwise fragmented political system by creating harmony between the executive and legislative branches of government.⁹³

Despite conceding the positive function that parties played, Goodnow also stressed their limitations as representative bodies. Parties played a vital public function and yet, because of their status as private organizations, they were not regulated by the state. Left unchecked, members did not often have the power to control the actions or policies.⁹⁴

Goodnow also acknowledged the problem of the influence of state and national parties in municipal affairs. He specifically pointed to the fact that mayors tended to be elected on state and national platforms rather than local issues as a reason why the federal plan was imperfect at best.⁹⁵

Although Goodnow viewed the role of parties in local politics as problematic, he felt that the solution would not be as simple as reformers hoped. He faulted reformers for simply arguing for separate municipal elections without offering any deeper solutions to such a widespread systemic problem. For as long as cities were also agents of the state, Goodnow claimed that parties had a legitimate role to play in local politics. Moreover, despite efforts at civil service reform, the spoils system continued in most cities, remaining an incentive for partisan involvement. Finally, given the length of municipal ballots due to the proliferation of elective positions, most voters relied on partisan labels in casting their votes. In short, Goodnow concluded that it was unrealistic to expect an end to the influence state and national parties in local elections.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, 276.

⁹⁴ Goodnow, *Politics and Administration*, 133-254.

⁹⁵ Goodnow, *Municipal Problems*, 258.

⁹⁶ Goodnow, *Municipal Problems*, 194-208, 212-14.

Goodnow offered alternative solutions to the problems posed by America's party system. In *Politics and Administration*, he proposed legal recognition and regulation of parties as political bodies, hoping thereby to force them to be more accountable to their members. Ideally, his preferred model to ensure maximum accountability was the British parliamentary system. Yet given the realities of American politics, Goodnow suggested the more modest solutions of direct primaries, forced publicity of corporate and partisan financial records, and a variety of measures to prevent electoral fraud.⁹⁷

When it came to cities, however, Goodnow offered a somewhat different solution. In *Municipal Problems* he explained at length the problem of the "elective principle" in urban elections. He maintained that in large cities, "if a great number of offices is to [be] filled, many of which are ... comparatively unimportant, even the most intelligent elector is apt to become confused and ... to vote the 'straight ticket' of the party." Additionally, Goodnow claimed that with the proliferation of municipal activities, in many new positions "technical skill" was "required." And so although he remained a staunch advocate of a popularly elected representative council, Goodnow insisted that most municipal offices - "registers of deeds, sheriffs, country clerks, and coroners," and even in some instances the mayor, ought to be appointed. In short, Goodnow, quoting a speaker from a National Municipal League convention, concluded: "Where you want skill, you must appoint; where you want representation, elect." Citing the "success" of municipal government in England, France, and Germany, he insisted that this conclusion was not only "true from the point of view of theory," but also from "the teaching of actual experience."⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Goodnow, *Politics and Administration*, 133-254.

⁹⁸ Goodnow, *Municipal Problems*, 181-86.

**Conclusion:
The Legacy of Goodnow and Early Municipal Political Science**

Regardless of his intention to provide an analysis of parties that transcended what he felt was the simplistic antiparty sentiment held by many Americans, Goodnow's work nevertheless provided the justifications for many nonpartisan reforms to come. Goodnow's use of scientific terminology helped him to establish academics as objective arbiters in questions of scope of government.⁹⁹ This scientific style, founded on his realist, comparative technique that cited European "experiences" rather than abstract theories, pioneered the method by which political scientists could speak of the functions of government not as interested advocates of expansion but rather as neutral analysts of the apolitical subject of administration. In turn, he provided reformers with the source of expert authority they needed to validate their efforts to create a nonpartisan civil service in local government. In lieu of older arguments about the moral shortcomings of party politicians, reformers could now speak of the need to make positions appointive rather than elective because they required technical skill rather than representation. His argument that the "elective principle" was not applicable to many positions in local government also provided a justification for the short ballot movement that would soon emerge.

Goodnow's reversal of Dillon's rule paved the way for the home rule movement. Gaining momentum in the first decades of the twentieth century, the efforts of home rulers to prevent state legislative interference in municipal affairs was more often than not motivated by a desire to end the influence of state and national parties in local politics. Despite his intention also to explain the legitimate and positive role played by parties in the American polity, many of his readers found in his work "scientific" justifications for their own non-

⁹⁹ Silverberg, "A Government of Men," 173-74.

partisanship, selectively focusing on his arguments that cities were more administrative than political entities and that parties, while providing a necessary service on the state and national levels, therefore were not needed in the apolitical matter of municipal affairs.

Additionally, in spite of Goodnow's efforts to stress the importance of the political and administrative aspects of government, countless readers focused almost exclusively on the latter. Read selectively, his call for strong representative bodies as essential to democratic government was often forgotten, and his discussion of administration as apolitical was used to defend a narrowed sphere of public participation in governance. His distinction between politics and administration was habitually misread as normative rather than descriptive, as advocating the insulation of administration from politics to shelter neutral specialists from partisan influence. Political scientists also came to emphasize the need separate the two functions, neglecting Goodnow's appeal for separation and integration. These misinterpretations in fact furthered an elitist, anti-democratic movement of political theory and among political scientists, foreshadowing technocratic models of expert governance that would emerge more fully after World War I.¹⁰⁰ In the context of municipal government, Goodnow's theories provided the kernels for the arguments for the short ballot movement and even the city manager plan.

Yet Goodnow himself was partly to blame for these misreadings of *Politics and Administration* because he never considered with any depth the dynamics of the representation that were the foundation for the political side to governance. He merely asserted the need for strong legislative bodies. Unlike Bryce or even Wilson, Goodnow did not discuss the formation of public opinion in any depth. Despite efforts to study more than

¹⁰⁰ Frisch, "Urban Theorists, Urban Reform, and American Political Culture in the Progressive Period," 308; Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, 277-79.

formal laws and institutions, neither Goodnow nor any of his realist contemporaries in the field of municipal political science addressed the role of reform organizations (or unions, or commercial organizations) in local politics. And in formulating his distinction between politics and administration, Goodnow simply assumed an abstract state possessing a singular will. Although he understood politics as encompassing decisions about who would express that will and by what method, he nevertheless still was limited by his adherence to the idealist, organic conception of the state as homogenous entity with a will of its own.¹⁰¹ His realist contemporaries even realized this flaw at the time. Henry Jones Ford's review of the book faulted Goodnow for basing his analysis on "a conception of the state as an entity possessing a self-conscious personality" without recognizing that this was only one of many ways of understanding the state.¹⁰² Without questioning this organic conception of governmental power, Goodnow continued to believe that a strong legislative body alone was sufficient to represent the singular will of a unified people.

As long as Goodnow simply assumed the existence of a homogenous will to be expressed, he did not consider the ramifications of the possibility of plural group interests in the political side of his dichotomy. This assumption enabled him and many other political scientists to continue to believe that their work expressed the universal needs of government. In the context of cities, even though Goodnow passionately supported enlarging the sphere of local self-government, his writings did not provide a detailed blueprint for how local policy would be determined beyond the basic claim of a need for a strong council. This oversight

¹⁰¹ Goodnow, *Politics and Administration*, 9, 35; Waldo, "Political Science: Tradition, Discipline, Profession, Science, Enterprise," 5.

¹⁰² Henry Jones Ford, "Politics and Administration," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 16 (September 1900): 2-3.

would take on a particular importance when Goodnow along with Rowe and Shaw turned his attention to drafting the Municipal Program for the National Municipal League.

Chapter 3

The Creation of the Municipal Program, 1897-1900

Henry Jones Ford began his review of Frank Goodnow's *Politics and Administration* by commending recent efforts "to apply the principles of political science to the solution of problems of government presented by the working of American institutions." He praised the use of scientific models, particularly "inductive methods," in such endeavors. To illustrate his claim, Ford pointed to "the practical study of problems of municipal government" by the National Municipal League and the League's recently published *Municipal Program*. Noting Goodnow's participation in the composition of the Program, Ford went on to suggest that *Politics and Administration* provided "the philosophical principles on which the program is based."¹ While Ford was correct in recognizing the influence of *Politics and Administration*, he also could have added *Municipal Home Rule* and *Municipal Problems* as central sources as well. While the other members of the Committee that drafted the Program – particularly Leo S. Rowe and Albert Shaw – also shaped its contents, and many details, particularly regarding more technical matters of indebtedness and accounting, originated from a variety of sources, in large part the Municipal Program was almost the complete embodiment of Goodnow's theories on the municipality and its larger position in the governmental system.²

¹ Henry Jones Ford, "Politics and Administration," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 16 (September 1900): 1-2.

² Though there were seven members of the Committee, the three political scientists clearly dominated along with chairman Horace Deming, a lawyer and active reformer from New York. Yet according to historian Michael Frisch, Deming's contributions to the Program "reflected academic theory far more than it did the tradition of mugwump moralism from which he came." Michael H. Frisch, "Urban Theorists, Urban Reform, and American Political Culture in the Progressive Period," *Political Science Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 303; Frank J. Goodnow, *Municipal Problems* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897); Frank J. Goodnow, *Municipal Home Rule: A Study in Administration* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1895).

The creation of the Program not only represented an attempt to fulfill municipal political science's realist aspirations to effect political change outside academia by participating in the continuing evolution of the institutions of government, it also indicated that the ideals of realism were beginning to pervade reform circles as well.³ Local municipal reform associations and the National Municipal League in particular pioneered a style of activism that would soon become prominent in a wide variety of Progressive reforms after 1900. Beginning with organization, often through voluntary associations, in the name of the "people" reformers undertook investigations and gathered the "facts," then analyzed the results, typically utilizing social-science methodology, and finally embarked on campaigns of publicity, education, and lobbying.⁴ Municipal reformers found in the Program the revelation and analysis of the universal "facts" that served their own aspirations to act as leaders who would educate local public opinion as to the requirements of good city government.

Moreover, in adopting the realist language of objective and systematic analysis of the state as a governmental system, the Program provided reformers with a new basis for justifying and explaining their antipathy towards political parties and support for civil service

³ Political scientist Helene Silverberg argues that "committee's political scientists turned to their disciplinary inheritance, freely embracing, discarding, or combining its different elements as they served the committee's purpose." In contrast, I argue that their work from the Program flowed directly from their realist convictions. Silverberg claims that by becoming involved in the Program, the political scientists on the committee "temporarily" abandoned "the conventions of their 'science.'" Yet as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the realist movement challenged those very "conventions" and encouraged scholars to become directly involved in real-world politics. Silverberg also asserts that they abandoned the "legal formalism" of the concept of administration when they applied it to topics such as the creation of a civil service and budget reform. Again, this decision fulfills one of the major goals of the realist movement, which hoped to replace abstract, formal discussions and replace them with new analyses that connected ideals to real-world institutions. See Helene Silverberg, "A Government of Men': Gender, the City, and the New Science of Politics," *Gender and American Social Science: The Formative Years*, ed. Helene Silverberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 169-70.

⁴ On this style of Progressive reform generally, see James J. Connolly, *The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 8; Richard L. McCormick, "Progressivism: A Contemporary Reassessment," *The Party Period and Public Policy: American Politics from the Age of Jackson to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 271.

reform. Reformers could now reject the need for parties in municipal politics not simply by indicting them as “evil” or aberrations from an ideal system, but rather by explaining that though they might perform a necessary function in the wider institutions of government, their role in municipalities was harmful. The Program provided a detailed plan to reduce the role of parties in city government, and its emphasis on creating a sphere of local autonomy to do so encouraged reformers to redirect their anti-party efforts toward the movements for home rule that would become increasingly popular in the new century. In addition, the Program’s reliance on the concept of an autonomous sphere of administration apart from political considerations supported the need for a system of civil service based on merit and skill rather than partisan alliance. The analytical tools of political science, as applied in the Program, thus afforded a new way to defend civil service reform as an apolitical matter of applying the fundamental principles of government.⁵

Only through their reliance on this apolitical conception of administration were the members of the Committee and the League able unanimously to agree that in the Program they had devised a system “embodying the essential principles that must underlie successful municipal government in this country.”⁶ The Program provided a detailed blueprint for the structures on municipalities in terms of the selection and duties of local officials. Yet, following Goodnow’s approach, it addressed the function of municipalities only in terms of the creation of an efficient administrative system to carry out those functions, claiming that its structural provisions provided individual cities with the necessary apparatus to decide

⁵ The Program’s endorsement of the understanding of the mayor as playing a purely administrative role in city government encouraged a line of thought that would develop into the concept of city manager government, though the term would not come into usage until nearly a decade later.

⁶ “Preparatory Note,” *Municipal Program: Report of a Committee of the National Municipal League, Adopted by the League, November 17, 1899, Together with Explanatory and Other Papers* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1900), xi.

such questions as they saw fit. It left the power to determine the scope of those functions up to each individual city. While in part this decision reflected a commitment to local autonomy on the part of the Committee, it also provided a way to avoid many potentially divisive issues, particularly that of municipal ownership of streetcars and utilities. For though most municipal reformers and members of the League supported the expansion of the scope of local government, they differed greatly as to the nature and extent of that expansion. The ability to discuss function as a mere matter of administration thus facilitated the maintenance of the diverse coalition of reformers that made up the National Municipal League.

The Program also followed Goodnow's lead by relying on the creation of a strong legislative body to ensure that the system it created functioned democratically. Yet in stipulating that members of the council be selected through at-large elections rather than by ward, the Program adhered to the notion that individual legislators represented the interest of the entire community rather than any segment thereof. Such an understanding of the nature of representation reinforced the conviction of reformers that municipal affairs would be improved by rediscovering a degree of unity that was lost with the emergence of competing group interests.

The avowed neutrality of political science and claims as to the universal applicability of the Municipal Program regarding such divisive matters served an important purpose for municipal reformer associations. Their founders, as we saw in chapter one, created these organizations in an effort to lead public opinion in their communities, to undertake educational campaigns that would end partisan discord and recreate harmony around the fundamental requirements for good local government. Municipal reformers attempted to use the Program, with its exclusive discussion of structure, to gain the support of a wide variety

of local groups hoping to expand municipal activities for their own purposes, from business groups seeking to develop infrastructure for commercial expansion to social reformers seeking to create programs directed towards public welfare. Citing the credentials of its authors, municipal reformers hoped to use the Program's provisions as a rallying point to unite urban political actors. The avowed universality of the Program also buttressed the arguments of those who sought to nationalize municipal reform by claiming to present a single system applicable to all cities.

The Formation of the Municipal Program

The impulse of the realist movement to replace abstract philosophical discussions with analyses of concrete political endeavors and institutions was not confined to political science alone, for municipal reformers also hoped, through careful study, to unearth the connection between the philosophical and the real and thereby prove their usefulness. The Municipal Program epitomized this goal. Echoing sentiments expressed in his academic writings, Leo S. Rowe explained the need for such a program in several speeches presented at the League's annual meetings and Conferences for Good City Government. Rowe suggested that the gap between "our political ideals and methods of political reasoning ... and the form of municipal government," between "our civic and political standards" and "the conditions of city life" was a major cause of the failures of urban government. He claimed that Americans constantly changed their charters and experimented with forms of city government because of "the prevailing uncertainty as to the most effective organization of

the municipality, as well as the great divergence of opinion on some of the fundamental questions of municipal policy.”⁷

Reform organizations, Rowe also noted, had not in the past alleviated this problem, due to their inability to move beyond “destructive criticism” and their failure “to furnish a positive basis for political reorganization.” These limitations had resulted in a “growing distrust of the ability of reform movements to meet the practical problems of American political life.” Rowe, however, was confident that the League’s Program would put an end to such skepticism as to the usefulness of reformers, marking “a turning point in the history of reform movements in the United States.”⁸ In this manner, the League described its decision to draft a program as indicative of “the completion of the preliminary descriptive work” and “the inauguration of a policy of concrete, definite work” that would “be a distinct and important contribution to the study of municipal government in America.”⁹ Much as political scientists wanted to prove their usefulness, so did the National Municipal League, and the Municipal Program was its vehicle for doing so.

When Horace E. Deming, a lawyer active in reform circles in New York and a founding member of the League, first proposed the idea of a unified plan at the League’s

⁷ Leo S. Rowe, “American Political Ideas and Institution in their Relation to the Problem of City Government,” *Proceedings of the Louisville Conference for Good City Government and the Third Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League Held May 5, 6, and 7, 1897* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1897), 75, 77-8. See also Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “The Advance of the Movement for Municipal Reform,” *Proceedings of the Indianapolis Conference for Good City Government and Fourth Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League, Held November 30, December 1-2, 1898* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1898), 108-09. Woodruff argued that while “[t]he movement for charter reform grows apace,” most charters do “not represent a simple, concise statement of fundamental powers like the constitution of a State, with ample latitude as to details and incidentals as occasion may require; but rather a labyrinth of conflicting legislative intention and enactment beyond the intelligent comprehension of any one. A recognition of this fact has led to the numerous recent efforts to secure new charters in various cities, and also fully explains and amply justifies the action of the National Municipal League in appointing a Committee on Municipal Program....”

⁸ Leo S. Rowe, “Public Accounting Under the Proposed Municipal Program,” *Proceedings of the Columbus Conference for Good City Government and Fifth Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League Held November 16, 17, 18, 1899* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1899), 104.

⁹ “Introduction,” *Proceedings ... 1897*, iii.

annual conference in May of 1897, he explained the rationale behind such a program using the very language of political science. Much as leading realist scholars such as Goodnow, James Bryce, and Woodrow Wilson extolled the value of real-world inquiries that unearthed general principles, Deming spoke of the need to make use the results of “experience and investigation” in order “to get into practical politics” by establishing the “fundamental principles” of municipal government. The resolution put forth by Deming made his reasoning quite clear:

*“Resolved, That the Executive Committee appoint a Committee of Ten to investigate and report on the feasibility of a Municipal Program, which shall embody the essential principles that must underlie successful municipal government and which shall also set forth a working plan or system, consistent with American political institutions and adapted to American industrial and political conditions, for putting such principles into practical operation....”*¹⁰

Like many of their contemporaries, Deming and many other League members who endorsed the idea of a Program had faith that research and analysis would necessarily lead to a convergence of opinion, that it would unearth the “essential” points on which all would agree.

Yet even before the League’s Committee began its work, some members voiced their concerns about whether or not they would be able to reach any agreements at all on the “fundamental principles” of municipal government. Deming justified the value of such a Program in part by claiming that while the “actual framework” of city government varied tremendously, the “theory of the city under our American form of government is identical in

¹⁰ “Proceedings of the Louisville Conference and Third Annual Meeting,” *Proceedings ... 1897*, 6-7. Though Deming originally proposed a ten-member committee, the final Committee was composed of only seven men: Frank J. Goodnow, Albert Shaw, Leo S. Rowe, Horace E. Deming, Charles Richardson, George W. Guthrie, and Clinton Rogers Woodruff. Frank Mann Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform: The History of the National Municipal League* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), 28-29. For more biographical information on these members, see chapter two.

every state in the Union.” When the League’s secretary, Clinton Rogers Woodruff, rose to second the resolution to begin work on a Municipal Program, he added that he did so despite his reservations about some of Deming’s statements, claiming, “I do not think that municipal conditions throughout this country are so uniform . . . , nor that any definite plan which might be devised by any body of men, no matter how wise, would fit all conditions.” Nevertheless, he agreed that it was time to “find the certain particulars on which we all agree.” Another member only gave a qualified endorsement to the idea of a Municipal Program, stating that he thought “it quite problematical as to whether a program can be agreed upon, except in minor details.”¹¹

Nevertheless, the official record of the National Municipal League proudly describes the process by which the Program was drafted as a deliberative one that resulted in consensus. According to this published account, the members of the Committee not only met several times to discuss drafts amongst themselves but also consulted the League’s membership and other municipal experts and political scientists. According to the official *Proceedings*, immediately after the formation of the Committee in May of 1897, its members divided themselves in to topical subcommittees. In March of 1898 they met again to hear the reports of the subcommittees. They next presented a draft to the wider membership of the League in November of 1898, proudly declaring that despite their “widely divergent training,” “strong personal convictions,” and “essentially different points of view,” they were able to come to a “unanimous agreement that a ‘Municipal Program’ was feasible and

¹¹ Goodnow even joked about the divergence of opinions expressed. After complimenting one speaker’s proposal but still maintaining that he felt it “would be insufficient to obtain good popular government in the city,” he somewhat self-deprecatingly added “but I suppose that all of us who have made a particular study of municipal reform have our own peculiar methods and ideas for reforming the present condition of things. I am perhaps biased with my own ideas upon the necessity of concrete reform” (16). See “Proceedings of the Louisville Conference and Third Annual Meeting,” 7-8, 16, 38.

practicable and by fair and full comparison of opinion were able to embody the result of their agreement in definite propositions.”¹² After the discussion of the tentative provisions at this meeting, Deming, with Goodnow’s assistance, revised the draft yet again. The Committee then printed and sent out copies of the amended draft to municipal reformers and scholars throughout the country and met yet again to discuss their criticisms and suggestions. At last, in November of 1899 they presented the final draft, which they again unanimously supported, at the meeting of the League in Columbus.¹³ At that meeting, described by the *New York Times* as “a most representative gathering” attended by over two hundred “city officials and municipal authorities from all over the country,” the members of the League met to discuss the program.¹⁴ Again, despite disagreements over minor points, the members proudly declared that their expert Committee had determined the “fundamentals” necessary for good city government and unanimously “adopted, ratified and approved” the Municipal Program.¹⁵

Despite this celebratory narrative presented in the published records of the League, a close reading of the Program itself and accompanying explanatory papers reveals an alternative interpretation. There was not as much debate and revision as the League claimed. There are no substantial differences between the original draft of the program first presented to the League in November 1898 and the one finally published in 1900.¹⁶ The details of the Program stemmed directly from Goodnow’s theories on municipal government, combining

¹² “Report of the Committee on Municipal Program,” *Proceedings ... 1898*, 2.

¹³ “Introduction,” *Proceedings ... 1899*, iii; “Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting,” *Proceedings ... 1899*, 6.

¹⁴ “Reforms in City Rule – National Municipal League Discusses Needed Legislation,” *New York Times*, November 16, 1899, p. 8.

¹⁵ “Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting,” *Proceedings ... 1899*, 3, 45-47.

¹⁶ See “Report of the Committee on Municipal Program,” “Proposed Constitutional Amendment,” and “Proposed Municipal Corporations Act,” *Proceedings ... 1898*, 1-52 and “Proposed Constitutional Amendment” and “Proposed Municipal Corporations Act,” *Municipal Program*, 174-86. There are only slight differences in the reorganization of the section on the council.

state administrative controls with a sphere of autonomy for local decision-making and a strong mayor in charge of municipal administration with a powerful council to attend to the legislative side to local government.

The Content of the Municipal Program

Home Rule and the Expansion of Municipal Functions

A redefinition of city-state relations was the corner-stone of the Municipal Program. Despite the fact that the Program would be called a “Model Charter” for years to come, it in fact consisted of a series of Constitutional Amendments and a Municipal Corporations Act, both intended to be passed at the state level. The decision to structure the Program in this way reflected Goodnow’s belief that the powers granted by the states to municipal corporations mattered far more than the details of how that municipality was organized internally.¹⁷ Building on Goodnow’s argument that states had a legitimate interest in regulating certain municipal functions – but that this control needed to be administrative rather than legislative – the proposed Constitutional Amendments transferred most state regulatory powers from legislatures to administrative boards. They also vastly reduced the right of state governments to intervene in local affairs, retaining only the rights to supervise and control municipalities in their role as enforcers of state laws and to review municipal accounts.¹⁸ In so defining state-city relations, the Municipal Program radically departed from the accepted wisdom on the nature of municipal powers. Dillon’s rule held that cities

¹⁷ Frank J. Goodnow, “The Powers of Municipal Corporations,” *Proceedings ... 1897*, 67.

¹⁸ *Municipal Program*, 156-225.

possessed only those powers enumerated powers either expressly stated or clearly implied in their charters. The Municipal Program, in contrast, according to Rowe proposed to “give the municipality the widest possible discretion in determining the sphere of its activity” and “to assure to every city a large measure of freedom in the determination of local policy.”¹⁹

The large degree of home rule granted with this freedom to determine local policy reflects the influence of Rowe and other prominent leaders of the League who advocated the expansion of the scope of municipal government. At the Conference of the League in Louisville in 1897, Rowe spoke of the relationship between city government and “social evolution,” arguing that each community needed to be able “to adopt, consciously, a policy favoring the growth of the new civic standards” and that to do so, they needed to be free to work to shape their environments, to raise the standard of living of residents “through the offering of new services or commodities.” Fellow committee member and First Vice President of the League Charles Richardson, a retired businessman from Philadelphia, agreed with these sentiments, claiming that “[t]he scope of our local governments must be so enlarged that they will affect the average voter as constantly and in as many as possible....” He went on to specify “that reformers should take every opportunity to urge the extension of municipal functions to all such matters as supply of light, water, street transportation, etc..”²⁰ Home rule, in short, was for many overtly a means towards end of enabling municipalities to experiment with new governmental activities.

In advocating the expansion of municipal activities, Goodnow, Rowe, and Shaw encouraged reformers to rethink some popular assumptions about the role of government and

¹⁹ L.S. Rowe, “A Summary of the Program,” *Municipal Program*, 160.

²⁰ L.S. Rowe, “American Political Ideas and Institutions in their Relation to the Problem of City Government,” 82-83; Charles Richardson, “Municipal Voters,” *Proceedings ... 1897*, 259-60. On Richardson, see Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 29.

to look to European municipalities rather than American business corporations for inspiration. Goodnow contested the popular analogy among reformers comparing municipal to business corporations that claimed that applying business practices to local administration would make it more efficient and economical. As he told League members, he realized that it had “become the fashion of this country of late years to speak of the city as a business corporation, and to regard the work of the city as rather business than governmental in character.” He realized that people typically meant only that the work of cities was largely administrative in character when they made this claim. Yet although he agreed about the paramount importance of administration in city government, he strongly disagreed with the business analogy itself. Not only was this position incorrect, “if followed” it would “lead to disastrous results.” For not only did municipalities, as governmental institutions, possess “powers of sovereignty or compulsion,” they also undertook many duties and programs not to “derive a profit from them” but rather because “local social welfare demands that they shall be so assumed.”²¹

Goodnow, Rowe, and Shaw also encouraged reformers to look to European cities as models for American municipal government. In response to a paper presented by Shaw that heavily made use of the positive examples afforded by English, Scottish, and Germany cities, one League member voiced his concerns that political conditions were simply too different in Europe for “foreign models” to be useful. Another, however, disagreed, arguing that it was time for “that class of the American people who believe that everything American in the field of politics is perfect” to overcome their insular worldview and learn from the “lessons in municipal government from the experiences of European countries” to be found in the

²¹ Frank J. Goodnow, “The Place of the Council and of the Mayor in the Organization of Municipal Government – the Necessity of Distinguishing Legislation from Administration,” *Proceedings ... 1898*, 72; Frank J. Goodnow, “The Powers of Municipal Corporations,” *Proceedings ... 1897*, 66.

Municipal Program. One such lesson that this speaker found in the Program was that “government in cities is a positive and necessary good.” For alongside the “growth of municipal self-rule” came the realization that “government must more and more become positive co-operation for mutual service rather than for mere repression.”²²

A wide variety of constituents of the League supported such a positive view of local government in relation to the extension of municipal services. Many commercial organizations believed that it was the duty of municipal government to provide the local infrastructure necessary for commercial development. Also at the Louisville Conference, Riverson Ritchie, Secretary of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, addressed the relationship between “Commercial Organizations and Municipal Reform.” Ritchie detailed several areas in which the Chamber, as part of its effort “to promote the growth of commerce and industry,” had encouraged the city’s government to adopt “a policy of continuity in the execution of municipal necessities and enterprises.” From the Chamber’s perspective, these “municipal necessities and enterprises” included “[t]he planning of an extensive system of public grounds and roadways,” “the extension of the water system,” and “an improved and expensive system of public sanitation.” The Chamber even felt that it was the duty of the

²² Albert Shaw, “The City in the United States – The Proper Scope of Its Activities,” *Proceedings ... 1898*, 82-93; “Paper Prepared by Mayor Quincy” with the “Discussion of Paper by Dr. Albert Shaw,” *Proceedings ... 1898*, 186-87; “Paper of Mr. Delos F. Wilcox,” with the “Discussion of Paper by Dr. Albert Shaw,” *Proceedings ... 1898*, 193-94. Quincy was unable to attend the conference, but Secretary Woodruff read the paper he had prepared. Rowe later explained that some of the central goals of the Program hoped “to give the municipality a more definite place in our political system than it at present enjoys; to give it that freedom of action which is the necessary accompaniment of growth and expansion, and to place within its power the determination of local policy whenever such policy is not inconsistent with the general welfare of the State.” He went on to explain that “the principle itself is a sound one is attested by the accumulated experience of the nations of Western Europe and the more negative lessons of American municipal development.” See Rowe, “A Summary of the Program,” 166. For more on the tie between American and European reform, see Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Era* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998) and footnote 67 in chapter two.

municipal government to “enlarge the harbor” and “furnish modern facilities for the rapid handling of vessels or their cargoes.”²³

The League also included members who advocated the expansion of municipalities not in the name of commercial development but rather of social welfare. At the League’s annual conference in Indianapolis in 1898, two leading left Progressive mayors addressed this theme. Mayor Josiah Quincy of Boston, known for his innovations in municipally-run welfare programs, supported the principle that “a large measure of discretion should be left to each city as to the lines of work which it will take up” by asserting that city government “should keep up with the growth of civilization and the development of the community.” Comparing “the American city of to-day with that of twenty-five or fifty years ago,” Quincy celebrated the “the broader conceptions of the social ends to be subserved by municipal governments”²⁴ In a paper condemning the practice of granting private franchises for municipal services, Mayor Samuel “Golden Rule” Jones of Toledo more dramatically concluded that given that “the purpose of municipal government” was “that of ministering in every possible way to the social needs of the people of the municipality” he favored “public ownership of all public utilities.” Citing a contemporary author on “Socialism in England,” Jones declared himself in favor of not only municipally-owned public utilities, but also streets, schools, gymnasiums, hospitals, asylums, parks, bands, lodging houses, reading rooms, and art galleries.²⁵ While most participants at conferences of the League did not

²³ Riverson Ritchie, “Commercial Organizations and Municipal Reform,” *Proceedings ... 1897*, 120, 122-24.

²⁴ “Paper Prepared by Mayor Quincy,” 188. Quincy did not attend the conference, so Secretary Woodruff read his paper. James Connolly’s history of Progressivism in Boston describes Quincy’s administration in the late 1890s as renowned for its “pioneering experiments in municipal welfare policy.” See James J. Connolly, “The Politics of Municipal Reform,” *The Triumph of Ethnic Progressivism: Urban Political Culture in Boston, 1900-1925* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 26.

²⁵ “Paper of Hon. Samuel M. Jones,” with “Discussion of Paper of Charles Richardson,” *Proceedings ... 1898*, 220-21, 227.

advocate as wide a degree of municipal ownership as Jones, there was widespread support for local public enterprise.²⁶

Despite this sentiment, the Program remained silent on the issue of municipal ownership and most details of local policy. Although a majority of municipal reformers advocated some form of municipal expansion, they did not agree on the form and degree of that expansion. Public ownership in particular was a deeply contested topic, many viewing it as a form of municipal socialism. As a result, the Program took no position on this issue. Goodnow explained to the League's membership that "[t]he powers which any city should exercise depend very largely upon local conditions. No general rule as to the extent of municipal powers can be laid down." Shaw agreed that it while the Program made it possible for cities to opt for public ownership if they so chose, it simply was not possible for the Committee to "advocate or to condemn any particular innovation or extension of municipal functions."²⁷ In part this noncommittal stance reflected a real commitment to local autonomy, but it also conveniently allowed the Committee to avoid many divisive political quagmires. The Program did not offer much detail with regard to the composition of municipal departments, leaving this matter up to individual cities. It discussed "the exercise of municipal functions" as a matter of "procedure," detailing methods for regulating franchises, keeping public accounts, and instituting a merit system.²⁸ In adopting an approach that discussed function purely in terms of the creation of efficient structures to

²⁶ In an article in the *New York Times*, Washington Gladden wrote: "The conference [of the League in Columbus in 1899] does not seem to have committed itself to the public ownership of municipal monopolies, though the tone of the discussion often took that direction." Washington Gladden, "Reform in City Government," *New York Times*, November 26, 1899, p. 23.

²⁷ Goodnow, "The Powers of Municipal Corporations," 63; Albert Shaw, "The City in the United States – the Proper Scope of its Activities," 88-89.

²⁸ Rowe, "Summary of the Program," 162-65, 169-71. When addressing franchises, Rowe was careful to note that the committee relied on "a principle that has now received very general acceptance." The only department head named in the Program was the city controller, to be elected by the Council.

carry out pre-determined activities, the League was able to declare unanimous support for the Program and maintain its diverse coalition of municipal reformers.

While the Program left the range of municipal functions up to individual cities, it provided for far less freedom with regard to determining structure. While it intended to create a large sphere of home rule with regard to policy, the Program did not include the right to frame municipal charters as a local right. Perhaps in deference to the widely held conviction of many reformers that this right was fundamental to home rule, it permitted residents of any city of 25,000 or more to adopt their “own charter and frame of government.”²⁹ But given that its proposed state laws also required all cities to adopt relatively uniform systems of government, this stipulation really did not leave much room for cities to maneuver.

Shaw questioned whether there was any value to be found in allowing individual cities to frame their own charters since such endeavors were “almost never brought about for really broad and conclusive reasons of public policy.” Echoing the sentiments he so strongly expressed in his own books on municipal government in Europe, Shaw derided American reformers for only “making and unmaking charters” while European reformers made do with existing structures in order to “accomplish results in the way of an improved life for their people.” Shaw went on to claim that by having more or less uniform and permanent structures, European cities, with their wide powers of determining local policy, were free to focus on real matters of consequence to their local community. The Program would allow American cities the same liberty, for according to Shaw the Committee unanimously agreed

²⁹ *Municipal Program*, 183.

that “the main outlines of a municipal system should be uniform throughout all the towns of a State.”³⁰

Goodnow agreed that there should not be much discretion in framing charters. Yet while Shaw did not advocate allowing individual cities to draft their own charters because he felt structure was largely irrelevant, Goodnow opposed this privilege because he considered structure very important. Goodnow believed that there were certain universal principles upon which governmental institutions should be organized, and, more importantly, that he and the Committee had articulated them. And so when he explained to the members of the League that the Program did not in fact bestow upon cities much power to frame their own charters, he justified this policy by claiming that “it was wiser to fix beyond the possibility of change the general principles which should lie at the base of the municipal organization.”³¹

*Radical Democracy?
The Role of the Elected Officials, Parties, and the Public in the Municipal Program*

Reflecting the faith of political scientists that careful research would yield universally applicable principles of government, the Committee, while silent on the potentially divisive details of municipal functions, forcefully and clearly asserted that its Program successfully accomplished the League’s original goal of devising a system “embodying the essential

³⁰ Shaw, “The City in the United States – The Proper Scope of Its Activities,” 82-85. In this speech, Shaw also stated: “I deny emphatically, with the full concurrence of your committee, the proposition that there is any advantage in leaving it to a town to decide for itself whether it will repose the appointing power in the Mayor or in the City Council, or apportion it, giving some power to the City council and a good deal of it to a series of administrative boards. When such questions are worked out separately for each community, whether or not the alterations are ... nominally ratified by the Legislature in a special act, such changes are almost never brought about for really broad and conclusive reasons of public policy.”

³¹ Frank J. Goodnow, “Political Parties and City Government Under the Proposed Municipal Program,” *Proceedings ... 1899*, 73.

principles that must underlie successful municipal government in this country.”³² This system began, as we have seen, by redefining city-state relations according to Goodnow’s theories on municipal home rule. It went on to propose a uniform structure of local government based on Goodnow’s other writings on municipal government and his distinction between politics and administration.

In so doing, the Program challenged a number of prevailing assumptions among many reformers. Its authors intended the Program’s provisions regarding the strength of the local councils and the regulation of political parties in particular to create a system consistent with “the demands of radical democracy.”³³ Indeed, the members of the Committee were particularly pleased with their efforts to create what they felt was a truly representative form of municipal government. Yet while many of these provisions were somewhat radical in comparison to established practices, they continued to be based on a conception of democracy that assumed that deliberation would yield consensus and a sense of common purpose among all urban residents.

The primary way in which the Municipal Program intended to restore representative democracy to municipal government was by establishing home rule, by protecting and nurturing a sphere in which local concerns thrived apart from larger state and national issues. As we have seen, the Program attempted to realize this autonomy primarily through formal state laws that granted municipalities a wide range of discretion in determining their own

³² “Preparatory Note,” *Municipal Program*, xi.

³³ Delos F. Wilcox noted that there were only two ways in which the Program might not be considered entirely democratic. First, it required that those elected to form a new city charter be “householders.” Second, it made no provision for the initiative or referenda. Perhaps in response to this criticism, the final version of the program omitted the requirement that framers of charters be householders and added the option to adopt the initiative and referenda in the same section that allowed for minority or proportional representation to be passed by the local councils. See *Municipal Program*, 180, 183-85; “Proposed Constitutional Amendment,” *Proceedings ... 1898*, 19, 22; “Paper of Mr. Delos F. Wilcox,” 193-94.

powers. This in itself, by reversing Dillon's rule of granting only enumerated powers to municipalities, was a powerful challenge to existing institutions.

Yet the Program also proposed to foster a sphere of local autonomy through a number of provisions designed to reduce the influence of state and national parties in municipal politics. Goodnow, as we have seen, faulted reformers in his academic writings for their simplistic efforts to eliminate the influence of parties without taking into account the problem presented by their role in the larger American political system. The Program thus contained a detailed plan to alter the structures that enabled parties to wield such strong influence in municipalities in order to enable voters to ignore larger issues of partisanship, making decisions according to municipal concerns alone. This plan included such procedures as personal registration, nomination by petition, the use of alphabetical nonpartisan ballots, a reduction in the number of elective positions, and the establishment of separate municipal elections. Also, by creating a merit system for local administrative positions, the Program hoped to eliminate the temptations of the spoils system, and by instituting a uniform and public system of accounting, it tried to make it impossible for corrupt politicians to disguise fraud and embezzlement.³⁴

Despite these efforts, James C. Carter, president of the League, saw "in the Municipal Program ... a disposition to depreciate to a certain extent that degree of emphasis which the League has hitherto placed upon the notion that the interference of political parties in municipal affairs was the principal source of our trouble." At the League's founding in 1894, one of the key assertions was that the major cause of the failings of municipal government was interference of state and national parties in local affairs. Five years later, as the League's

³⁴ Frank J. Goodnow, "Political Parties and City Government under the Proposed Municipal Program," 71, 74-75.

membership discussed the proposed Municipal Program at the annual conference in 1899, President Carter reiterated this belief that partisan meddling was “the great principal source of the evils against which we contend.”³⁵

Yet the Program, marked by Goodnow’s strong influence, relied on a more complicated understanding of the root of municipal problems and the nature of political parties. Goodnow, in a paper presented at the same conference in 1899, agreed that the intrusion of state and national parties posed a problem and “that municipal matters” needed to “be determined on their own merits,” but he believed that such intrusion grew out of “the natural and legitimate desire of political parties to further the objects for which they have been established” and “to make use of the city to strengthen their own organization and maintain power themselves.” The choice of the words “natural” and “legitimate” to describe parties was undoubtedly shocking to many members of the League, and it presented a sharp contrast to President Carter’s assessment of parties, stressing their role in corruption and misgovernment as “the main source of evil.”³⁶ The solutions offered by the Program did not rely on such a monocausal explanation. As Delos F. Wilcox, a former student of Goodnow, explained to League members, the Committee maintained that there were nearly a dozen “principle causes” of municipal misgovernment, including not merely “partisanship” but also “interference ... by State Legislatures,” “the private control of public privileges,” “an undeveloped civic consciousness,” and both “indefiniteness of organization” and “undemocratic organization” in municipalities.³⁷

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 63-64; “Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting,” *Proceedings ... 1899*, 36-37.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Delos F. Wilcox, “An Examination of the Proposed Municipal Program,” *Proceedings ... 1899*, 52-53; Though Wilcox and John A. Fairlie, both students of Goodnow, were not official members of the Committee, Frisch claims that they helped draft the Program. They both wrote explanatory articles that were published with the Program by the League. See Frisch, “Urban Theorists, Urban Reform, and American Political Culture in the

The Program, then, built upon the widespread anger among reformers in the 1890s concerning the role of parties and the interference of state legislatures in municipal government, but it also redirected that sentiment in several ways. The Program provided a more realistic basis for home rule, a justification for the exclusion of parties in certain realms of municipal activity and a number of specific provisions intended to accomplish this goal. It also provided a new language for justifying the exclusion of parties in local politics, one based less on vague and moralistic statements about the “evils” of parties and more on political science’s systematic, objective analysis of the party system in the American polity.

The Program’s provisions on the role of the mayor and the council also bore the mark of Goodnow’s influence, embodying his distinction between the administrative and political functions of government. The Program divided the executive and legislative by requiring that local charters make the mayor the “chief administrative officer” of the city, with the right to appoint all department heads and subordinate officers, subject only to a civil service system based on competitive examinations. The Program granted the council, as the legislative arm of city government, the right to exercise all other powers conferred by the charters to municipalities. These included the right to formulate policies as the people’s representatives. The Program clearly intended this to be a wide grant of powers, specifically including the right to establish municipal offices, make appropriations, levy taxes, regulate assessments, and investigate administrative departments.³⁸

Progressive Period,” 303; John A. Fairlie, “Municipal Development in the United States,” *Municipal Program*, 1-35; Delos F. Wilcox, “An Examination of the Proposed Municipal Program,” *Municipal Program*, 225-39.

³⁸ Goodnow, “Political Parties and City Government Under the Proposed Municipal Program,” 77; Rowe, “A Summary of the Program,” 159-60; *Municipal Program*, 201-20. The Program granted the Mayor the power to appoint three or more individuals to a Municipal Civil-service Commission. These unpaid commissioners were in charge of the regulation, examination, and appointment of all municipal officials except for departmental heads, who were appointed by the mayor.

The Program's inclusion of a powerful, representative local assembly, considered by the Committee to be essential for the overall system to function democratically, challenged widespread reform sentiment in favor of "strong mayor" government. Despite claiming simply to more clearly separate legislative and executive functions, given the pervasive distrust of local councils most movements for charter reform by the 1880s focused on increasing the powers of the mayor over the administrative structures of government in an effort to create more accountability.³⁹ The Program increased the administrative powers of the mayor, but it did so only in connection with a clearer demarcation between the role of the mayor and the council that increased the latter's powers as the legislative arm of local government. Interestingly, Shaw, Rowe, and Goodnow all came to the Committee already supporting a powerful local legislative body.⁴⁰ When advocating such a council before the League, Rowe even joked that he was aware that "this implied plea for the rehabilitation of the local representative body will be received, in many quarters, with a smile." But he went on to explain that "it is the only system which meets the requirements of modern democratic ideas and at the same time takes due cognizance of the intrinsic nature of the work in which our municipalities are engaged."⁴¹ In short, the Program presented a strong representative council as fulfilling the need for representation of local opinion.

³⁹ Tso-Shuen Chang, "History and Analysis of the Committee and City Manager Plans of City Government in the United States," *University of Iowa Monograph Series: Studies in the Social Sciences* VI (1918): 43-45. Chang defines the "Mayor System" or "Federal Plan," as he calls it, only in terms of increasing the mayor's administrative powers and concludes that "the council is deprived of all executive powers and is now made a purely legislative body." He does not mention any increases in the legislative powers of the council, suggesting that even though many reformers compared this system to that of the federal government, they rarely concerned themselves with solidifying the council's legislative powers.

⁴⁰ Goodnow, as we have seen, made a formidable case for a more powerful council in *Municipal Problems* (see chapter two). For Shaw's perspective, see Albert Shaw, "Municipal Government in Great Britain," *Political Science Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (June 1889): 217.

⁴¹ Leo S. Rowe, "American Political Ideals and their Relation to the Problem of City Government," 79.

In the formation of local charters, the Program's provisions on the representative structures of local government left little room for variation. According to the Program, the mayor-council form of government was essential. It stemmed, in Goodnow's mind, from "the general principles" of governmental organization – the need to separate politics from administration. The Program, as noted, did allow for some local variation, providing that, "[s]ubject to the constitution and the laws of the State," cities with 25,000 or more residents might adopt their "own charter and frame of government." Yet given that the Program fixed its mayor-council plan as state law, this stipulation really did not leave much room for cities to maneuver. The only matters that remained discretionary in terms of representation were the options to elect council members at-large, by wards, or by minority or proportional representation and to decide whether or not to adopt the initiative and referenda.⁴²

Much as the diversity of opinion on the details of municipal activities among reformers caused the Committee to avoid taking a clear position on function, those structural matters that remained "optional" in the Program were also potentially divisive. The Program, however, was far from neutral regarding the selection of council members, clearly favoring at-large elections. Although Rowe explained that in larger cities residents might choose to retain a system of ward-based elections, he believed that in "the smaller cities there is no valid reason for district or local representation."⁴³ Reformers tended to reject the need for ward representation, claiming that it served only to elect council members narrowly

⁴² Goodnow, "Political Parties and City Government Under the Proposed Municipal Program," 73; *Municipal Program*, 180, 182-84, 216, 219-20. The decision to adopt a system of ward base or proportional representation was not part included as a component of charter making but rather left up to the council. The composition of municipal departments was also discretionary. According to Rowe, "As regards municipal departments, it will be noticed that the charter contains but few provisions relating to their organization. This is explained by the fact that the number and organization of departments differ according to the size of the city and the scope of its functions." Rowe, "Summary of the Program," 169.

⁴³ For the specification that council members should be elected at large rather than by ward, *Municipal Program*, 216 and Rowe, "Summary of the Program," 167-68.

concerned with the good of their constituents rather than of the city as a whole. The preference for at-large elections reflected the prevailing belief among political scientists and many reformers that despite the seeming diversity of opinion among urban residents, there nevertheless was a singular “will of the people” to be represented in legislative bodies.⁴⁴ It also assumed that councilors could – and would – represent the interests of the entire population of the city rather than any particular segment thereof.

The fondness for at-large elections stemmed in part from the organic conceptions of cities still common among both academics and reformers. Woodrow Wilson explained the connection in a public lecture on city government in Baltimore in 1896. He argued that wards should be abolished because of the commonality of representation involved in municipal councils: “The common voice should tell in the common choice. Common interests should be determined by a common vote. A city is not a group of localities, nor an aggregation of interests nor a public works corporation, but an organism, whole and vital only when conscious of its wholeness and identity.”⁴⁵

The authors of the Municipal Program agreed with this line of reasoning, assuming the existence of a singular public will among urban residents. As Rowe explained to members of the League, particularly in “smaller cities,” there was “no valid reason for district or local [ward] representation.” He added that the Committee felt that “such representation” should be “discourage[d] ... whenever and wherever possible.”⁴⁶ Municipal problems, according to Rowe, needed to “be considered from the standpoint of the

⁴⁴ According to historian Phillip Ethington, while by 1900 most reformers recognized a diversity of opinion in cities based in part on identities of class, race, and gender, they nevertheless hoped to restore a degree of consensus in urban politics, to unify those groups into a single public. See Phillip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 8-11.

⁴⁵ *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Volume 10 1896-1898*, ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 452.

⁴⁶ Leo S. Rowe, “A Summary of the Program,” 167-68.

community viewed as a unit.”⁴⁷ Deming expanded on the understanding of representation on which the Program was founded, explaining that it facilitated the conditions necessary to “develop an enlightened opinion” and created the necessary institutional structures to ensure that “the will of the people” would control the policies of the government.⁴⁸ The key assumption that Deming and the Program made was that there was only one “enlightened opinion,” one “will of the people” to be represented by council members.⁴⁹

The “radical democracy” of the Program was also more a representative than a participatory democracy, allowing for only a limited degree of public involvement in the process of governance. The Program made it possible for cities to adopt the initiative, referenda, and recall. Yet much as they resisted the inclusion of the option to adopt a system of minority representation, the Committee members incorporated the measure for direct democracy only hesitantly in the final draft of the Program.⁵⁰ Moreover, a forerunner of the Short Ballot Movement, the Program drastically reduced the number of elective offices from the norm in most American cities, electing only the mayor and the council by popular vote.⁵¹

Yet the members of the Committee felt that reducing the number of elective officers was democratic because it would create greater accountability to public desires. In electing

⁴⁷ Rowe, “American Political Ideas and Institutions in their Relation to the Problem of City Government,” 77.

⁴⁸ Horace E. Deming, “Public Opinion and City Government under the Proposed Municipal Program,” *Proceedings ... 1899*, 85-86.

⁴⁹ Officially, the Committee, “feeling unable to be dogmatic as to the best mode of representation in the council,” left the decision as to whether or not to adoption minority or proportional representation up to individual cities. See Wilcox, “An Examination of the Proposed Municipal Program,” *Proceedings ... 1899*, 60-61. In his academic writings, Goodnow, however, had cautiously endorsed schemes for minority representation. He, too, rejected the ward or “local” system, believing that in the modern city neighborhoods were now homogeneous and thus did not need special representation. He also wanted to abolish wards because they made “it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain representation of opinions based on other than local causes of variation.” Goodnow, then, admitted that there were “opinions” that “should be given representation” and therefore that it might “be worth while to try some system of minority representation.” Frank J. Goodnow, *Municipal Problems*, 151, 153, 169.

⁵⁰ See note 33.

⁵¹ Richard S. Childs, a future president of the National Municipal League, organized the National Short Ballot Organizations with Woodrow Wilson in 1909. Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 101. For more on Childs and his role in the League, see chapter seven.

only the council and mayor and then allowing the mayor to appoint all administrative positions, the Program attempted to make it easier for the public to control the administration by making clear whom they should hold responsible. If the administration was poorly run, the mayor was to blame, and, with only a two year term, the people could soon vote him out of office.⁵² Goodnow had in *Municipal Problems* explained the rationale for appointing the majority of city officials. While in the past the “elective principle” had served communities well as a means for selecting public officials, it simply was not applicable to large, modern cities where there were simply too many offices requiring specialized skills for the average voter to make informed choices. Offices should be elective only if their purpose was representative; if they required technical knowledge they should be appointed.⁵³ Rowe expanded upon this point a speech before the League in 1897, explaining that allowing people to elect the majority of local officials completely “ignores the fact that for offices requiring preparatory professional and technical training, popular opinion *cannot* apply the proper standards nor popular vote enforce responsibility.”⁵⁴ From this perspective, the Program’s decision to elect only the mayor and council, allowing the mayor to appoint all other officials, was in fact more democratic than the alternative.⁵⁵

⁵² Rowe, “Summary of the Program,” 168-69.

⁵³ Goodnow, *Municipal Problems*, 185-87.

⁵⁴ Rowe, “American Political Ideas and Institutions in their Relation to the Problem of City Government,” 78.

⁵⁵ Rowe explained why he felt that the principle of checks and balances applied only to the state and national governments and not to municipalities. The purpose of a system of checks and balances was to protect the “fundamental civil and political rights” of citizens, and while it accomplished this, it paid the price of clear lines of governmental responsibility. Yet according to Rowe, such basic rights were not issues on the municipal level because local government was mostly concerned with apolitical, administrative matters. Checks and balances were not necessary then, and since they made “a system of direct responsibility” almost impossible, they did more harm than good in municipal government. See Rowe, “American Political Ideas and Institutions in their Relation to the Problem of City Government,” 76-79.

Conclusion

The Municipal Program helped establish municipal political scientists as leading experts worthy of consultation on real-world matters of reform. Its enthusiastic reception in newspapers and academic journals alike solidified the acceptance of participation in such public endeavors as a legitimate task for political scientists. Partly as a result of the extensive contacts that Goodnow, Rowe, and Shaw made with other political scientists in their work for the League, these three became leading figures in the establishment of the American Political Science Association only two years after the publication of the Program.⁵⁶ Goodnow in particular became an established authority on the drafting of local charters, with dozens of local leaders from all over the country writing to him and requesting advice.⁵⁷ His colleagues would later describe his career by celebrating his work both as a “purely academic investigator” and “scholar” and as a “man of action” concerned with the translating the “practical” possibilities of his work into “terms of social progress.” Shaw and Rowe also continued long careers that paired scholarship and public activism.⁵⁸ In short, the Program’s

⁵⁶ Silverberg, 171. For a favorable review of the Program in a non-academic publication, see “The Municipal Programme,” *The New York Times*, February 24, 1900, p. 6.

⁵⁷ For examples of local reformers writing to Goodnow for assistance, see George B. Cardwill (Secretary of the New Albany Commercial Club) to Frank Goodnow, November 26, 1906 and Thos. W. Cauldwell (Morristown Civic Association) to Frank Goodnow, March 14, 1906, Folder “Ca,” Box 3; C.S. Crandall to Frank Goodnow, March 18, 1905 and Frank Goodnow to C.S. Crandall, March 24, 1905. Folder “Coudert...,” Box 5; Sidney J. Dillon to Frank Goodnow, May 23, 1907, Folder “Di (various)...,” Box 5; Thomas Ewing, Jr. (Charter Commission of Yonkers) to Frank Goodnow, October 27, 1904, Folder “Egbert...,” Box 6; W.F. Fitzgarrald (Mayor of Marion, Iowa) to Frank Goodnow and Frank Goodnow to W. F. Fitzgarrald, March 7, 1907, February 27, 1907, Folder “Fe-Fi,” Box 6; Correl Humphry (Secretary of the Utica Chamber of Commerce) to Frank Goodnow and Frank Goodnow to Correll Humphry, February 21, 1905, February 17, 1905, Folder “Hov – Hy), Box 9; F.W. Lyman (Charter Commission of Minneapolis) to Frank Goodnow, July 28, 1903 and Frank Goodnow to F.W. Lyman, September 30, 1903, Folder “Little...,” Box 11; William Martin (Commission for the Revision of the Charter of the City of Newark) to Frank Goodnow, June 1, 1907, Folder “Marsland ...,” Box 11, Correspondence, Frank Johnson Goodnow Papers Ms. 3. Special Collections, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD. There are many more examples of such letters in the Goodnow Papers. Moreover, the vast majority of the letters in this collection date from 1903 and later, and there were very likely many more letters written to Goodnow regarding local efforts at charter reform before this date.

⁵⁸ On Goodnow, see Munroe Smith, “The Professional Life of Frank Johnson Goodnow,” *The Johns Hopkins Alumni Magazine* II (November 1913-June 1914): 284; Lurton W. Blassingame, “Frank J. Goodnow and the American City” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1968) and chapter seven. On Shaw, see Lloyd Graybar,

careful avoidance of potentially divisive “political” issues of function and detailed description of universal structures became a model for academic public activism in the decades to come.

Yet critics had long doubted that structural reforms alone would solve the problems facing municipal government. Many active in urban politics in the 1890s maintained that charter reform alone would not be effective as long as immoral and dishonest men held office. Mayor George W. Ochs of Chattanooga insisted before an audience of members of the League that “reform in municipal government is not so much a question of method as it is a question of morals.” He claimed that it was impossible to “construct a charter that will give honest government.” Mayor Josiah Quincy of Boston agreed, calling it “a mischievous delusion ... to believe that the most perfect charter theoretically would of itself insure good government.” Yet Charles Richardson, member of the Committee on Municipal Program, later assured members that the Committee had “never for one moment yielded to the conclusion that it is possible to make any system so perfect by itself and in itself to secure good municipal government.” He explained that “good city government” also required “the development of an active, continuous interest on the part of the intelligent voters” and that much of the Program had “been designed for that express purpose.”⁵⁹

While the authors of the Program did not believe that structural reform alone would solve municipal problems, they did believe that it would be able to stimulate the public interest in local affairs necessary to solve those problems for the common good. As Horace

Albert Shaw of the Review of Reviews: An Intellectual Biography (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press). On Rowe, see Mark T. Berger, “Civilising the South: the U.S. Rise to Hegemony in the Americas and the Roots of ‘Latin American Studies,’ 1898-1945,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 12, no. 1 (January 1993): 8-9, 36.

⁵⁹ “Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting,” 4; “Proceedings of the Louisville Conference and Third Annual Meeting,” 22-23; “Paper Prepared by Mayor Quincy,” 187.

Deming, the original proponent of a Municipal Program, explained in a talk on “Public Opinion and City Government under the Proposed Municipal Program,” “[n]o scheme of city government” would improve conditions without developing “an effective and general interest among the voters themselves in the actual conduct of the public affairs of the city.” The Program was designed in part to “compel the development of this interest.” Its provisions for home rule and its version of mayor-council government forced citizens “to work out their local destiny” and provided them with “ample powers to manage the city’s business.” By creating a system based on such clear accountability, under which “the public policy which they favor will be the policy of the city government,” the Program obliged the formation of an “enlightened public opinion” among urban voters.⁶⁰

Despite the wide diffusion and immensely favorable reception of the Program among reformers, its assumed universalism sparked heated debates in cities across the country. On one level, it furthered the nationalizing impetus began by local and national municipal reform associations in the 1890s by providing a standardized way of talking about the “essential” requirements for good government in all cities. Yet local experiences with administrative reform in municipalities indicate that the path towards nationalizing municipal structures based on the Program’s recommendation was not as easy as reformers may have anticipated.⁶¹ Turning to three cities involved in charter reform both shortly before and shortly after the creation of the Municipal Program, the following chapter reveals the volatility and dissent that remained surrounding the issues of balancing mayoral control with

⁶⁰ Deming, “Public Opinion and City Government under the Proposed Municipal Program, 77, 84-85.

⁶¹ Silverberg argues that the Program provided a conceptual framework central to efforts to nationalize municipal reform and that it enabled male reformers to insulate an “administrative realm from politics out of the class, ethnic, and gender conflict in which it had been embedded.” While these sentiments undoubtedly reflect the aspirations of many municipal reformers, the following chapter demonstrates they were not always able successfully to utilize the framework afforded by the Program to accomplish this goal. A variety of other local constituencies continued to contest such structural reforms on the basis of identities of race, gender, and particularly class for many years to come. Silverberg, “A Government of Men,” 170-71.

the need for popular accountability over the administration of municipalities and deciding whether to elect council members by wards or at-large. Not only did many local political actors reject the Program's division between administrative and legislative functions and its assumption of a singular "will" among urban residents, many even questioned the value of any system for municipal government determined by outside reformers rather than local residents.

Chapter 4

“Strong Mayor” Government: Charter Reform in Worcester, Toledo, and Norfolk, 1893-1906

With the publication of the Municipal Program, political actors in cities across the country increasingly looked to the authority of the National Municipal League to present charter reform as an apolitical matter of applying the universal rules of good city government. Particularly in local newspapers, reformers described the National Municipal League as a prominent, national leader in the movement for municipal reform, as an organization above political motivations, driven only by a desire to provide reformers with unbiased and professional information. An editorial from Norfolk’s *Virginian Pilot* in March 1905 characterized the League in just these terms, depicting its “officers and members” as unselfish “men who make the affairs of municipalities their life-study,” as “earnest and sincere in their desire for the betterment” of local government. It went on to note the value of the League, claiming that elected officials and other interested parties from cities across the country, increasingly aware of “the need for definite information,” often wrote directly to League officers for advice concerning a wide variety of municipal topics. Finally, the editorial recommended the Municipal Program, written by extremely “competent” men “free from all political prejudice,” as “the league’s greatest work, and indeed the world’s greatest work of its kind,” promising its readers that the Program “answers every possible interrogation which may be embodied in the main question, ‘What should our cities do to meet the new conditions and eliminate the existing evils[?].’”¹

¹ “National Municipal League’s Convention,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 23, 1905, p. 5. The editorial also greatly praised the work of the City Club of New York which was hosting the National Municipal League’s annual convention in 1905.

The timing of the publication of this tribute to the National Municipal League and its Municipal Program was not accidental, for in 1905, political leaders in Norfolk, Virginia were attempting to revise their city charter in an effort to consolidate administrative departments. By 1900 advocates of charter revision most often sought to adopt “strong mayor” systems of local government to accomplish this goal. Under this system, sometimes also called the “Federal Plan,” the mayor gained control over administrative departments through the power to appoint and remove municipal officers, a power that typically had previously belonged to the councils or to state-appointed boards. Moving away from the board system of the mid-nineteenth century, marked by a proliferation of state-appointed boards, advocates of the new strong-mayor plan hoped that concentrating administrative power in the hands of the mayor would also concentrate responsibility and accountability. Despite the popularity of the federal analogy, which claimed that the system mirrored that of the national government, the term “strong mayor” provided a more accurate description. Reforms typically focused exclusively on increasing the mayor’s executive and administrative powers and limiting the council to a purely legislative role without any real attempt to define or enlarge the legislative function.²

This chapter analyzes the experiences of three cities that attempted to adopt such administrative reforms through charter revision: Worcester, Massachusetts in 1893, Toledo, Ohio in 1900-01, and Norfolk, Virginia in 1904-06. In turning to municipal reform on the

² Tso-Shuen Chang, “History and Analysis of the Committee and City Manager Plans of City Government in the United States,” *University of Iowa Monograph Series: Studies in the Social Sciences* VI (1918): 43-45. Chang defines the “Mayor System” or “Federal Plan,” as he calls it, only in terms of increasing the mayor’s administrative powers and concludes that “the council is deprived of all executive powers and is now made a purely legislative body.” See also Frank Goodnow, *City Government in the United States* (New York: The Century Co., 1904), 65-68. Though most contemporaries agreed on a general move towards strong-mayor government, they provided no concrete data on the adoption of such charters. The increasing popularity of the commission and city-manager plans over the next thirty years coincided with a rise in data-gathering efforts by social scientists, leaving a much more detailed record of the adoption of such charters that will be analyzed in subsequent chapters.

local level, it becomes apparent that those who initiated movements for strong mayor charters employed the same style of rhetoric used by elite reformers. They too presented charter reform as a simple matter of applying universal structures that would allow the municipality to provide greater services. In contrast to the claim of many historians that structural reform was most often initiated by groups of business leaders (outsiders hoping to gain control of municipal government), this chapter demonstrates that incumbents already in power moved to revise municipal charters to consolidate their control over the reigns of city government in order to implement new and expansive governmental programs.³ Predictably, many revisions would benefit incumbents both by facilitating their reelection and by making it easier to secure the enactment of their platforms. Nevertheless, echoing the philosophy underlying the National Municipal League's own Municipal Program, they presented such structural reforms as above partisan incentives, as the undisputed requirements for the implementation of a more efficient system of local government, a prerequisite for functional expansion.

Though most urban residents at the turn of the century agreed that municipalities needed to enlarge the scope of their activities to meet the needs of growing communities, they did not agree on what it meant to do so. Local business leaders, hoping to attract investors and further the economic development of their cities, wanted municipal governments to undertake the physical improvements (of streets, sewers, etc.) they felt necessary for commercial expansion.⁴ Social reformers hoped to widen the scope of local government for very different purposes, aspiring to use municipalities as agents of social

³ For this interpretation see the discussion of the historiography of municipal reform in the introduction.

⁴ See Amy Bridges, *Morning Glories: Municipal Reform in the Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 47-51; James Weinstein, "The Small Businessman as Big Businessman: The City Commission and Manager Movements" in his *The Corporate Ideal and the Liberal State* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 95, 106.

welfare, focusing on programs that would improve the living conditions and educational and social opportunities of urban residents. In some cases, the specific goals of both groups overlapped. Improving public water supplies was good for business and public health alike. In other cases, they diverged sharply, often over the volatile issue of public ownership. Yet both types of reformers typically argued that administrative consolidation was a necessary first step before new programs could be implemented and turned to charter reform as a means towards the ends of the expansion of municipal activity.

Though they portrayed charter revision as an apolitical administrative reform, proponents of charter revision, when confronted with the realities of municipal politics, formulated strategies to secure their objectives, strategies that often centered on the interplay between state and local government. The daily business of urban government in the Progressive Era was not autonomous or isolated but rather intricately intertwined with the politics of state legislative bodies.⁵ The process of charter revision was no different, with state laws regulating the types of permissible structures and state legislative approval typically required for the adoption of new charters. When the dominant party in local politics differed from the dominant party in state politics, minorities in cities often looked to their allies in the state legislatures for support.⁶ Incumbents were forced to accept compromises in the charters they proposed. As a result, though the Municipal Program advocated expanding the sphere of local autonomy for the determination of municipal functions, as the movement for “home rule” gained momentum in the early twentieth century, the term increasingly

⁵ Nancy Burns and Gerald Gamm, “Creatures of the State: State Politics and Local Government, 1871-1921,” *Urban Affairs Review* (September 1997): 59-96.

⁶ Joseph D. McGoldrick, *The Law and Practice of Municipal Home Rule, 1916-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 2.

became synonymous with state constitutional provisions granting cities the right to frame and adopt their own charters without interference.⁷

While partisan politics dictated alliances at the state level, at home the initiators of structural reform also formed coalitions with other types of groups in order to secure new charters. Although a wide variety of formal groups had always participated in local politics alongside parties in various roles, the rising spirit of non-partisanship in cities at the close of the nineteenth century generated opportunities for new styles of organizational involvement. In cities across the country as urban residents became more critical of the ability of parties adequately to represent the interests of their constituencies, other forms of organized groups increasingly asserted a more active role in local governance. Recent historical scholarship has demonstrated that direct lobbying of state legislatures in these years emerged as an alternative to traditional partisan political representation.⁸ On the local level, municipal reform associations, commercial organizations, unions, and a variety of women's associations also engaged in this type of activity, attending council meetings to voice their concerns regarding specific issues. When the time came to build coalitions in support of charter revision, reformers often looked to these groups just as much as parties to support their efforts, and their ability to convince these groups to do so was crucial in determining the fate of proposed charters.

To create a successful coalition, supporters had to convince others that the structural reforms embodied in strong-mayor charters would simply enable the municipality to carry out more efficiently predetermined policies and not alter the content of those policies. Most

⁷ Howard Lee McBain, *The Law and Practice of Municipal Home Rule* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), v.

⁸ Elisabeth Clemens, *The People's Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

residents of American cities at the turn of the century agreed that the activities of municipal governments needed to expand to meet the needs of growing cities, but they did not on what those new activities should be. In explaining the need to divide the executive/administrative and legislative departments of local government, the authors of the Municipal Program, following Frank Goodnow's distinction between politics and administration, maintained that the local councils would express the people's will and the administration, controlled by the mayor and a civil service system, would execute that will. Yet when placing the administration out of the reach of politics included mayoral appointed department heads (rather than appointed by the councils or elected by the people), sharp resistance surfaced. Critics questioned the assertion that the administration of local government was devoid of political motivations and feared that administrative centralization would allow the mayor to control the content of local policy. Though supporters may have seen charter revision merely as a means of creating streamlined machinery that would facilitate the implementation of expansive programs, critics felt that new charters had the potential fundamentally to alter the representative structures of local government, structures that determined who would control the shape that expansion took. For many this type of centralization of the administration reflected a distrust of popular government.

Worcester, 1893

In Worcester, Massachusetts in the late nineteenth century, disagreements regarding the appropriate role of municipal government in facilitating the economic development of the city divided the Republican Party into two factions. The minority represented the interests of

elite businessmen who advocated the expansion of municipal infrastructure, from the construction of new streets and sewers to the extension of railroads and the city's gas and electrical supplies, to further economic development. The majority, representing middle-class artisans and small-business owners, in large part rejected such wide-ranging programs, wary of the use of public monies for services that they felt would disproportionately benefit the private economic interests of a few wealthy individuals. The elite businessmen in the Republican Party thus formed an alliance with predominately Irish Democrats, who were willing to support plans for development in exchange for control over the municipal jobs created as well as specific improvements for their individual wards.⁹

Elite Republicans, backed by their Democratic allies in the councils, moved to revise Worcester's charter in 1893 to consolidate their control over the administrative departments of the municipality in the hopes that it would facilitate the implementation of their desired physical improvements of the city.¹⁰ In January, Henry A. Marsh, president of a local bank and the newly-elected Republican mayor, moved to amend Worcester's charter to consolidate mayoral control over the administration of city government. In his inaugural address, Marsh declared the need for a new charter so that Worcester might "keep pace with the improved methods of municipal administration which are being adopted by other cities."¹¹ For Marsh and his allies, "improved methods" meant adopting "business-like" principles that allowed a

⁹ Robert J. Kolesar, "Politics and Policy in a Developing City: Worcester, Massachusetts, in the Late Nineteenth Century," (Ph.D. diss, Clark University, 1987), 92-132.

¹⁰ Kolesar also details the ways in which these groups hoped to weaken the control of middle-class Republicans over the ward caucuses that nominated candidates for the Board of Alderman. See *ibid.*, 77, 221.

¹¹ Marsh's decision to move for a new charter was also influenced by an act passed by the state legislature the previous year requiring newly-incorporated municipalities to adopt charters that more clearly separated of the role of the executive and the legislative branches in the administration of local government and in so doing granted the mayor increased powers, foreshadowing the National Municipal League's own model charter, which would not be published for another seven years. *Inaugural Address of Hon. Henry A. Marsh, Mayor of the City of Worcester, at the Organization of the City Government, January 2, 1893* (Worcester, MA: Press of Charles Hamilton, 1893), 3. See also "The New City Charter," *Worcester Spy*, February 14, 1893, p. 1; "Suggests Radical Change," *Worcester Telegram*, January 3, 1893, p. 1; "Inauguration Day," *Worcester Spy*, January 3, 1893, p. 1.

mayor to run a city as an executive would run a corporation, with power and responsibility concentrated in one person.¹² He advocated removing policy questions from what he called “popular influence and excitement” and “hasty consideration.”¹³ To this end, Marsh engineered a proposed charter that would substantially increase the powers of the mayor over the departments of the city government. The sole Democratic member of the Board of Alderman motioned that Marsh appoint a Charter Commission of Three to prepare a revision of the city’s charter, and within a month’s time it recommended a new “strong mayor” charter that replaced the commissioners of several departments that had been appointed by the council with a single board of public works to be appointed by the mayor. It also granted the mayor wider veto powers, the right to remove appointed officials, and the right to appoint the commission that granted liquor licenses, a power that had previously belonged to the Board of Aldermen.¹⁴

The Board of Trade was an important ally over the coming months in the efforts to promote the proposed charter, and many of its members shared similar views on the relationship of municipal government to the business community.¹⁵ Like the municipal reform associations that formed in response to partisan machines, commercial bodies such as the Board of Trade were becoming increasingly organized and enduring features in city life.

¹² “They Like the Revision,” *Worcester Telegram*, February 15, 1893, p. 3.

¹³ Marsh quoted in Kolesar, “Politics and Policy in a Developing City,” p. 226-29.

¹⁴ “A New Charter Wanted,” *Worcester Spy*, March 9, 1893, p. 4; “The New City Charter,” *Worcester Spy*, February 14, 1893, p. 1; “The City Charter,” *Worcester Gazette*, February 14, 1893, p. 4; Kolesar, “Politics and Policy in a Developing City,” 229-32. The charter also suggested a number of significant changes regarding the election of local representatives, most notably that councilors did not have to live in the wards that they represented and that the majority of school committee members now be elected at-large rather than by wards, but these changes were opposed by both Democrats and Republicans in the council and were therefore discarded/rejected. See Kolesar, “Politics and Policy in a Developing City,” 232-40.

¹⁵ Though there was a Central Labor Union in Worcester in these years, there is no evidence that it participated in the debates concerning the proposed charter. Organized labor was relatively weak in Worcester in these years, which may account for the CLU not taking an active role as CLUs in so many other cities did. See “History of the Central Labor Union of Worcester and Vicinity,” *Official Souvenir for Grand Parade and Demonstration by the Combined Labor Bodies of Worcester and Vicinity* (Worcester: The Central Labor Union and Building Trades Council of Worcester, 1891?), NP and discussion of Worcester in chapter six.

While officially they asserted apolitical functions, they also asserted that they were uniquely suited to take the lead in municipal government. In Worcester, the Board of Trade's leaders claimed that its purpose was simply "promoting trade and business in the City of Worcester and vicinity."¹⁶ Nevertheless, foreshadowing the assertions of countless other business groups in the coming decades, by the early 1890s Worcester's Board also justified its involvement in municipal matters by asserting the need of businessmen in politics. At one meeting, a member of the Board declared that "politics ... ought to be kept out of the city government. It should be a matter of business instead...." Another agreed, adding that "something must be done to secure the aid of the broad-minded, level-headed businessmen of Worcester in transacting the business of the city." G. Stanley Hall, president of Worcester's Clark University, concurred that businessmen needed to become involved in public affairs, claiming that organizations such as Worcester's Board of Trade were of great "public benefit" by working "to develop solidarity of public interests."¹⁷

Members of the Board of Trade favorably regarded Mayor Marsh's proposal for a strong mayor charter and took the lead in generating public support by hosting several public discussions of the structural reform of municipal government over the coming months. They invited prominent local figures and representatives from other cities to speak. At one event, Charles Francis Adams, descendent of John Adams and John Quincy Adams, presented an address on "Municipal Government" in which he spoke of his experiences in drafting a charter for Quincy, Massachusetts and maintained that municipal government should be run

¹⁶ *Act of Incorporation, Constitution and By-Laws of the Worcester Board of Trade, Worcester, Mass.* (Worcester: Chas. Hamilton, 1875), 3.

¹⁷ "Board of Trade Banquet. A Notable Gathering of Representative Men," *Worcester Spy*, March 25, 1893, p. 1; "Boards of Trade. Their Value to Growing Cities Like Worcester," *Worcester Spy*, February 22, 1893, pp. 1-2; "At the Board of Trade," *Worcester Telegram*, January 10, 1893, p. 4.

“as a business corporation just as much as any bank, manufacturing company, railway company or insurance company here in.”¹⁸

The *Worcester Telegram*, representing the middle-class wing of the Republican Party, attacked the proposed charter on many levels, questioning the alleged neutrality and universality of the strong mayor principle and suggesting that it might have unforeseen consequences. One editorial challenged the authority of municipal reformers, belittling the Charter Commission’s strong mayor charter as the work of “eminent municipal reform ‘writers’” who based it on a model from the state of New York. Concluding that “Worcester has always been a better governed city under its Worcester-made charter than any city under the proposed New York charter,” the editorial warned its proponents that “[t]he aimless and stupid tinkering project has become ridiculous, and if persisted in, the people will dump the charter based upon the New York idea, and also its disciples, into obscurity.”¹⁹ Other articles rejected the claim that municipal government was merely a “business enterprise,” maintaining that it was in fact a “civil government” founded on “certain basic principles of popular government.”²⁰ Yet beneath these arguments of principle, coverage in the *Telegram* also revealed the nativist motivations of the charter’s critics. The Republican middle class resented the alliance between the elite branch of their party and predominantly Irish-Catholic Democrats, and they voiced their concerns about what would happen should a Democrat be elected mayor under the proposed charter. They claimed that such a centralized system

¹⁸ “Board of Trade Banquet. A Notable Gathering of Representative Men,” *Worcester Spy*, March 25, 1893, p. 1; “Business Men at the Tables,” *Worcester Telegram*, March 25, 1893, pp. 5, 8; “Boards of Trade. Their Value to Growing Cities Like Worcester,” *Worcester Spy*, February 22, 1893, pp. 1-2; “At the Board of Trade,” *Worcester Telegram*, January 10, 1893, p. 4.

¹⁹ “New York ‘Boodle’ Charters Not Wanted,” *Worcester Telegram*, March 15, 1893, p. 2. Notably, the editorial neglected to mention that the more direct model for the charter was the recent state law in Massachusetts.

²⁰ Quoted in Kolesar, “Politics and Policy in a Developing City,” 219, 230-31.

would make it easy for a corrupt mayor to use his powers to make himself a boss and build a political machine in Worcester.²¹

Partisan cleavages, closely tied to ethnic and class prejudice against working-class Irish immigrants, surfaced again when one citizen began a campaign to include an alternative system for the election of council members in the new charter. Postmaster J. Evarts Greene, the former editor of a local Democratic newspaper, the *Spy*, was deeply concerned about the lack of public interest in municipal affairs. As one of the few citizens who attended the only public meeting of the Charter Commission, he proposed the creation of a variation on the old town-meeting form of government to generate popular enthusiasm. He suggested that they elect thirty representatives per ward to form a massive legislative body that would represent all segments of the population. The other citizens attending the meeting, however, quickly dismissed this proposal as entirely impractical.²² Greene then turned his attention to an alternative form of proportional representation called the Gove system. He circulated a petition in favor of including this system in the new charter and worked hard to explain and promote it in the pages of his former paper, *The Spy*, which printed several positive editorials.²³

Greene's next step was to present the petition for the Gove system before the council. In his first attempt, the council refused to hear his petition. Somewhat predictably, the vote followed party lines exactly, with all members of the Democratic minority voting to let him speak and all members of the Republican majority voting not to let him do so. Apparently

²¹ "New York 'Boodle' Charters Not Wanted," *Worcester Telegram*, March 15, 1893, p. 2; "Steeped it in Nicotine," *Worcester Telegram*, February 20, 1893, p. 4; Kolesar, "Politics and Policy in a Developing City," 230-1, 234-35.

²² "Municipal Reform," *Worcester Spy*, January 25, 1893, p. 1.

²³ Under this somewhat complicated system, voters selected only one candidate for council. Each candidate only needed a certain number of votes to be elected; once he received that number he was free to give his additional "surplus" votes to the candidate of his choice. See "Proportional Representation," *Worcester Spy*, February 17, 1893, p. 4.

their refusal sparked enough indignation that when Greene again tried to present his petition to the council two weeks later, the council let him speak and explain the Gove system for about half an hour. After he had finished, however, no discussion followed for the council promptly declared the session closed.²⁴

The *Telegram*, the voice of the middle-class Republican majority, rejected the notion of minority representation in legislative bodies entirely, at one point suggesting that it was impossible to tell whether the supporters of the Gove system were “from the lunatic asylum or the Amalgamated order of sacred reformers.”²⁵ The *Worcester American*, purportedly the voice of a local branch of the nativist American Protective Association, argued that minority representation was “a direct violation of one of the fundamental principles of the American constitution, which is, the majority must rule.”²⁶ The *Spy*, the local Democratic paper, disagreed. Its editors declared that “[t]o make our nominally representative system of government truly representative” Americans needed to adopt an electoral system based on proportional representation. They blamed the current “winner takes all” district system for gerrymandering, bribery, and the spoils system. Moreover, rejecting the principle of majority rule, they declared that minority parties also had the right to express their opinions in legislative bodies:

We maintain that representative assemblies ought to be as nearly as practicable actual reproductions in little of the people they represent, including in their just proportion, as in the community at large, all varieties of political opinion and purpose, and each represented by its most trusted leaders.²⁷

²⁴ “Jealous of their Powers,” *Worcester Spy*, February 21, 1893, pp. 1, 3; “A Million and a Quarter,” *Worcester Spy*, February 28, 1893, p. 1; “Knocked it in the Head,” *Worcester Spy*, March 1, 1893, p. 1-3; “Radically Revised It!” *Worcester Telegram*, February 21, 1893, pp. 1, 4; “Emphasized Its Action,” *Worcester Telegram*, March 1, 1893, p. 4; “Snubbed,” *Worcester Gazette*, February 21, 1893, p. 4; “Proposed New Charter Gets Its Death Blow,” *Worcester Gazette*, March 1, 1893, p. 4.

²⁵ Kolesar, , “Politics and Policy in a Developing City,” 234, 238.

²⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 246.

²⁷ “Proportional Representation,” *Worcester Spy*, February 17, 1893, p. 4; “A Political Reform,” *Worcester Spy*, February 12, 1893, p. 4.

When opponents in Worcester obstructed their efforts, those unable to increase the mayor's powers or secure a system of proportional representation at home looked to the state to intervene. Firmly in control of the Board of Aldermen, the middle-class wing of the Republican Party rebuffed several attempts by the Democrats and their Republican allies to secure most of the original provisions of the proposed charter. In the end, the version that the councils sent to the state legislature in Boston for approval only extended the mayor's veto powers and allowed him to remove officials from office. It did not substantially expand his powers over the administration, and it did not alter the system of representation.²⁸ At this point, the Board of Trade continued to promote the principles of the original charter, hosting another talk on municipal government in which Charles Francis Adams not only promoted the "business corporation" analogy of local government but also a system of minority representation in local legislative bodies.²⁹

When the council sent its amended charter to the state legislature, Greene and his allies sent several petitions to Boston requesting that a provision for a system of proportional representation be included in any new charter.³⁰ One was signed by all of Worcester's Democratic state representatives and by the most prominent of its Republican state senators.³¹ Greene then attended the hearing of the legislature's Committee on Cities, where

²⁸ For the details of these maneuvers, see "The City Charter," *Worcester Gazette*, March 21, 1893, p. 4; "Committee of Conference Necessitated by Charter Deadlock," *Worcester Gazette*, March 16, 1893, p. 4; "The New Charter," *Worcester Gazette*, March 15, 1893, p. 5; "The City Council Meeting," *Worcester Gazette*, March 14, 1893, p. 4; "New City Charter," *Worcester Gazette*, March 11, 1893, p. 4; "The City Charter," *Worcester Gazette*, March 4, 1893, p. 4; "Proposed New Charter Gets Its Death Blow," *Worcester Gazette*, March 1, 1893, p. 4; "Snubbed," *Worcester Gazette*, February 21, 1893, p. 4; "The New City Charter," *Worcester Gazette*, February 20, 1893, p. 4; "About the New Charter," *Worcester Gazette*, February 18, 1893, p. 7; Kolesar, 232-43.

²⁹ "Board of Trade Banquet," *Worcester Spy*, March 25, 1893, p. 1.

³⁰ "Proportional Representation," *Worcester Spy*, March 27, 1893, p. 1.

³¹ Kolesar, "Politics and Policy in a Developing City," 237-38.

he was allowed to speak in favor of the proportional representation.³² When the state legislature voted to send the charter back to Worcester for a popular referendum, it included an amendment for a system of minority representation in the election of the Board of Aldermen and an additional amendment reinstating the mayoral appointment of the liquor license commission, subject to the approval of the council.³³

Not all in Worcester were pleased with the legislature's actions. The Worcester *Gazette*, a third local paper that was the most ardent supporter of the original Commission's strong-mayor charter, expressed its anger over the amendments. At first, the *Gazette* did not question the right of the state to intervene. When the council sent its version of the charter to Boston, the *Gazette* suggested that the legislature would refuse to ratify it given that it did not increase the mayor's powers sufficiently to conform to the new state law.³⁴ Now that the legislature had indeed passed the charter and amended it, the *Gazette* reversed its position and criticized the state for interfering in a local matter. It declared itself opposed to such "charter tinkering," questioning the "justice" of allowing representatives to alter it according to their own individual "whims."³⁵ Regardless, the charter and both amendments were both adopted in the popular referendum (by the widest margins in Democratic wards). Marsh, however, had not obtained the original charter he proposed.³⁶ His alliance with local Democrats and the Board of Trade and their appeals to a sympathetic state legislature had

³² "The New City Charter," *Worcester Spy*, April 15, p. 1.

³³ "The Legislature," *Worcester Gazette*, June 6, 1893, p. 3; "The Legislature," *Worcester Gazette*, June 1, 1893, p. 3. The system of minority representation was not the Gove system, but rather the one proposed by Charles Francis Adams before the Board of Trade. See Kolesar, "Politics and Policy in a Developing City," 244.

³⁴ "The License Commission," *Worcester Gazette*, March 20, 1893, p. 6.

³⁵ "Charter Tinkering," *Worcester Gazette*, June 6, 1893, p. 4.

³⁶ "It Was Anti-Marble Day," *Worcester Telegram*, December 13, 1893, p. 1; Kolesar, "Politics and Policy in a Developing City," 247.

only yielded some increases in mayoral power and ensured greater representation of his allies in the Board of Aldermen.

Toledo, 1900-1901

Charter reform began in Toledo, Ohio in 1900 much as it had in Worcester, with a manufacturer elected as mayor attempting to secure a new charter that would increase his powers. In his fourth annual message to the council, Mayor Samuel Jones, a local factory owner, declared that Toledo's antiquated charter created a government ill-equipped to deal with the needs of a growing city. Given that the position currently wielded no real power, Jones proposed a new charter in which the mayor would control municipal departments as a general manager ran a business.³⁷ On the surface, Mayor Jones seemed very similar to Worcester's Mayor Marsh: a businessman who sought to insulate the policy-making decisions from popular influence to further the business interests of the city. Both mayors made use of similar rhetoric, claiming that municipal government needed to be run like a business corporation in order to meet the needs of growing communities, and yet the contrast between these two mayors illustrates the ways in which political actors with widely divergent goals and democratic sensibilities came to advocate similar structural reforms. Strong mayor charters were supported by those who sought to expand the scope of local government in the name of building infrastructure to facilitate economic development but also in the name of creating social programs to improve the lives of local residents.

³⁷ "In Favor of New Charter," *Toledo Bee*, December 11, 1900, pp. 1, 3; "The Mayor's Annual Message to Council," *Toledo Blade*, December 11, 1900, p. 10.

While Marsh wanted to develop the physical infrastructure of Worcester to facilitate economic growth, Jones hoped that adopting a strong mayor charter would help him to enact a variety of social welfare programs. For Jones, the purpose of municipal government was in “ministering in every possible way to the social needs of the people.”³⁸ Jones was a very successful self-made businessman, but during the Depression of the 1890s, deeply disturbed by pervasive poverty and unemployment, he underwent a religious conversion of sorts and became a dedicated proponent of the Golden Rule. He decided to treat his workers as he would want to be treated, instituting an eight-hour day and providing employees with paid vacations, subsidized health care, Christmas bonuses, and wide variety of other benefits. In 1897, the Republican Party nominated him for mayor of Toledo, mistakenly thinking that his social convictions might attract working-class voters without really being of consequence. He was elected by a narrow margin, but by the time he ran for re-election two years later, he won by one of the widest margins in Toledo’s history. Toledo was a rapidly expanding industrial center when Jones entered office, marked by its ethnic diversity and a rough reputation for gambling, prostitution, and saloons. Jones wanted to use Toledo’s government to improve the daily lives of its working-class residents through programs for playgrounds, kindergartens, swimming facilities, zoos, public concerts, and municipally-owned utilities.³⁹

Jones was ultimately unable to secure the adoption of a strong mayor charter, and his failure to do so further demonstrates the importance of building a coalition of support to achieve structural reform. As mayor, Jones’s attempts to use the government to improve the

³⁸ “Paper of Hon. Samuel M. Jones,” *Proceedings of the Indianapolis Conference for Good City Government and Fourth Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League, Held November 30, December 1-2, 1898* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1898), 227.

³⁹ He also advocated an eight-hour day and minimum wage for all public employees. Marnie Jones, *Holy Toledo: Religion and Politics in the Life of “Golden Rule” Jones* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998), 92; Arthur DeMatteo, “The Progressive as Elitist: ‘Golden Rule’ Jones and the Toledo Charter Reform Campaign of 1901,” *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 69:1 (Winter 1997): 11-14; John D. Buenker, *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc.: 1973), 29.

lives of Toledo's residents were frustrated by his political isolation. Even with widespread popular support among voters, as an independent he did not have the backing of a partisan organization and was unable to accomplish much of his program. These disappointments in part led to his interest in charter reform.⁴⁰ Yet this isolation also contributed to his inability to secure the charter he desired. He was unable to convince his constituents that increasing the mayor's powers was desirable, and many critics of the proposed reforms emphasized the loss of popular participation and control rather than the potential gains of innovative governmental programs.

Jones learned about charter revision and other reforms through his involvement in the National Municipal League and other state and national municipal reform groups where he encountered some of the leading figures in municipal reform. He too became nationally prominent, developing his own theory of urban democracy. As early as 1898, Jones attended the National Municipal League's Conference for Good City Government, where he presented a paper arguing for the replacement of the private ownership of public franchises with municipally-owned utilities, street-railways, and more.⁴¹ Echoing the authors of the Municipal Program, Jones also publicly argued that with home rule cities would be able to expand the scope of local government.⁴² He continued to make similar speeches in the coming years, also attending the conventions of the League of American Municipalities and the League of Ohio Municipalities, organizations composed primarily of elected officials interested in reform. At the meeting of the Ohio League, participants discussed the

⁴⁰ DeMatteo, "The Progressive as Elitist," 10.

⁴¹ "Paper of Hon. Samuel M. Jones," *Proceedings of the Indianapolis Conference*, 220-27.

⁴² Jones published articles in prominent journals and spoke about these issues in Toledo. See the following items found in the Samuel M. Jones papers. S.M. Jones, "Municipal Expansion," *The Arena* XXI: 6 (June 1899): 766, Third Annual Message to the Council (1899), and Fourth Annual Message to the Council (1900), Series Two: "Speeches, articles, and printed materials," Samuel Milton Jones Papers, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, Toledo, Ohio (microfilm edition, roll 12). Hereafter cited as Jones Papers.

possibility of securing a uniform municipal code for the state of Ohio to replace the current system in which the state legislature passed charters for individual cities.⁴³

While the charter Jones recommended for Toledo in many ways conformed to the proposed uniform code, he modified it in several ways in accordance with his own democratic commitments. Jones put forward a new charter that would abolish all boards appointed by the council, grant the mayor the power to appoint department heads, and replace the current forty-five member bi-cameral council elected by wards with a much smaller body of five to seven people selected at-large in non-partisan elections. Unlike Worcester's Mayor Marsh, who sought to insulate decision making from the public, Jones sought to offset the centralization in the Code's proposed charter with the inclusion of a provision to replace the mayoral veto of council bills with public referenda.⁴⁴ Jones was an ardent supporter of non-partisan elections and the initiative and referendum as a means to end opportunities for corruption in politics and thereby improve both "social and political

⁴³ On Jones' participation in these Leagues, see "Matters of Municipal Interest Discussed at Cleveland," *Toledo Blade*, May 16, 1901, p. 11; "The League of Municipalities," *Toledo Blade*, April 22, 1901, p. 2; "Return of the Mayor," *Toledo News Bee*, December 20, 1900, p. 3; "The Mayor Talks in the Municipal League on Municipal Ownership," *Toledo News Bee*, December 15, 1900, p. 5.

In Ohio at the close of the nineteenth century, the state constitution classified cities by population in granting charters. Although the original intent had been to prevent special acts for individual cities, the state legislature continually circumvented the law by multiplying the number of classifications in order to pass so-called "ripper bills" that would apply to the charters of individual cities. Outraged by such state interference in local government, municipal reformers in 1898 pressured the state legislature to create a commission to draft a new municipal code. The Code proposed by the commission abolished the classification system and replaced it with a uniform system of local governmental. Although the state legislature never passed the code, it was widely publicized in cities throughout the state. In 1900, Toledo's population increased to the point where the city's classification changed, and state law required that a new charter be adopted. In this context, Jones likely hoped that even though the state legislature had refused to adopt the code that would make this form of charter uniform throughout the state, if Toledoans requested it for their city alone they might comply. See Hoyt Landon Warner, *Progressivism in Ohio, 1897-1917* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press for the Ohio Historical Society, 1964), 107-8; Clinton Rogers Woodruff, "Municipal Government in Ohio," *Yale Review* 12 (May 1903-February 1904): pp. 127-128; "Census Entitles Toledo to New Municipal Grading," *Toledo Bee*, December 6, 1900, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁴ "In Favor of New Charter," *Toledo Bee*, December 11, 1900, pp. 1, 3; "The Mayor's Annual Message to Council," *Toledo Blade*, December 11, 1900, p. 10.

conditions.”⁴⁵ With the inclusion of the popular referendum, Jones likely believed that his version of the strong mayor plan could achieve the administrative efficiency necessary to expand the scope of local government while maintaining popular accountability.

While Jones was actively involved with several state and national reform organizations, there is no evidence that the local municipal reform association backed his move for a new charter. Though the Citizens’ League of Toledo, like Jones, also supported non-partisanship and declared the need to apply “business principles” to the affairs of municipal government, its leaders, mostly prominent businessmen, did not share Jones’s dedication to strengthening local democracy.⁴⁶ Founded in January of 1901, just one month after Jones proposed revising the charter, Toledo’s Citizen’s League mostly worked to curb the “extravagance” of municipal office holders and lower taxes and only allowed taxpayers (property owners) to join. Its meetings were closed to non-members, including the press, and members were instructed not to comment publicly on its internal workings. It functioned

⁴⁵ Samuel M. Jones, “Non-Partisan Politics and Direct Legislation,” February 6, 1900, Series Two: “Speeches, articles, and printed materials,” Jones Papers.

⁴⁶ Business leaders formed the Citizens’ League partly in response to a series of editorials in the *Toledo Blade*, a local paper with Republican sympathies. These articles informed readers that a wave of municipal reform was sweeping the country and suggested that Toledoans form an organization similar to Chicago’s Committee of 100 or Municipal Voters’ League. Even after the formation of the Citizens’ League, the *Blade* continued to urge local organization to follow the Municipal Voters’ League’s lead, prodding its members to emulate the Chicagoans and investigate the backgrounds of municipal candidates. These articles also declared that the “prominent business and professional men of Toledo” were concerned about the division of responsibility under the current government and that they strongly desired “a better and more-business like government.” When the Citizens’ League formally issued its first public statement, it declared that “The CL, of Toledo, is a business association for business purposes. It seeks to apply to the affairs of the city, the same principles and methods which mark the conduct of a successful business enterprise.” See “The Voters Must Act,” *Toledo Blade*, February 26, 1901, p. 4; “Citizens’ League of Toledo - Publicly Announces its Purposes and Aims,” *Toledo Blade*, February 15, 1901, p. 1; “Citizens’ League of Toledo, Ohio Is Formally Launched,” *Toledo Blade*, January 28, 1901, p. 2; “How Chicago Secured Better Government,” *Toledo Blade*, December 5, 1900, pp. 1-2; “Toledo’s Government,” *Toledo Blade*, December 3, 1900, p. 4; “Many Toledo Citizens Favor Board of Control,” *Toledo Blade*, December 3, 1900, p. 3; “For Better City Government,” *Toledo Blade*, December 1, 1900, pp. 1-2; “Local Municipal Reform Urged by Business Men,” *Toledo Blade*, November 30, 1900, p. 9; “Toledo Taxpayers Talk for Municipal Reform - Citizens Committee Likely to Take a Hand in the Spring Election,” *Toledo Blade*, November 28, 1900, p. 1.

largely as a self-declared public watchdog, investigating the backgrounds of local candidates and the records of city departments.⁴⁷

As an independent, Jones also did not have strong backing from either party in his move to revise the charter, and he instead looked to local labor and commercial groups to aid in the drafting of a new charter. Jones wanted the commission to be as representative as possible of the residents of Toledo, and he worked to ensure that the new charter was created with as much publicity and public involvement as possible.⁴⁸ Unlike in Worcester, where the Mayor had appointed a commission of only three individuals, Jones proposed that the presidents of the Central Labor Union and the Chamber of Commerce join him and the head of the council in appointing fifty members to the Charter Commission.⁴⁹ The resulting Commission was remarkably representative for the day. In addition to current city officials and several business leaders, the commission included three women involved in education, the presidents of several local unions, a book binder, a sheet metal worker, and an African-American deputy country recorder. When a representative of the Polish community complained that they had no representatives, the commission later agreed to appoint one.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ "Citizens' League Aims," *Toledo Bee*, February 15, 1901, p. 7; "The Taxpayers League," *Toledo Bee*, February 4, 1901, p. 4; "Citizens' League of Toledo, Ohio Is Formally Launched," *Toledo Blade*, January 28, 1901, p. 2. Declaring itself "bipartisan," the League attempted to "assist in the selection of city and county officials" by publishing a list of the names, occupations, and places of business of the candidates of both parties for municipal office in the spring of 1901. After "careful investigation," the League endorsed certain candidates but concluded that other were "not the most suitable persons to represent the best interests of the city." See "Candidates for Common Council – Citizens' League Makes Some Recommendations That Are Worth Careful Consideration," *Toledo Blade*, March 29, 1901, p. 1; "Citizens' League of Toledo, Ohio Is Formally Launched," *Toledo Blade*, January 28, 1901, p. 2. While the *Blade* published this list, the *Bee* refused to do so, explaining that since the composition of the League's membership remained a secret, they would not print an "anonymous attack on the reputation of candidates." "The Citizens' League," *Toledo Bee*, March 29, 1901, p. 4; "Citizens' League in Municipal Politics," *Toledo Bee*, March 25, 1901, p. 1. Soon, the League also hired an investigator to examine the records of several city departments to determine whether or not they were being economically run, including the Waterworks and the City Infirmary. See "Citizens' League Again," *Toledo Bee*, July 4, 1901, p. 1.

⁴⁸ DeMatteo, "The Progressive as Elitist," 7, 16-17.

⁴⁹ "Submitted by the Mayor," *Toledo Bee*, January 29, 1901, pp. 1-3.

⁵⁰ Initially, Jones refused to add a Polish representative, claiming that "nationality was not recognized in forming the commission," but when one appointee resigned, the Commission replaced him with a man named

Although the Commission initially considered several possible models, in the end the Republicans took control of the convention away from Jones and others and pushed through their own version of a strong mayor charter. When the Commission began its work, one member suggested that they simply adopt the “Cleveland Plan,” a recent charter adopted by Cleveland to which they were, according to state law, now entitled to adopt having recently moved to a higher population grade. Yet another member disagreed, arguing instead that the Commission should compare several models, including the National Municipal League’s Municipal Program, before coming to a decision. Jones agreed, claiming that “Toledo should be a pacemaker, not a follower.”⁵¹ Yet despite Jones’s efforts to make the body inclusive and deliberative, the Commission’s meetings were soon marked by heated disagreements not regarding the actual content of the charter but rather over the proper parliamentary rules of debate. Several members accused the chair of the commission of imposing a gag order to prevent them from voicing their opinions and presenting alternative proposals.⁵² In the end, a small Republican majority was able to push through a strong mayor charter without Jones’s plan to replace the mayoral veto with a popular referendum on all bills passed by the council. The charter created a seven-member council elected at-large, granted the mayor extensive

Antony Szyperski. See “Discord Crops Out in the New Charter Commission,” *Toledo Bee*, February 24, 1901, p. 1; “Charter Commission Elects Leander Burdick President,” *Toledo Blade*, March 11, 1901, p. 5; “Permanent Officers Selected,” *Toledo Bee*, March 10, 1901, pp. 1, 8. There were also initially only two women on the commission, but Jones appointed a third when a current member resigned. See “Charter Commission Elects another New Member,” *Toledo Bee*, March 31, 1901, p. 2.

⁵¹ “Urges Adoption of Cleveland Charter,” *Toledo Bee*, April 28, 1901, pp. 1-5; “If the People Want It - Toledo Can Have a New Charter Without Action of the Legislature,” *Toledo Bee*, April 16, 1901, p. 1.

⁵² “Charter Opposition Becomes Apparent - Lively Meeting Saturday,” *Toledo Blade*, October 14, 1901, p. 5; “Burdick Charged with Applying Gag Rule,” *Toledo Bee*, October 13, 1901, pp. 1, 8; “Claimed Gag Rule Was Applied,” *Toledo Blade*, August 15, 1901, p. 5.

control over the city's administration, established a municipal civil service, and allowed the people referenda only on public franchises.⁵³

Despite the fact that Jones made clear that this proposed charter was not what he had originally hoped to adopt, he endorsed the Commission's work as an improvement over the status quo. Many of his supporters, however, did not agree. Only twenty-three members of the Commission agreed to endorse the charter officially, and nineteen publicly declared their opposition.⁵⁴ In part, this division followed partisan lines, with most of the Republicans, the majority party in city politics, signing the charter and most of the Democrats, the minority party, signing the protest.⁵⁵ But the debate over the proposed charter also revealed the salience of racial, ethnic, and class identities in considerations of representation in government. All of the representatives of the commission whose constituencies were otherwise ardent followers of Jones – the union members as well as the African-American, German, and Polish members – voted against the charter. Leaders of Toledo's two largest federations of unions (the Toledo Central Labor Union and the Toledo Building Trades

⁵³ "New Charter As Planned by the Commission," *Toledo Blade*, October 5, 1901, p. 6. This charter closely followed the proposed uniform state code (see note 43), causing one member of the Commission to write a letter to the *Toledo Blade* claiming that "[t]he great mistake of this commission was in slavishly copying and appropriating to itself the ill-considered and unscientific work of the state code commission...." See "The Proposed City Charter - Judge Morris Points Out the Weak Points in the Instrument," *Toledo Blade*, October 25, 1901, pp. 1, 6.

⁵⁴ "Now Up To Election Board," *Toledo Bee*, October 19, 1901, p. 3; "The New City Charter," *Toledo Blade*, November 1, 1901, p. 1; "Charter Commissioners Who Oppose New Charter," *Toledo Bee*, November 1, 1901, p. 1.

⁵⁵ 23 members of the Charter Commission signed the charter by October 18th.

Of the 28 Republican members, 61% (17) signed the charter.

Of the 11 Democratic members, 18% (2) signed the charter.

Of the 10 unknowns, 40% (4) signed the charter.

19 people signed the public protest of the charter published on November 1st.

Of the 28 Republican members, 25% (7) protested.

Of the 11 Democratic members, 55% (6) protested.

Of the 10 unknowns, 50% (5) protested.

For details on those signing the charter and the public protest of the charter, see "Charter Commissioners Who Oppose New Charter," *Toledo Bee*, November 1, 1901, p. 1; "Now Up to Election Board," *Toledo Bee*, October 19, 1901, p. 3. For the partisan affiliations of the members of the charter commission, see article Y. "These Persons Constitute the New Charter Commission," *Toledo Bee*, February 18, 1901, p. 2; "To Prepare a New Charter," *Toledo Bee*, February 17, 1901, p. 1.

Council) soon signed a public letter declaring their opposition to the proposed charter as well.⁵⁶ While they may have supported many of Jones's proposed social welfare programs, they did not believe that a strong mayor form of government was a necessary or desirable means to achieve them.

Critics did not perceive the centralization of power in the office of the mayor to be a simple matter of achieving greater efficiency but rather a dangerous attack on the principle of popular representation in government. L.W. Morris, a Republican judge in the common pleas court, wrote an article in the *Toledo Blade* to explain why he and other members of the Charter Commission decided to protest the charter. He claimed that the position of the mayor was "UNDEMOCRATIC AND MONARCHICAL. It takes the government of the city out of the hands of the people and their duly authorized representatives and puts it into the hands of one man for a term of years." Morris went on to add that it made the mayor a "Dictator" and a "boss," concluding, "I believe that the American tendency to place municipalities under one man's management, without any reference to capacity for the work,

⁵⁶ Arthur Edward DeMatteo, "Urban Reform, Politics, and the Working Class: Detroit, Toledo, and Cleveland, 1890-1922," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Akron, 1999), 123; "Charter Commissioners Who Oppose New Charter," *Toledo Bee*, November 1, 1901, p. 1.

The Central Labor Union, founded in 1886, was an active force in local politics. It blocked the election of an anti-union cigar maker in 1891 by distributing 4,000 circulars and stationing workers at polling booths to ensure that members did not vote for this candidate. Its leaders continued to campaign openly against anti-union men and soon sponsored the candidacies of union members for council positions. By 1899, the endorsement of Toledo's CLU for Jones's candidacy for mayor provided crucial support in a city where one quarter to one third of all workers were unionized. See Gregory Robert Zieren, "The Propertied Worker: Working Class Formation in Toledo, Ohio, 1870-1900," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Delaware, 1981), 416-474.

J. H. Spielbusch, a German member of the Charter Commission, joined with other leaders in the German community to call for a mass meeting in Germania Hall to criticize the proposed charter. "Likely to Knock the New Charter," *Toledo Bee*, October 21, 1901, p. 7.

Though African Americans in Toledo tended to vote for Jones, there is no evidence that he attempted to form alliances with the African-American community of Toledo (only 1.3% of the population) beyond the appointment of Charles A. Cottrill to the Charter Commission. Cottrill was a Republican and a political leader of the African-American community in these years. See LeRoy Thomas Williams, "Black Toledo: African Americans in Toledo Ohio, 1890-1930," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Toledo, 1977), 57, 73, 77. On Jones racial views, see Samuel Milton Jones, "The Race Problem," September 16, 1899, Series Two: "Speeches, articles, and printed materials," Jones Papers.

by direct choice of the people at the polls, shows, not only want of faith in the capacity of the people for self government, but great indifference as to results.”⁵⁷

Six days later, the *Blade* published a reply to Morris written Julian Tyler, a Republican lawyer and one of the twenty-three members of the Commission supporting the charter defending the charter using the language of elite reformers and academics. Tyler claimed that their proposal followed the Federal Plan, separating the functions of the executive and legislative branches of municipal government just as they were in the federal government. He denied that the mayor’s complete control over the administration would make him a despot since he had no legislative powers whatsoever, which belonged entirely to the council.⁵⁸ Morris, however, countered in another article that the mayor did have legislative powers in his right to veto bills passed by the council and to recommend public improvements. He further claimed that the members of the Commission who supported the charter were using the theory of separation of powers to mask their real ends of granting the mayor absolute power. He even went so far as to claim that during their meetings, certain members of the Commission referred to popular government as “nonsense” and equated the role of the mayor to that of a czar.⁵⁹

The decision to elect a small council at-large sparked a similar debate. Those who opposed the new charter, notably including all of the minority groups, claimed that a seven-member council elected at-large did not provide for minority representation and voiced their preference for a much larger body elected by wards.⁶⁰ Judge Morris’s articles in the *Blade*

⁵⁷ “The Proposed City Charter - Judge Morris Points Out the Weak Points in the Instrument,” *Toledo Blade*, October 25, 1901, pp. 1, 6.

⁵⁸ “The Proposed City Charter - Julian Tyler of the Commission Replies to Critics,” *Toledo Blade*, October 31, 1901, p. 1.

⁵⁹ “The One-Man Feature of the Proposed Charter,” *Toledo Blade*, November 4, 1901, p. 6.

⁶⁰ Judge Morris had at the last meeting of the Commission attempted to introduce his own alternative charter that proposed a 45-member council elected by wards. The commission voted 19 to 17 to table the charter

explained why these members of the Commission felt that the Charter did not provide for adequate representation of Toledo's citizens, claiming that "the philosophy of the framers of the charter is redolent with the rankest disbelief in the capacity of the people for self-government." He explained that the proposed council "is not large enough to be fairly representative of the many import interests and sections ... of a great and growing city like Toledo." In contrast, he advocated a council that provided "for minority representation, and for that of any great interest whether it be political, religious, social, mercantile, racial or industrial." Without such representation, a council, according to Morris, "is not only not democratic, but it lacks the very power of reflecting the popular will. Deprived of fair representation in council, the people are not granted even the appearance of participation in their own affairs."⁶¹

Julian Tyler, in defending the council in the pages of the *Blade*, presented a very different understanding of the nature of popular representation in legislative bodies, again echoing the claims of elite theorists of municipal government. He believed that it was not fair for a person elected in only one ward to have the power to make legislative decisions that affected the entire city. The at-large system, he added, would make it possible "to elect men who will be truly representative of the entire body of the citizens, and who, while charged with the ... duty of legislating for the best interests of the city as a whole, [will] protect and advance the interests of every part of it."⁶² In short, in the pages of the Toledo *Blade* Morris and Tyler articulated competing conceptions of representation similar to those that would be

without even allowing it to be read. See "Charter Commissioners Who Oppose New Charter," *Toledo Bee*, November 1, 1901, p. 1; "The One That Was Not Read - Another Proposed Charter for the City of Toledo," *Toledo Bee*, October 17, 1901, pp. 1, 3; "Charter Formally Adopted," *Toledo Bee*, October 17, 1901, p. 2; "Charter Adopted by Commission," *Toledo Blade*, October 17, 1901, p. 9.

⁶¹ "The Proposed City Charter - Judge Morris Points Out the Weak Points in the Instrument," *Toledo Blade*, October 25, 1901, pp. 1, 6.

⁶² "The Proposed City Charter - Julian Tyler of the Commission, Replies to Critics," *Toledo Blade*, October 31, 1901, p. 1.

debated by scholars in years to come, demonstrating that local actors also actively debated the appropriate role of groups in the political process.

The popular referendum on the charter suggests that the opinions of the voters of Toledo paralleled those of the charter commission, with working-class districts voting more heavily against the charter, by a margin of 57.5%. The new charter failed to pass by a narrow margin of 49.4% to 51.6%. Provisions that increased the mayor's powers, reduced the size of the council, and replaced ward with at-large representation struck many Toledoans as a danger to the principle of democratic representation.⁶³ Jones had originally hoped to make use of these features to implement innovative policies of social welfare that would have benefited members of the working class greatly. Yet without a strong coalition, Jones was unable to secure the inclusion of a popular referendum to replace the mayoral veto, and without the referendum, there was little in the Charter Commission's proposal to convince the majority of Toledoans local government would remain popularly accountable.⁶⁴

⁶³ DeMatteo, "The Progressive as Elitist," 8, 20-21.

⁶⁴ By 1902, a decision by the Ohio Supreme Court forced the state legislature to confront this issue directly by declaring Cleveland's special charter of 1891, and consequently any charter tailored to an individual city, unconstitutional. The Court gave the general assembly less than six months to resolve the predicament of that fact that many cities in the state were now governed by illegal charters. Regardless of clear sentiment from in favor of a system of home rule with regard to charter making among academics, union leaders, and elected officials in the League of Ohio Municipalities, the state legislature opted to create a uniform municipal code. Though the Ohio Code of 1902 did not embody the system proposed by the Toledo Charter Commission, Toledoans still found themselves in 1902 with a new charter imposed by outside forces.

The Ohio Code of 1902 did not encompass the more innovative trends in municipal government. State legislators rejected the federal plan, deciding instead to continue with the older board system. The code required an elected mayor and unicameral council as well as city solicitor, auditor, treasurer, police judge, and some members of the boards of public safety and services. While the remaining members of the boards were to be appointed by the mayor, the governor could intervene if the council did not approve the mayor's nominees by a two-thirds majority. The members of the board of health, sinking fund trustees, and tax commissioners were to be appointed by the mayor. The Code also mandated a merit system of appointment in the police and fire departments. In the case of Toledo, the new Code abolished the bi-cameral legislature elected by wards and replaced it with a single body with twenty percent of members elected at-large. Secretary Clinton Rogers Woodruff of the National Municipal League listed its problems: specific rather than general grants of power, "the profusion of elective officers," "the retention of the antiquated board system," "the inadequate civil service system." He also claimed that some of the boards were appointed by the governor, not the mayors, violating the principle of home rule. Warner, *Progressivism in Ohio*, 16-17, 105-15; John R. Schindel, "The Paine Law in Ohio," *Proceedings of the Cincinnati Conference for Good City Government and the Fifteenth Annual Meeting*

Norfolk, 1904-1907

In the first years of the twentieth century, civic boosters in countless cities across the country worked to attract outside investors by providing “modern” municipal infrastructures and services. In Norfolk, Virginia, a shipping center with a reputation as a “wide-open” town, the drive to accomplish this goal and attract manufacturers in 1904 was more urgent than in almost any other city, with the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition, a national celebration of the three-hundredth anniversary of the settlement of Jamestown, looming just three short years away. According to Mayor James Riddick, “Just now with the Jamestown Exposition about to be held, with our city about to go on exhibition before the people of the world, it is particularly necessary for us to put our house in order in every regard....” In an article addressing “Norfolk’s Public Institutions and Desirable Lines for Improvement,” Riddick celebrated recent advancements in public health due to improvements in sewerage and the establishment of municipally-owned waterworks and also mentioned progress in the paving and lighting of streets and the regulation of saloons. At the same time, he suggested that more needed to be done to create public squares and parks and to further improve the water supply and streets.⁶⁵ Charter reform began in Norfolk as part of this effort, and its fate offers another example of the importance of sustaining coalitions to secure revisions in municipal charters. Though the reformist Good Government Association initiated the move for a new

of the National Municipal League (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1909), 251-52; Woodruff, “Municipal Government in Ohio,” 114-15.

⁶⁵ Jas. G. Riddick, “Norfolk’s Public Institutions and Desirable Lines for Improvement,” *Jamestown Exposition Edition of the Norfolk Dispatch* (Norfolk: Norfolk Dispatch Publishing Company, 1904), 120-23. On the desire “to secure the location here of manufacturing establishments,” see “Norfolk Must Watch,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, July 13, 1905, p. 4.

charter, its members soon discovered that without the support of the Central Labor Union and the Norfolk Municipal League it would be unable to achieve its goals.

Even more than in Worcester or Toledo, charter reform began in Norfolk, Virginia, as a response to changes in state law. In 1902, Virginia adopted a new constitution with a revised article on the organization of the governments of cities and towns. Two years later, councilor T.S. Southgate, a merchandise broker, leading figure in the Chamber of Commerce, and member of the Board of Governors of the Jamestown Exposition, introduced a resolution in the common council for the revision of the city charter. Southgate claimed that Norfolk urgently needed a new charter because the present one did not conform to the provisions on cities in Virginia's new state constitution.⁶⁶ Norfolk's present charter did, in fact, violate the new state laws in several ways, particularly by appointing rather than electing a number of local officials.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the move to initiate a new charter must have also been part of the Good Government's Association's move to consolidate their control over Norfolk's government.

The Good Government Association, founded in 1900, began as a municipal reform movement against the machine politics of the Ring that dominated Norfolk's government. Given the absence of a competitive Republican Party, the only real contest in municipal elections was the Democratic primary, in which rivalries centered on these two factions of the Democratic Party. Under the rule of the Ring, Norfolk had become known as a "wide-

⁶⁶ *A Record of the Common Council*, No. 20, May 3, 1904-February 2, 1906, p. 153 (original copy located in City Hall, Norfolk, VA); "Star Chamber Met Quick Death ... Voted for City Charter Revision Commission," *Virginian Pilot*, September 7, 1904, p. 1. For biographical information on Southgate, see "Merchants in Session," *Ledger Dispatch*, October 9, 1906, p. 1; "Chamber of Commerce," *Norfolk Public Ledger*, January 16, 1906, p. 9.

⁶⁷ See Chapter IV, Section 26, *The Ordinances of the City of Norfolk, VA, with the Amended Charter, Acts of Assembly Relating to City Government, and an Appendix* (Norfolk, VA: Burke & Gregory, 1902), 21; Article VIII, Sections 119-20, *The Constitution of the State of Virginia Adopted by the Convention of 1901-2* (Richmond: No Publisher, 1902), 30-31. The new constitution required that the clerk of court, attorney for the commonwealth, city treasurer, and city sergeant be elected.

open” town, famed for saloons, gambling, and prostitution. By 1902, with the support of labor, members of the Good Government Association had taken control of the city council, promising to reduce crime, institute honest elections, and secure public control of utilities. Once in office, they set about excluding the Ring, now the minority faction, from all boards and committees to consolidate their power. That same year, Virginia’s new constitution disfranchised African American and many poor white voters. The loss of these voters hurt the Ring in the polls, and by 1904, the Good Government Association completely controlled the city’s government.⁶⁸

With the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition only a few short years away, the Good Government Association worked closely with local commercial organizations to restore Norfolk’s image by transforming the reputation of its government and embarking on a plan for beautification, particularly of streets, sidewalks, and parks.⁶⁹ Supported by fellow business leaders and white-collar professionals, the members of the Good Government Association in the council worked to clean up the city, in large part to attract investors. To accomplish their goals, they often collaborated with the Chamber of Commerce, which in 1904 petitioned the councils for the establishment of a Municipal Bureau of Improvement. That same year, the Chamber also took the lead in expanding the city’s railway system, successfully petitioning the council for the extension of a railroad line. In 1905, the Chamber focused on the expansion of the city itself, organizing meetings with chambers of nearby communities to consider consolidation with Norfolk. By the following year, the Chamber was so involved in municipal government that it established standing committees on parks,

⁶⁸ James Sidney Kitterman, Jr., “Reformers and Bosses in the Progressive Era: The Changing Face of Norfolk Politics, 1880-1920” MA Thesis, Old Dominion, 1971, 67-96.

⁶⁹ “Improving City Streets,” *Virginian Pilot*, November 17, 1904, p. 3; “\$42,278 Voted for Beautifying the City,” *Virginian Pilot*, November 16, 1904, p. 1.

libraries, streets, and roads.⁷⁰ The *Virginian Pilot* commended such efforts, claiming that “Progressive cities everywhere have come to recognize the necessity of making themselves attractive, if not only as an end desired in itself, but as a means to their success and prosperity in a business way.”⁷¹

The Good Government Association was also allied with unions in Norfolk. The Central Labor Union supported the Good Government Association and regarded the upcoming Jamestown Exposition as beneficial for organized labor. Organized labor in Norfolk was actively involved in municipal politics, but when an attempt to form a Workingman’s Political Club that would nominate its own candidate for the council in 1904 faltered, the union members involved decided to back the Good Government Association candidates instead.⁷² Moreover, the organizers of the Jamestown Exposition Company promised to use only union labor in all of its building and construction projects, which secured many jobs for the CLU’s members.⁷³

Yet when the Good Government Association attempted to insulate the process of charter revision from any outside influences it began to lose the support of organized labor and other groups in Norfolk. Unlike in Toledo and Worcester, Norfolk’s leaders did not announce what type of revisions they supported from the start, claiming only that they wanted to revise the charter in accordance with the new state constitution. The council voted

⁷⁰ “Names Committees of Norfolk Chamber,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, January 25, 1906, p. 9; “Tentative Terms of Consolidation Fixed,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 30, 1905, p. 3; “Big Meeting Will Discuss Plan of Consolidation,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 24, 1905, p. 3; “Greater City is Gaining Favor,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 22, 1905, p. 3; “Municipal Bureau of Improvement Is Planned,” *Virginian Pilot*, September 18, 1904, p. 3. For the occupations of many of the Good Government councilors, see “Object to So Many Liquor Dealers on Ticket,” *Ledger Dispatch*, May 15, 1906, p. 11.

The Board of Trade and Retail Merchants’ Association were similarly involved in local politics. See “Merchants Will Fight Light Co. in Council,” *Virginian Pilot*, October 11, 1905, p. 3; “Board of Trade’s New Home is ‘Warmed,’” *Virginian Pilot*, July 7, 1905, p. 3; “New Home for Board of Trade,” *Norfolk Public Ledger* June 30, 1905, p. 12; “Business Men Are to Confer,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 13, 1905, p. 7.

⁷¹ “Make the City Attractive,” *Virginian Pilot*, October 3, 1905, p. 4.

⁷² Kitterman, “Reformers and Bosses in the Progressive Era,” 94-95.

⁷³ “Union Labor Men Want Municipal Ownership,” *Virginia Pilot*, November 14, 1905, p. 7.

for the creation of a commission to draft a new charter, submit it to the councils for adoption, and then present it to the state's general assembly for final ratification. Predictably, the seven-person Commission, including one member of the select council, two members of the common council, the city attorney, the city engineers, and two private citizens (both lawyers selected by the council) was closely allied with the Good Government Association.⁷⁴ The Central Labor Union then unanimously adopted a resolution requesting that the city council appoint a representative of organized labor to the Commission, which currently consisted of a clerk, a merchant, and five lawyers. According to the union member who proposed the resolution,

[W]e feel that organized labor is of sufficient importance in this community to give it representation along with other local interests. In the very important work ahead of the commission it is possible that something may turn up affecting one way or the other the affairs of the working man, directly or indirectly, and in such an event the Central Labor union believes that the services of some one conversant with the best interests of working people may prove of some avail.⁷⁵

Yet despite the fact that the CLU had been a valuable ally of the Good Government Association, the council denied their request, claiming that current commissioners "were fully capable of representing all the interests of the community justly and fairly and that too many members would make it cumbersome and unwieldy." One councilor even criticized the Union for attempting to inject "party or factional politics in such an important body."⁷⁶ In so doing, the council, controlled by the Good Government Association, sought to insulate

⁷⁴ "Star Chamber Met Quick Death," *Virginian Pilot*, September 7, 1904, p. 1; "Who Emasculated the City Charter?" *Virginian Pilot*, October 15, 1904, p. 4.

⁷⁵ "Unions Want Place on the Charter Commission," *Virginian Pilot*, September 15, 1904, p. 7. For the professions of the members of the Charter Commission, see "Labor Candidate for Board of Control," *Norfolk Public Ledger*, March 19, 1906, p. 4.

⁷⁶ "Labor's Proposition Was Rejected by the Common Councilmen," *Virginian Pilot*, October 5, 1904, p. 7; "Labor Gets No Man on New Charter Commission," *Virginian Pilot*, October 12, 1904, p. 3.

the creation of the new charter completely, justifying its position by claiming that the Commission represented the interests of the entire community.

The following month, the Commission further moved to block all outside influences by declaring its sessions closed to the public, calling it “inexpedient” to allow open access to its “deliberations” but still officially welcoming written suggestions from private citizens.⁷⁷ The local press was not pleased with this decision and continued to report the details of their meetings whenever information leaked.⁷⁸ Soon enough, disgruntled citizens began to feel that the Good Government Association was no longer devoted to municipal reform, now only interested in consolidating its power over the city government by any means possible, including charter reform. These citizens, declaring themselves representatives of the people of Norfolk, decided to organize the Norfolk Municipal League to promote the adoption of a “modern” city charter.⁷⁹

The founders of the Norfolk Municipal League used the organizational model of a municipal league to assert their authority as apolitical civic leaders. These prominent residents of Norfolk closely followed events transpiring in cities across the country and justified their decisions to form a local municipal league based on the successes of leagues in other cities. Shortly before its formation, an editorial in the *Virginian Pilot* explained that municipal leagues “are in existence in many of the largest and most progressive cities of the United States and the promoters of the proposed organization here aver that the time is ripe for the formation of such an association in Norfolk.” At the Norfolk League’s first meeting in March of 1905, L.P. Shaw, a retired naval lieutenant and president of the League, told his listeners that to improve municipal government, many of the “larger cities of the country

⁷⁷ “Old Chairman of the Charter Commission,” *Virginian Pilot*, November 15, 1904, p. 2.

⁷⁸ “Charter Revision Commission's Big Task,” *Virginian Pilot*, December 29, 1904, p. 3.

⁷⁹ “With Bright Prospects the Municipal League Is Formally Organized,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 17, 1905, p. 7.

have organized municipal leagues, notably Boston, Cleveland, Harrisburg and Los Angeles.” At their next meeting, the League’s members voted to adopt the constitution of “the famous Harrisburg league, which is considered one of the best in the country,” and to become affiliated with the National Municipal League. Within months, Shaw initiated a plan to create a statewide Virginia Municipal League, sending out appeals to newspapers and “prominent men” in towns and cities across the state to form leagues of their own.⁸⁰

Shaw and other leaders also used the rhetoric of leading municipal reformers and the model of the National Municipal League’s Municipal Program to present their own desired structural reforms as universal tools for achieving good government. Though the Norfolk League’s constitution referred to the importance of “the business-like, economical, intelligent and progressive management of the affairs of the city government,” its first declared purpose was “[t]o induce citizens to take an active and earnest part in municipal affairs; to stimulate civic pride, cooperation and public spirit.”⁸¹ With the Charter Commission at work, the League called on “all public-spirited citizens” to “unite to see to it that this charter should indeed be a ‘charter of their liberties’ and confer on the city in the highest possible degree the blessings of home rule.” To draft such an “up-to-date” charter, the League recommended Municipal Program as a model and presented copies of the Program to every member of the Charter Commission. Shaw stressed that “the ablest experts” in the country spent years

⁸⁰ “Move to Stop Civic Corruption,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, October 30, 1905, p. 1; “Elects Officers, Plans Campaign,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, March 17, 1905, p. 2; “With Bright Prospects the Municipal League Is Formally Organized,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 17, 1905, p. 7; “City League Enrolled 33 Members,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 10, 1905, p. 1; “Form Municipal League Is the Movement,” *Virginian Pilot*, February 28, 1905, p. 3. Kitterman claims that the members of the Norfolk Municipal League included “some of Norfolk’s most prominent citizens.” See Kitterman, “Reformers and Bosses in the Progressive Era,” 98.

⁸¹ “With Bright Prospects the Municipal League Is Formally Organized,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 17, 1905, p. 7; “City League Enrolled 33 Members,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 10, 1905, p. 1; “Municipal League Meeting Tonight,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 9, 1905, p. 4; “Concerning a Municipal League,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 1, 1905, p. 4. Notably, the League’s constitution listed encouraging popular involvement as its first purpose. Working to create business-like government was fifth.

drafting the Program, clearly suggesting that the Charter Commission could do no better. Shaw particularly emphasized the importance of the initiative and referendum, claiming that all “modern charters” now contained these features, and he also sought the inclusion of a merit-based civil service.⁸²

The Charter Commission and others challenged the authority claimed by the Norfolk League based on its connections to wider networks of municipal reform. The Charter Commission dismissed the National Municipal League’s Program as an inappropriate model. A member of the Charter Commission commented, “We are trying to formulate a charter in accordance with the constitution of the state ... such as may be applicable to the local conditions and not a charter based upon academic and theoretical views.” An editorial in the *Norfolk Public Ledger* agreed, arguing that “[t]here are some theories that are absolutely irrefutable from a standpoint of a theoretical argument that are untried and might not prove suited to local conditions, and of these the charter committee might do well to steer clear.”⁸³

As self-declared representatives of the people, the leaders of the Norfolk Municipal League also assumed that they would be given greater access to the sessions of the Charter Commission than the general public. The Commission’s chair, however, maintained that while League members were free to submit written suggestions like other private citizens,

⁸² “Shaw Scores Charter’s Makers,” *Virginian Pilot*, November 1, 1905, p. 2; “Referendum for Charter to Be Advocated,” *Virginian Pilot*, September 14, 1905, p. 5; “Form Municipal League Is the Movement,” *Virginian Pilot*, February 28, 1905, p. 3; “Writes Letter to the League,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, December 28, 1905, p. 6; “Meeting Called of Municipal League,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, October 14, 1905, p. 1.

⁸³ “No Reply to Lieut. Shaw,” *Virginian Pilot*, November 2, 1905, p. 5. The editorial continued: “There may, however, be some new and desirable features that they might gather from outside suggestions. It would seem to us that it might be wise an address to the charter revision committee embodying such provisions as it considers desirable, and then should the committee desire to further follow any feature, it could invite the president of the [Norfolk Municipal] league to meet for such consideration.” See “The Secret Sessions,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, November 4, 1905, p. 4.

they would not be allowed to attend the closed sessions.⁸⁴ In response, President Shaw of the Municipal League launched a bitter campaign against the “undemocratic secret sessions” of the Commission. As he explained to an audience of League members, the Commission’s secret meetings violated “[t]he two fundamental principles on which all workable systems of representative government must be founded - that people are the sources of all power and that the majority must rule.” When approached by the press, the Commission refused to reply to Shaw’s comments.⁸⁵ Despite the requests of the Central Labor Union and the Municipal League to participate in the framing of the new charter, the Commission refused to view charter-making as a process open to public deliberation.

When the Charter Commission finally published its work in February of 1906 after a year and a half of closed-sessions, its proposed charter did not follow the recommendations of the Municipal Program, nor did it contain provisions for a civil service system or the initiative and referendum, dismissed by the Chairman as “not being of practical value.”⁸⁶ Though the Charter Commission considered both the Federal Plan and the Commission Plan (a recent innovation in which the mayor and the council were replaced with a small commission), it ultimately recommended the creation of a Board of Control.⁸⁷ The Board of

⁸⁴ “Municipal League Will Not Attend Charter Meetings,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 18, 1905, p. 5; “With Bright Prospects the Municipal League Is Formally Organized,” *Virginian Pilot*, March 17, 1905, p. 7; “Meeting Called of Municipal League,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, October 14, 1905, p. 1; “Shaw Scores Charter’s Makers,” *Virginian Pilot*, November 11, 1905, p. 2.

⁸⁵ “No Reply to Lieut. Shaw,” *Virginian Pilot*, November 2, 1905, p. 5; “Shaw Scores Charter’s Makers,” *Virginian Pilot*, November 1, 1905, p. 2; “Would Dispense with Secret Sessions,” *Virginian Pilot*, August 13, 1905, p. 3.

⁸⁶ “Charter Discussed,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 10, 1906, p. 4.

⁸⁷ The Commission Plan would have violated Virginia’s constitution, which required all municipalities to be governed by a mayor and a council. See Article VII, “The Organization and Government of Cities and Towns,” *The Constitution of the State of Virginia Adopted by the Convention of 1901-2*, 29-35. Several articles in the *Norfolk Public Ledger* even indicate that there was some feeling that the Board of Control was a form of commission government. See “Board of Control Leaves Tonight,” *Ledger Dispatch*, July 23, 1906, p. 11; “Board of Control May Take the Trip,” *Ledger Dispatch*, June 13, 1906, p. 3. For the rumor that the Commission would recommend the Federal Plan, see “Mayor to Have Enlarged Powers,” *Virginian Pilot*, November 25, 1905, p. 1.

Control would replace the six council-appointed boards that currently each ran individual municipal departments (street, sewer and drains, water, police, health, and fire). It would radically centralize the city government, reducing the power of the council, which would no longer manage the details of departmental business in committee.⁸⁸

Given its vast powers, the method of selecting the Board of Control was essential in determining who would run Norfolk's government. The Charter Commission could not agree on this point. The public officials on the Commission wanted the Board appointed by the mayor, subject to approval by the council; the two private citizens wanted it elected by the people.⁸⁹ In allowing the mayor to appoint this powerful Board, the proposed charter, a variation of strong mayor government, attempted to remove administrative powers from the legislative body. While this plan could in theory be described as conforming to the concept of the separation of politics and administration, opponents of the Good Government Association viewed it as a political attempt to gain total control of Norfolk's government. With a sympathetic mayor in office, the Good Government faction assumed that it would control the appointment of the Board of Control.

The debate in the council over which method to choose, pitting the Ring against the Good Government faction, focused on the abilities of the people to elect qualified candidates. The Good Government members claimed that the people would not choose those best qualified to run the city as it should be run, which in their mind was as a business corporation. The Ring members defended the people's capabilities, insisting that if they

⁸⁸ "Board of Control Charter Finished," *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 1, 1906, p. 1.

⁸⁹ The city engineer proposed an alternative plan in which the council selected the Board of Control. See "Wants Finance Committeeman," *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 11, 1906, p. 1.

could elect a competent mayor, they could also elect a competent Board of Control.⁹⁰ Many in Norfolk agreed with the Ring. An editorial in the *Norfolk Public Ledger* warned that “the unfortunate tendency to centralization of power is a thing to be closely watched by the people,” and one citizen later described a system that allowed the mayor to appoint the Board as “a one man oligarchy.”⁹¹ Despite the great public protest over a Board of Control appointed by the mayor, the Good Government Association, firmly in control of the council, easily voted for an appointed Board in a strictly factional vote of twenty four to ten. As a result, the Good Government Association’s popular support further eroded. It had come into office promising to make city government more responsive to the people, but its efforts to consolidate control through charter reform alienated many of its supporters.⁹²

Organized labor now ended its alliance with the Good Government Association. Though the Good Government Association had initially formed a coalition with labor in opposition to the corruption of the Ring and in support of community preparedness for the Jamestown Exposition, it lost the backing of this important base because it failed to convince union leaders that increasing the mayor’s powers by allowing him to appoint the Board of Control served their interests. This loss weakened the Good Government Association significantly as unions in Norfolk continued to be a powerful force in local politics in these years. The previous summer, members of the Central Labor Union decided to circumvent the clause of their constitution that prohibited the introduction of “politics into the deliberations of unions” by forming an affiliated Working Men’s Democratic Association. Boasting that

⁹⁰ “Wants Finance Committeeman,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 11, 1906, p. 1. Shaw of the Norfolk Municipal League wanted the Board elected by the council using a system of cumulative voting to provide for minority representation. See “Board of Control Was Discussed,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 15, 1906, p. 11.

⁹¹ “The New Charter,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 19, 1906, p. 4; “Fight Charter in Legislature,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 17, 1906, p. 11.

⁹² Kitterman, “Reformers and Bosses in the Progressive Era,” 100-01.

they controlled the votes of over 2,000 men in the city, they formed this organization to endorse pro-union candidates for state office and thereby contributed to the election of E.W. Gaines to the general assembly later that summer.⁹³

The Central Labor Union now supported the appeal of the Ring councilors to the general assembly to amend the proposed charter so that the Board would be elected by the people. The CLU and the Ring were optimistic that the legislature in Richmond would side with them. At the Constitutional Convention in 1901, though the Committee on the Organization and Government of Cities and Towns had vocally advocated an increase in the “powers of local self-government” granted to municipalities, it followed the lead of the “thought of some of the best political scientists of the country” and applied that home rule only to the scope of municipal activities, favoring uniform structures in cities across the state. The article pertaining to local government in the final version of the new constitution therefore provided for a largely standardized system in all cities, specifically permitting the general assembly to amend and even repeal municipal charters if it felt they violated these constitutional provisions. It also stipulated that several local officials previously appointed now be elected by popular vote.⁹⁴ This legal context, combined with Gaines’s presence in

⁹³ “Labor Pleased with Results,” *Virginian Pilot*, August 24, 1905, p. 5; “Labor Will Take Hand in State Politics,” *Virginian Pilot*, August 6, 1905, p. 1.

⁹⁴ “Board of Control,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 12, 1906, p. 4. See “Report of the Committee on the Organization and Government of Cities and Towns” and Article VII of the Constitution of the State of Virginia: “The Organization and Government of Cities and Towns” reprinted in *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of Virginia. Held in the City of Richmond, Beginning June 12th, 1901* (Richmond: J.H. O’Bannon, 1901), 1-7, 29-35. The committee also paraphrased Frank Goodnow’s explanation of the “the dual character of cities” (see chapter two), further indicating the widespread influence of his conception of home rule. It did not, however, follow Goodnow and the Municipal Program in suggesting that a general grant of powers to cities be included in the constitution, instead requesting that the general assembly later grant “the largest and possible powers of local self-government to cities and towns.”

the general assembly, resulted in the legislature agreeing with advocates of a popularly-elected Board and voting to amend the charter before passing it into law.⁹⁵

In these same years, the Good Government Association also attempted to redistrict the city in an effort to consolidate its control over city government, providing another example of political actors attempting to utilize avowedly apolitical structural reforms to achieve partisan ends. Just as the Good Government members of the councils cited the recently adopted state constitution to justify the need for a new charter, they also made use of it to defend their call to redistrict the city. With the adoption of new qualifications for suffrage in the Virginia Constitution of 1902, the number of registered voters dropped by nearly half in Norfolk between April and October of that year. Given that this reduction in the electorate affected different wards unevenly, G. Tayloe Gwathmey introduced a bill in the common council in July 1905 to redistrict the city based on the distribution of voters rather than residents.⁹⁶

While on one level this move to redistrict Norfolk was motivated by factional competition within the Democratic Party for control of the city government, on another it was about race, citizenship, and representation, issues which pervaded municipal politics. The Ring's previous dominance of Norfolk's elections was made possible in part by the support of African-American voters. In the fall of 1901, the Ring easily defeated the Good Government Association at the polls, winning a dramatic victory in ward four, known for its

⁹⁵ "Legislature Will Amend New Charter," *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 19, 1906, p. 10; "Real Charter Fight Tonight," *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 26, 1906, p. 11; "People to Elect," *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 27, 1906, p. 1.

⁹⁶ *A Record of the Common Council*, No. 21, February 6, 1906 – September 3, 1906, pp. 19, 36, 122-24 (original copy located in City Hall, Norfolk, VA); *A Record of the Select Council, Norfolk, VA*, No. 14, Jan. 10, 1905 – Aug. 31, 1906, pp. 317-21, 323-24 (original copy located in City Hall, Norfolk, VA); "Redist. Bill Now Up to Mayor," *Virginian Pilot*, August 9, 1905, pp. 1-2; "Is It Goodbye to Old Fourth?" *Norfolk Public Ledger*, July 7, 1905, p. 12; "Redistricting Bill Passed Common Branch 16 to 5 in a Session Replete with Sensational Utterances," *Virginian Pilot*, July 7, 1905, p. 1; "Identity of 4th Ward in Peril," *Virginian Pilot*, July 4, 1905, p. 1.

large African-American population, with a return of 1,224 to 16. In the fall of 1903, only one year after the passage of the new constitution, turnout in the fourth ward fell to only 86. The Ring suffered several losses, and the Good Government Association was well on its way to dominating municipal politics in Norfolk.⁹⁷

The Good Government Association's attempt to redistrict was widely understood to be an attempt to gerrymander the city to solidify its control of the council. Claiming that representation needed to be based on the number of voters per ward rather than the number of total residents, the Good Government councilors argued that the current system unfairly over-represented the fourth ward and proposed to abolish the fourth ward and alter the boundaries of several other wards. Outraged, the Ring opposition in the councils maintained that the new constitution required districts to be made according to the total population, not the voting population. One member of the Ring publicly declared at a common council meeting that the redistricting plan was the "dirtiest political steal" he had ever witnessed, motivated purely by a desire to ensure that the Good Government faction would dominate the council in future elections. Despite the obvious motivation behind the redistricting measure, the Good Government faction, however, maintained that it was only concerned with creating equitable representation in the councils. One Good Government councilor maintained that "the Fourth ward is a cancer on the body politic of the city" that needed to be removed, and Gwathmey later claimed that his plan would simply provide "the people a more equal voice in the councils."⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Kitterman, "Reformers and Bosses in the Progressive Era," 81, 90-91.

⁹⁸ "'Absurd,' Says Gwathmey of Umstadter's Opinion," *Virginian Pilot*, November 29, 1904, p. 4; "Redistricting Bill Passed Common Branch 16 to 5 in a Session Replete with Sensational Utterance," *Virginian Pilot*, July 7, 1905, p. 1. When the Good Government faction next attempted to delay the upcoming elections for the City Democratic Committee until after the city had been redistricted, many residents of Norfolk came to agree with the Ring's assessment of the political motivations behind the redistricting plan. See Kitterman, "Reformers and Bosses in the Progressive Era," 104; "City Committee Election Postponed Indefinitely,"

Though at council meetings both factions avoided overtly mentioning the obvious racial dimension to this attempt further to disfranchise the residents of the fourth ward, the prejudicial distrust of the capabilities of African-American voters often surfaced in the pages of the local newspapers. Critics of the Ring, accusing it of corrupt electoral practices, often presented its African-American supporters as unqualified for the duties of citizenship. In one editorial, the *Virginian-Pilot* maintained that it was “nonsense” to speak of “the negro” as a legitimate “factor in government,” asserting that as a “menial and an underling,” he was “incapable of governing himself, much less ... someone else.”⁹⁹ Further indicating the unspoken racial motivation of the redistricting scheme, another editorial simply declared “We all know what the Fourth ward is.”¹⁰⁰

Ultimately, however, though the Good Government faction, with solid majorities in both councils, easily secured the passage of the redistricting bill, it was unable to gerrymander the fourth ward out of existence. The Ring successfully challenged the measure in the state courts, which agreed that the bill violated the state constitution, and when the Good Government faction renewed its efforts with an attempt to circumvent an injunction that barred it from redistricting the city, the Ring sought the support of Democratic allies in the state legislature. Despite the Good Government faction sending a delegation to Richmond to lobby for its cause, the legislature passed a bill that prevented Norfolk from

Virginian Pilot, August 4, 1905, pp. 1-2; “City Committee’s Election May Be Postponed,” *Virginian Pilot*, July 16, 1905, p. 7.

The members of the Ring were correct in claiming that the new constitution stipulated representation in the council by population rather than by voters. See Article VII, Section 121, *The Constitution of the State of Virginia, Adopted by the Convention of 1901-2*, 31; “Report of the Committee on the Organization and Government of Cities and Towns,” *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of Virginia*, 5.

⁹⁹ Kitterman, “Reformers and Bosses in the Progressive Era,” 81; “The Race Issue a National One,” *Virginian Pilot*, July 22, 1904, p. 4. The Good Government Association came to power in part due to the strong support it received from Norfolk’s Central Labor Union, which refused to admit African Americans as members. See “Large Unions Barred Negroes,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 25, 1905, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ “The Fourth to the Rescue,” *Virginian Pilot*, July 8, 1905, p. 4.

redistricting until 1909 at the earliest.¹⁰¹ State intervention by both the courts and the general assembly thereby prevented the Good Government Association from redistricting, just as it had blocked their efforts to secure a charter without a popularly-elected Board of Control.

Racial politics also penetrated discussions of the new charter, for though the Norfolk Municipal League presented the implementation of a civil service system as a neutral matter of adopting a universally agreed upon tool of good government, opponents realized that to do so could potentially alter the racial balance of power in the city. Speaking for the Municipal League, President Shaw had long advocated “the adoption of the competitive merit system” as part of a shift “from political to business methods,” explaining that such a system would be “death knell of the politicians, but the salvation of the taxpayer.”¹⁰² While Virginia’s new constitution contained no civil service provisions, a merit system had already been introduced in Norfolk’s Fire Department, and for a time it seemed that the Charter Commission would include provisions to expand the civil service to include the police department as well.¹⁰³ Yet when the Commission presented its proposed charter to the councils, it did not initially include a merit system. With Shaw of the Municipal League still publicly campaigning for the inclusion of a civil service commission in the new charter, the council later inserted one in an attempt to pacify critics angered over the appointment of the Board of Control.¹⁰⁴ Soon after the law took effect, two African Americans applied for

¹⁰¹ Kitterman, “Reformers and Bosses in the Progressive Era,” 104-106; “Failed to See All Norfolk Men,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 24, 1906, p. 1; “No Further Fight Against Injunction,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, January 31, 1906, pp. 1, 10; “Caucus Endorsed Gerrymander Bill,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, December 6, 1905, p. 9; “Redistricting Norfolk,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, December 6, 1905, p. 1; “Declare Gerrymander Is Illegal and Want the Courts to Decide,” *Virginian Pilot*, December 7, 1905, p. 1. The constitution of Virginia did specify ward representation by population rather than by voters. See note 98.

¹⁰² “Shaw Again Raps Star Chamber Meetings,” *Virginian Pilot*, August 16, 1905, p. 3.

¹⁰³ “Obtain Results on Police Force,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, September 14, 1905, p. 1; “Merit System Is Introduced,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, May 10, 1905, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ “Don’t Want the People to Elect,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 9, 1906, p. 9. The *Norfolk Public Ledger* was critical of this maneuver, writing, “The sop thrown to Cerberus in the form of a limited and

municipal jobs. The *Ledger Dispatch* reported that their applications “came as a sort of bomb to many, but not unexpectedly to members of the Charter Revision Commission, who had gone carefully over the situation before the provision for the Civil Service Commission was [pl]aced in the new charter.” The article went on to note that legally, their applications had to be accepted and that, given this situation, several members of the Civil Service Board and their examiners might resign.¹⁰⁵

The consequences of the Good Government Association’s damaged alliance with labor and strained relations with the Norfolk Municipal League became clear during the first primary election under the new charter. Though the many segments of Norfolk’s voters continued to oppose the Ring, wary of its ties to the liquor industry, the Good Government Association’s claim that the election was a “choice between honest, popular government and the bossdom of the political RING” no longer rang true.¹⁰⁶ Though the Municipal League did not campaign against the Good Government Association, it declared all the nominees for Board of Control to be suitable candidates, implicitly rejecting the Associations’ own campaign claims.¹⁰⁷ In the primary election, the Ring not only regained much of its lost

ineffectual civil service ... does not lessen the desirability of having the board of control elected by the people.” See “The New Charter,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 19, 1906, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ The city council later voted to create a Civil Service Commission by ordinance and Virginia’s General Assembly amended Norfolk’s charter to include such a Commission. See “Negroes Will Apply to Serve as Police and also as Firemen,” *Ledger Dispatch*, October 12, 1906, p. 1; “New Charter for Norfolk,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, March 10, 1906, p. 11; “Fight Charter in Legislature,” *Norfolk Public Ledger*, February 17, 1906, p. 11.

¹⁰⁶ “The Ring’s Profession of Virtue a New Subterfuge,” *Ledger Dispatch*, May 14, 1906, p. 16.

¹⁰⁷ The League did raise concerns about the number of “liquor dealers” running for council seats (mostly associated with the Ring). After the general assembly passed the new charter, the Municipal League had decided to investigate the backgrounds of candidates and make “recommendations accordingly.” President Shaw claimed that some of the “old fogies” in the League might object to these examinations, but insisted that the “progressive fellows” knew that they needed to engage in this sort of activity to ensure that their League would “be of the same good to Norfolk that municipal leagues in other cities have been.” Shaw also decided to ask prospective candidates to fill out a detailed questionnaire to determine whether or not they might profit from elected office. “Object to So Many Liquor Dealers on Ticket,” *Ledger Dispatch*, May 15, 1906, p. 11; “Candidates O.K. Says the League,” *Ledger Dispatch*, May 15, 1906, p. 6; “Will Make All Replies Public,” *Ledger Dispatch*, May 10, 1906, p. 6; “Candidates Are Preparing Replies,” *Ledger Dispatch*, May 9, 1906, pp.

ground in the council, it won two of three seats on the Board of Control.¹⁰⁸ As a result, the Good Government Association did not achieve the level of control it had sought over the many large-scale civic improvements undertaken in preparation for the Jamestown Exposition.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

In the end, none of the incumbents secured the charter revisions that they desired to consolidate mayoral control over the administrative departments of their cities. Worcester's Board of Aldermen rebuffed efforts to create a board of public works appointed by the mayor, Toledoans elected not to adopt the proposed strong mayor charter in the popular referendum, and the General Assembly of Virginia amended Norfolk's proposed charter requiring the Board of Control to be elected by the people. Whether as the result of failed coalitions at home or the intervention in state legislature, these early proponents of structural reform found their efforts thwarted. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, however, home rule, franchise reform, and the commission plan – three issues that had already begun to surface in local politics – would come together to enable reformers to convince critics at home and state legislative bodies that administrative centralization could be attained without a loss of popular control over local government, promising an efficient expansion of municipal services that would not sacrifice democratic accountability.

1, 13; "Lines Are Drawn for the Board of Control," *Ledger Dispatch*, May 2, 1906, pp. 1,5; "Municipal League and the Board," *Ledger Dispatch*, May 1, 1906, p. 13.

¹⁰⁸ "Results of the Vote for Board of Control," *Ledger Dispatch*, May 18, 1906, p. 11; "Complexion of New Councils," *Ledger Dispatch*, May 18, 1906, p. 1. The councils were composed of twenty-nine members of the Good Government Association and twenty-four affiliates of the Ring.

¹⁰⁹ For one example, see the following articles on the construction of the boulevard for the Jamestown Exposition. "Satisfied Board on Boulevard," *Ledger Dispatch*, October 23, 1906, p. 1; "Boulevard Commission," October 9, 1906, p. 1; "Provide for Boulevard," *Ledger Dispatch*, August 22, 1906, p. 7.

Chapter 5

Municipal Reform and Public Service Corporations: Home Rule, Franchise Reform, and the Commission Plan

Three issues dominated municipal politics in Chicago in the first decade of the twentieth century: home rule, charter revision, and “the transit question.” Contemporary observers and historians alike have closely detailed the often dramatic confrontations among politicians, reformers, labor leaders, and representatives of public service corporations regarding these issues. By 1900 Chicago was a massive city, second only to New York in population, whose residents increasingly relied on street cars for public transportation. In the 1890s, public anger over the inefficiencies of a system reliant on competing service providers that resulted in high fares and poor and often dangerous conditions was on the rise. When combined with revelations that the heads of public service corporations over-inflated stocks and bribed city councilmen for valuable franchises, a wide variety of groups began to take action, from reform associations such as the Civic Federation of Chicago, the Municipal Voters League, and the City Club to working-class and ethnic organizations such as the Chicago Federation of Labor and the United Societies for Local Self-Government. Home rule, charter reform, and municipal ownership of street railways emerged as three possible and closely related solutions. In 1905 Chicago’s voters elected Edward F. Dunne mayor on a platform of municipal ownership of all street railways, and in 1907 they were presented with a charter designed to secure home rule and provide for improved regulations of franchises while establishing the option of municipal ownership.¹

¹ Newspapers in cities across the country covered the efforts to secure home rule and municipal ownership in Chicago, as did academic journals. For examples, see Milton J. Foreman, “The Relation of Chicago to Public Service Corporations,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 31 (May 1908): 155-60; “Chicago New Charter Movement – Its Relation to Municipal Ownership,” *Annals of the American*

Though Chicago's struggle with "the transit question" attracted much attention, it was not unique. In almost every city across the country, the provision of public utilities and transportation dominated local politics in the first decade of the twentieth century. City councils typically granted franchises to private companies known as public service corporations to supply gas, electricity, and sometimes water and to construct and operate public transit systems. In return for granting these "special privileges," as the muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens revealed to the nation in 1902 and 1903, council members often received hefty kickbacks. As a result, according to *The New Encyclopedia of Social Reform* (1908), "The question of public utilities ... has in many places overshadowed all other questions." From "the street-railway situation" in Chicago to "the gas question" in Boston, the need to reform the present system for providing these services was "the one issue" that stirred people to action.² Blaming corruption and inefficiency in state and local legislative bodies for the situation, proponents of both improved regulations and the alternative of municipal ownership looked to home rule and charter revision as the means to achieve these ends.

Academy of Political and Social Science 31 (May 1908): 105-14; Willard E. Hotchkiss, "Recent Phases of Chicago's Transportation Problem," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 31 (May 1908): 85-95. This entire volume of the *Annals* was dedicated to "Control of Municipal Public Service Corporations." For an example of local coverage, see the following articles from newspapers in Norfolk, VA. "Municipal Ownership Elections," *Norfolk Public Ledger*, May 4, 1905, p. 9; "Mayor Dunne Fights for Municipal Gas," *Norfolk Public Ledger*, April 24, 1905, p. 1; "Democrats and Municipal Ownership," *Virginian Pilot*, April 15, 1905, p. 4; "The Chicago Election," *Virginian Pilot*, April 6, 1905, p. 4; "Municipal Ownership Carried Day in Chicago," *Virginian Pilot*, April 5, 1905, p. 9.

For historical treatments of the municipal ownership campaign, the move for home rule, and charter revision, respectively, see George Leidenberger, *Chicago's Progressive Alliance: Labor and the Bid for Public Streetcars* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006); Thomas R. Pegram, "Defining Home Rule: Mainstream Reform, Alternative Culture, and the Chicago City Charter Movement," *Partisans and Progressives: Private Interest and Public Policy in Illinois, 1870-1922* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 87-119; Maureen A. Flanagan, *Charter Reform in Chicago* (Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1987).

² Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004 [1904]); Clinton Rogers Woodruff, "Municipal Progress in the United States, Recent," *The New Encyclopedia of Social Reform*, ed. William D. P. Bliss (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, Co., 1908), 795-800.

In all but the very largest cities, by 1907 movements to reform municipal charters at the very least considered the commission plan. After Galveston, Texas was destroyed by a hurricane in the fall of 1900, a group of local businessmen petitioned the state legislature for an emergency measure to replace the mayor and council with a small commission that would help rebuild the city. Pleased with the results, civic leaders in Galveston elected to retain the commission and a new plan of local government was born. A small body of five to seven commissioners working for the city full-time replaced the mayor and the council, taking over both their administrative and legislative duties. Elected at-large in non-partisan elections, the commissioners then typically each headed an individual department (streets, police, etc.). Other cities in Texas soon decided to adopt the “Galveston Plan” as well, and when reformers in Des Moines, Iowa modified the plan in 1907 by including provisions for the initiative, referendum, and recall, the “Des Moines Plan” attracted national attention. In the pages of newspapers and magazines across the country, promoters of commission government claimed that the new system had finally found a way to concentrate power and responsibility in the administration of local government while still maintaining popular accountability. By 1910, ninety-two cities had adopted the commission plan, and over the next five years, an additional three hundred and thirty one would as well.³

This chapter, in exploring the connections among franchise reform, home rule, and the commission plan, demonstrates the extent to which the meaning of municipal reform after

³ “The Des Moines Plan of City Government,” *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* 8, no. 1 (July 1907): 17-25; “Forms of City Government,” *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* 7, no. 3 (March 1907): 71-76; “Galveston’s Civic Management,” *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* 7, no. 3 (February 1907): 50-52; “Spread of the Commission Plan,” *Outlook* 89, no. 10 (July 4, 1908): 495; “Three Great Experiments,” *The Independent* 64, no. 3107 (June 18, 1908): 1409; “Government by Commission,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1914, p. 12; “City Government by Commission,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 17, 1907, p. 6; “The Commission Plan,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 22, 1907, p. 8; “Orange form of City Government,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 21, 1907, p. 7; Bradley Robert Rice, *Progressive Cities: The Commission Government Movement in America, 1901-1920* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), xi-xix, 3-53.

1900 was in flux. Considerations of these three topics often focused on the crucial issue of the appropriate role of voters in the expanding and increasingly technological programs of government, an issue that would later come to the forefront of debates regarding technocracy and group interests in democracy in the 1920s. Early attempts to achieve administrative centralization through the adoption of strong mayor charters, as demonstrated in chapter four, met with only limited success. With anger regarding political corruption and the granting of “special privileges” on the rise in the first decade of the twentieth century, municipal Progressives considered a variety of alternative reforms. For some, home rule reflected a real commitment to local control that would enable urban residents to make collective decisions regarding municipal functions, while for others it was more a means for reformers to take control of their cities and enact their own programs for good government. For the latter group, regulation of municipalities by state administrative boards staffed by trained experts soon became a more attractive alternative. Similarly, franchise reform operated on multiple levels, both as part of the aspiration to bring urban residents together to solve mutual problems and as a simple effort to improve the provision of services to city-dwellers as consumers. Yet even though divisions among elite reformers and local political actors alike were beginning to surface, in these years many came together to advocate the adoption of commission charters to solve the problem posed by the inadequacies of the present franchise system.

The popularity of the commission plan was due in large part to the belief that it would enable cities to maintain greater popular control over the provision of utilities and transportation, whether by improved regulation or municipal ownership, thereby enabling municipalities to undertake new programs without the fear of corruption by public service

corporations. The classic account of municipal reform, arguing that charter revision was simply a tool used by elite business and professional groups to wrest control of local government from immigrant-backed machines, largely ignores the centrality of franchises and the provision of public services as motivating forces.⁴ Moreover, though regional political and economic variations, state laws, and unique local circumstances all played important roles in decisions to adopt or reject commission charters, ultimately all of these variables were closely related to the root issues of franchise reform and the expansion of municipal services. Reformers themselves understood the power of these issues. According to Clinton Rogers Woodruff in his twentieth annual review as Secretary of the National Municipal League in 1915, “The tendency to enlarge the scope of the city’s functions, which has been one of the marked features of recent municipal developments,... has unquestionably been the chief impetus of the movement ... for the commission form of government....”⁵

An End to “Special Privileges”: Franchise Reform and Municipal Ownership

The first decades of the twentieth century witnessed an expansion in the services municipalities provided to their citizens. Particularly in urban areas, residents came to expect local government to perform an active role in their lives, to do more than simply provide police protection and safeguard their legal rights. As a result, in these years many cities across the country extended their public works programs in the more established realms of the construction and maintenance of streets, sewers, and public parks. Others began to

⁴ For more on the historiography of municipal reform and such accounts, see the introduction.

⁵ Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “Present Phases of the Municipal Situation,” *National Municipal Review* IV, no. 1 (January 1915): 3.

experiment with the municipal ownership of public utilities. Municipally-owned water works rapidly appeared throughout the U.S., but public electric lighting plants spread more slowly and gas works and street-railway systems remained rare.⁶

While city-owned water plants and sewer systems achieved widespread acceptance, public ownership of other utilities remained more controversial. Self-interest for some and concern for the public welfare for others came together to create extensive support for the expansion of municipal services in the realm of public health. Commercial leaders and city officials allied themselves with public health experts to advocate the availability of a clean and abundant public water supply as vital to making their cities attractive to newcomers and outside investors. Urban boosters thus typically supported the municipal ownership of water plants.⁷ Water more than other utilities was considered a public good, vital to the health and safety of the community.⁸ In the name of improving public health, municipalities also dramatically increased their spending on garbage collection, street cleaning, sewerage, and water filtration and purification. Here, in municipalities, more than in any other level of government, Americans of the Progressive Era displayed a willingness to abandon a strict *laissez-faire* policy in favor of a more active government dedicated to the public welfare.⁹ Though most Americans desired improvements in the services currently provided by municipalities and many also desired and expansion in those services, they could not agree on the best means of achieving this: through improved regulation over the current system of

⁶ John A. Fairlie, "Recent Extensions of Municipal Functions in the United States," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 25 (March 1905): 97-108.

⁷ Martin V. Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in American from Colonial Times to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 119.

⁸ M. N. Baker, "Municipal Ownership and Operation of Waterworks," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 57 (January 1915): 279.

⁹ Eric Rauchway, *Blessed Among Nations: How the World Made America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 96-105; Melosi, *The Sanitary City*, 123.

granting franchises to privately-owned public service corporations or through the establishment of municipally-owned plants.

Interest in reforming the provision of municipal utilities grew out of the larger Progressive crusade against monopoly and “special privilege,” a reaction on the local level to the revelation of corrupt alliances among businessmen and politicians.¹⁰ By the 1890s, some academics and reformers, such as Frank Parsons, founder and President of the National League for Promoting the Public Ownership of Monopolies and professor at Boston University, were already arguing that “the evils experienced from private monopoly,” including high rates, poor services, and corruption, could be solved by creation municipally-owned utilities.¹¹ Lincoln Steffens soon brought the depth and ubiquity of corruption in the process of granting municipal franchises to a national audience with a ground-breaking series of articles published in *McClure’s Magazine* from October 1902 to November 1903, a series so popular that it was reprinted in book form as *The Shame of the Cities* the following year. Here, Steffens chronicled the widespread “boodle” and “graft” involved in the granting of public franchises and contracts in large cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, and Pittsburg. It was in St. Louis, however, that Steffens described in greatest detail the prevalence of the bribery of councilmen by business men, “men of wealth and social standing,” for “special privileges” and “valuable franchises” from the city government.¹²

The increasing awareness of the existence of such relationships between public service corporations and elected officials fostered the development of an understanding of the

¹⁰ Robert H. Bremner describes the campaign of the civic revivalists in Ohio “for municipal ownership of public utilities” as “the urban side of the national antitrust movement.” See Robert H. Bremner, “The Civic Revival in Ohio: Municipal Ownership and Economic Privilege,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 9, no. 4 (July 1950): 477.

¹¹ Frank Parsons, *The City for the People, or, The Municipalization of the City Government and of Local Franchises* (Philadelphia: C.F. Taylor, 1900), 1, 17-175, 218.

¹² Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*. On St. Louis see esp. pp. 20-40.

root of municipal corruption and machine politics somewhat different from explanations popular in the 1880s and 1890s described in chapter one. Rather than blaming the spoils system and politicians promising municipal jobs in exchange for votes, reformers increasingly focused on the franchise system and the corrupt alliances among politicians and businessmen. Instead of pointing to electoral fraud per se as the root of the system, Steffens blamed the business community for its involvement in political corruption, writing that “[t]he business man has failed in politics as he has in citizenship. Why? Because politics is business. That’s what the matter with it.... The commercial spirit is the spirit of profit, not patriotism; of credit, not honor; of individual gain, not national prosperity; of trade and dickering, not principle.” At the same time, Steffens also blamed the apathy of voters who were aware of the situation but did nothing to alter it, hoping that his exposes would arouse a great sense of “civic pride” among “an apparently shameless people.”¹³

Yet others exculpated the voters and democracy altogether. In *The City: The Hope of Democracy* (1905), Frederic Howe, the nationally-prominent municipal reformer, insisted that “the corruption of our cities” was in fact not due “to democracy, to the spoils system,” or “to the indifference, if not the corruption of the voter.” While many treated the “failures” of urban government “as the failures of democracy,” Howe maintained that America’s cities in fact did “not have a democratic government” at all. According to Howe, “What we really have in our large cities is a business-men’s government, and a business-men’s government rooted in privilege. Privilege has always been a source of corruption.” In the typical city, a franchise corporation received “monopolies uncontrolled by law” by making a “bargain” and forming a “partnership” with local political parties. Regardless of campaign rhetoric,

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1, 4-5.

elections were really about franchise grants. In short, Howe proclaimed that democracy in America's cities had "been drugged by business interests."¹⁴

Support for municipal ownership, for Howe and many others, was thus not simply a matter of improving public welfare (or boosting one's city) but also achieving a higher form of democracy. Howe maintained that municipal ownership was not primarily a "monetary" question concerning "the relief of taxation" or "a profit or loss account." Nor was it a matter of "even cheap water, gas, or electricity." Rather, it was a means towards achieving a "higher civic life," a matter of "self-government" and "political morality." In part, Howe presented municipal ownership as democratic simply as a tool to end the undemocratic "privilege of monopoly" granted to "the franchise corporations" that led to corruption and boss politics. Yet he also believed that it would lessen "class antagonism," a barrier to true democracy, by eliminating the temptation for businessmen to profit from city government and thus enabling them to take on their role as "natural leaders" dedicated only to the service of the community.¹⁵ Moreover, in cities across the country, particularly in the west and southwest, municipal ownership became associated with local control. Public service corporations in other states often owned municipal franchises, and as a result, animosity often centered on their "foreign" origins.¹⁶ In such cases, municipal ownership as democratic self-government was more about a desire for local-control than hostility to private enterprise.

¹⁴ Frederic C. Howe, "The Case for Municipal Ownership," *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* 2 (1905): 89-94. See also Frederic Howe, *The City: The Hope of Democracy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons: 1905), 2. 5. Here Howe explained that the true cause of conditions at the root of "municipal shame" was "greed for franchise grants and special privileges," adding that, "What we really have is government by special privileges and big business men. These privileges are owned by leading members of the community. And they give us such government as best serves their business."

¹⁵ Howe, "The Case for Municipal Ownership," 90, 93-98.

¹⁶ Melosi, *The Sanitary City*, 121-22; Amy Bridges, *Morning Glories: Municipal Reform in the Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 32-33.

A variety of national reform organizations promoted the cause of municipal ownership. Though many did not officially endorse it, the conferences of major national organizations provided venues where proponents met and publicized their cause. Focused on the “franchise problem” from its formation, the League of American Municipalities, composed primarily of elected officials, seemed to gravitate towards municipal ownership as the preferred solution. In the late 1890s and the first few years of the twentieth century, prominent supporters of public enterprise – reformers Frank Parsons and Frederic Howe and leading Progressive mayors such as Toledo’s Samuel Jones and Chicago’s Edward Dunne – regularly spoke at conventions and contributed to the *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities*.¹⁷ Yet perhaps in part because of its reputation for sympathizing with public ownership, the League soon adopted an officially non-committal stance on the subject.¹⁸

Likewise, the Commission on Public Ownership of Public Utilities organized by the National Civic Federation, an investigatory and consensus-building reform organization designed to represent business, labor, and “the public” in opposition to socialists and the most conservative business groups, also produced a relatively non-committal report after

¹⁷ “Proceedings Eleventh Annual Convention of the League of American Municipalities,” *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* 8, no. 4 (October 1907): 95-99; Frederic C. Howe, “Municipal Ownership in Cleveland,” *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* 7, no. 1 (January 1907): 11-13. Coverage of the conventions of the League of American Municipalities in the *New York Times* suggested that the organization leaned towards municipal ownership. See “Abuses Mayor Dunne,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1905, p. 1; “The Ideal City,” *New York Times*, October 11, 1903, p. 6; “Contract System Denounced,” *New York Times*, October 8, 1903, p. 3; “Municipal League Meets,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1900, p. 7; “League of Municipalities,” *New York Times*, September 22, 1899, p. 1; “Talked City Ownership,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1899, p. 7; “Municipal Ownership Question,” *New York Times*, May 7, 1899, p. 16; “To Discuss City Affairs,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1898, p. 15; “League of American Municipalities,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1897, p. 3. One article even cited a mayor who refused to allow his Board of Aldermen to attend the convention of an organization where “[m]unicipal ownership of everything, initiative and referendum, woman suffrage, stern measures for the repression of wealth ... were prominent among the remedies” put forth. See “A Sensible Veto,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1899, p. 6.

¹⁸ League of American Municipalities, *10th Annual Convention of the League of American Municipalities Held at Chicago, September 26, 27 and 28, 1906* (Chicago: Kirchner, Meckel & Co., 1906); “Municipal Control Opposed in League,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1907, p. 8; “Non-Committal on M.O.,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1906, p. 3.

two-year study that cost \$50,000. The report only gave a qualified endorsement for municipally-owned enterprises in the realms of public health, safety, transportation, and infrastructure (streets and grounds) while also providing detailed recommendations for the regulation of the granting of franchises to private companies. Notably, like so many other commentators of municipal problems, the Commission that drafted the report relied upon the concept of home rule to avoid public disagreement, leaving the ultimate decision regarding the adoption of municipal-ownership or improving regulation of private franchises up to local decision in each individual municipality.¹⁹

Home Rule for Cities: Municipal Ownership and Charter Reform

¹⁹ The Commission agreed upon several provisions regarding the importance of improving the regulation of the process of granting franchises to private companies but also concluded that “[m]unicipalities should have the power to enter the field of municipal ownership upon popular vote under reasonable regulations.” Quoted in *Report of the Delegates Representing the City of Hudson, N.Y. at the Eleventh Annual Convention of the League of American Municipalities Held at Norfolk, VA September 18-21, 1907, Submitted to the Common Council of the City of Hudson, Sept. 26, 1907* (Hudson, NY: Bryan Printing Co., 1907), 10. For the full report, see Commission on Public Ownership and Operation, *Municipal and Private Operation of Utilities, Report to the National Civic Federation, Part 1, Volume 1, General Conclusions and Report* (New York: National Civic Federation, 1907).

While historian James Weinstein views the National Civic Federation as a conservative organization dominated by business, and, as a result, portrays the findings of the Commission on Public Ownership in similar terms, some contemporaries disagreed with this assessment of the Commission’s findings. Mayor Edward Dunne of Chicago, a nationally-prominent supporter of municipal ownership, interpreted the Commission’s report as an implicit endorsement of public enterprise in many realms of local government. In his presidential address delivered before the League of American Municipalities, Dunne claimed that despite the fact that “the ‘safe and sane’ conservative element has a large and controlling representation upon the committee” that “[n]ot only does the committee fail to report adversely upon the contentions of the advocates of Municipal Ownership; but on the contrary it concedes most of the claims contended for the friends of Municipal Ownership here and in Great Britain.” He went on to note that “[t]he committee goes further and inferentially declares in favor of public ownership of transportation when it declares, ‘We have come to the conclusion that Municipal Ownership of public utilities should not be extended to revenue-producing industries which do not involve the public health, the public safety, public transportation or the permanent occupation of public streets and grounds.’” See James Weinstein, “The National Civic Federation and the Concept of Consensus,” *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900-1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 6-8, 24-26; “Proceedings Eleventh Annual Convention of the League of American Municipalities,” *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* 8, no. 4 (October 1907): 97-99.

The concept of home rule relied on the assumption that once cities were freed from corrupting external influences, urban residents would unite under the banner of good city government. Early advocates of home rule understood city charters to be fundamental laws representing a homogeneous and unified public will, rejecting the possibility of legitimate heterogeneous interests.²⁰ Embodying the initial optimism of its supporters, Frederic Howe boldly proclaimed that “[h]ome rule would create a city republic, a new sort of sovereignty, a republic like unto those of Athens, Rome, and the mediaeval Italian cities.” He believed that home rule was about much more than charter reform and an objection to state legislative interference in local matters: “It partakes in a struggle for liberty, and its aim is the enlargement of democracy.... It is a demand on the part of the people to be trusted, and to be endowed with the privileges of which they have been dispossessed.” In short, Howe concluded, “With home rule secured, with popular control attained, with the city free to determine what activities it will undertake, ... then the city will be consciously allied to definite ideals, and the new civilization, which is the hope as well as the problem of democracy, will be open to realization.”²¹

The home rule movement blamed the excessive interference of state legislatures in municipal affairs for the corruption and inefficiency plaguing urban government. Supporters argued that state legislatures, dominated by rural districts, passed bills that disregarded the wants and needs of urban residents. This state of affairs, they claimed, violated the right to self government upon which our country was founded. Many were particularly angered

²⁰ Historian Jon Teaford describes the first two state constitutions that provided for home rule in the 1870s in these terms. He writes: “City charters were to represent the homogenous public interest and not the heterogeneous special interests of a polyarchic city. The original home-rule provisions, in fact, represent a nostalgic attempt to construct a consensual, immutable foundation for an urban American that was ephemeral and divided.” See Jon C. Teaford, *The Unheralded Triumph: City Government in America, 1870-1900* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 107.

²¹ Howe, *The City*, 160-67, 313.

when state legislatures amended municipal charters for what they believed to be political reasons. As outrage over such “charter tinkering” grew, municipal home rule increasingly became synonymous with state constitutional provisions granting cities the right to frame and adopt their own charters without interference.²²

Yet the concept of home rule also presented a conundrum for many reformers, because support of home rule was often accompanied by advocacy of increasingly nationalized, uniform structures of local government. The National Municipal League’s Municipal Program proposed a system that granted cities wide powers to determine the content of local policy but also created a uniform system of local government, defining home rule as a matter of function rather than structure, and local proponents of the Program implicitly agreed. But for others there was an important connection between allowing cities to determine the structures of their own governments and enabling them to embark on new and expansive programs. Convinced that “democracy can best work out its problems when government is responsible, as well as responsive, to the immediate community which it serves,” Howe believed that home rule needed to encompass both the right “to adopt ... or amend the fundamental laws of the community” and “the right to determine what activities and powers shall be exercised.” As Howe explained, “Home rule would produce variety in municipal administration rather than uniformity. We should thus have in every state a number of experiment stations of administration, taxation, and social betterment, each seeking a solution of its local problem and each contributing to the political experience of the

²² Howard Lee McBain, *The Law and Practice of Municipal Home Rule* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), v. In one example of outrage over “charter tinkering,” in a speech before a Good Government Club in Manhattan in 1893, John J. Chapman complained that “Our city charter is being constantly tinkered, and every move for improvement and reform can be checkmated at Albany, as has often been done. A defeated party in a city will go and appeal to Albany for the purpose of regaining lost power....” See “Working for Better City Government,” *New York Times*, June 23, 1893, p. 4.

country.... Variety, not uniformity, is what we need.”²³ From this perspective, participatory local self government and the resulting diversity of opinion was integral to democracy.

Other supporters of home rule, however, reconciled the contradiction between the implied diversity of local autonomy and their own advocacy of increasingly uniform “expert” solutions only through their continued assumption that their own definitions of good government were universal, even in the face of clear and strong opposition.²⁴ When proponents of structural reforms, such as those discussed in chapter four, faced defeats at home, the concept of home rule provided a rationale to continue to advocate charter revision. Rather than accept defeats and confront the reality of the diversity of opinion within their cities, municipal reformers could blame the interference of outside forces such as state legislatures for their frustrations. A study of the progress of the home rule movement published in 1933 critically claimed that while “the home rule movement is part of the broader movement to liberate cities from organized corruption, and restore control to the so-called, or self-called, good citizens,” it nevertheless “confuses its objective of making popular government work, with the idea of local self-government.” Ultimately, most home rulers were less concerned with “popular self-government” than “good government,” and, the study concluded, while it was “common for reformers to refuse to face this distinction or to deny it,” if “forced to the choice most would probably take the latter”²⁵ This appraisal of home rule partly explains why many municipal reformers, previously ardent supporters of

²³ Howe, *The City*, 160-70.

²⁴ In a study of Chicago’s experience with charter reform at the turn of the century, historian Thomas Pegram argues that despite the assumptions of “mainstream” reformers that all Chicagoans shared their understanding of home rule as a means towards obtaining a more efficient and centralized municipal administrative machinery, an “alternative culture” among immigrants defined home rule as the right to reject the intrusive efforts of temperance advocates to regulate their lifestyles. See Pegram, “Defining Home Rule: Mainstream Reform, Alternative Culture, and the Chicago City Charter Movement,” 87-119.

²⁵ Joseph D. McGoldrick, *The Law and Practice of Municipal Home Rule, 1916-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 2-3.

local self-government, began to turn to regulation by state administrative boards as the solution to the franchise problem.

Municipal Ownership v. State Regulation

Though by the 1920s regulation by administrative commission would become the preferred resolution to the franchise problem, in the 1910s reformers disagreed as to whether such commissions or municipal ownership provided the best solution. Even within a single organization, reformers were deeply divided regarding the significance of the rise of state regulatory boards for home rule and local democracy. In 1913, chairman Delos F. Wilcox presented the report of the National Municipal League's Committee on Franchises at the League's annual meeting. Wilcox, who had studied with John Dewey at the University of Michigan and Frank Goodnow at Columbia, was a well-known expert on public utilities and franchises, serving as Chief of the Bureau of Franchises of the Public Service Commission for the First District and later Deputy Commissioner of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity in New York City in the 1910s.²⁶ In the report, Wilcox warned that as a result of "a tendency toward too great centralization in the control of public utilities," "the powers of municipalities to control local utilities ... are being seriously curtailed or taken away entirely." Noting that the League had "always been friendly to the idea of municipal home rule," Wilcox concluded that "there are certain features of exclusive state regulation which

²⁶ Wilcox remained a passionate advocate of municipal ownership throughout his career. He was also a vice-president of the Public Ownership League of America in the 1920s who contributed to the *Bulletin of the Public Ownership League of America*. See Delos F. Wilcox "The Street Car Crisis and the Way Out," *Municipal Railways in the United States and Canada Bulletin of the Public Ownership League of America* 18 (1922): 3-4.

For more on Wilcox see Michael H. Frisch, "Urban Theorists, Urban Reform, and American Political Culture in the Progressive Period," *Political Science Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 303 and [http://ead.lib.uchicago.edu/view.xqy?id=ICU.SPCL.WILCOX&c=w&sub=Wilcox,%20Delos%20F.%20\(Delos%20Franklin\),%201873-1928](http://ead.lib.uchicago.edu/view.xqy?id=ICU.SPCL.WILCOX&c=w&sub=Wilcox,%20Delos%20F.%20(Delos%20Franklin),%201873-1928)

tend to make the municipalization of utilities more difficult, and to that extent interfere with one of the most fundamental provisions of the home rule program.”²⁷

In a stark contradiction (and perhaps in deference to the League’s declared commitment to airing all perspectives), a contemporaneous publication by the National Municipal League suggested that state regulation provided a solution superior to municipal ownership. The League had invited professor Clyde L. King of the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School to select and comment on “the more important papers presented to the League” concerning *The Regulation of Public Utilities* (1912).²⁸ Introducing a selection of fifteen essays, King explained why municipal ownership was not the ideal solution. King claimed that support for municipally-owned services existed “due solely to the fact that municipal ownership has been the only weapon with which the American city could successfully abate the evil” of public service corporations beyond its control. King believed the municipal ownership would ultimately prove unsuccessful. Publicly-owned enterprises required more extensive regulatory machinery than private endeavors.

In addition, King claimed that several legal limitations reduced the viability of municipal ownership as a solution. First, implicitly referring to Dillon’s rule, King explained that the courts had for many years held that municipalities could exercise only those powers expressly granted them by state constitutions or legislatures. Given that not even half of

²⁷ The members of the committee were Delos F. Wilcox, chairman, Robert Treat Paine, James W. S. Peters, Abraham E. Pinanski, Charles Richardson, and Clinton Rogers Woodruff. Professor Edward W. Bemis was also on the committee, but he disagreed with its findings and therefore decided not to sign the committee’s final report. See Delos F. Wilcox, “Municipal Home Rule and Public Utility Franchises,” *National Municipal Review* III (January 1914): 13-27; Folder 38, “Council Minutes, 1915,” Carton 2, Series 1 “Administrative Records, 1894-1989,” and Folder 25 “Committees and Projects, Franchises, 1911,” Carton 50, Series 4, Part 1 “Committees and projects, 1894-date,” National Municipal League Papers, Archives of the Auraria Library, Denver, CO.

²⁸ *The Regulation of Municipal Utilities* ed. Clyde Lyndon King (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1921 [1912]), v-vi. This volume was published as part of the National Municipal League Series (discussed in chapter seven). For King’s professional affiliations, see Clyde London King, “The Conference of American Mayors on “Public Policies as to Municipal Utilities,” *National Municipal Review* IV, no. 1 (January 1915), 91-93.

American cities had been granted the right to own and operate their own utilities by the states, municipal ownership, for most, was not a practical option. Second, through both constitutional and statutory law, most states limited the amount of debt that cities could incur, thereby making it impossible for municipalities to raise the necessary funds to undertake public programs. Citing these reasons and many others, King thus concluded that regulation by “expert public service commission” provided a more efficient and more feasible resolution. Indeed, according to King, “Under a scheme of competent regulation ... the municipality will probably rarely, if ever, have occasion for resorting to municipal ownership and operation.”²⁹

The reasoning behind the belief that regulatory commissions rather than public ownership provided the best solution to the franchise “evil” illuminates an important shift in the conception of democratic political participation among reformers. King explained that regulation through means other than expert commission had all failed for the same reason. Neither the courts, legislative bodies, nor the public (wielding the initiative and the referenda) had the time, knowledge, skill, or training to collect the requisite information to supervise private franchise corporations. Municipally-owned utilities would not solve this problem since they required even more thorough and expensive management and administration. The best solution was to create a permanent commission of trained professionals to oversee both the granting and the continuing enforcement (the latter being more important) of franchises. According to King, such a “commission alone can secure the data ... necessary for intelligent and adequate regulation of municipal utilities. For this purpose they are created, and for this purpose they are specifically organized and

²⁹ King, “Municipal Ownership versus Adequate Regulation,” *The Regulation of Municipal Utilities*, 23-55. See esp. 26, 44-46, 52-53. While preferring regulation by public service commissions, King also felt that state law should grant cities the right to own public utilities if they so chose (50).

equipped.”³⁰ Reformers such as Howe and Parsons heralded the use of the initiative and referenda either to grant franchises or (preferably) to establish municipal ownership, believing that by establishing a system of direct democracy that returned popular control to the people they could destroy a system that granted unfair “special privileges.” Yet King and others, emphasizing the specialized, technical nature of the provision of public services, rejected this line of reasoning, hoping to remove the granting of franchises from the political process altogether and position it instead in the neutral realm of expert administration.

In sharp contrast, Wilcox, speaking for the League’s Committee on Franchises, articulated an alternative view that adhered to the belief that it was an important component of democracy to allow decisions regarding the provision of utilities to be made locally and questioned the notion that expert administrative boards could or should speak for the people of a city. Wilcox explained that in order to awaken and sustain “the active and intelligent interest of the voters,” “the control of all public functions should be localized as much as possible” and “the entire machinery of government [should] be kept close to the people for whose benefit it has been created.” He warned that state regulation made it more difficult for cities “to municipalize the utilities” and that it undermined the democratic foundations of home rule:

So long as we stand for the idea of throwing upon the people of the city the responsibility for working out their own municipal salvation under home rule, we cannot for a moment accept the proposition that the entire control of the utilities using the city streets should be transferred to a distant authority not politically responsible to the people of the city, and not thoroughly acquainted, by residence in the city, with local conditions and local needs.³¹

³⁰ King, “The Need for Public Utility Commissions,” 185-207; King, “Municipal Ownership versus Adequate Regulation,” 52-55; King, “The Need for Regulation,” 19-20. The quotation is from page 201.

³¹ Wilcox, “Municipal Home Rule and Public Utility Franchises,” 15-17.

The support of King and many others for an allegedly apolitical expert administrative solution to the franchise problem influenced emerging conceptions of the participation of individuals and groups in the political process. As municipal governments across the country expanded the functions they performed, local political actors grappled with the challenge of creating structures that maintained a system of popular control and at the same time provided for the necessary input of experts. Undoubtedly, reformers and all urban residents hoped to improve the quality of the services provided by municipalities, but franchise reform, as noted, was initially about much more. Progressives such as Howe hoped that home rule and municipal ownership would bring urban residents into a democratic process, creating greater opportunities for people to make decisions about their own lives. But when other reformers increasingly elevated the role of professional, state-level administration, for some reformers democratic government came to mean doing for rather than with the people, of serving their interests rather than including them in the process of deciding those interests.

This perspective played a pivotal role in shaping the emerging pluralist conception of group politics. As one study of the struggle to create publicly-owned street cars in Chicago argues, the failure of the movement for municipal ownership strengthened a functionalist interpretation of local politics put forth by supporters of railway services by regulated private franchises. This brand of functionalism allowed for only a narrow sphere of civic participation in which citizens were discriminating consumers, concerned primarily with obtaining quality services from local government. Echoing this reading of political motivation, political scientist Arthur Bentley, a key early theorist of group politics, argued in a study of the street-car debate that distinct groups of urban residents acted according to material (rather than ideological) interests, seeking primarily the provision of efficient

transportation. Such readings of functionalism and pluralism portrayed urban residents as objective political actors concerned more with practical matters than larger ideological commitments, as more concerned with receiving quality services than participating in the decision-making process.³² King's endorsement of regulation by expert public service commissions rather than by the people through the initiative and referendum also promoted such an understanding of civic participation. Given that the people lacked the "data" and "adequate knowledge" necessary "for making franchises," King insisted that "a distinct administrative tribunal to look after the public's interests" was needed. In King's model, experts protected the interests of the people as consumers of services.³³

Increasing support for regulatory commissions rather than municipal ownership also influenced the course of home rule. Given that support for municipal ownership was strongly associated with home rule, the rising popularity of regulatory commissions in part reflected a declining belief among elite reformers in local self-government as a significant component of modern democracy. Municipal ownership required an expansion of home rule for several reasons. The prevailing legal doctrine known as Dillon's rule held that municipalities could exercise only those powers expressly granted to them by state legislatures. At the turn of the century, most states had not expressly granted cities the power to own or operate utilities beyond those deemed essential for public health.³⁴ In several states, municipal reformers waged heated battles to secure the right of cities to own their own transportation systems as part of the struggle to achieve independence from corrupt state

³² George Leidenberger, *Chicago's Progressive Alliance: Labor and the Bid for Public Streetcars*. See esp. 6-10, 128-29, 135, 151. Leidenberger argues that the "functionalist ideology which stipulated that any policy proposals must adhere to immediate needs and practical solutions and ascribed to the average citizen the role of passive consumer of urban services rather than that of an active agent in the political process" became dominant after the 1907 defeat of the public-ownership movement and of Mayor Edward Dunne, one of its most prominent leaders.

³³ King, "The Need for Public Utility Commissions," 198-201.

³⁴ Melosi, *The Sanitary City*, 122.

legislatures dominated by special interests. In Ohio, according to Frederic Howe, “Attempts to secure this right have been defeated by the corporate interests in the state legislature through the identity of the party machines with the franchise corporations.”³⁵ Yet even after the courts began to move away from Dillon’s rule and adopt broader views of governmental activities in the 1910s, state law continued to inhibit the ability of cities to establish municipal ownership. In almost every state, cities were not permitted to tax residents or to incur debt beyond a fixed percentage of the value of the assessed value of local property. Cities, then, were often not able to raise the capital necessary to undertake new endeavors.³⁶

Yet even in cases where state legislatures granted cities the right to create municipally-owned utility plants in accordance with local desires, state governments continued to play important regulatory roles with the advent of state-level administrative commissions. Though some reformers like Howe and Wilcox remained ardent supporters of municipal ownership as an integral component of the democratic vision of home rule, many others were simply more interested in the creation of an efficient system of regulation by professionals trained to amass statistical data than the establishment of local control over municipal utilities. State administrative boards provided the perfect solution.³⁷ King, for example, argued that “a state commission is essential, whether or not separate municipal commissions exist” because “only a state commission can secure all the data essential to intelligent regulation,” including, especially, “intercorporate” and comparative data among

³⁵ Frederic C. Howe, “Municipal Ownership in Cleveland,” *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* 7, no. 1 (January 1907): 11.

³⁶ Gail Radford, “From Municipal Socialism to Public Authorities: Institutional Factors in the Shaping of American Public Enterprise,” *Journal of American History* 90, no. 3 (December 2003): 873-78; Charles A. Beard, *American City Government: A Survey of Newer Tendencies* (New York: Century Co., 1912), 130-31.

³⁷ Jon C. Teaford, *The Unheralded Triumph*, 123; Jon C. Teaford, “State Administrative Agencies and the Cities 1890-1920,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 25, no. 3 (July 1981): 225-28. Though such support seemingly violated the principles of home rule, many reconciled the two, arguing that it was state *legislative* interference in local matters to which they objected rather than state interference per se (this in part followed Goodnow’s theory of municipal home rule, as described in chapter two).

various cities. Moreover, state commissions, with greater powers, would help municipal commissions act as “effective regulative agents.”³⁸ At first many local political actors were wary of such “foreign” models and their seemingly anti-democratic centralizing tendencies, but state governments progressively turned to such bodies. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, regulatory commissions operated in an advisory capacity, but by the early twentieth century they increasingly adopted supervisory and compulsory roles particularly in the areas of finance (accounting) and sanitation (water and sewerage). State legislatures lost power over municipal utilities, but not, as many home rulers had initially hoped, to city councils or urban voters, but to state administrative boards.³⁹

The Commission Plan

Though state regulatory boards would eventually largely replace home rule and municipal ownership as the preferred solution to the franchise problem, through the 1910s commission charters remained popular as a means of achieving greater public control of the provision of utilities and streetcar services. The commission plan was strongly associated with such control and with the expansion of municipal services, whether by tighter control of the process of granting franchises or the establishment of municipal ownership. The pairing of the commission plan with non-partisan elections at-large, civil service systems, and measures for direct democracy was the source of much of its popularity. Many reformers would not have supported commission charters without the inclusion of the initiative,

³⁸ King, “State versus Municipal Utility Commissions,” 253-63. Quotations from 256 and 262.

³⁹ Teaford, *The Unheralded Triumph*, 122-23; Teaford, “State Administrative Agencies and the Cities 1890-1920,” 229-48.

referendum, and recall to counterbalance the centralization of power.⁴⁰ As of 1914, roughly ninety-four per cent of commission-governed cities had some provisions for the initiative, referendum, and/or recall.⁴¹ In addition, commission-governed cities also tended to be allowed to undertake larger amounts of debt, often necessary to construct municipally-owned utility plants.⁴²

In many cities, reformers viewed the direct democracy measures associated with the commission plan as a means to improve the regulation of franchises, particularly with the use of the popular referendum for the granting of franchises and/or the establishment of municipally-owned service providers.⁴³ In making his case for municipal ownership, Frank Parsons carefully distinguished “public ownership” from “government ownership.” While the latter could exist under a corrupt system controlled by the spoils system, the former required “the merit system of civil service and the initiative and referendum” in order “to prevent private monopoly by abuse of ... power.”⁴⁴ Although as initially conceived in Galveston, Texas in 1901, commission government did not include the initiative, referendum, and recall, the “Des Moines Plan” of commission government, created in 1908, provided for these measures of direct democracy, and thereafter most reformers included such provisions

⁴⁰ Rice, *Progressive Cities*, 72-76. Rice also disagrees with Samuel P. Hays’s claim that businessmen supported the direct democracy measures in reform charters as masks for their real goals (discussed in the introduction). According to Rice, “If the business elites had been truly convinced that direct legislation would be ineffective and meaningless ... there would have been no reason for them to show the apprehension and to exercise the opposition that they often did when the three devices were suggested. It is also doubtful that such prominent reformers as William Allen White, Brand Whitlock, John MacVicar, and Robert LaFollette would have endorsed the municipal direct democracy if it were merely an opiate administered by elite businessmen trying to ram commission government down the peoples’ throats” (75).

⁴¹ Charles F. Taylor, “Municipal Initiative, Referendum, and Recall in Practice,” *National Municipal Review* III, no. 4 (October 1914): 693-94. Taylor sent surveys to all of the 335 cities currently governed by the commission plan. 279 replied, and of these 261 provided for some combination of initiative, referendum, and/or recall.

⁴² Bureau of the Census, *Comparative Financial Statistics of Cities under Council and Commission Government, 1913 and 1915* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 9.

⁴³ This topic will be further discussed in chapter six.

⁴⁴ Parsons, *The City for the People*, 17-18.

in commission charters.⁴⁵ Civil service reform was also strongly associated with commission government. For as a popular text on commission government explained, both “private ownership of ... public services” and “municipal ownership” were “attended with great dangers so long as the civil service of our cities was on a spoils basis.” Yet it happily went on to claim that Des Moines’ new commission charter eliminated these dangers with a council elected at-large, the initiative, referendum, and recall, and the requirement that all franchises be submitted to a popular vote.⁴⁶

As the movement for home rule increasingly focused on charter reform, it too became closely associated with commission government. According to a study of the commission plan published in 1910, cities that adopted commission charters were marked by an “aggressive local spirit” and “a determination of the city to rule its own affairs that bode no good for the traditional combination of bad city and state politics.”⁴⁷ Moreover, cities in states that allowed for local control over the adoption and revision charters were far more likely to select commission government. States dealt with the desire of municipalities to adopt commission charters in a wide variety of ways falling into two general categories (see Appendix 5A). Some created systems of local control whereby cities could secure commission government without appealing to the state legislatures, either by allowing complete home rule with regard to the structures of local government or by passing specific laws permitting the adoption of the commission plan by local referenda. Other states retained legislative control over the adoption of new charters, either making it obligatory for

⁴⁵ Rice, *Progressive Cities*, 34-51.

⁴⁶ John J. Hamilton, *Government by Commission or the Dethronement of the City Boss* (New York: Funk & Wangalls Company, 1911 [1910]), 86-91. Here, Hamilton was primarily concerned with explaining how the Des Moines Plan safeguarded the franchise system and not with arguing that it paved the way for municipal ownership.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

cities of certain sizes to adopt commission charters or requiring individual cities to submit proposed commission charters to the legislatures for approval.

These state laws were hugely consequential – cities in states that allowed for local control were far more likely to turn to commission government (see Appendixes 5B and 5C). These state laws also varied hugely by region, with states along the east coast, both north and south, far less likely to allow cities autonomy over the process of adopting commission charters than their more western counterparts. While states on the east coast were home to forty-two percent of all American cities in 1920, they were home to only twenty-five percent of cities governed by commission charters. In contrast, cities in states west of the Mississippi were over-represented in the move for commission government. While these states contained only thirty-one percent of American cities, they boasted forty-nine percent of commission-governed cities. Finally, cities in states in the central part of the country fell in the middle, representing twenty-six percent of all American cities and twenty-seven per cent of commission-governed cities.⁴⁸

The regional variation in state laws and the adoption of commission charters developed partly as a result of sectional variations in political and economic structures.⁴⁹ In the late nineteenth century, political parties in eastern states were more elaborately structured and deeply entrenched than their western counterparts. While eastern parties typically mobilized large memberships in competitive elections, western parties, closely allied with the railroads and mining companies that dominated local economies, did not need to engage in

⁴⁸ Contemporaries were quite aware of this trend as well. In 1912, the secretary of the National Municipal League wrote “The [commission] movement’s greatest development continues in the central west. The northwestern group leads, with 64 cities; and the southwestern group follows with 59. The other groups are as follows: Northern central, 29; Pacific and Rocky, 32; southern central, 27; southern, 14; middle, 15; New England, 7.” See Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “Simplicity, Publicity and Efficiency in Municipal Affairs,” *National Municipal Review* II, no. 1 (January 1913): 2.

⁴⁹ For a detailed account of statistical studies regarding the adoption of the commission and city manager plans that address the issue of region, see note 16 in the introduction.

such activities to remain in power. Progressive reformers in these states were able to harness the electoral power of new groups of voters without strong preexisting partisan loyalties in a way that simply was not possible in the East. Opponents of partisan politics and the spoils system were more successful in demonizing established parties as “the interests” and securing the adoption of Progressive reforms such as direct primaries and the initiative, referendum, and recall on the state level.⁵⁰ In municipalities, then, it is not surprising that reformers in the West were also more successful in securing the adoption of commission charters that typically weakened political parties through such measures as non-partisan, at-large elections and the initiative, referendum, and recall in local matters. A recent book on charter reform in southwestern cities elaborates on the economic dimension of regionalism, arguing that weak party organizations combined with a lack of available local capital to enable business leaders to act as reformers and successfully implement reform charters. Organized groups of businessmen had access to resources and were able to attract outside investments in their communities, from state and local governments and from private investors in other parts of the country, thereby making it possible for them to attract local support despite certain anti-democratic consequences of the reforms they sought.⁵¹

Regional political and economic variations and the resultant disparities in state law governing cities begin to explain why reformers in some cities were more successful than

⁵⁰ Martin Shefter, “Regional Receptivity to Reform in the United States,” *Parties and the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 169-79. Shefter, in this “state-centered” response to behavioral analyses of politics, relies on “the new institutionalism” to argue that “the relationship between political parties and public bureaucracies is of crucial importance in shaping the behavior of politicians. The relative timing of democratization and bureaucratization has crucially influenced the character of political parties in both Europe and America” (xi-xii). In forming his argument regarding regional variations in the adoptions of Progressive reforms, Shefter divides East and West by the Mississippi River but does not include former Confederate states, New Mexico, Arizona, or Oklahoma in his analysis. The three “reform” categories upon which he bases his statistical analysis are cities with partisan elections, turnout in presidential elections, and volatility in Republican gubernatorial elections.

⁵¹ Bridges, *Morning Glories*, 18-19, 54-69. Bridges also suggests that reformers achieved greater successes in cities in states with limited electorates given that suffrage restrictions tended to disfranchise groups more likely to oppose reforms such as organized labor and the working class.

others in building coalitions in support of commission charters based on the promise that proposed reforms would yield greater control over the services provided by local governments and make an expansion of such services possible. Such arguments were more convincing in cities where one or more of the following variables were present: weak state regulatory boards, anger over the poor services provided by and special privileges of public service corporations, the absences of a competitive two party system, and co-operation between commercial and labor organizations in the name of attracting outside investments. That these variables were more common in the Southwest and West accounts for much of the greater popularity of the commission plan in these parts of the country. Reformers there more often convinced voters that the creation of a small body that fused legislative and executive functions, typically combined with the initiative, referendum, and recall, would enable the public better to control the provision of municipal utilities and thereby result in greater overall prosperity in their cities.

Elite reformers and academic observers agreed that commission-governed cities expanded the functions they undertook and that such expansion was at least in part due to the perception of urban residents that the features of the commission plan provided them with the necessary tools to improve popular control of their municipalities. The National Municipal League appointed a committee to study the commission plan composed of five men: Clinton Rogers Woodruff, secretary of the League, Ernest S. Bradford, author of a book on commission government, Richard Childs, Secretary of the National Short Ballot Organization, and Charles A. Beard and William Bennet Munro, professors of political science and Columbia and Harvard, respectively. In 1911, the Committee presented “an analytical study” of commission government that concluded the plan was a “relative success”

compared to “the older forms” given that residents were “generally more content” and felt “more effective politically” under commission charters. As a result, the Committee concluded, commission-governed cities manifested “a striking increase in efficiency and a higher standard of municipal accomplishment.” It also claimed that “[t]he relative success of commission government results primarily because it is more democratic (i.e., sensitive to public opinion) than the old form.” Here, the Committee cited two provisions as the chief “democratic features.” First, the “unification of powers” combined the legislative and executive functions in a single commission to prevent the evasion of “full responsibility.” Second, the creation of a “short ballot” simplified “the whole work of citizenship so much that the citizens can handle their political affairs without employing a political machine as an intermediary political instrument.” It also included the initiative, referendum, and recall and non-partisan elections as “useful” and “desirable” though not “indispensable” features.⁵²

Yet despite this praise, the League’s Committee declared only a qualified endorsement of commission government. While the Committee’s members recommended the plan for cities of 100,000 and under, they expressed reservations about the applicability of the plan to the governments of larger cities. Its “analytical study” even went on to list several major points on which the Committee could not agree. In larger cities, several members maintained that commission government could only be a success if it retained ward-based elections (or adopted a plan for proportional representation) and “radically” increased the size of the commissions, while others felt that the at-large feature and smaller size could be retained given the safeguards provided by the initiative, referendum, and recall. The Committee also disagreed as to whether or not individual commissioners should be

⁵² National Municipal League, *The Commission Plan and Commission-Manager Plan of Municipal Government: An analytical study by a committee of the National Municipal League* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1914), 2, 6-8.

appointed to head executive departments (i.e. water departments, street departments, police departments, etc.). While some felt that provision was an essential component of the commission plan's fusion of executive and legislative powers, others insisted that the commission really remained a popularly-elected representative body.⁵³

The fusion of the executive and legislative branches of government into a single commission was the subject of greatest division among commentators on the commission plan. Harvard's William Bennet Munro realized that this aspect of the plan marked "a radical disregard of a time-honored theory" "concerning the usefulness of checks and balances," but insisted that "the plan puts an end to that intolerable scattering of powers, duties, and responsibilities" embodied by the older forms of city government with divided powers. Munro also dismissed those who called the commission plan "oligarchical [sic], undemocratic, and un-American" because of this fusion of powers as operating on the basis of "politicians' logic" and "shallow sophistry."⁵⁴ Many others agreed, insisting that the inclusion of the direct democracy measures replaced the older reliance on checks and balances among the different branches of government. The concentration of power and responsibility in a single body combined with the initiative, referendum, and recall would allow the people be a direct check and hold elected officials accountable for their actions.⁵⁵ Others, however, vehemently disagreed. One commentator in a volume on commission government published by the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences warned that "checks and balances of power in government that have been adopted as the result of the

⁵³ National Municipal League, *The Commission Plan and Commission-Manager Plan of Municipal Government*, 8-12.

⁵⁴ William Bennett Munro, *The Government of American Cities* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912), 294-5, 305, 311.

⁵⁵ Hamilton, *Government by Commission*, 64, 142; Benjamin Shambaugh, "Commission Government in Iowa: The Des Moines Plan," *Commission Government and the City-Manager Plan* (Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 1914 [1911]), 36. Shambaugh was a professor of political science at the State University of Iowa and the Superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

experience of ages cannot safely be cast aside” and that concentrating executive and legislative power in a single commission would grant the commissioners “Absolute power.”⁵⁶ Moreover, Frank Goodnow’s popular distinction between politics and administration held that these two purposes of government should be separated when possible. The logic of the commission plan’s fusion of branches violated this distinction, and followers of Goodnow were likely thus wary of the plan.⁵⁷

Conclusion

In most cities, the movement for commission government grew out of widespread discontent with the franchise system. The neglect of the centrality of this fact in explanations for the spread of commission government has prevented historians from understanding more fully the dynamics of the coalitions that supported the restructuring of local government. The classic scholarly account in presents a static and monocausal explanation for the spread of the spread of the commission plan, claiming that upper-class business and professional groups orchestrated the adoption of reform charters to gain control of municipal government while incumbent politicians, unions, socialists, and other working-class constituencies opposed their adoption. This account dominated later historical treatments of the period for many years (and in some cases continues to do so).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Walter Cooper, “Objections to Commission Government,” *Commission Government and the City-Manager Plan* (Philadelphia: The American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, 1914 [1911]), 187-88.

⁵⁷ Woodruff, “Simplicity, Publicity and Efficiency in Municipal Affairs,” 3. In his textbook on city government, Charles A. Beard, a former student of Goodnow, wrote about the importance of “the separation of politics from administration” but did not discuss the commission plan at length. See Charles A. Beard, *American City Government: A Survey of Newer Tendencies* (New York: Century Co., 1912), 109.

⁵⁸ This account is discussed in detail in the introduction.

To critique such analyses that rely almost entirely on social-class as a motivating factor is not to deny its salience in campaigns for commission government. In locales across the country upper-class business and professional organizations initiated moves to adopt commission charters. Yet these charters in many cases would not have been adopted without such groups forming alliances with other local political leaders, most often union officials and/or party politicians.⁵⁹ Why would working-class constituencies support reforms that would seemingly reduce their own power in local politics? As this chapter has demonstrated, many nationally-prominent municipal reformers favored commission government in large part because of its association with the provisions for direct democracy that reformers promised would yield improved regulation of the franchise system and/or facilitate the creation of municipally-owned service providers. The following chapter turns to the local level, exploring in-depth the campaigns to secure commission charters in four cities to reveal under what circumstances local reformers were most successful at convincing fellow urban residents of these claims.

⁵⁹ For examples, see Rice, *Progressive Cities*, 12, 110; Seth M. Scheiner, "Commission Government in the Progressive Era: The New Brunswick, New Jersey, Example," *Journal of Urban History* 12, no. 2 (February 1986): 157-79; Richard G. Miller, "Forth Worth and the Progressive Era: The Movement for Charter Revision, 1899-1907," *Essays on Urban American*, ed. Margaret Francine Morris and Elliott West (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 89-126.

Chapter 6

The Commission Plan and Popular Control of Street Railways: Fort Worth, Oakland, Toledo, and Worcester, 1900-1914

Campaigns for the adoption of commission charters differed from earlier efforts to secure administrative consolidation by increasing the power of the mayor in many ways. The influence of the explosion of popular anger following the revelations of corruption involved in the granting of franchises to public service corporations that followed the publication of Lincoln Steffen's exposes from 1902-1904 was momentous.¹ Opponents of strong mayor charters had been more concerned with the anti-democratic implications and the possibilities for corruption that could potentially accompany the centralization of administrative power. Yet despite the fact that the commission plan, in fusing all executive, legislative, and administrative functions into a single body of only five to seven individuals, centralized power to a far greater degree, there was not as much resistance to the plan on these grounds. Popular outrage over the role that public service corporations played in the corruption of local politics outweighed such concerns. Moreover, reformers promised that the initiative, referendum, and recall would offset the centralization of the commission plan and facilitate greater popular control over the provision of utilities and transportation. The rising popularity of measures for direct democracy in American cities thus paralleled a declining concern with the details of representative democracy, and debates regarding the commission plan were not marked by the same passion regarding ward versus at-large elections and the reduction of the number of elective offices.

¹ Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004 [1904]). On St. Louis see esp. pp. 20-40.

By examining two successful campaigns to secure commission charters in Fort Worth, Texas and Oakland, California alongside unsuccessful campaigns to do so in Worcester, Massachusetts and Toledo, Ohio, this chapter suggests commission charters tended to be adopted in cities where reformers were able to harness popular anger over corrupt and often ineffective public service providers to form coalitions with other groups. In Worcester, an entrenched two-party system and a strong system of state regulation of municipal charters, utilities, and railroads combined with favorable railroad rates to prevent reformers from convincing voters, who were for the most part satisfied with local services, to abandon the mayor-council form for commission government. In contrast, in cities of the west and southwest such as Oakland and Fort Worth, urban populations were initially more united in their anger towards public service corporations, typically seen as outsiders and often tied to large railroad conglomerates such as Southern Pacific, and as a result, unions and commercial organizations came together to work for commission charters. Street-railway systems, vital to the continued economic development of cities and the primary means of transportation for most workers, connected these groups and took center stage in campaigns for commission government.

Toledo presents a somewhat more complicated story, for anger against public service corporations such as the Toledo Railway and Light Company led to widespread support for home rule, municipal ownership, and charter reform but not for the commission plan. Commission government was not, as in so many other cities, considered by Toledoans necessary to achieving the larger ends of home rule and reform of the franchise system. Nevertheless, the success of municipal reformers still depended upon their ability to convince voters that other forms of charter revision would improve popular control over the provision

of utilities and public transportation and thereby facilitate the implementation of municipally-owned programs. Initially, Mayor Samuel Jones, a dedicated social reformer, attempted to do so but failed in 1901, as detailed in chapter four. Only with the adoption of a state amendment providing for municipal home rule and deepening public anger over the services provided by the “Rail-Light” was his successor Brand Whitlock able to lay the foundations for the adoption of a new charter in 1914. Local unions were somewhat divided regarding proposed revisions, and though Toledoans adopted a new charter providing for non partisan elections and the initiative and referendum, they elected to retain the mayor-council form of government rather than adopt the commission plan.

In all these cities, however, reformers and other political actors involved in charter revisions continued to consider how the relationship between proposed structural reforms and the provision of municipal services would shape the future meaning of popular control of government. Nationally prominent reformers such as Frederick Howe were not the only ones who believed that the fate of American democracy lay in the hands of cities.² From prominent individuals such as Howe and Toledo’s Mayor Brand Whitlock to little-known figures such as Fort Worth’s Mayor T.J. Powell and the Progressive editors of the *Oakland Enquirer*, politically-active urban leaders across the country argued that the destruction of the “special privileges” at the heart of the franchise system through reforms such as home rule and commission government was necessary to secure a viable system of self-government for the new century. Securing real popular control over the provision of municipal services in cities was the first step in a wider movement to redeem American democracy, for, according

² Frederic C. Howe, *The City: The Hope of Democracy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons: 1905).

to Whitlock, “if things are to be set right in this country, they must be set right in the cities first: democracy must be worked out in the cities first.”³

Fort Worth, 1900-1907 The Commission Plan and Public Service Corporations

Fort Worth, Texas underwent a period of rapid population growth and economic expansion in the first decade of the twentieth century. At the close of the nineteenth century, Fort Worth was still primarily a retail center for farmers and cattle dealers. In 1901, packing-houses came to Fort Worth and grew rapidly, attracting other manufacturing plants along the way. In the following decade, the city’s population nearly tripled, reaching over 73,000 by 1910.⁴ As the city grew, the local government needed to provide new services at a rapid pace and often to rely on public service corporations to do so. Local business leaders, fearful that these corporations would dominate local government, turned to charter reform as a means to prevent this from happening and to create a local government that would ensure the provision of the roads, sidewalks, water, and transportation necessary for continued growth. Cities in Texas, closely following the innovation in municipal government in Galveston, were among the first in the nation to consider adopting the commission plan.⁵ Reformers in Fort Worth believed that a commission charter would ensure the creation of such a system of

³ “Ohio Cities to Lead Nation by Home Rule, Says Mayor,” *Toledo Blade*, May 3, 1912, pp. 1, 11.

⁴ *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920: Volume I – Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 82-86; Richard G. Miller, “Fort Worth in the Progressive Era: The Movement for Charter Revision, 1899-1907,” *Essays in Urban America* ed. Margaret Francine Morris and Elliot West (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 90-91. There were few foreign-born residents in Fort Worth because most migrants, mainly Protestants, came primarily from border and southern states. In 1910 over ninety-four percent of Fort Worth’s residents native born and eighteen percent were African American.

⁵ A friendly state legislature in Austin granted a commission charter to Galveston’s neighbor and rival Houston in 1905, and by 1907 five other cities would request similar charters. Two years later, it passed a general law to allow any city with 10,000 residents or fewer to adopt commission government by popular referendum. See Bradley Robert Rice, *Progressive Cities: The Commission Government Movement in America, 1901-1920* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 19, 25; Tso-Shuen Chang, “History and Analysis of the Commission and City Manager Plans of Municipal Government in the United States,” *University of Iowa Monograph Series: Studies in the Social Sciences VI* (1918): 105.

government, and as they worked to convince residents to support them, they played upon popular distrust of public service corporations and the franchise system.

Yet in these same years, Fort Worth's mayor Thomas Powell, echoing municipal reformers throughout the country, also used criticism of the franchise system and support for municipal ownership as part of his vision for the democratization of local government.

Powell, an attorney and former newspaperman, campaigned as an opponent of "rings" and "machines," promising to return municipal government to the people.⁶ As a member and later an honorary vice president of the League of American Municipalities, Powell came into contact with some of the most prominent supporters of public ownership of the day, from Frank Parsons to Toledo's Mayor Brand Whitlock, also an honorary vice president.⁷ In an article published in the *Fort Worth Telegram*, Powell quoted John Stewart Mill and Lincoln Steffens in making his case for municipal ownership of the "essential services" of urban life. "The urban resident," Powell explained, "must have light, water, transportation, [and] communication with other things that are a daily necessity." He believed that private

⁶ Miller, "Fort Worth in the Progressive Era," 92-93.

⁷ Powell was listed as an honorary vice president in the program for the convention of the League in 1906, at which Frank Parsons spoke. The following year Fort Worth's next mayor, W.D. Harris, spoke on commission government and Brand Whitlock spoke on franchises. See "Eleventh Annual Convention of the League of American Municipalities, Norfolk, Va., September 18, 19 and 20, 1907," *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* 8, no. 3 (September 1907): 82; League of American Municipalities, *10th Annual Convention of the League of American Municipalities Held at Chicago, September 26, 27 and 28, 1906* (Chicago: Kirchner, Meckel & Co., 1906).

The city of Fort Worth was a member in the League of American Municipalities and was in contact with the organization. See invitation to and program for the Eleventh Annual Convention of the League of American Municipalities, Folder "July 1907, 2 of 2," Box "May - August 1907," supplement to the invitation to the Ninth Annual Convention of the League of American Municipalities, Folder "August 4, 1905," Box "June - August 1905;" invitation to the Ninth Annual Convention of the League of American Municipalities, Folder "July 7, 1905, 1 of 2," Box "June - August 1905;" dues receipt from the League of American Municipalities, Folder "February 3 and 17, 1905, 1 of 3," Box "January - May 1905" and invitation from Charleston to attend the annual convention of the League of American Municipalities, Folder "December 1, 1900," Box "September - December 1900;" in Council Proceedings, Local History Collection of the Central Branch of the Fort Worth Public Library, Fort Worth, TX (hereafter cited as Council Proceedings). This collection does not contain the actual minutes of the proceedings of the council. Rather, it consists of many of the original copies of resolutions, contracts, petitions, letters from citizens, departmental and committee reports, messages from the mayor, and other items on the council's agenda.

provision of such services through franchise grants dominated every aspect of local politics, and he was worried that as cities in Texas continued to grow at a rapid pace politicians would be tempted by the “great value and power” of such grants. At the same time, he also celebrated the democratic implications of allowing the people to adopt municipal ownership by popular referendum, referencing the Declaration of Independence in portraying the referendum as a tool to end government “controlled by the self interests of a few men” and a return to a government deriving its “just powers from the consent of the governed.” Finally, elevating the importance of “the problem of the city” as the “problem of our civilization,” Powell declared that “upon its solution rests not only the public peace, the public morals and the public health of the citizen, but, also, the perpetuity of democratic institution in this country and the liberality of the American people.”⁸

During his administration, Powell presented charter reform as a means to improving the regulation of the franchise system and allowing the option of municipal ownership by popular referendum. Powell and his allies feared that public service companies seeking franchises would soon control the city council in Fort Worth. In 1900 and again in 1901, Powell, backed by the newly-formed Board of Trade and endorsed by various federations of unions, unsuccessfully attempted to convince the council to revise the city’s charter.⁹

Renewing their efforts in the fall of 1904, supporters of charter reform organized a Civic

⁸ T.J. Powell, “Right of Optional Referendum American Cities’ Greatest Need,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 5, 1904, p. 4. This article was a reprint of a piece written by Powell for the *Dallas Lantern*.

⁹ Many of the proposed reforms would have weakened the power of the council, including imposing a tax on the gross receipts of companies awarded public service franchises, the election of most department heads (most of whom were now appointed by the council), the establishment of at-large elections, and the adoption of the initiative and referendum. See Miller, “Fort Worth in the Progressive Era,” 91-98 and mayor’s veto, Folder “December 7, 1900,” Box “September – December 1900;” letter from committees appointed by the Fort Worth Building Trades Council and the Fort Worth Trades Assembly to the mayor and city council, November 2, 1900, “To the Present Board of Aldermen,” and the report of the Charter Committee, Folder “November 16, 1900,” Box “September – December 1900;” charter resolution, Folder “May 4, 1900; May 7, 1900, 1 of 2,” Box “May – August 1900,” Council Proceedings.

The Board of Trade was founded in 1900. See Capt. B.B. Paddock, ed., *History of Texas: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest Edition, Vol. II* (Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1922), 651.

League and Citizens' Clubs in several wards throughout the city modeled after the Chicago Civic League. They recommend numerous amendments, including at-large council elections and the election of most administrative positions currently appointed by the council, but franchise regulation continued to take center stage. Not only did they propose a tax of at least two percent on the gross earnings of all public service corporations, they also sought a referendum on all franchises granted by the city. The council, however, rejected most of these proposals and adopted its own amendments. In a public standoff, one member of the Board of Aldermen insisted that it was absurd to consider holding referenda for all franchises, claiming that "[i]t is our business to issue franchises ... just as it is the business of the people in a dry goods store to sell goods." Powell responded by vetoing the council's charter and declaring, "I have been working for referendum for six years and I shall continue to do so as long as I can raise a hand in the aid of pure and honest government." With the Board of Trade and the Trades Assembly (of unions) supporting the Mayor, the council backed down and included a mandatory referendum on franchises along with several other minor charter reforms among the amendments to be sent to the state legislature.¹⁰

Powell decided not to seek re-election in December 1905, and despite the adoption of the amendment providing for referenda on all franchises, fears that public service corporations would try to dominate municipal government played a prominent role in the

¹⁰ Miller, "Fort Worth in the Progressive Era," 102-04; "Council Accepts the Referendum" *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 14, 1905, p. 2; "Trades Assembly Endorses Mayor," *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 11, 1905, p. 2; "Mayor Vetoes Charter Action," *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 7, 1905, p. 2; "Mayor Does Not Give up Fight," *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 4, 1905, p. 8; "Aldermen Vote down Franchise Referendum," *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 4, 1905, p. 2; "Final Action on Charter Changes," *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 1, 1905, p. 2; "Charter Change to Be Reported," *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 3, 1905, p. 2; "Charter Amendments Now in the Hands of Council Committee," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 7, 1905, p. 1; "Proposed Amendments to City's Charter Adopted at Meeting of Citizens," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 28, 1904, p. 1; "Citizens Plan Amendments to City's Charter," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 21, 1904, p. 5. See also Mayor T. J. Powell to the Hon. City Council, no date and Aldermen to John T. Montgomery, city secretary, March 13, 1905, Folder "March 3 and March 13, 1905," Box "January – May 1905," Council Proceedings.

upcoming election. County Judge William Harris and Alderman Newton Lassiter both sought the mayoral nomination in the Democratic primary, the real contest in a one-party city such as Fort Worth. During the campaign, they made similar promises to improve the streets and sidewalks in the city and to construct additional school buildings. Lassiter, however, was criticized for running for office while working as an attorney for the Northern Texas Traction Company, a public service corporation currently holding several franchises for street railways in Fort Worth. Lassiter repeatedly denied that as an elected official he had ever been “influenced in the slightest degree by any individual or any corporation” and maintained that he only served “the interests of Fort Worth.” He also insisted that it would be impossible, given the current law providing for referendum on all franchises, for the mayor to grant favors to any group and promised “to compel street railway companies and other public service corporations, to maintain and furnish efficient facilities and adequate service” as mayor. Yet many voters were not convinced by these promises, and despite the endorsement of the *Fort Worth Telegram*, Lassiter lost to Harris in the primary.¹¹

When reformers in Fort Worth turned to the commission plan, another public standoff between the council and advocates of charter revision ensued. In 1906, the *Telegram* printed articles celebrating the successes of Galveston’s experiment and the Board of Trade

¹¹ Miller ignores the importance of Lassiter’s association with the Northern Texas Traction Company in the election, arguing, “The race boiled down to one between two personalities and in no way was it a referendum for reform.” Miller, “Fort Worth in the Progressive Era,” 105. See “Harris Wins Majority of 145,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 15, 1905, p. 1; “Lassiter and Progress,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 7, 1905, p. 4; “Big Meeting Held in Fifth Ward,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 6, 1905, p. 7; “Biggest Meeting of the Campaign,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 5, 1905, [page number not clear on microfilm]; “Lassiter’s Record From Laboring Man’s Viewpoint,” December 3, 1905, p. 14; “Fort Worth’s Next Mayor,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 1, 1905, p. 4; “Lassiter Urges United Effort to Build Up City,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 25, 1905, p. 1; “Lassiter Opens City Campaign,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 21, 1905, p. 1; “Harris Attacks City Sprinkling,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 21, 1905, p. 2; “Lassiter out in Mayoralty Race,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 19, 1905, p. 12. In “Harris Wins Majority of 145,” the *Telegram* reported that Harris received 1,351 votes to Lassiter’s 950, a majority of 401 and not 145 as the title claims.

organized a number of public events to promote commission government.¹² Having faced so much opposition from the council during his terms as Mayor, Powell, now acting as a private citizen, attempted to by-pass the council by organizing a “Citizens’ Charter Committee” composed of thirty-five delegates from various local organizations to draft a new charter to be submitted to the voters. Mayor Harris supported Powell and invited the Committee to meet in his office. The members of the Committee soon proposed a charter that would replace the mayor and councilors elected by wards with five commissioners elected at large. The council countered by forming its own charter revision committee that proposed several amendments but retained the basic mayor-council form. The council then passed an ordinance calling for a popular election in which voters would be allowed to choose between the charter of the Citizens’ Committee and the amendments of the council. Harris vetoed the ordinance, declaring that the council had no legal right to take such an action, but critics accused the Citizens’ Committee of trying to secure the passage of their charter at the state capital in Austin without the people’s approval at home. Eventually, a compromise was reached and the state legislature passed the Citizens’ Committee in early 1907 with an amendment stipulating that it would only become law if approved in a popular election in Fort Worth.¹³

¹² See, for examples, “Business Men Talk of Greater Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 6, 1906, p. 1; Taylor McRae, “How Galveston Has Raised City Funds,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 4, 1906, p. 9; “Taylor McRae, “How the Galveston Commission Works,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 2, 1906, p. 12. Copies of the *Telegram* from March 5, 1906 to October 11, 1906 were not available, but presumably there were many more articles on Galveston and commission government in these months.

¹³ “To the City Council,” January 12, 1907, undated resolutions, and City Sect Jno. T. Montgomery to Chief of Police Jas. H. Maddox, January 11, 1907, Folder “January 7, 11, and 21, 1907, 1 of 2,” Box “January – April 1907;” various letters dated January 10, 11, and 14 1907 to and from city officials, undated resolutions, charter amendments proposed by the council, and Mayor W.D. Harris’s veto, Folder “January 7, 11, and 21, 1907, 2 of 2,” Box “January – April 1907,” Council Proceedings.

This standoff between Mayor Harris and the Citizens’ Committee and the council was closely covered in the *Telegram*. See “Council to Call Vote on Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 27, 1907, p. 3; “No Opposition to New Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 13, 1907, p. 7; “Charter Passes When It Passes,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 10, 1907, p. 6; “Special Session of City Council,” *Fort Worth Telegram*,

Though this confrontation undoubtedly was indicative of a struggle between businessmen-reformers and ward politicians with competing visions of city government, interpretations that focus on class alone do not take into account the centrality of franchise reform in proposed charters. The traditional scholarly account of Progressive municipal reform argued that businessmen and professionals organized campaigns to replace partisan machines, run by ward politicians with close ties to working-class, immigrant constituents, with professionalized commission or city manager systems that better served their own interests. A study of Fort Worth's experience agreed with this assessment and portrayed the charter reform campaigns of 1900-1907 as efforts undertaken by an organized business community seeking to gain control of local government and implement a program of growth favorable to its own economic interests. It also portrayed the democratic rhetoric of Powell and others celebrating government by "the people" as a deliberate façade designed to mask their real goal of government controlled by the business community alone.¹⁴

Yet the business community was not as calculating or as united as this interpretation suggests, nor were the ward politicians merely representatives of the sentiments of the working-class residents of the city. A close reading of the initial deliberations of the

February 10, 1907, p. 6; "Council Talks of Vote on Charter," *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 5, 1907, p. 2; "1,200 Petition for Election," *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 3, 1907, p. 7; "People to Vote on New Charter," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 27, 1907, p. 9; "Mayor vetoes Election Call," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 11, 1907, p. 6; "Will Hold Election," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 11, 1907, p. 1; "Mayor Will Veto Council's Action," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 10, 1907, p. 7; "New Charter May Not be Voted on," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 10, 1907, p. 3; "Busy Session of the City Council," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 8, 1907, p. 8; "Councilmen Will Contest Charter," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 29, 1906, p. 5; "Waggoman on New Charter," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 21, 1906, p. 2; "New Charter Is Complete," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 16, 1906, p. 9; "Committee Will Discuss Charter," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 7, 1906, p. 2; "Council Will Write Charter," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 4, 1906, p. 5; "Discussion of City Charter," *Fort Worth Telegram*, October 12, 1906, p. 14. See also Miller, 106-11.

For a description of the details of the version of the commission plan provided for in Fort Worth's charter, see Henry Bruère, *The New City Government: A Discussion of Municipal Administration Based on a Survey of Ten Commission Governed Cities* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1912), 40-68. Bruère included Fort Worth as one of the ten commission-governed cities studied here.

¹⁴ Miller, "Fort Worth in the Progressive Era," see esp. 89-90, 93-94, 111, and 114-15.

Citizens' Committee and its subsequent campaign to secure the adoption of its charters by the voters demonstrates that reformers were motivated by animosity towards public service corporations. They presented their commission charter as a means to check the influence of these companies and create an independent local government capable of expanding its services for the benefit of the entire community, and the outcome of their efforts demonstrates that they were successful. Though with the establishment of the poll tax in 1902 only 5,184 of over 50,000 residents of the city were registered to vote by 1907, the fact that 84.3% of those who voted in the popular election favored the new charter was nevertheless remarkable.¹⁵

Regional economic conditions in large part explain why voters in cities in the Southwest were more likely to support commission and later city manager charters. Cities in this region in the early twentieth century lacked capital, and the segments of local business communities who supported charter reforms typically presented themselves as leaders capable of attracting outside resources from both state and national government and private companies for their cities. They convinced voters to support their reforms by claiming that under new charters, municipal government would be able to provide the lighting, paved streets, sewers, water supply, and public transportation necessary to attract much needed workers and employers to their cities.¹⁶

In Fort Worth, the leaders of the new Board of Trade were these business leaders. Within one year of its founding, the Board had organized committees on water, lights, parks,

¹⁵ "Citizens Vote for Commission," *Fort Worth Telegram*, April 3, 1907, p. 4; "11,123 Paid Poll Tax in County. Total for City Amounts to 5,184," *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 1, 1907, p. 1. Miller presents a different figure of 4,580 registered voters. See Miller, "Fort Worth in the Progressive Era," 111.

¹⁶ Amy Bridges, *Morning Glories: Municipal Reform in the Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 17-19, 54-57. While Bridges (43-44) notes that because public service corporations were often owned by eastern investors, residents in southwestern cities often united in opposition to an external enemy, there is no evidence to suggest that this was the case in Fort Worth.

public grounds, education, city ordinances, city finances, the state legislature, and advertising. By 1907 it had nearly five hundred members. To attract outside investors to the city, it printed pamphlets advertising Fort Worth and coordinated efforts with the Home Factory and Industrial Association. To obtain favorable rates and conditions for Fort Worth, it lobbied against the railroads at the state legislature in Austin. And to limit the power of public service corporations at home, its officers led the efforts of the Citizens' Charter Committee to secure a commission charter for Fort Worth.¹⁷

The Board of Trade's success in securing a commission charter was partly due to the coalitions it formed with local political leaders and civic organizations. In the weeks before the election, it worked with the Mayor, the Trades Assembly, and the network of ward-level civic leagues that to promote the charter as an instrument for regulating franchises and expanding municipal services. Mayor Harris wrote an open letter printed in the *Telegram* urging residents to pay their poll taxes so they could help bring commission government to Fort Worth. Across the city, leaders of the Board of Trade and the Trades Assembly spoke at meetings organized by the civic leagues.¹⁸ In its list of ten reasons to vote for the new

¹⁷ "Board of Trade Opposes Bills," *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 2, 1907, p. 5; "Board of Trade Protests Rates," *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 16, 1907, p. 5; "Now 459 Members Board of Trade," *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 16, 1906, p. 2; "Showing Big Growth," *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 7, 1906, p. 3; "Board of Trade President Busy," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 10, 1906, p. 3; "Will Ask Council for Improvement District," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 7, 1906, p. 1; "Committee Ready to Work for Sidewalks," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 3, 1906, p. 8; "Issues Pamphlet about the City," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 27, 1903, p. 1; "Committees for the Board," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 28, 1902, p. 4. The delegates from the Board of Trade on the Citizens' Charter Committee were F.W. Axtell, a director, E.H. Carter, also a director, Dr. J.L. Carter, president, and Captain B.B. Paddock, founder, secretary, and director. See Paddock, *History of Texas*, 651; "People to Vote on new Charter," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 27, 1907, p. 9; "Committees of Board of Trade," *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 24, 1907, p. 1; "Committee Will Discuss Charter," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 7, 1906, p. 2; "Showing Big Growth," *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 7, 1906, p. 3; B.B. Paddock to T.J. Powell, June 9, 1905, Folder "July 21, 1905," Box "June-August 1905," Council Proceedings.

¹⁸ "Eighth Ward to Check vote," *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 30, 1907, p. 7; "Sixth Ward Supports; Third Opposes Charter," *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 29, 1907, p. 7; "Charter Rally at City Hall," *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 27, 1907, p. 1; "Civic Club to Rouse Voters" *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 26, 1907, p. 6; "Mayor Addresses Fifth Ward Club," *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 15, 1907, p. 12; "Gas Franchise Is Condemned," *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 13, 1907, p. 10; "Fifth Ward Wants No Saloons There," *Fort Worth*

charter, the Sixth Ward Civic League not only made general statements about creating “a more truly representative government” and fighting “special interests” but also specifically addressed the ways in which it would improve the regulation of franchises.¹⁹ Organized labor in the city had long favored referendums on franchises and municipal ownership of utilities, and it also encouraged its members to pay their poll taxes and vote. The delegates from the Trades Assembly who had participated in the deliberations of the Citizens’ Commission now declared their support for the new commission charter and urged members to vote for it in the upcoming election.²⁰

In attempting to win popular support for the commission charter, reformers did not emphasize the theoretical arguments for at-large elections or the concentration of legislative and executive functions but rather the specific ways in which the charter would enable the municipality to provide more services to residents. Mayor Harris in particular underscored the importance of the fact that the charter would enable the city to raise funds by allowing it to take on more debt than currently allowed by state law. It permitted voters to elect to issue an additional \$150,000 worth of bonds per year, and Harris maintained that such funds were

Telegram, January 25, 1907, p. 5; “League Favors a Commission,” January 23, 1907, p. 8; “Urge Voters to Pay Their Taxes,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 20, 1907, p. 13.

¹⁹ “Civic League Presents Argument for Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 31, 1907, p. 4.

²⁰ “Labor Will Vote on New Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 1, 1907, p. 5; “26 New Members Trades Assembly,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 25, 1907, p. 5; “Union Members Prepare to Vote,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 7, 1906, p. 5; “Trades Assembly Endorses Mayor,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 11, 1905, p. 2; “Pay Poll Tax Is Advice of Trades Assembly,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 11, 1903, p. 8; “Labor Delegate Is in the City,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 9, 1903, p. 1.

The delegates of the Trades Assembly to the Citizens’ Charter Committee were C.W. Woodman, secretary of the state Federation of Labor, and Lee Stephens, an electrical worker. For biographical information, see “26 New Members Trades Assembly,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 25, 1907, p. 6; “Committee Will Discuss Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 7, 1906, p. 2; “Vagrancy Law Is to Be Invoked at Once,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, July 26, 1904, p. 2; “Pay Poll Tax Is Advice of Trades Assembly,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 11, 1903, p. 8.

necessary for the city to carry out several projects currently being discussed, including the construction of additional school buildings and the paving of streets in poor condition²¹

Reformers also presented the new charter as a way to strengthen the right of the city to undertake publicly-owned programs. Municipal ownership of utilities was favorably regarded in many circles in Fort Worth. The *Telegram* had been publishing articles for several years publicizing municipal ownership in cities throughout Texas and Europe and promoting its profitability.²² Unions favored public ownership of utilities, and former Mayor Powell, now a candidate for Congress, declared that because he believed that “the greatest need of our national life” was “for the people to own the government,” he had always favored “a reasonable regulation of public utilities, and the public ownership of the same, wherever it was practicable.”²³ Fort Worth currently owned and operated its own water plant, a fact celebrated by boosters of the city, and various groups sought to establish a municipal garbage plant and a city market house for the sale of local produce in 1906. Yet despite popular support for these projects (630 citizens signed a petition to the council favoring a market house while only 72 signed a petition against it), they were not enacted.²⁴

²¹ “Mayor Indorses New Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 3, 1907, p. 5; “New School Steps Taken,” March 3, 1907, pp. 1, 4; “City Finance in Good Shape,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 25, 1907, p. 5; “Finances of City Aldermen,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 17, 1906, p. 1.

²² “Santone after Water Plant,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 17, 1905, p. 2; Giovanni Conti, “Municipal Ownership Is Winning in Italy,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, October 1, 1905, pp. 7; “What a City Can Do,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 14, 1902, p. 6; “Shows Profits of Municipal Ownership,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 4, 1902, p. 6.

²³ “Mayor Powell out for Congressional Honors,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 11, 1906, p. 6; “Labor Delegate Is in the City,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 9, 1903, p. 1.

²⁴ “Market House Deal is Dead,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 20, 1906, p. 2; “City Council’s Speedy Session,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 6, 1906, p. 10; “Consider Market House Plan,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 5, 1906, p. 8; “Council Votes for City Market House,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 4, 1906, p. 5; “Garbage Plant Offer Made,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 4, 1906, p. 2; “Population Is Nearly 52,000,” December 5, 1905, p. 1; “Water Supply of Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 11, 1902, p. 6. See also petition requesting a market house, Folder “November 9, 1906, 1 of 2,” Box “October-December 1906” and petition opposing a market house, Folder “November 9, 1906, 2 of 2,” Box “October-December 1906,” Council Proceedings.

Despite internal disagreements, the Citizens' Charter Committee in the end included several clauses expanding the opportunities for municipal ownership, and the champions of these clauses cited them as a reason for voters to support the commission charter. The charter provided the commissioners with extensive powers over the infrastructures and utilities of the city. Holding that the public spaces in the city belonged to the people, the charter granted the commissioners what the *Telegram* described as "absolute control over the street and sidewalks and the ground under them, and the air above them..." and thus allowed them to charge public service corporations providing transportation, telephone and telegraph service, lighting, and electricity for their use (and to compel property owners to pay for the paving of the streets adjacent to their property). At the same time, the charter limited the power of the commissioners, denying them the right to sell any property or utilities currently owned by the city without the approval of the voters in a popular referendum. The charter also provided for the option of municipal ownership of all utilities and directly established a municipal lighting plant.²⁵

The inclusion of these provisions suggests that the businessmen in the Board of Trade, though some of the original leaders of the charter movement, did not control the content of the Citizens' Committee entirely and in fact compromised with other groups in order to secure their support. As a member of the Citizens' Committee, Captain B.B. Paddock, founder, secretary, and director of the Board of Trade, attempted to omit the "public ownership" clauses from the charter, but he faced stern opposition from fellow committee member M.B. Harris, a former county judge, and these clauses were included in

²⁵ "New Charter Is Complete," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 16, 1906, p. 9; "Charter of City Is Now Complete," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 14, 1906, p. 3; "Committee Met Monday Night," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 11, 1906, p. 6.

final version of the charter.²⁶ Campaigning for the charter at a meeting of the Third Ward Democratic Club in March of 1907, former Mayor Powell declared his support for municipal ownership and emphasized the importance of the franchise “compensation clause” in endorsing the charter. Later that month, at a meeting of the Eighth Ward Civic League, C.W. Woodman, a delegate from the Trades Assembly to the Citizens’ Committee, promised his listeners that “[t]he new charter will pave the way for municipal ownership of public utilities when the city is ready for them.”²⁷

While the charter secured the right to establish municipal ownership, it also heavily regulated the granting of franchises and the activities of corporations providing public services, particularly street car companies. Even though representatives of the street car companies had requested a meeting with the Citizens’ Committee to voice their objections to the “radical” provisions of the charter regarding street railways, the final charter granted the commission great powers to regulate speeds, fares, and the construction and maintenance of tracks. It also provided for several taxes, including a tax of three per cent on the gross receipts of public service corporations, and made referenda on franchises optional rather than mandatory, requiring a petition to call for an election signed by twenty percent of those who voted in the last election.²⁸ Whether or not this change in the referendum strengthened or weakened popular control of franchises was debated even amongst members of the Citizens’

²⁶ “Charter Complete,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 30, 1907, p. 12; For biographical information on Paddock and Harris, see Paddock, *History of Texas*, 651; “Showing of Big Growth,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 7, 1906, p. 3; “The Civic League,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, November 26, 1904, p. 5.

²⁷ “Plan Campaign for New Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 31, 1907, p. 12; “Powell Dissects New City Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 8, 1907, p. 5.

²⁸ “Charter Complete,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 30, 1907, p. 12; “Committee Hears Mayor’s Troubles,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 13, 1907, p. 7; “Charter Committee,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 12, 1907, p. 8; “New Charter Is Complete,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 16, 1906, p. 9; “Officers May Be Recalled,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 12, 1906, p. 5; “Committee Talks of New Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 8, 1906, p. 5. The street railways provisions of the charter may have favored larger companies over smaller ones. One representative at the meeting objected to universal transfers and “to the unlimited use of the car tracks of one company by another” on behalf of smaller companies.

Commission. Former Mayor Powell said that he supported the charter despite this new franchise law, explaining that it would be far too costly and time consuming for opponents to obtain the signatures of one-fifth of all registered voters. Mayor Harris, in contrast, argued that solved the problem of endless elections while still allowing the people to call for a referendum if necessary.²⁹

Harris and Powell both agreed, however, that voters should reject the franchise sought by the Fort Worth Power and Light Company in the weeks before the charter election. When this company attempted to secure a renewal of its current twenty-five year franchise eight years before it expired, reformers seized on this move as evidence that the new charter provided superior regulation of public service corporations than the present system. Reformers had long claimed that the real opponents of the charter were these corporations. Paddock of the Board of Trade had alleged that the council objected to the commission charter not because it felt that it did not reflect popular desires but because of it was following the lead of “one of the corporations.” The *Telegram* had reported that the petition to the council requesting a vote on the charter was signed by “Half Hundred Railroad Men ... During [the] First Hour’s Circulation.” Now the *Telegram* accused the Fort Worth Light and Power Company of trying to rush a renewal of its franchises because while the present charter charged no fee for the use of public property, the new charter would impose the three-percent tax. Harris, Powell, the *Telegram*, and several of the civic leagues publicly opposed the franchise renewal, as did the voters of Fort Worth in the referendum of March 1907, just weeks before they adopted the commission charter of the Citizen’s Committee.³⁰

²⁹ “Powell Dissects New City Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 8, 1907, p. 5; “Mayor Indorses New Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 3, 1907, p. 5.

³⁰ “Ex-Mayors Talk to Civic League,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 16, 1907, p. 7; “Vote Down the Franchise,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 15, 1907, p. 1; “Franchise Extension in Hands of People,” *Fort Worth Telegram*,

Oakland, 1907-1910 The Commission Plan and Southern Pacific

In the spring of 1907, when Fort Worth and other Texan cities were adopting commission charters, Des Moines, Iowa secured its own version of the plan, modified with the inclusion of strong provisions for the initiative, referendum, and recall in local affairs.³¹ The “Des Moines Plan,” as it became known, received national coverage in the press even before it took effect in Des Moines. By that summer, the *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* explained the details to its readers, largely elected officials. A wider audience learned of the new experiment through articles in popular magazines and newspapers across the country. The *Chautauquan* told its readers that the residents of Des Moines viewed the commission plan as “the ‘way out’ of the troubles of graft, corruption, spoils, politics, and general demoralization.”³² With the passage of a home rule amendment in California, residents of Oakland, California, still waging a decades-old struggle against the Southern Pacific Railroad Corporation, one of the biggest “interests” in the entire nation, turned to the

March 15, 1907, p. 1; “Gas Franchise Is Condemned,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 13, 1907, p. 10; “Citizens Alive to Gas Matter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 12, 1907, p. 8; “Powell Dissects New City Charter,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 8, 1907, p. 5; “Mayor Opposes New Franchise,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, March 7, 1907, p. 5; “Charter Was Juggled?” *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 22, 1907, p. 1; “Want to Vote on Commission,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 31, 1907, p. 1; “Committee Hears Mayor’s Troubles,” *Fort Worth Telegram*, January 13, 1907, p. 7.

³¹ See chapter five.

³² “Highways and By-Ways,” *The Chautauquan* 48, no. 1 (September 1907): 14-15; “Is Des Moines Plan Socialistic?” *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* 8, no. 2 (August 1907), 52-54; “The Des Moines Plan of City Government,” *Bulletin of the League of American Municipalities* 8, no. 1 (July 1907): 17-25; “The Spread of the Texas Idea,” *Outlook* 86, no. 14 (August 3, 1907): 707-08. For newspaper coverage, see “City Government by Commission,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 17, 1907, p. 6; “The Commission Plan,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 22, 1907, p. 8; “Orange form of City Government,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 21, 1907, p. 7.

Des Moines Plan.³³ Oakland's efforts to secure commission government in these years thus provides a stark example of a movement for charter reform that was not led by businessmen seeking to destroy a working-class political machine but rather by reformers intent on destroying the hold of public service corporations on local politics. To accomplish this goal, these reformers drew on a national Progressive rhetoric that condemned the granting of unfair "special privileges" to Southern Pacific and other public service corporations.

Although as in Fort Worth and many other cities the mayor initiated the movement for charter revision, unlike T. J. Powell, Oakland's Frank Mott did not aspire to create a more democratic system of local government. In his second inaugural address in April of 1907, Mott, citing the recent passage of a home rule amendment in the state of California, declared that Oakland should now elect a board of freeholders to frame a new charter more attuned to the needs of a growing city.³⁴ As mayor, Mott, a local businessman and founding member of the Chamber of Commerce, used his position to create an environment favorable to a variety of local businesses by granting franchises, tax breaks, and other forms of patronage, but he made sure never to cross the line dividing what contemporaries referred to as "honest" and "dishonest" graft. Frustrated by the limitations on his powers under the current charter, Mott hoped to secure the adoption of a strong mayor form of government. The Mayor, however, did not anticipate that reform-minded small businessmen and professionals in the Alameda County Progress Club would embrace charter revision as their own and spearhead an effort to bring commission government to Oakland.³⁵

³³ On the home rule amendment, see Steven J. Blutza, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans – Causes and Consequences: An Historical and Analytical Study," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1978), 5

³⁴ "Mayor Frank J. Mott Delivers Annual Message to Council," *Oakland Enquirer*, April 2, 1907, pp. 10, 11.

³⁵ Blutza, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans," 4-9, 13. This study makes many arguments concerning the motivations and strategies of a variety of local groups and individuals without clearly attributing

In the fall of 1907 the Alameda County Progress Club (ACPC), aided by the progressive *Oakland Enquirer*, began a campaign to convince voters that the adoption of a commission charter would enable Oakland to create the modern and progressive structures essential for providing the services necessary for a growing city. The leaders of the ACPC began their campaign by inviting delegates of civic and labor organizations to form a Joint Charter Committee to draft a model charter. The invitation sent out did not mention the commission plan but instead suggested specific reforms mostly regarding services to be provided under a new charter, from a municipal market and free school books to inspectors of milk, produce, plumbing, electricity, and more. When the delegates arrived at the meetings, however, leaders of the ACPC repeatedly spoke about the charters of Galveston and Des Moines.³⁶ Building on the claim that the commission plan would make government more responsible, a series of editorials in the *Enquirer* spread the message that such a charter was necessary for development. One editorial contrasted Oakland's "entirely obsolete" charter with the "progressive" charters of Des Moines and other commission-governed cities, claiming that the "present charter under which Oakland is operating ... hampers the growth of the city."³⁷

them to a particular source. Many of these claims likely come from the author's interviews with several people active in Oakland politics in the early twentieth century. See pp. 550-51.

³⁶ Printed invitation from the Alameda County Progress Club, no date, "Minutes of Joint Committee on New Charter for Oakland," no date, and "Minutes of Joint Charter Committee," January 16, 1908, Folder "Oakland: correspondence, drafts, literature," Box IV "Materials concerning city charters of California," William Carey Jones Papers, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (hereafter cited as Jones Papers). T.F. Marshall and William Rambo were both leaders of the ACPC who spoke about the charters of Galveston and Des Moines at the meetings.

For the coverage of these meetings in the local papers, see "New Charter to Be their Slogan," *Oakland Enquirer*, November 1, 1907, p. 6; "Working for a New Charter," *Oakland Enquirer*, October 30, 1907, p. 5; "Civic and Labor Bodies for New City Charter," *Oakland Tribune*, November 22, 1907, p. 17. Though both papers were Republican, the *Enquirer* was clearly a much more Progressive paper than the *Tribune*, which typically sided with Southern Pacific. The *Enquirer* covered the campaign for a new charter in far greater depth. See Blutza, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans," 21, 27.

³⁷ "Looking Forward to a New Charter," *Oakland Enquirer*, November 1, 1907, p. 4.

These editorials promoting the commission plan also indicate the extent to which political actors in Oakland drew on the national discourse of Progressive reform to convince fellow residents to support charter revision. Several emphasized the use of the initiative, referendum, and recall on the municipal level in Des Moines, celebrating these measures of direct democracy as “progressive ideas” that made “city government more effective and more responsive to the will of the people.” In “Municipalities That Point the Way,” the *Enquirer* reprinted excerpts from an article by Brand Whitlock, the prominent mayor of Toledo, on “the Galveston Plan” that began with a diatribe against charters that enabled “an oligarchy formed by a union of greedy politicians and greedy plutocrats” to prevent “the people of a city” from doing “anything for themselves” and ended with a prediction that a commission charter would abolish such “Special Privilege, the great foe to equality and brotherhood.”³⁸

Progressive attacks on the unjustness of special privileges granted through franchises to powerful corporations resonated powerfully in Oakland where the Southern Pacific Railroad Corporation had for years controlled the city’s waterfront and many of its railways lines. After the Civil War, western state and local governments, in need of access to transportation and outside capital, often granted railroad corporations favorable franchises, subsidies, and protections from regulation. By the close of the nineteenth century, the railroads had become extremely powerful both economically and politically, often forming corrupt alliances with elected officials. In California, the campaign against the monopoly powers of Southern Pacific, pejoratively nick-named “The Octopus,” had figured prominently politics for decades, with reformers protesting the railroad’s involvement in

³⁸ “Features of the Des Moines Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 13, 1907, p. 4; “Municipalities that Point the Way,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 5, 1907, p. 7; “Looking Forward to a New Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 1, 1907, p. 4.

politics and demanding improved regulations.³⁹ In Oakland, Southern Pacific had managed to acquire ownership of the city's entire waterfront in the 1880s and since then profited handsomely while providing little in return to the municipality. Southern Pacific and the city had been locked in a legal battle for years that had finally resulted in the return of ownership of the waterfront to the city, putting the railroad in the position of having to obtain a franchise for continued use of the property. The city now had to decide whether to maintain control of the operation of the waterfront or to lease it out through franchises to Southern Pacific and/or Western Pacific, a competing transcontinental railroad currently seeking a grant of its own.⁴⁰

In this context, reformers drew on the widespread animosity toward Southern Pacific to generate support for the proposed commission charter, depicting it as an instrument that would ensure that future franchises would not be given to corporations without securing profitable returns to the city and establish the right of the city to own and operate the waterfront. Though reformers in Oakland often advocated municipal ownership of utilities and other services, debates about public ownership typically focused on control of the waterfront and streets of the city and the regulation of railroad companies making use of these properties. In promoting charter reform, editorials in the *Enquirer* lamented the fact that in Oakland "valuable assets in the water front, in its streets, [and] in its franchises for

³⁹ Though recent historical scholarship has questioned George Mowry's portrayal of Progressivism in California as mainly a struggle between the Republican Party and Southern Pacific, most scholars still agree that opposition to Southern Pacific and other large corporations played an important role in reform politics in these years. See William Deverell, "Introduction," *California Progressivism Revisited*, ed. William Deverell and Tom Sitton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 1-11; Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and Non of My Own* – *A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 367-70; George E. Mowry, *The California Progressives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951).

⁴⁰ Blutz, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans," 9-12. According to Blutz, while Mott and other business leaders sought to reduce the power of Southern Pacific in the city, they still felt that its continued presence and prosperity were essential to the growth of the city and were thus less hostile to it than other groups. The *Enquirer*, for example, supported municipal operation as a more "progressive" alternative to leasing the waterfront to railroad companies. See "Opportunity is Knocking at Oakland's Door," *Oakland Enquirer*, April 3, 1907, p. 1.

quasi-public corporations have been given away” and that as a result “the city has been almost absolutely divested of all possible sources of revenue other than license and direct taxation.”⁴¹

The promise that a commission charter would create a system of government more resistant to the power of Southern Pacific and more responsive to the will of the people was attractive to a variety of groups. In 1905, the Director of the Merchants’ Exchange had publicly charged that the Board of Trade (which would soon become the Chamber of Commerce) was controlled by Southern Pacific.⁴² Two years later, relations between these two groups were still tense. Although the Chamber of Commerce supported public ownership of the waterfront and welcomed new railroads, it felt that the continued presence of Southern Pacific was essential to Oakland’s economy. The Merchants’ Exchange, in contrast, would have preferred to see the railroad forced out the city entirely.⁴³ When the ACPC invited delegates to a charter convention, promoting the commission plan as a tool to end “Special Privileges,” the Merchants’ Exchange was initially receptive, attending the first meeting and allowing the Joint Charter Committee to use its rooms for a later conference.⁴⁴

Unions in Oakland also had good reason to support the charter movement. Organized labor was a powerful political force in northern California in these years. Progressive Republicans and Democrats in the state legislature sought its support for various reform measures, and labor leaders, in turn, bargained with the Progressives for favorable labor

⁴¹ “Boosting for a new Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 4, 1907, p. 4.

⁴² Edgar J. Hinkel and William E. McCann, eds., *Oakland, 1852-1938: Some Phases of the Social, Political and Economic Development of Oakland, California* Vol. I (Oakland, CA: Oakland Public Library, 1939), 148-49. This work was as a report conducted under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration.

⁴³ Blutza, “Oakland’s Commission and Council-Manager Plans,” 31.

⁴⁴ “Merchant’s Exchange in Weekly Session,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 6, 1907, p. 8; “New Charter to Be their Slogan,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 1, 1907, p. 6. For a description of commission government in these terms printed in the *Enquirer* during the early meetings of the Joint Charter Commission, see “Municipalities That Point the Way,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 5, 1907, p. 7. This article reprinted a piece by Brand Whitlock.

legislation.⁴⁵ In Oakland, the Progressive ACPC, the Union Labor Party and even the Socialist Party all supported a number of shared causes, including the adoption of the initiative, referendum, and recall and opposition to the graft involved in the granting of franchises.⁴⁶ When the Joint Charter Committee began to meet, supporters of commission government sought to convince the delegates that such a charter would achieve these ends in Oakland. William Rambo, a member of the Building Trades Council and the legal committee of the ACPC, spoke in favor of a charter that would “give no opportunity for graft” and ensure “a Government for and by the people” through provisions for the recall and referenda on all franchises.⁴⁷

In inviting delegates from “the various representative bodies” in the city to attend its first meeting, the leaders of the ACPC likely hoped, like their counterparts in Fort Worth who formed the Citizens’ Charter Committee, to form a coalition of leading civic and labor groups to circumvent unreceptive local officials in their effort to secure a new charter.⁴⁸ Only sixteen organizations, however, sent delegates to this first meeting: thirteen unions, one fraternal order, a Harbor League dedicated to municipal ownership and development of the waterfront, and the Merchants’ Exchange. Three months later, the members of the Joint Charter Committee only included twenty-four organizations: nineteen unions, four fraternal

⁴⁵ Mary Ann Mason, “Neither Friends nor Foes: Organized Labor and the California Progressives,” *California Progressivism Revisited*, ed. William Devereill and Tom Sitton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 57-71.

⁴⁶ “Platform of the Socialist Party of the State of California,” *The Labor World*, October 10, 1908, p. 4; “A Little Complaint,” *The Labor World*, May 16, 1908, p. 1.

⁴⁷ “Minutes of Joint Charter Committee, Oakland, Cal., January 16, 1908, Folder “Oakland: correspondence, drafts, literature,” Box IV “Materials concerning city charters of California,” Jones Papers. On Rambo, see “Labor Will Help Framing New Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, February 2, 1910, p. 2; “To Discuss New City Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, February 5, 1908, p. 3.

⁴⁸ Printed invitation from the Alameda County Progress Club, no date, Folder “Oakland: correspondence, drafts, literature,” Box IV “Materials concerning city charters of California,” Jones Papers. For more on the strategy of the ACPC, see Blutza, “Oakland’s Commission and Council-Manager Plans,” 21-25.

orders, and the Harbor League.⁴⁹ The Merchants' Exchange no longer attended the Committee's meetings because the Chamber of Commerce had convinced the Exchange to focus its energies on a joint campaign for consolidation of the cities of Alameda County into a single city. Business leaders believed that consolidation would reduce taxes and thereby stimulate economic growth, and those in the Chamber of Commerce argued that consolidation should precede charter revision, which could begin after a greater Oakland had been achieved. As the two business organizations collaborated on this issue over the coming months and unions continued to dominate the Joint Charter Committee, the Merchants' Exchange abstained from actively participating from the charter movement and the Committee struggled to present itself as representative of all the people of Oakland.⁵⁰ Chairman Hugh Murrin maintained that although "[a]t present the unions are the most active workers in the new movement ... it is not our intention to make this a class fight. When a new charter is presented to the Mayor of our city we should represent, not the laboring class alone, but the business and professional men of Oakland."⁵¹

In an effort to rebuild the image of the Joint Charter Committee as a community group representing the will of the people of the city, the ACPC turned to an authoritative "expert" on municipal government. William Carey Jones, a professor of jurisprudence at Berkeley, had written a version of the commission plan adapted to the laws of California,

⁴⁹ "To Discuss New City Charter," *Oakland Enquirer*, February 5, 1908, p. 3; "New Charter to Be their Slogan," *Oakland Enquirer*, November 1, 1907, p. 6. On the purpose of the Harbor League, see Blutza, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans," 24.

⁵⁰ For details on the collaboration between the Merchants' Exchange and the Chamber of Commerce, see "Form Permanent Body to Secure Consolidation," *Oakland Enquirer*, June 4, 1908, p. 3; "Representatives of All Districts Interested to Discuss Consolidation," *Oakland Enquirer*, April 16, 1908, p. 1; "To Fight for Oakland Alone," *Oakland Enquirer*, November 14, 1907, p. 3. For more on the history of the consolidation movement and its role in the charter campaign, see Blutza, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans," 32-36.

⁵¹ "Will Co-Operate on New Charter," *Oakland Enquirer*, December 20, 1907, p. 7. Blutza, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans" also claims that Mott unofficially worked to convince all groups except the unions not to attend the conference by suggesting that the proposed reforms were "radical and experimental" experiments backed by the Socialists and the Union Labor Party (28).

which he assured residents of Berkeley and Oakland not only created a more accountable system of local government but also a more democratic one.⁵² The *Enquirer* had covered many public speeches made by Jones during the course of his work with a board of freeholders framing a charter in Berkeley, and the ACPC soon invited Jones to deliver a talk to its own Joint Charter Committee.⁵³ At this meeting in February 1908, Jones told his listeners that commission-governed cities in Texas, Iowa, and Kansas were “the only democratic, city governments in the United States.” Though he relied on the popular analogy of an efficient business corporation with the residents of a city as stockholders, he also maintained that the inclusion of the initiative, referendum, and recall made the commission plan analogous to a “town-meeting plan adapted to large populations” and underscored the importance of making “the people feel that they have an active part in the conduct of all public affairs.”⁵⁴

The Committee evidently was impressed by Jones and within weeks published a proposed charter for Oakland, written largely by Jones, calling for commission government with strong provisions for direct democracy. The charter also included very strict regulations

⁵² Jones’s version of the commission plan under consideration in Berkeley included a system of nominations designed to solve one of the problems of at-large elections by enabling all classes of candidates to run. Under Jones’s plan, a candidate only needed to obtain twenty-five signatures to enter the primary election. Those receiving the highest votes in this first election continued were then eligible to run in a second election, limited to two candidates for each position. For more details on this system, see Folder “Talk to Commonwealth Club Re: Berkeley Charter, n.d.,” Box I “Correspondence; correspondence re Kaweah, 1891; drafts and ms. of articles, speeches; clippings etc. re Berkeley campaign, 1909; clippings,” Jones Papers.

⁵³ I. Less, Secretary of the Alameda County Progress Club, to Jones, January 28, 1908, Jones to Less, January 29, 1908, Less to Jones, January 30, 1908, Folder “Oakland: correspondence, drafts, and literature,” Box IV “Materials concerning city charters of California,” Jones Papers; “To Discuss New City Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, February 5, 1908, p. 3; “Prof. W. C. Jones Outlines Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 9, 1907, p. 8; “Invite Prof. Jones to Address the Citizens of Oakland,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 8, 1907, p. 4. Blutz, “Oakland’s Commission and Council-Manager Plans” even claims that the Progressives of Oakland first learned of the commission plan from Jones in the summer of 1907 (15-16).

⁵⁴ Quotations from “What New Charter for the City Should Provide,” *Oakland Enquirer*, February 8, 1908, p. 3. See also “Provisions of a New Charter Discussed,” *Oakland Tribune*, February 7, 1908, p. 2. For a complete version of a very similar speech made to the Commonwealth Club of Berkeley, see Folder “Talk to Commonwealth Club Re: Berkeley Charter, n.d.,” Box I “Correspondence; correspondence re Kaweah, 1891; drafts and ms. of articles, speeches; clippings etc. re Berkeley campaign, 1909; clippings,” Jones Papers.

of franchises, requiring popular referenda for most grants, establishing a twenty-five year maximum for all grants, and stipulating that the city had the right to purchase the plant or property of any public service corporation holding a franchise if it so chose. It specified that all street-car lines be open to use by multiple carriers and that rails be considered part of the streets themselves (and therefore property of the city). The *Enquirer* celebrated this document as the result of collaboration between Jones and those with “practical experience” on the Committee, declaring “Expert’s Plan Is Approved. Proposed City Government Is to Be Founded on Idea of People’s Rule and Control of Corporations Franchises.”⁵⁵

With the unveiling of a proposal so adverse to the interests of public service corporations, opinion on charter reform in Oakland became increasingly polarized. Over the next few months, the Joint Committee and the ACPC, again supported by the *Enquirer*, undertook a massive petition drive calling for the election of a board of freeholders to frame a new charter for Oakland and by May submitted over 4,000 signatures to Mayor Mott. Mott, however, did not immediately ask the council to call for an election, citing the need to work for city-county consolidation first and the added expense of an extra election to taxpayers. Yet in reality, several powerful local interests, including Southern Pacific, Oakland’s public service corporations (several of whom were members of the Chamber of Commerce), and liquor dealers, opposed the proposed charter’s strict regulation of franchises and provisions for the initiative, referendum, and recall. The *Oakland Tribune*, a conservative Republican paper and defender of Southern Pacific, published an editorial agreeing with Mott that consolidation was more important than a new charter and dismissing

⁵⁵ “Committee Frames Model for Municipal Charter. Expert’s Plan Is Approved. Proposed City Government Is to Be Founded on Idea of People’s Rule and Control of Corporations’ Franchises,” *Oakland Enquirer*, February 28, 1908, p. 8; Blutza, “Oakland’s Commission and Council-Manager Plans,” 37-39. These sources contain details of the specifics of the version of the commission plan proposed by the Joint Charter Committee. The charter also provided for an eight-hour day for all city workers.

“the new charter-makers” as “restless experimenters in governmental novelties who desire to impress upon the scheme all the fads and fancies that are the fungi of socialism.”⁵⁶

Mott held on to the petition, and as the weeks passed, the leaders of the ACPC were increasingly angered by the mayor’s inaction. T.F. Marshall, a small businessman who was the unofficial leader of the charter movement, now wrote a public letter implicitly attacking Mott, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Merchants’ Exchange for obstructing a reform supported by the fifty-six groups that now comprised the Joint Charter Committee and over 4,000 residents of the city. Ultimately, Mott decided to send the petition to the council without a recommendation, assuming that a sympathetic council would vote against an election and that the matter would end there.⁵⁷ With the fate of the new charter now before the council, reformers embarked on an effort to regain the support of the Merchants’ Association and to garner enough popular support to secure the necessary votes in the council to call for an election. The ACPC and their allies in the council organized meetings and spoke at improvement clubs and church groups throughout the city, and the *Enquirer* unleashed a renewed editorial campaign on behalf of a new charter.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ “A New Charter,” *Oakland Tribune*, May 30, 1908, p. 6; “Four Thousand Voters Want Freeholders’ Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, May 26, 1908, p. 7; “To Present Petition for Election,” *Oakland Enquirer*, May 1, 1908, p. 9; “Text of Charter Framed to Give Good City Government,” *Oakland Enquirer*, April 27, 1908, p. 12; “Charter Framers to Make Talks,” *Oakland Enquirer*, April 24, 1908, p. 1; “No Politics but a Non-Partisan Effort to Secure a Good City Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, April 10, 1908, p. 1; “The Charter Committee of the Alameda Progress Club Will Meet Tonight,” *Oakland Enquirer*, April 9, 1908, p. 1; “New Charter Project Gaining Many Friends,” *Oakland Enquirer*, March 27, 1908, p. 8; “Progress Club Plans Campaign,” *Oakland Enquirer*, March 13, 1908, p. 12; Blutz, “Oakland’s Commission and Council-Manager Plans,” 25-26, 42-44.

⁵⁷ “The Charter Committee Ask Mayor to Return Petition,” *Oakland Enquirer*, June 26, 1908, p. 24; “Oakland’s New Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, June 8, 1908, p. 3; Blutz, “Oakland’s Commission and Council-Manager Plans,” 44-48.

⁵⁸ “To Hear Talk on New Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 9, 1908, p. 2; “Church Federation to Hear of New Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, June 30, 1908, p. 3; “Church Federation to Hear of Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, June 27, 1908, p. 2; “Charter Convention Is to Hold Meeting,” *Oakland Enquirer*, June 24, 1908, p. 1; “Church Club Studies Municipal Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, June 18, 1908, p. 8; “Present Charter Is Inadequate,” *Oakland Enquirer*, June 15, 1908, p. 2; “Central Oakland Improvement Club Declare for New Charter,” June 4, 1908, p. 5.

As part of its effort to sway the business community to the cause of charter reform, the *Enquirer* printed numerous editorials arguing, to counter Mott, that a new charter would attract neighboring communities and thereby help effort to achieve consolidation.⁵⁹ But many editorials also emphasized the ways in which a commission charter would enhance the ability of the people to control public service corporations, enable the city to develop its own holdings, and thereby contribute to the overall prosperity of the city. One reprinted an article by Horace Deming, then the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the National Municipal League, that appealed to “the aroused and intelligent patriotism of our businessmen” to “attack the problem of city government.” Alluding to corruption in the franchise system, Deming concluded, “Civic pride says we will find some way to get public improvements without condoning or participating in fraud. Good government is a vital, commercial asset and a good democratic government is impossible without civic pride....”⁶⁰ Other editorials explained that a municipality only possessed “those powers expressed in the charter” and that therefore as “the necessities of a modern municipality are extending ... it is most unfortunate for a growing city to find that it is tied up by an obsolete charter.”⁶¹ In

⁵⁹ For editorials arguing that a new charter would encourage surrounding towns to consolidate with Oakland, see “Killing Every Prospect of a Greater Oakland,” *Oakland Enquirer*, August 14, 1908, p. 4; “A New Charter the Best Advertisement for Oakland,” *Oakland Enquirer*, August 12, 1908, p. 4; “Shall Oakland Stand Still,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 28, 1908, p. 4; “Why Berkeley Attracts,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 28, 1908, p. 4; “Work for New Charter and for Consolidation,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 16, 1908, p. 4; “A New Charter and Consolidation,” *Oakland Enquirer*, June 4, 1908, p. 4; “The Next Move for a Greater Oakland,” *Oakland Enquirer*, May 29, 1908, p. 4; “Straight out for Consolidation,” *Oakland Enquirer*, May 22, 1908, p. 4.

The *Enquirer* also suggested that given that Berkeley had recently adopted a commission charter, neighboring communities would be more likely to join Berkeley than Oakland. For coverage of the charter movement in Berkeley, see “To Use New Charter to Advertise City in East,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 17, 1908, p. 1; “New Charter Is Complete,” *Oakland Enquirer*, June 17, 1908, p. 5; “Berkeley Setting an Example to Oakland,” *Oakland Enquirer*, June 11, 1908, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Horace E. Deming, “Civic Pride an Asset,” *Oakland Enquirer*, May 1, 1908, p. 8. Deming chaired and served on several important committees for the National Municipal League. He also signed the original call to form a National Municipal League and was one of the authors of the first Municipal Program. See Frank Mann Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), 28-29, 95, 119, 127, 132, 203, 206.

⁶¹ “Tying the Hands of the People,” *Oakland Enquirer*, June 12, 1908, p. 4.

detailing the specific future needs of the city, from the development of the waterfront to improvements in the transit system, they insisted that “a modern and up-to-date charter” was “the most essential and immediate step for the progress of this city.”⁶² Finally, given its importance to the future prosperity, several editorials suggested that only the “Interests,” “the recognized organs of graft” opposed the new charter and sought “to defeat popular government in Oakland.”⁶³

Though the ACPC, the Joint Charter Committee, and the *Enquirer* were not able to secure a freeholder election that summer, their efforts were not in vain. The Merchants’ Exchange agreed to support the call for an election and even sent representatives to appeal to the council directly, but nevertheless after several heated public meetings, the councilors, siding with the mayor, voted against the election in August of 1908. They claimed that it would be better to wait to revise the charter until after Oakland and surrounding towns voted on whether or consolidate into a single city.⁶⁴ Yet when a vote to annex five surrounding towns finally drew near in the fall of the following year, many residents of these towns resisted joining a city that did not have a “modern” charter. In order to defuse such opposition, Mayor Mott, the council, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Merchants’

⁶² “Some Big Things for Oakland,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 29, 1908, p. 4.

⁶³ “Delay the Policy of Those Who Would Defeat the New Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, August 1, 1908, p. 4; “The ‘Interests’ Oppose a New Charter,” June 1, 1908, p. 4. An editorial in April had emphasized that the Commercial Club of Des Moines backed the new charter movement and that though the new charter hurt “some corporate interests,” the “business interests of that city stood as one man in favor of the new charter.” See “A Wise Policy for a City,” *Oakland Enquirer*, April 11, 1908, p. 4. Another article the previous fall emphasized the fact that the Chamber of Commerce in neighboring Berkeley supported the commission plan. See “Declare for a New Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 8, 1907, p. 10.

⁶⁴ “Shall the Council Deny a Fundamental Right of Self-Government,” *Oakland Enquirer*, August 3, 1908, p. 4; “Merchants’ Exchange ‘Recalls’ Agent Gier,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 29, 1908, p. 6; “Citizens Ask Right to Vote,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 28, 1908, p. 2; “Ask Support for Merchants,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 27, 1908, p. 2; “Merchants’ Exchange to Discuss New City Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 22, 1908, p. 4; “Merchants Favor New City Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 22, 1908, p. 4; “The Commercial Interests of the City Getting in Line for a New Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 15, 1908, p. 4; “Asks Merchants’ Exchange to Discuss New City Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, July 15, 1908, p. 12; “Merchants Are to Send Committee to Council,” *Oakland Tribune*, July 22, 1908, p. 4; Hinkel and McCann, *Oakland, 1852-1938*, 153-54; Blutza, “Oakland’s Commission and Council-Manager Plans,” 48-64.

Exchange all publicly pledged that if annexation passed, they would call for the election of a board of freeholders to frame a new charter by the following summer. The ACPC and Joint Charter Committee at this point declared their support for annexation, celebrating “the forecast of a new and up-to-date charter ... as a presage of unity for the common good will of all.” Less than a week later, annexation carried easily in both Oakland and the five neighboring towns.⁶⁵

Now that a new charter was unavoidable, almost every group in Oakland came out in support of charter reform and at the same time began strategizing how best to secure the election of freeholders supportive of their own interests. Various leaders of the ACPC and the Merchants’ Exchange formed a new organization called the Civic League of Greater Oakland, and the League called all unions, civic groups, fraternal orders, and improvement clubs to send delegates to a Greater Oakland Charter Convention. Mindful of the consequences of labor’s dominance on the Joint Charter Committee, several unions, though officially welcomed, were informally asked not to attend. Whereas in 1908, nineteen of twenty-four organizations sending delegates were unions, now only twelve of eighty-three were unions (see Appendix 6). Most unions refused to attend the Convention in protest and formed their own Union Labor Charter Convention. As the date of the election neared, the Greater Oakland Charter Convention drafted its own commission charter and nominated a slate of fifteen freeholders. The Union Labor Charter Conference drafted a list of specific

⁶⁵ “Annexation Carries,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 17, 1909, pp. 1, 2; “Progress Club out for Bonds,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 12, 1911, p. 11; “City Council Pledges Oakland New Charter,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 2, 1909, pp. 1, 3; “Five Cent Fare to All Annexed Districts,” *Oakland Enquirer*, November 1, 1909, p. 7; “Mayor to Open Annexation Campaign,” *Oakland Enquirer*, October 26, 1909, p. 9; “Annexation Carries by Great Majority,” *Oakland Tribune*, November 17, 1909, p. 3; “Annexation Made Sure by Signing of Unique Pact,” *Oakland Tribune*, November 6, 1909, pp. 1, 2; “Oakland’s Pledge Sincere,” *Oakland Tribune*, November 4, 1909, p. 6; “Council Pledges New Charter,” *Oakland Tribune*, November 2, 1909, p. 9. Blutz, “Oakland’s Commission and Council-Manager Plans,” also claims that charter reformers worked behind the scenes in the five towns to generate opposition to annexation without a promise for a new charter (102-07).

demands for the new charter and decided to back Mayor Mott's slate (which included four labor candidates). With the support of Labor, Mott's ticket won most of the seats, but several candidates sympathetic to the original charter movement were also elected.⁶⁶

The composite charter drafted by this Board was the result of much bargaining, and it demonstrates that reformers were more concerned with restricting the powers of public service corporations and instituting direct democracy than with the commission form itself. The charter it produced was a commission charter in name only. Commission government as adopted in Galveston and Des Moines called for the mayor and council to be replaced by five commissioners attending to their duties full time. Mott's representatives among the freeholders managed to secure a charter that not only retained an elective mayor but also granted him wide appointive powers. The remaining four commissioners, who worked for the city only part time, were in many ways more akin to subordinate department heads than commissioners. Yet the original supporters of the Des Moines Plan of commission government were willing to accept these modifications in exchange for strict regulations of franchises and guarantees of the right to implement municipal ownership in the new charter.

⁶⁶ Five names appeared on both tickets. These five were all elected, as were eight from the Mayor's ticket and two from the opposing ticket. "Total Official Returns Freeholders Election," *Oakland Enquirer*, July 7, 1910, p. 2; "Mott Progressive Ticket Sweeps City in Direct Primary," *Oakland Tribune*, June 15, 1910, p. 2; "Progressive Ticket Assured of Election at Primaries," *Oakland Tribune*, June 13, 1910, p. 7; "Freeholders Nominees Fail to Respond to Invitation," *Oakland Tribune*, June 9, 1910, p. 20; "Freeholders Must Give Pledge," *Oakland Tribune*, June 4, 1910, p. 22; "Mott Administration Freeholder Ticket Is Still Shy Two Names," *Oakland Tribune*, May 29, 1910, p. 15; "Oakland Freeholder Ticket in Field to Frame New Charter for Oakland," *Oakland Tribune*, May 28, 1910, pp. 1,2; "Freeholders' Primary Ticket in Field to Frame New Charter for Oakland," *Oakland Tribune*, May 27, 1910, p. 16; "Charter Meeting Completes Work," *Oakland Tribune*, May 20, 1910, p. 16; "Charter Nominees Declare for Platform," *Oakland Tribune*, May 13, 1910, pp. 1, 5; "Charter Platform is Ready for Freeholders," *Oakland Tribune*, April 30, 1910, p. 11; "Tentative Charter Platform Drawn up by Greater Oakland Convention," *Oakland Tribune*, April 26, 1910, p. 2; "Union Men Talk of New Charter," *Oakland Tribune*, April 14, 1910, p. 2; "Charter Convention Calls out Representative Crowd," *Oakland Tribune*, April 1, 1910, p. 16; "Improvers Assemble in Big Convention to Plan Charter for Greater Oakland," *Oakland Tribune*, March 18, 1910, p. 13; "Clubs Take Preliminary Steps for Holding Charter Convention," *Oakland Tribune*, February 25, 1910, p. 13; "Union Men May Be Freeholders," *Oakland Tribune*, February 25, 1910, p. 13. Blutz, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans," 110-58 provides a much more detailed account of these events.

Although not as far-reaching as the original charter proposed by the Joint Committee in 1908, it specifically provided for the right to own utility plants and the waterfront and allowed the city to purchase franchises at the end of their terms. It required mandatory referendum on all public utility franchises and competitive bidding, and it did not allow grants of longer than thirty-five years. The charter also carefully regulated the operation of railroads within the city. Finally, it included provisions for the initiative, referendum, and recall.⁶⁷

Just as in Fort Worth, as the popular referendum to decide the fate of the charter neared, a public controversy regarding a franchise renewal erupted shortly before the election that generated more support for the charter. When Southern Pacific threatened to appeal the decision of the courts returning ownership of Oakland's waterfront to the city, Mott had negotiated a compromise to prevent a continuation of the legal battle. In September of 1908, Southern Pacific had agreed to renounce all claims to ownership of the waterfront in exchange for a fifty-year franchise for 1,400 feet of frontage. Two years later, this agreement had yet to be formalized. Only when the popular referendum on the new charter was approaching did the railroad apply for a franchise on the waterfront and for an additional franchise for a railway within the city.⁶⁸

In protesting the attempt Southern Pacific to secure these last-minute franchises,

⁶⁷ Blutz, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans" provides a detailed account of the compromises made during the meetings of the Board of Freeholders. Mott's supporters managed to secure some limitations on the use of the initiative, referendum, and recall (158-75). For the specific provisions of the charter, see "Charter of the City of Oakland Prepared by the Board of Freeholders," *Oakland Tribune*, November 2, 1910, pp. 22-26; "Charter of the City of Oakland Prepared by the Board of Freeholders," *Oakland Enquirer*, October 24, 1910, pp. 15-19.

William Carey Jones attended many of the meetings of the freeholders and served as an unofficial advisor. See for example "Freeholders Accomplish Much towards Charter," *Oakland Tribune*, October 1, 1910, p. 4.

⁶⁸ "Franchise Worth \$1,000,000," *Oakland Enquirer*, November 17, 1910, p. 4; "The Steal Goes Through," *Labor World*, November 12, 1910, p. 2; Blutz, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans," 68.

representatives of organized labor and the Socialist Party advertised the new charter as a means to retain greater popular control over public service corporations (see Figure 6.1). The *Labor World*, a socialist newspaper in San Francisco, had printed an editorial the previous spring attacking the prospect of a new charter and non-partisan elections. It accused both “the forces of Big business” including “the railroad companies, the Oakland Transit, the Water company, [and] the gas and power companies” that were “quietly working through the present city administration” and “merchants, landlords and small businessmen” in the Greater Oakland Charter Convention of seeking only to advance their own “business interests.”⁶⁹ Yet as the referendum on the charter neared that fall, the *Labor World* did not print any articles critiquing the charter. It did, however, print the platform of the Socialist Party calling for the initiative, referendum, and recall and “complete self-government and home rule for cities” to secure wide powers of municipal ownership.⁷⁰ Moreover, in its extensive coverage of the vigorous efforts of unions and the Socialists to prevent the granting of Southern Pacific’s franchises, it repeatedly printed their demand that the matter be decided *when* the new charter became law and required popular referendum on all franchises even though the election on the charter had yet to take place.⁷¹

⁶⁹ “Oakland’s New City Charter,” *Labor World*, June 3, 1910, p. 4.

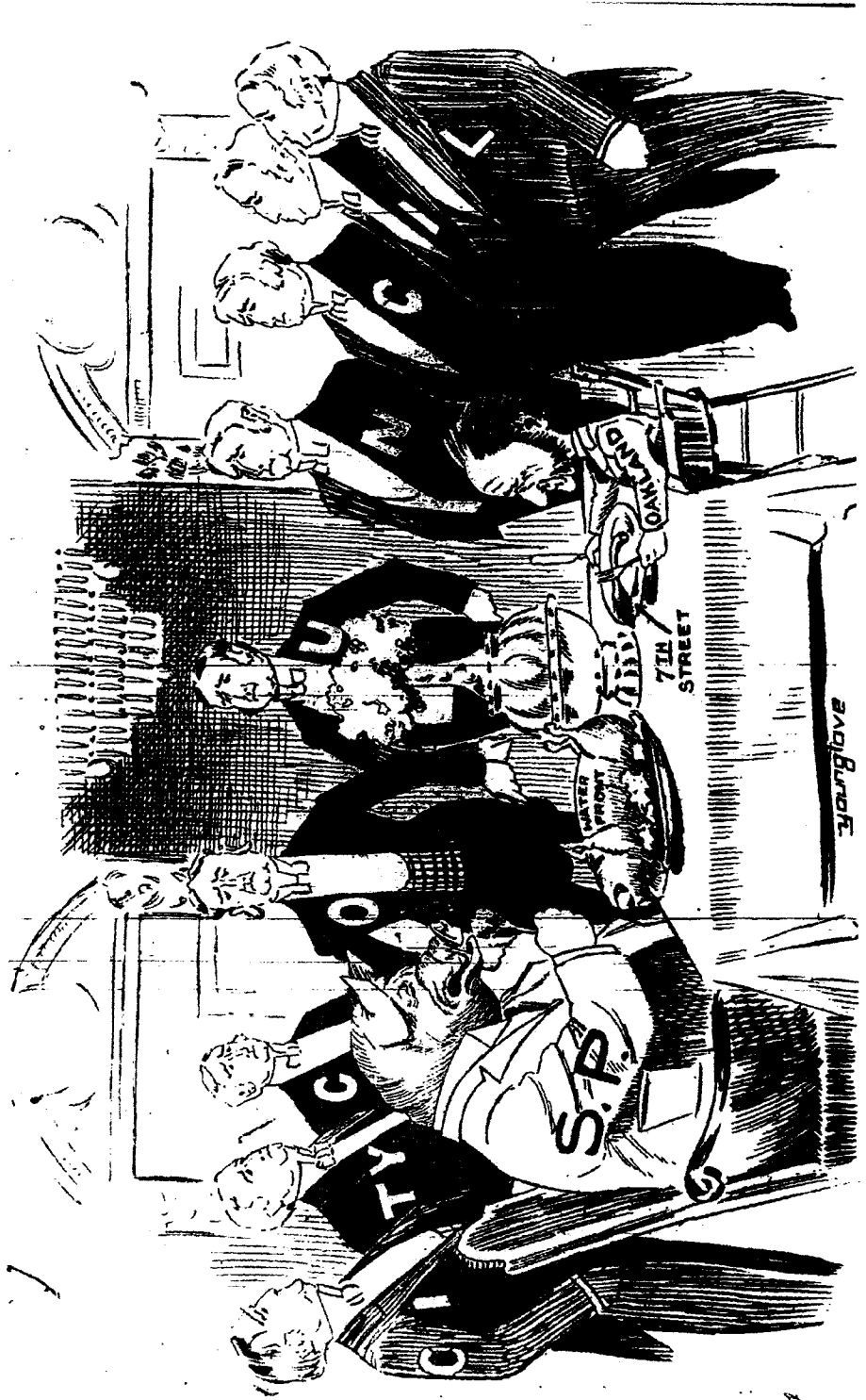
⁷⁰ “Platform of the Socialist Party,” *Labor World*, October 8, 1910, p. 2. For more on support for municipal ownership, see “Working Men, Rally to the Rescue of Oakland,” *Labor World*, November 19, 1910, p. 2.

⁷¹ Harold Everhart, “The Power of Privilege,” *Labor World*, December 3, 1910, p. 3; “Oakland’s Betrayal by the People’s Representatives,” *Labor World*, November 12, 1910, p. 2; “The Steal Goes Through,” *Labor World*, November 12, 1910, p. 2; Harold Everhart, “Oakland’s Golden Opportunity,” *Labor World*, November 5, 1910, p. 11; “Socialist Party Backs Up Everhart,” *Labor World*, October 29, 1910, p. 4.

The assumption that the franchise on the waterfront would be subject to a popular referendum may have been incorrect given the fact that Mott’s supporters at the charter convention managed to enact a provision that would allow Southern Pacific to secure this franchise despite the fact that other franchises would be limited to thirty-five years and 700 feet. For details of this provision, see Blutz, “Oakland’s Commission and Council-Manager Plans,” 137-38, 174.

Blutz, “Oakland’s Commission and Council-Manager Plans” also suggests that the Socialist Party in Oakland supported the new charter but agreed not to publicly support it recognizing that this would hamper its chances for success, but he does not have any sources for this claim (100-01, 112).

Figure 6.1, Untitled Political Cartoon, *Labor World*, November 26, 1910, p. 1.



Though the unions, Socialists, and other reformers were unable to prevent the council from granting the franchise for the waterfront, they did prevent it from granting the railway franchise in December of 1908.⁷² That month, in an election marked by low turnout (roughly forty per cent), three-quarters of those who voted supported the charter. No group had actively campaigned for the charter because almost no group in Oakland opposed it. The charter carried in every ward, widely supported by all segments of the community.⁷³ Even the Chamber of Commerce, long an opponent of a commission charter, now believed that its adoption would benefit the economic prosperity of the community and make it more attractive to outsiders. A pamphlet advertising the city published by the Chamber in 1911 bragged about the adoption of the commission charter and specified the referendum and recall and “the submission of a vote of the people of all proposed franchises to grant the use of streets to a public-service corporation” as some of the most “important things” secured.⁷⁴

Toledo and Brand Whitlock, 1912-1914 Home Rule, Municipal Ownership, and Charter Reform

The greatest difficulty had been found in the city's want of autonomy; the cities of Ohio not only lacked the power to own and operate public utilities, but they even had few rights in contracting with the private companies. The street car companies had always been more ably and assiduously represented in the state legislature than had the people themselves; the people had not had the strength to wrest these powers from the legislature, and indeed, in their patience and toryism, they had not made many efforts to do so. Thus our campaign led us out into the state, and the end, toward which we had to struggle, was the free city; the last of our demands was home rule.

⁷² For more details concerning these two franchises, see Blutza, “Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans,” 187-200.

⁷³ There was an alternative proposition at the same election restricting the sale of alcohol that liquor deals actively opposed. “Adopt Charter by Big Vote,” *Oakland Enquirer*, December 9, 1910, p. 1; “Charter Vote December 8,” *Oakland Enquirer*, December 6, 1910, p. 1; “Charter Is Ratified by Big Vote,” *Oakland Tribune*, December 9, 1910, pp. 1, 2; “Charter Is Endorsed by All Voters,” *Oakland Tribune*, December 8, 1910, pp. 1, 4; Blutza, “Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans,” 182-83.

⁷⁴ This pamphlet can be found in “Alameda County – Oakland – 1910-1919,” County Pamphlet Files, Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library, Oakland, CA.

In the relations between public utility corporations and the municipality, our cities were a whole generation behind the cities of Great Britain, Germany, France and Belgium. Indeed, in relation to all social functions we were no much further advanced than was Rome in the second century.

Brand Whitlock, 1914⁷⁵

Though commission government continued to spread rapidly in the early 1910s, it never became popular in Ohio where efforts to secure a home rule amendment in the new state constitution eclipsed most other municipal reforms.⁷⁶ Yet the popularity of the cause of home rule shared the same basis as the movement for commission government, for reformers presented both to urban residents as means to destroy the corrupt franchise system and establish programs for municipal ownership. In his crusade to make Toledo a “free city,” Mayor Brand Whitlock presented home rule and charter reform in these terms, and many of Toledo’s residents, unsatisfied with local street car services in particular, found his arguments convincing. For years, Toledoans had complained that the Toledo Railway and Light Company provided poor services and charged excessive fares. When the Company bribed members of the council to secure an extension of its franchise in 1904, Mayor Samuel Jones, perhaps the most popular mayor in Toledo’s history, vetoed the ordinance in one of his last acts in office. After his death, supporters decided to continue Jones’s program by forming an Independent Party calling for home rule and greater democracy and denouncing corruption and graft. The Independents’ candidate for mayor, Brand Whitlock, lawyer,

⁷⁵ Brand Whitlock, *Forty Years of It* (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western University, 1970 [1914]), 347.

⁷⁶ Rice, *Progressive Cities*, 120. Only two cities in Ohio adopted commission charters: Lakewood in 1913 and Middletown in 1914.

writer, and close friend of Jones, was elected by a landslide in 1905.⁷⁷ As Mayor, Whitlock continued Jones's efforts to replace Toledo Rail-Light with a municipally-owned street car system, and to do so he first sought to achieve home rule.

During the Ohio Constitutional Convention of 1912, leading municipal Progressives worked to secure a home rule amendment that would enable Ohio's cities to undertake new initiatives as they saw fit, thereby redefining the purpose and scope of local government. Opponents of home rule feared that granting cities autonomy would make it impossible for the state to limit the sale of alcoholic beverages. To avoid entangling the cause of municipal self-government with the highly emotional "liquor question," supporters carefully crafted their amendment in such a way that defined home rule as granting cities the right to adopt charters and enact ordinances that did not conflict with the general laws of the state, specifically mentioning the right to own and operate public utilities.⁷⁸ Though municipal ownership was clearly what most Toledoans associated with an expanded local government under a system of home rule, the *Toledo Blade* portrayed the amendment as making possible a new positive role for the municipality. One editorial maintained that each city needed to "fit its government to its own peculiar needs" by adopting the "changes, betterments and experiments" that it deemed "worthy."⁷⁹ Another contrasted the vision of government held by the delegates of the constitutional convention of 1850, who had drafted the current constitution, with that of the delegates of 1912. The former were "more inclined to say 'you

⁷⁷ Arthur Edward DeMatteo, "Urban Reform, Politics, and the Working Class: Detroit, Toledo, and Cleveland, 1890-1922," (PhD. Diss. University of Akron, Ohio, 1999), 126-31; Wendell F. Johnson, *Toledo's Non-Partisan Movement* (Toledo, OH: Press of H. J. Chittenden Co., 1922), 17-29.

⁷⁸ "Constitutional Amendments," *Toledo Blade*, August 26, 1912, p. 6. "The Fight on Home Rule is Started," *Toledo Blade*, April 30, 1912, p. 2. Ohio's cities were currently governed by a universal municipal code and were only allowed to act on expressly granted powers. See chapter four and "Independence of Ohio's Cities Is Up to Conders," *Toledo News Bee*, April 25, 1912, p. 4; "Near Home Rule," *Toledo News Bee*, February 1, 1912, p. 6.

⁷⁹ "Home-rule in Sight," *Toledo Blade*, May 2, 1912, p. 6.

may not' than to say 'you may.'" They "erected barriers and imposed restrictions." The latter, in contrast, "tore down barriers and granted permissions." The former believed in "limiting rights," the latter in "extending rights." The proposed home rule amendment drafted by the delegates of 1912 would "empower the cities to do many things that are now expressly forbidden" and thereby "set free" the cities.⁸⁰

Progressives at the convention considered this amendment one of the most important, a vital component of their larger program for Ohio.⁸¹ Utilizing the rhetoric and style of the day, they portrayed home rule as a struggle by the "people" (represented by various reform organizations) to end the unjust "privileges" secured by "the interests" (public service corporations and their paid lobbyists) in the form of monopoly franchises for the provision of utilities and transportation in Ohio's cities (see Figure 6.2) In the summer of 1911, prominent reformers in the state had formed the Progressive Constitutional League to secure the adoption of the initiative, referendum, and home rule along with other Progressive measures in the new constitution. Toledo's Mayor Brand Whitlock was elected president of the organization, and he soon took an active role in the formation of the Ohio Municipal

⁸⁰ "A Charter for Freemen," *Toledo Blade*, August 31, 1912, p. 6. See also "Remember Home Rule," *Toledo Blade*, August 13, 1912, p. 6.

⁸¹ At the start of the convention, the press listed the major issues to be addressed as liquor licensing, the initiative and referendum, taxation reform, woman suffrage, and home rule for cities. See "Constitutional Convention Is On," *Toledo Union Leader*, January 12, 1912, p. 1; "The Constitutional Convention about to Begin," *Toledo Blade*, January 8, 1912, p. 8. Various supporters of the constitutional amendments described the campaign to secure their adoption in these terms. In one article, the Progressive *Toledo News Bee* claimed, "The progressive fight will be waged all along the line against Special Privilege, which under the leadership of the Ohio State Board of Commerce and the Ohio manufacturers Association, has been flooding the state with literature urging voters to vote against the amendments." See "Open Battle for Con Con Amendments," *Toledo News Bee*, August 13, 1912, p. 1. The *Toledo Union Leader* also reported that the Ohio Federation of Labor supported the proposed amendments to the constitution, including home rule, and urged local Central Labor Unions to campaign for them to counter "big business and its allies." "Ohio Adopts New Constitution," *Toledo Union Leader*, September 6, 1912, p. 1; "Discuss New Constitution," *Toledo Union Leader*, May 24, 1912, p. 1; "Constitution Makers Finish Labors," *Toledo Union Leader*, May 17, 1912, p. 1.

Figure 6.2 – “Who’s Afraid?” *Toledo News Bee*, August 24, 1912, p. 1.



League, which took the lead in drafting the home rule amendment in early 1912.⁸² To promote the amendment, the League, whose members included both individuals and local organizations, planned to build on the strength of reform groups in cities across Ohio by appealing “to every civic organization and city and village officials everywhere in the state to assist in the fight.”⁸³ Partly as a result, despite the opposition of representatives of public service corporations, the convention adopted the home rule amendment, including a provision specifically allowing cities to own and operate public utilities, by a strong majority.⁸⁴

Working to garner public support for the home rule amendment before the upcoming popular referendum, Whitlock explained to Toledoans why he believed that home rule and municipal government bore a larger importance both to the cause of progressivism and to democracy itself. Whitlock maintained that “no reform proposed by [the constitutional convention] is of more importance than of home rule for cities” which would make “democratic government” a reality and, according to Whitlock, “democracy must be worked out in the cities first.” Under the present system cities did not enjoy “self-government.” As a result, “the street car company and the gas company, the electric lighting company, the

⁸² Jack Tager, *The Intellectual as Urban Reformer: Brand Whitlock and the Progressive Movement* (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1968), 137-38. The Ohio Municipal League grew out of a conference referred to at various times as the “conference of Ohio mayors and municipal officers,” the “conference of Ohio municipalities,” and the “municipal conference of Ohio cities.” The Municipal Association of Cleveland was instrumental in the organization of this conference and took the lead in drafting the home rule amendment. See Hoyt Landon Warner, *Progressivism in Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press for the Ohio Historical Society, 1964), 330-32; “Fight on Home Rule Is Started,” *Toledo Blade*, April 30, 1912, p. 2; “For City Home Rule – Ohio Municipality Conference Adopts Resolutions,” *Toledo Blade*, January 26, 1912, p. 4; “Mayors Ask Home Rule,” *Toledo Blade*, January 25, 1912, p. 4; “Toledo Secures Important Concession for Home Rule City,” *Toledo News Bee*, January 26, 1912, p. 7; “Whitlock and Schreiber Will Champion Cities,” *Toledo News Bee*, January 15, 1912, p. 2.

⁸³ “Toledo Secures Important Concession for Home Rule City,” *Toledo News Bee*, January 26, 1912, p. 7.

⁸⁴ Warner, 332. “Ohio Cities to Lead the Nation by Home Rule, Says Mayor,” *Toledo Blade*, May 3, 1912, pp. 1, 11; “Free Cities from Grasp of Privilege,” *Toledo News Bee*, May 1, 1912, p. 1. Warner explains that the vote of 104 to 6 “did not indicate the extent of the opposition.” Before the actual vote was taken, an informal poll made clear that the amendment would definitely pass, and as a result many “doubtful members switched to the majority side.”

railroad” – “the Interests, Privilege” – had “found a way of ruling cities in its own interests” and in so doing “took for its own selfish use and aggrandizement, the things which belong to the people of the city.”⁸⁵ Whitlock also argued that “[t]he struggle for [the home rule] amendment ... is the struggle that Roosevelt and Bryan and Wilson and La Follette and progressives everywhere have been making.” The fate of the amendment “concerns the whole state, for if the cities are to be turned over for another quarter of a century to the mercies of corporations unrestrained in their greed, it will only strengthen their power to do the same thing elsewhere, and it will hurt not the cities alone, it will hurt, if it does not destroy, the entire state.”⁸⁶ Whitlock also argued that the fate of home rule and other constitutional amendments was vital “to determine[ing] whether money and privilege or men and women shall control our government. These amendments stand for greater freedom and for more abundant opportunity to know that this is government in which the common man may feel that he has a part and lot.”⁸⁷ Swayed by such rhetoric, the voters of Toledo adopted the home rule amendment and indeed all of the progressive amendments in the referenda.⁸⁸

After the passage of the amendment in the statewide election, Whitlock turned his attention to securing a new charter for Toledo, and in so doing further solidified in the minds of many Toledoans the connection among home rule, charter reform, and public ownership. Within days, Whitlock declared his intention to recommend that that council move for a new

⁸⁵ “Ohio Cities to Lead Nation by Home Rule, Says Mayor,” *Toledo Blade*, May 3, 1912, pp. 1, 11.

⁸⁶ Brand Whitlock, “With Home Rule Cities Will Stop Corporate Greed,” *Toledo News Bee*, August 26, 1912, p. 1.

⁸⁷ “No Vote Since Lincoln’s Day So Important,” *Toledo Blade*, August 20, 1912, pp. 1, 5.

⁸⁸ “Ohio Declares for Progress. Toledo Leads the Progressives of Ohio,” *Toledo News Bee*, September 4, 1912, pp. 1, 2; “Toledo Unique Among Ohio Cities” *Toledo Blade*, September 4, 1912, p. 1; “Toledo Vote on Big Proposals,” *Toledo Blade*, September 4, 1912, p. 1. The vote for the home rule amendment in Toledo was 13,749 to 2,501. While Toledo voted for all of the amendments, the voters of Ohio did not adopted eight of the 42 amendments, including woman suffrage, the abolition of capital punishment, and the elimination of racial distinctions in the constitution. See Hoyt Landon Warner, *Progressivism in Ohio, 1897-1917* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press for the Ohio Historical Society, 1964), 342.

charter. Like many municipal reformers and academics of the day, Whitlock greatly admired European systems of local government. In order to assist Toledo in drafting the best possible charter, one that would serve as “a model to other cities,” Whitlock declared that he would go to Europe and undertake a “systematic inquiry” of municipal government abroad.⁸⁹ He spent October and November of 1912 visiting cities in Ireland, Scotland, England, France, Belgium, and Germany and writing a series of articles to be published in a syndicate of newspapers that included the *Toledo News Bee*.⁹⁰ Though Whitlock originally declared that his research would focus on structures of government to aid in the forming of charters, the “letters” published in the *News Bee* highlighted the new functions being undertaken by cities abroad under publicly-owned programs. “Municipal Ownership,” one title declared, was not a “Subject of Discussion” in European cities, but “Part Of the Established Order.”⁹¹ Whitlock commended municipal leaders in Europe for operating successful and profitable public programs and celebrated the expansive spirit of cities such as Glasgow, which extended municipal ownership beyond utilities to include public street railways, telephones, parks, art galleries, museums, and libraries.⁹² Emphasizing the importance of local autonomy

⁸⁹ “Mayor Will Seek Facts for Charter,” *Toledo News Bee*, September 6, 1912, p. 1; “Mayor Plans New Charter Under Code,” *Toledo News Bee*, September 5, 1912, pp 1, 15; “Mayor Plans for New City Charter,” *Toledo Blade*, September 6, 1912, p. 1. See also Brand Whitlock to Marshall Sheppey, September 20, 1912, *The Letters and Journal of Brand Whitlock* ed. Allan Nevins (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1936), 152-54.

⁹⁰ Whitlock also undertook this European tour for political reasons. Having declared that he would not run for mayor again after his present term expired at the end of the year, the trip provided a graceful way to end his term and to avoid the fall election. Though Whitlock was an Independent in Toledo politics, he had declared his support for Woodrow Wilson’s presidential candidacy in the national election but wished to avoid campaigning for him. See Robert M. Crunden, *A Hero In Spite of Himself: Brand Whitlock in Art, Politics, & War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 217-18, 225-27; Tager, *The Intellectual as Urban Reformer*, 142-43.

⁹¹ “Cities Abroad Are Keen for Owning Public Utilities. Municipal Ownership Is Not Subject of Discussion But Part Of the Established Order,” *Toledo News Bee*, November 27, 1912, p. 1.

⁹² Brand Whitlock, “Liverpool Finds the Street Car Business Loaded with Profit,” *Toledo News Bee*, December 10, 1912, pp. 1, 6; Brand Whitlock, “Glasgow Has Snug Surplus From Its Own Plant for City Lighting,” *Toledo News Bee*, December 5, 1912, p. 1; Brand Whitlock, “City Ownership of Telephones Is Big Thing for Glasgow,” *Toledo News Bee*, December 4, 1912, p. 1; Brand Whitlock, “Mayor Tells How Glasgow Keeps Lean and Makes Money By It,” *Toledo News Bee*, December 3, 1912, p. 1; Brand Whitlock, “City Ownership

for expanding the functions of government, Whitlock wrote that German cities, “practically supreme in all that concerns their own affairs,” had extended “municipal activity” to a level “wholly unknown to us.”⁹³ Upon his homecoming in December, Whitlock then returned his attention to the matter helping cities to adopt new charters under the home rule amendment, working with the Ohio Municipal League to draft several model charters for cities to consider.⁹⁴

In the meantime, in Toledo, despite the efforts of a few zealous reformers, there was little evidence of widespread interest in reforming the city’s charters. The home rule amendment allowed cities to call for the election of a commission, either by a two-thirds vote of the council or by a petition signed by ten percent of the voters, to draft a new charter that would then be submitted to a popular vote.⁹⁵ When the council hesitated to call for a special election the following spring for a charter commission, citing the expense and suggesting that they instead wait until the general election in November of 1913, local members of the Ohio League of Municipalities and the German American Alliance, supported by the *News Bee*,

of Street Car Line Has Given Glasgow Penny Fares, Good Service, and Increased Pay for Men,” *Toledo News Bee*, November 28, 1912, pp. 1, 7.

⁹³ Brand Whitlock, “Germans Show Us How City Should Be Run. Model Municipal Government in the Rhine District,” *Toledo News Bee*, December 23, 1912, pp. 1, 6. Other articles in this series include Brand Whitlock, “Difficulties Mould Fine Civic Spirit,” *Toledo News Bee*, December 24, 1912, p. 1; Brand Whitlock, “Brussels’ Motto: ‘City is the Citadel of Our Liberties,’” *Toledo News Bee*, December 21, 1912, pp. 1, 11; Brand Whitlock, “Paris Offers Inspiration to City Builders,” *Toledo News Bee*, December 17, 1912, pp. 1, 4; Brand Whitlock, “Vast London Shameless In Her Failures,” *Toledo News Bee*, December 13, 1912, pp. 1, 14; Brand Whitlock, “Dublin’s Behind Other Cities Because She Is Not Free,” *Toledo News Bee*, December 11, 1912, pp. 1, 5; Brand Whitlock, “City Ownership Should Succeed in this Country,” *Toledo News Bee*, November 26, 1912, pp. 1, 2; Brand Whitlock, “Mayor’s First Letter. Brand Whitlock, In Opening Article On Cities of Europe, Gives First Impressions of Glasgow,” *Toledo News Bee*, November 25, 1912, p. 1.

⁹⁴ “Officials to Discuss the City,” *Toledo Blade*, January 22, 1913, p. 1; “Mayor Names Committee to Municipal League Meet,” *Toledo Blade*, January 13, 1913, p. 1; “City Delegates Are Opposed to Model Charters,” *Toledo News Bee*, January 22, 1913, p. 1; “City League to Talk Charter at Coming Meeting,” December 28, 1912, p. 1; “Mayor Starts on the Outlines of a New City Charter,” *Toledo News Bee*, December 9, 1912, p. 1. The Ohio Municipal League proposed to draft a model version of the federal plan, the commission plan, and the city manager plan for the state legislature to adopt as optional charters for cities to adopt.

⁹⁵ “Mayor Plans for New City Charter,” *Toledo Blade*, September 6, 1912, p. 1.

began circulating their own petition.⁹⁶ Though these reformers claimed to have collected several thousand signatures, when the council called a “mass meeting” to discuss the matter, only twenty to thirty Toledoans attended. At the meeting, a delegation from the local branch of the Socialist Party declared its opposition to charter reform.⁹⁷ The *Toledo Union Leader* declared that it did not see the need for a new charter since Toledo already had home rule and the right to adopt municipal ownership if the voters so chose.⁹⁸

While the council was still considering the matter of calling for a special election, the relationship of charter revision to municipal ownership and home rule was determined by the state courts.⁹⁹ As cities throughout Ohio began considering possible extensions of municipal functions under home rule, a difference of opinion emerged as to whether or not the amendment was self-executing. Some argued that before municipalities could acquire the powers of home rule, they had to adopt new charters specifying those powers, while others maintained that Ohio’s cities already possessed home rule.¹⁰⁰ To resolve the matter, Toledo’s City Solicitor Cornell Schreiber orchestrated a test case by asking the council to fund “a municipal moving picture house,” which it would only have the right to do if home

⁹⁶ “Delay Charter Petitions A Week,” *Toledo Blade*, January 16, 1913, p. 1; “Charter Petition Out on Thursday,” *Toledo Blade*, January 15, 1913, p. 1; “Petition for Charter,” *Toledo Blade*, January 11, 1913, p. 1; “Toledo Prepares for New Charter,” *Toledo Blade*, November 19, 1912, p. 13; “Vote for Charter Does Not Commit City to Any form,” *Toledo News Bee*, January 18, 1913, p. 1; “Prepare Prod For Council,” *Toledo News Bee*, January 15, 1913, p. 1; “Will People Have to Compel Council to Respect their Wishes?” *Toledo News Bee*, January 13, 1913, p. 1; “Prepare to Prod Councilmen Who Delay Action on Charter,” *Toledo News Bee*, January 10, 1913, pp. 1, 5; “Council Starts Move for a New City Charter,” *Toledo News Bee*, November 19, 1912, p. 4.

⁹⁷ “Final Action on Charter Commission Due Monday,” *Toledo Bee*, February 3, 1913, p. 1; “20 Citizens at Public Meeting,” *Toledo Blade*, January 17, 1913, p. 19; “Let People Talk about a Charter,” *Toledo Blade*, January 14, 1913, p. 11; “Few Come Out to ‘Mass Meeting’ Council Called,” *Toledo News Bee*, January 17, 1913, p. 15; “Council Asks the Public Again to Discuss Charter,” *Toledo News Bee*, January 14, 1913, pp. 1, 7.

⁹⁸ “Why a New Charter?” *Toledo Union Leader*, February 7, 1913, p. 4.

⁹⁹ The council had in fact called for a special election on April 26 but was considering changing the date because Jewish residents objected to the fact that the 26th fell on a Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. See “Vote on new Charter for Toledo Is Held Up Pending Test Suit Trial,” *Toledo News Bee*, February 11, 1913, p. 7; “Council Fixes Date When Citizens Can Vote on Charter Proposition,” *Toledo News Bee*, February 4, 1913, p. 1; “Charter Election Set for April 26,” *Toledo Blade*, February 4, 1913, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ “Not Easy to Find Exact Duties of Charter Makers,” *Toledo News Bee*, February 6, 1913, p. 1.

rule were already in effect. Continuing to agitate for a new charter, the *News Bee* explained that if the courts ruled that “the city does not now have those home rule powers, then if the people voted against a new charter they would be voting against home rule for Toledo.”¹⁰¹

When the state Supreme Court ruled against Schreiber in May of 1913, claiming that home rule was not automatic and that cities could only do only what their current charters expressly permitted, the tide turned in Toledo in favor of charter reform. Toledoans were outraged by the ruling, criticizing the courts for not adhering to the clear intent of the voters to enact home rule immediately. The *Union Leader* railed against the courts for attempting to stay “the Rising Floodtide of True Democracy,” portraying the ruling as emblematic of “the old struggle of the so-called vested rights against the people’s rule” and urging its readers to continue the “fight for the public ownership of things used in common.”¹⁰² Whitlock advised that the best course of action was to begin efforts to secure a new charter immediately, and the council, in a unanimous vote, called for the election of a charter commission in November.¹⁰³

The commission elected in November of 1913 considered both commission and federal plans of local government but ultimately chose to present the latter to the voters of

¹⁰¹ “Toledo Test Suit Gets New Ruling from High Court,” *Toledo News Bee*, February 24, 1913, p. 24; “Test Home Rule Power. Toledo Solicitor Raises Vital Point,” *Toledo News Bee*, February 10, 1913, p. 1.

¹⁰² “Ohio Cities Are Denied Home Rule,” *Toledo Union Leader*, May 9, 1913, p. 1; “Is Home Rule Amendment a Gold Brick,” *Toledo Blade*, May 9, 1913, p. 1, 2; “‘Home Rule’ Doesn’t Mean Anything Now According to City Solicitor Schreiber,” *Toledo Blade*, May 7, 1913, p. 1; “Court Holds Home Rule in Not in Force,” *Toledo Blade*, May 6, 1913, pp. 1, 2; “Home Rule Section Made Worthless by Holding in the Theatres Case,” *Toledo News Bee*, May 6, 1913, p. 1.

¹⁰³ “Charter Vote on November 4,” *Toledo Blade*, July 15, 1913, p. 11; “Charter Vote to Be Taken Nov, 5,” *Toledo Blade*, June 17, 1913, p. 1; “Mayor Urges Charter Election,” *Toledo Blade*, May 13, 1913, p. 19; “Let this City Make Charter, Mayor Writes,” *Toledo Blade*, May 8, 1913, p. 1; “Council Orders Charter Election for November 4,” *Toledo News Bee*, July 15, 1913, p. 9; “New Charter Vote Fixed for Next Election,” *Toledo News Bee*, June 17, 1913, p. 1; “Mayor Asks An Election on a Charter,” *Toledo News Bee*, May 13, 1913, p. 1; “Make Charter, Is Advice of Chief of City,” *Toledo Bee*, May 9, 1913, p. 1.

Toledo the following fall.¹⁰⁴ Though there were likely many factors influencing this decision, commission government was not, as in so many other cities, considered by any group necessary to achieving the larger ends of home rule and reform of the franchise system. The local papers and the charter commission both discussed the commission plan at length but in the end seemed wary of adopting such a new and experimental form of government, preferring the more established federal plan to what Whitlock now called “the new, long prophesied panacea.”¹⁰⁵ The charter proposed by the commission, however, established home rule (thereby making municipal ownership possible) and embraced many other popular reforms of the day. It included the initiative, referendum, and recall, specifically calling for referenda regarding franchise grants and/or plans for municipal ownership. While it retained the traditional ward-based system of selecting councilors, it instituted non-partisan nominations and elections and a system of preferential voting. Attempting to reform the administrative side of local government and make it more efficient and accountable, it created a City Planning Commission to plan for and coordinate the future physical development of the city, a Commission on Publicity and Efficiency to investigate departments and publish a *Toledo City Journal*, and a civil service commission to ensure the operation of merit system. It empowered the mayor, as the head of the administration, to appoint and remove the directors of all departments. These departments extended local

¹⁰⁴ For a complete account of the debates of the charter commission, see *Journal of the Charter Commission of the City of Toledo* 1 (November 19, 1913) – 29 (August 28, 1914). This journal can be found at the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, Toledo, OH.

¹⁰⁵ “Mayor Believes the People Have Asked for a New Charter,” *Toledo News Bee*, January 9, 1913, p. 1; “A Toledo Charter,” *Toledo Blade*, September 7, 1912, p. 4.

The *News Bee* published a series of articles by Milton W. Bronner on the operation of the commission plan in cities across the country January 1913. Though many commented favorably on the plan, several articles at the end were more critical. See, for example, Milton W. Bronner, “Defects Are Found in Commission Government,” *Toledo News Bee*, January 17, 1913, p. 1.

The commission plan was not popular among cities in Ohio after the adoption of the home rule amendment. Only two adopted it, and in three other cities voters rejected it at the polls. See Warner, *Progressivism in Ohio*, 453.

government into new areas, beyond the traditional functions of maintenance of basic infrastructures and police and fire protection. The new Department of Public Welfare included divisions of Health; Labor; Parks and Boulevards; Charities and Corrections; and Playgrounds, Recreations, and Amusements.¹⁰⁶

The inclusion of the regulation of “recreations” and “amusements” as a component of the expansion of municipal functions grew out of a larger debate in the city on the appropriate role of local government in dealing with vice. As mayor, Brand Whitlock greatly angered local Protestant church leaders with what they perceived to be his lenient and permissive attitude towards gambling, drunkenness, and prostitution. Whitlock believed that it was the duty of government to eradicate the causes of crime rather than punish individual offenders. In *On the Enforcement of Law in Cities* (1910) he argued that the best way to prevent “the existence of vice and crime” was to enact reforms that would put an end to a system that granted “monopolies and privileges to a few ... by denying common rights to the many,” thereby reducing “them to a condition of involuntary poverty.” The first step toward achieving this was to end the franchise system and allow individual cities to own and operate public street cars and utilities. Yet Whitlock had grander visions for local government,

¹⁰⁶ “The Charter of the City of Toledo as Amended,” *The Toledo Code of 1919* (Toledo: No Publisher, 1920), 1-69; *Proposed Charter for the City of Toledo, Prepared for the City of Toledo by the Charter Commission, Election Day – Tuesday, Nov. 3, 1914* (Toledo: Toledo Legal News Company, [1914]). This charter is bound and shelved with the Journal of the Charter Commission of the City of Toledo at the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library in Toledo, OH. It also contains proposals rejected by the commission. The charter was also published in the local papers and described in detail in numerous articles. See, for examples, Everett Snyder, “The New Charter,” *Toledo Blade*, October 21, 1914, p. 10; “Commissioners Explain Charter,” *Toledo Blade*, September 21, 1914, p. 5; “Complete Draft of Proposed New Toledo Charter,” *Toledo Blade*, July 10, 1914, pp. 10-12; “Charter Men Declare Code Progressive,” *Toledo News Bee*, July 10, 1914, pp. 1, 2.

hoping to use taxation to eliminate extreme wealth and poverty, to fund public educational and cultural programs, and, in so doing, to create a more democratic society.¹⁰⁷

Whitlock's views made him extremely popular with immigrants and members of the working-class, and their support was crucial in his electoral victories from 1905 to 1912 as an Independent candidate for mayor.¹⁰⁸ In 1913, however, Whitlock declared that he would not seek reelection and the Independent Party splintered, running two mayoral candidates. Playing upon resentment of Whitlock's reputation for moral permissiveness, the Guardians of Liberty and other anti-Catholic organizations backed the Republican candidate. The Republicans swept into office, winning every seat on the council and all other city offices. The mayoral contest completely overshadowed the election of charter commissioners.¹⁰⁹ The Republicans won twelve of the fifteen seats on the commission, but Whitlock and four other members of the Independent Ticket gained the remaining seats (one name appeared on both tickets).¹¹⁰ Whitlock, however, soon left Toledo and the charter commission behind when Woodrow Wilson appointed him ambassador to Belgium in December.¹¹¹

In his absence, though the commission adopted many reforms of which he would likely have approved, it also adopted several that conflicted with his philosophy of law enforcement and the appropriate role of city government. Leaders of local Protestant organizations attended meetings of the charter commission, asking that the regulation of local

¹⁰⁷ David D. Anderson, *Brand Whitlock* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1968), 46-48, 75; Tager, *The Intellectual as Urban Reformer*, 129-31; Brand Whitlock, *On the Enforcement of Law in Cities* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 913 [1910]), 3-4.

¹⁰⁸ Dematteo, "Urban Reform, Politics, and the Working Class," 130-53.

¹⁰⁹ Warner, *Progressivism in Ohio*, 447-48; Randolph C. Downes, "The Toledo Political-Religious Municipal Election of 1913," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* XXX (Summer 1958): 137-63; Johnson, *Toledo's Non-Partisan Movement*, 30-31.

¹¹⁰ "Whitlock is Among 15 Charter Commissioners," *Toledo Blade*, November 5, 1913, p. 13; "It Looks Like These for the Charter Board," *Toledo News Bee*, November 5, 1913, p. 2. Isaac Kinsey was a candidate on both the Republicans and the Independent tickets, and the Republicans won ten seats in addition to Kinsey's.

¹¹¹ "Mayor to Leave City on Last Day of His Term," *Toledo News Bee*, December 31, 1913, p. 2; "Whitlock Named Minister to Belgium," *Toledo Blade*, December 2, 1913, p. 1.

dance halls and “[p]rovision for municipal censorship of all public entertainments and amusements” be included in the new charter.¹¹² The commission complied, and as commissioner J. Kent Hamilton, attorney and former mayor, explained to readers of the *News Bee*, under the proposed charter, “Authority is given to council to regulate recreations, amusements and entertainments, and to define and suppress all things detrimental to the health, morals, safety, comfort and welfare of the people.”¹¹³ The charter also empowered the commissioner of playgrounds, recreations, and amusements to supervise and control both public and private social venues in the city.¹¹⁴

Even though they included such proposals that many working-class voters were likely to oppose, questioning the right of the municipality to interfere in their private lives, the charter commission nevertheless courted the support of organized labor.¹¹⁵ Although none of the labor candidates had been elected to the commission, an official delegation from the Central Labor Union (CLU) regularly attended the meetings to voice its concerns and was, for the most part, cordially received.¹¹⁶ When the commission finished its report, it asked for the CLU’s support in campaigning for the charter before the popular election.¹¹⁷ While the CLU’s membership ultimately voted to oppose the charter as an organization, this decision was hardly a foregone conclusion given that it contained many the reforms supported by

¹¹² “City May Censor All Amusements,” *Toledo Blade*, April 24, 1914, p. 8; “Dance Hall Regulation Asked in New Charter,” *Toledo Blade*, March 28, 1914, p. 11.

¹¹³ J. Kent Hamilton, “New Charter Is a Big, Broad Measure,” *Toledo News Bee*, October 20, 1914, p. 6; “Two Candidate Lists for Charter Commissioners,” *Toledo Blade*, October 8, 1913, p. 7.

¹¹⁴ “The Charter of the City of Toledo as Amended,” *The Toledo Code of 1919*, 37.

¹¹⁵ According to the *News Bee* at a meeting of the Central Labor Union, one speaker “attacked the provisions for supervision of public dance halls and swimming pools. He said he was raised over a saloon and that he and his children were as good as anybody’s.” See “C.L.U. Decides to Oppose New Code for City,” *Toledo News Bee*, October 23, 1914, p. 12.

¹¹⁶ “Asks Recognition in New Charter Draft,” *Toledo Blade*, December 12, 1913, p. 16; “Plan to Protect Labor in New Charter Draft,” *Toledo Blade*, November 19, 1913, p. 2. At one meeting the *Toledo Blade* reported that a member of the charter commission publicly criticized a representative of the Central Labor Union speaking for too long at a meeting regarding the question of amusements. See “L.W. Morris Off Charter Board,” *Toledo Blade*, April 10, 1914, p. 7.

¹¹⁷ “Charter Board Is to Campaign,” *Toledo News Bee*, September 24, 1914, p. 9.

labor. Municipal ownership was listed in the CLU's Constitution and By-Laws as the second plank of its platform.¹¹⁸ Unions in Toledo supported home rule, the federal plan, ward-based council elections, and the initiative, referendum, and recall. Yet they also officially opposed non-partisan elections, and many leaders voiced their concerns about the concentration of appointive power in the office of the mayor and a clause that allowed the council to amend or repeal ordinances passed by popular referenda.¹¹⁹ In encouraging union members to vote against the charter, many emphasized the fact that it had been written by business and professional men and that no union representative served on the Commission.¹²⁰ A member of the Socialist Party disparagingly referred to the Commissioners as "a bunch of corporation lawyers, their doctors and a federal judge" at a meeting of the CLU.¹²¹ Others, however,

¹¹⁸ "The Question of Municipal Ownership," *Toledo Union Leader*, April 6, 1914, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ "Charter Advocates Believe Unionists' Views Are Unchanged," *Toledo News Bee*, October 31, 1914, p. 2; "C.L.U. Decides to Oppose New Code for City," *Toledo News Bee*, October 23, 1914, p. 12; "Unions Indorse Municipal Cars," *Toledo News Bee*, April 10, 1914, p. 1; "Charter Framers Favor Election of a Council by Wards," *Toledo News Bee*, February 20, 1914, pp. 1, 2; "Why Toledo Trades Unionists Opposed Proposed Charter," *Toledo Union Leader*, October 30, 1914, pp. 1, 5; "Organized Labor Opposes The Proposed Charter," *Toledo Union Leader*, October 30, 1914, p. 2; "A Bosses' Charter," *Toledo Union Leader*, October 30, 1914, p. 8; "The City Charter – A Joker," *Toledo Union Leader*, October 16, 1914, p. 4; "Labor and the New Charter," *Toledo Blade*, October 26, 1914, p. 6; "Adoption of Charter to Be Delayed Week; The Vote Unchanged," *Toledo Blade*, July 14, 1914, pp. 1, 2.

The decision to allow the mayor to appoint all department heads also caused a division within the Charter Commission itself. Several members wanted department heads to be elected, and some seemed to feel that making these positions elective was a form of commission government even though there would still have been a council and a mayor elected as well. Those who wanted the mayor to appoint department heads insisted that this power was a vital component of the federal plan and necessary for the mayor to function as the true head of the administration of municipal government. For these discussions, see "New Charter Ready to Submit to Vote; Adopt Federal Plan," *Toledo Blade*, July 10, 1914, p. 1, 8; "Charter Makers Nearing Finish," *Toledo Blade*, May 15, 1914, p. 2; "Mayor to Have More Authority," *Toledo Blade*, May 1, 1914, p. 16; "Charter Board Deadlocks on Fundamentals," *Toledo Blade*, April 3, 1914, p. 8; "Charter Men Declare Code Progressive," *Toledo News Bee*, July 10, 1914, pp. 1, 2; "Mayor's Right May Disrupt Charter Board," *Toledo News Bee*, May 1, 1914, p. 9; "Form of City Government to Be Fought by Charter Men," *Toledo News Bee*, April 3, 1914, p. 2.

¹²⁰ "Why Toledo Trades Unionists Opposed Proposed Charter," *Toledo Union Leader*, October 30, 1914, pp. 1, 5.

¹²¹ "C.L.U. Decides to Oppose New Code for City," *Toledo News Bee*, October 23, 1914, p. 12. Members of the Socialist Party were by far the most vocal critics of the charter, declaring before the council even voted for an election of charter commissioners that they opposed non-partisan elections and the commission plan. See "Attacks New Charter," *Toledo Blade*, October 28, 1914, p. 5; "20 Citizens at Public Meeting," *Toledo Blade*, January 17, 1913, p. 19; "Few Come Out to 'Mass Meeting' Council Called," *Toledo News Bee*, January 17, 1913, p. 15.

dissented from the official position of the Central Labor Union. One of the official delegates of the CLU to the Charter Commission publicly voiced his support of the charter, arguing that labor candidates would have an easier time getting elected in a non-partisan electoral system.¹²²

Yet despite such close consideration of the provisions of the proposed charter, the question that most captivated the CLU and most of Toledo in 1913-1914 was “the transit issue.” After years of failed negotiations with municipal officials and disputes over high fares, poor service, and overcapitalization of company stock, all parties in the municipal elections of 1913 opposed a renewal of the Toledo Railways and Light Company’s franchise and declared their support for municipal ownership of utilities and street cars if favored by the people in a popular vote.¹²³ The newly-elected council refused to renew the franchise and passed an ordinance allowing the Company to charge no more than a three-cent fare after its current franchise expired in March of 1914.¹²⁴

A legal standoff ensued, and while the courts were considering the matter, several local groups organized to resolve the situation themselves.¹²⁵ The Commerce Club attempted to negotiate with the company directly, concerned that the dispute was generating

¹²² “Answer Objection to Charter Rule,” *Toledo Blade*, October 31, 1914, p. 2; “Strongly Indorse Charter,” *Toledo News Bee*, October 10, 1914, p. 10.

Several union leaders believed that non-partisan elections might help the cause of organized labor. See “Devise New Idea of City Government,” *Toledo Blade*, March 13, 1914, pp. 1, 2; “Labor Opposes Nonpartisanship,” *Toledo Blade*, January 1, 1916, p. 15.

¹²³ Downes, “The Toledo Political-Religious Municipal Election of 1913,” 155. For more details on the history of the public battle with the Rail-Light Company, see Dematteo, “Urban Reform, Politics, and the Working Class,” 126-28; Crunden, *A Hero in Spite of Himself*, 220-23; Tager, *The Intellectual as Urban Reformer*, 132-39; Randolph C. Downes, “Squeezing the Water out of the Toledo Railways and Light Company, 1907-1913,” *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* XXX, no. 1 (Winter 1957-1958): 26-48.

¹²⁴ “Big Con Worried,” *Toledo News Bee*, March 6, 1914, pp. 1, 2.

¹²⁵ “Killits Upsets Low Fare Order,” *Toledo News Bee*, March 26, 1914, pp. 1, 5; “Rail-Light Would Suspend 3-Cent Fair by Court Injunction,” *Toledo Blade*, March 24, 1914, p. 1.

“undesirable notoriety” and harming their attempts to advertise the city.¹²⁶ Meeting at the Second National Bank Building, a future member of the Commerce Club’s Board of Trustees and others gathered to form the Toledo Citizens’ Franchise Association to draft a compromise acceptable to all parties.¹²⁷ At the same time, however, the Municipal Ownership League began circulating a petition calling for a special election to enact an ordinance for the issuance of bonds to fund the construction and operation of municipally-owned street cars and electric, light, and gas plants. Upon receipt of a petition signed by 9,000 voters, the board of election agreed to hold the election in August.¹²⁸ The measure passed, but even before the vote, the Franchise Association and others declared that the election was unconstitutional, and by fall, the council was still considering a franchise, claiming that municipal ownership was simply not possible at the present time.¹²⁹

The Toledo Charter Commission drafted its charter during the same months in 1914 that the battle against Rail-Light was raging, and the ultimate form that the charter took and its fate can only be understood in the context of the transit question. For years, charter reform had been discussed by diverse groups in Toledo as means for establishing municipal ownership. Immediately after the adoption of the home rule amendment in 1912, Toledo’s Service Director voiced his hope that “under a new charter Toledo should be able to do more things for itself instead of contracting jobs out,” such as building its own bridges and

¹²⁶ “Commerce Club Calls Meeting,” *Toledo News Bee*, March 31, 1914, p. 9; “City Will Reject Offer Made by Commerce Club,” *Toledo Blade*, February 11, 1914, p. 1.

¹²⁷ “Commerce Club Elects Trustees,” *Toledo Blade*, September 16, 1914, p. 8; “New Citizen’s Association Works on Franchise Draft,” *Toledo Blade*, May 15, 1914, p. 1; “New Franchise Draft to Take Best of the Others,” *Toledo News Bee*, June 5, 1914, p. 1.

¹²⁸ “Mun्य Election to be Held Aug. 4, Is Board’s Decision,” *Toledo News Bee*, July 18, 1914, p. 1; “Petition Out Soon for City Car Ownership,” *Toledo Blade*, May 15, 1914, p. 1.

¹²⁹ “Plan a Long Franchise,” *Toledo News Bee*, October 2, 1914, p. 1; “Will Continue Fight on M.O. Program; Plans Not Outlined,” *Toledo News Bee*, August 5, 1914, p. 1; “The Citizen’s Duty Next Tuesday,” *Toledo News Bee*, July 31, 1914, p. 6; “Suit Brought to Test Validity of a Mun्य Election,” *Toledo News Bee*, July 23, 1914, p. 1. 10,597 men voted for bonds, and 9,409 voted against. 20,006 men out of 37,000 registered voters participated in the election.

operating its own asphalt plant for paving roads.¹³⁰ Soon after the publication of Whitlock's series of articles on public ownership in European cities, those attending a meeting of the Pastor's Union of the Y.M.C.A. to discuss a new charter said that they wanted any revisions to establish municipally-owned "street car, heating and lighting systems" and "public bath houses and laundries."¹³¹ Opposition to Rail-Light and the franchise system more broadly so strong that when the Charter Commission took up the issue, it was no surprise that it drafted provisions for far stricter regulations of public service corporations and provided for the option of municipal ownership by popular referendum.¹³²

In the fall of 1914, reformers used support for municipal ownership to promote the new charter. Portraying the charter as the fulfillment of the original independent movement spearheaded by Samuel Jones nearly twenty years ago, the *News Bee* claimed that the proposed charter established "practically every principle of good city government for which Toledo voters struggled." These principles included home rule, non-partisan elections, and "absolute democracy" in the form of the initiative, referendum, and recall. But they also included a more "carefully guarded" process of granting franchises and the option of municipal ownership.¹³³ With the council claiming that despite the recent election municipal ownership was not currently possible, the fact that the new charter would make it so was a powerful argument. As William Renz, president of the German-American Alliance, succinctly stated, "we cannot have municipal ownership, for which the people voted, until we

¹³⁰ "Mayor Plans for New City Charter," *Toledo Blade*, September 6, 1912, p. 1.

¹³¹ "City Ownership Urged As Plank in New Charter," *Toledo News Bee*, January 28, 1913.

¹³² "Charter Opposes Exclusive Grants," *Toledo Blade*, May 29, 1914, p. 8; "Charter Men Support Every Popular Franchise Contention," *Toledo News Bee*, May 22, 1914, p. 5. The final version of the charter presented to the voters banned exclusive franchises and grants of longer than 25 years, allowed for the city to purchase unexpired franchises, and provided for municipal ownership by popular referenda. See "The New Charter on Franchises," *Toledo News Bee*, October 27, 1914, p. 6.

¹³³ "The Opportunity," *Toledo News Bee*, October 17, 1914, p. 6; "Jones' ideas in the Charter," *Toledo News Bee*, October 12, 1914, p. 6.

get a new charter.”¹³⁴ These arguments were persuasive to many voters, and the charter was adopted by a strong margin (56%) in the November election.¹³⁵

Worcester, 1913-1914 The Strength of Party Politics and State Regulation

In Worcester, Massachusetts, reformers were not able to convince residents that a commission charter would improve the performance of local government. Home rule never attracted the same passionate support in Massachusetts that it did in Ohio, and no third party ever controlled local politics in Worcester as it did in Toledo. With a competitive two-party system and a relatively effective state railroad commission, municipal reformers in Worcester never able to form coalitions and galvanize voters angered by the franchise system in the ways that they did in Fort Worth, Oakland, and Toledo. Railroad rates favored industries in Massachusetts over those in other parts of the country. The Boston and Albany Railroad, for example, provided special rates to wire manufacturers in Worcester to enable them to compete with rivals in Pittsburgh who were located closer to western customers.¹³⁶ Moreover, ethnic diversity among Worcester’s immigrant workforce undoubtedly contributed to the strength of the Republican Party in local politics, for the Democratic Party was so strongly associated with the Irish that Swedes, Russians Jews, and French Canadians all voted Republican.¹³⁷ Republicans such as Edward Fletcher, a shoe manufacturer, and James Logan, an envelope manufacturer, dominated the office of mayor, and though in 1912

¹³⁴ “Renz Favors New Charter; Calls It Best,” *Toledo News Bee*, October 20, 1914, p. 11.

¹³⁵ “The Charter Wins,” *Toledo Blade*, November 4, 1914, p. 6; “New Charter to Make Great Change in City,” *Toledo News Bee*, November 4, 1914, p. 6. 20,638 men voted for the charter and 15,908 against the charter.

¹³⁶ Richard M. Abrams, *Conservatism in a Progressive Era: Massachusetts Politics, 1900-1912* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 21.

¹³⁷ Abrams, *Conservatism in a Progressive Era*, 51. In 1910, the five largest immigrant groups in Worcester were Irish (10,535), Russian (8,767), Swedish (8,036), French Canadian (5,010), and other Canadian (3,377). See Charles G. Washburn, *Industrial Worcester* (Worcester: The Davis Press, 1917), 314.

the Democrats briefly captured the office, in 1913, as the Board of Trade's *Worcester Magazine* proclaimed, the voters returned "the executive chamber" to "a manufacturer as mayor" with the election of George M. Wright, head of the Wright Wire Company, "one of the larger industries in the city."¹³⁸

Just as Henry Marsh had twenty years earlier, Mayor George M. Wright entered office in 1913 envisioning the city government as a corporation in need of a new charter in order to provide for the needs of a growing city. Though there had been many amendments, the city charter remained substantially the same as when originally adopted in 1893, with a mayor and a bi-cameral council and school committee elected by ward.¹³⁹ Wright, who like many businessmen viewed municipal government as a "civic business corporation" and elected officials as "the directors" who administered its affairs, believed that the "charter of any city should be examined in an expert way once in twenty years at least."¹⁴⁰

Complimenting Wright's inaugural address, an editorial in the *Worcester Gazette* claimed

¹³⁸ "The City Government for 1913," *Worcester Magazine* XVI, no. 1 (January 1913): 10-12. Logan was mayor from 1908-1911 and Fletcher from 1902-1903. For information on Logan and Fletcher, see Washburn, *Industrial Worcester*, 200-01, 241; *Fourth Inaugural Address of Hon. James Logan, Mayor of Worcester, Mass., January 2, 1911* (Worcester, MA: Belisle Printing & Publishing Co., 1911); *Inaugural Address of Edward F. Fletcher, Mayor of Worcester, Massachusetts, January 5, 1903* (Worcester, MA: Press of Charles Hamilton, 1903); *Inaugural Address of Hon. Edward F. Fletcher, Mayor of Worcester, Mass., January 6, 1902* (Worcester, MA: Press of F. S. Blanchard, 1902).

¹³⁹ Regarding the method of selecting the Board of Alderman, Ronald A. Petrin writes, "In 1902 Republican voters changed the city charter, abandoning the selection of aldermen by city-wide vote [and a system of minority representation, as per the 1893 charter], which had enabled French-Canadians to be represented on that board, and returning to ward-elected aldermen." See Ronald A. Petrin, "Ethnicity and Urban Politics: French-Canadians and Worcester, 1895-1915," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 15, no. 2 (June 1987): 146. For a description of Worcester's charter circa 1913, see Thomas F. O'Flynn, "The City Government," *The Story of Worcester Massachusetts* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1910), 132-34. Worcester's government could not be described as a "strong mayor" system, nor was there a clear division between the executive/administrative and the legislative branches. The mayor retained appointive power over several important positions (city physician, assessors, park commissioners, board of health, license commissioners, license board and chief of police), but the councils appointed all heads of departments and the "city treasurer, auditor, city engineer, city solicitor, messenger, trustees of Free Public library, of funds, and of hospitals." See also *Charter and Ordinances of the City of Worcester, 1911* (Worcester: The Blanchard Press, [1911?]).

¹⁴⁰ *Second Inaugural Address of Honorable George M. Wright, Mayor of Worcester, Massachusetts, January 5, 1914* (Worcester, MA: Commonwealth Press, 1914), 3, 30; *Inaugural Address of Hon. George M. Wright, Mayor of Worcester, Mass., January 6, 1913* (Worcester, MA: Belisle Printing and Publishing Co., 1913), 7.

that the mayor had put forth an image of the municipality as “a huge corporation” with “functions” that varied “from providing education and care for the afflicted, to giving police protection, immunity from fire and an abundance of drinking water.” The editorial also commended the mayor’s emphasis on the importance of the “individual citizen” and “public servants” working together to help “municipal government to reach its greatest worth and efficiency.”¹⁴¹

Without home rule, local political actors in Massachusetts had to appeal to the state legislature’s committee on cities if they sought to amend their charters. Wright claimed he had no specific agenda for a new charter but that he did not think the present situation, in which several competing groups were currently petitioning the legislature for piecemeal changes, the wisest course. He was “opposed to a few men getting together and suggesting changes in our city charter.” Instead, he proposed that they openly and thoroughly discuss and study the matter at home and then “go before the legislature with a practically united front.” Unlike Marsh, who appointed a committee of only three men to revise the charter in closed sessions, insulated from public opinion, Wright hoped to “give the fullest opportunity to our citizens” to participate in the drafting of a new charter. In a message delivered to Worcester’s legislative bodies, Wright recommended that the councils authorize him to appoint a committee consisting of various elected officials and twenty to thirty “representative citizens” to draft a new charter to be submitted to the state legislature and then to a popular vote. He proposed many possible topics for their consideration, including, to name a few, instituting non-partisan elections, creating a unicameral council, altering the terms for various elected officials, reconsidering which officials should be elected and which

¹⁴¹ This editorial referred to Wright’s second inaugural address in January 1914. “Mayor’s Inaugural,” *Worcester Gazette*, January 6, 1914, p. 4.

should be appointed, improving coordination among various departments, strengthening the power of the mayor, and/or adopting a commission form of government.¹⁴²

Yet despite Wright's public declaration that he was not endorsing any specific changes in the charter, rumors claimed that he was in fact working to secure commission government for Worcester.¹⁴³ His proposal for a revision of the charter immediately sparked public discussion of the commission plan. By the next day, the local papers polled representatives of Worcester in the state general assembly on their views on the commission plan.¹⁴⁴ Unlike most eastern states, Massachusetts actually had seven cities operating under commission government by 1912, though most were substantially smaller than Worcester.¹⁴⁵ The *Worcester Magazine* had in the past printed several articles on the commission plan, urging readers to consider the experiences of other cities in the state operating under the plan, and the neighboring city of Leominster was currently considering adopting it as a well.¹⁴⁶

Though members of the city council claimed that they opposed Wright's plan only because it did not allow them a voice in the revision of the charter, many observers believed their real motivation was opposition to commission government itself. The Democrats in the

¹⁴² "City Council Meeting, February 3, 1913," *Worcester Magazine* XVI, no. 3 (March 1913): 88; "Mayor Wright Wants More Light on Any City Charter Changes," *Worcester Gazette*, February 4, 1913, p. 1; "Mayor Suggests Charter Changes for Worcester," *Worcester Gazette*, February 4, 1913, p. 3; "Commission Government for Worcester Will Be Considered by Special Committee," *Worcester Telegram*, February 4, 1913, pp. 1, 4. It seems that Wright was successful at least in blocking the various bills regarding Worcester's charter before the state legislature. Soon after he declared Worcester in need of a full revision of its charter, the legislature's Committee on Cities decided to postpone consideration of all these bills until the next session. See "Go Over to Next Year," *Worcester Telegram*, March 14, 1913, p. 3.

¹⁴³ "Mayor Wright Wants More Light on Any City Charter Changes," *Worcester Gazette*, February 4, 1913, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ "Approve of Plan of Mayor on City Charter Changes," *Worcester Gazette*, February 5, 1913, p. 9; "Caution is Suggested," *Worcester Telegram*, February 5, 1913, p. 11.

¹⁴⁵ Rice, *Progressive Cities*, 117. These cities were Haverhill, Taunton, Gloucester, Lowell, Lynn, Lawrence, and Salem.

¹⁴⁶ "Draft of a Charter Is Being Made For Commission Rule," *Worcester Telegram*, May 29, 1913, p. 13; "Announces Conversion," *Worcester Telegram*, March 17, 1913, p. 10; "The Commission Plan," *Worcester Magazine* XIII, no. 5 (May 1910): 141; "Commission Government: How It Works Out in Our Neighboring City of Haverhill," *Worcester Magazine* XIII, no. 5 (May 1910): 126.

common council joined forces with several Republicans in an effort to gain control over the revision of the city charter, first by proposing that the mayor's appointees to the charter commission be approved by the council and then that the commission's charter itself be approved by the council before being sent to Boston. Although the council members considered the mayor's proposal at first, soon after he announced his appointees to the commission they quickly tabled the bill.¹⁴⁷ According to one member of the Board of Aldermen, the mayor's commission consisted of members of "various idealistic organizations in Worcester" that would not be able to "see the practical side of city government as much as ... the idealistic side."¹⁴⁸ Editorials in the *Worcester Gazette*, however, questioned the notion that the council should play a decisive role in forming a new charter, suggesting that it was inappropriate for a body that would be affected by the outcome to participate in the process of revision.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, coverage of the council meetings in local papers made it clear that several members of the councils feared the mayor's charter commission would adopt the commission plan, "an autocratic form of government."

Democratic alderman H. H. O'Rourke even hyperbolically claimed that adopting commission

¹⁴⁷ In general, the *Telegram* reported the Council's own explanation of its motivations while the *Gazette* questioned that explanation. See "Mayor's Appointments for Charter Committee Tabled," *Worcester Telegram*, May 13, 1913, p. 1; "Opposition to Scope of Plan in Revising the City's Charter," *Worcester Telegram*, May 5, 1913, pp. 1, 2; "Order Adopted for a Committee to Consider Changes in City Charter," *Worcester Telegram*, March 18, 1913, pp. 1, 4; "Aldermen Lay on Table Commission to Revise Charter," *Worcester Gazette*, May 13, 1913, p. 16; "City Charter Commission Is Held Up," *Worcester Gazette*, May 10, 1913, p. 1; "Order Passed to Name Committee on City Charter," *Worcester Gazette*, March 18, 1913, p. 10; "Move on Foot to Kill New Charter Plans," *Worcester Gazette*, March 15, 1913, p. 2; "Committee Votes for Commission on Charter," *Worcester Gazette*, February 28, 1913, p. 3. See also "City Council," *Worcester Magazine* XVI, no. 6 (June 1913): 194; "City Council," *Worcester Magazine* XVI, no. 5 (May 1913), 155; "City Council," *Worcester Magazine* XVI, no. 4 (April 1913): 121.

¹⁴⁸ "Charter Plan Opposition Is Looming Up," *Worcester Gazette*, May 2, 1913, pp. 1, 2. For the names of those appointed by the mayor, see "City Council," *Worcester Magazine* XVI, no. 5 (May 1913): 155; "Mayor Names 20 Citizens to Help Revise Charter," *Worcester Telegram*, April 29, 1913, p. 1; "Aldermen Adopt Uniform Rule for Police Officers. Mayor Wright Appoints Commission to Consider Advisability of Changing City Charter. Routine Matters," *Worcester Gazette*, April 29, 1913, p. 16. This member was likely referring to the presence of several members of the Progressive Party on the list of names for the proposed charter commission.

¹⁴⁹ "Worcester Voters to Judge," *Worcester Gazette*, May 7, 1913, p. 4; "Considering Charter Reform," May 6, 1913, p. 4.

government would lead to “bloodshed, loss of life and loss of property” and that if Worcester did so, it would join “the dynamiting class.”¹⁵⁰

The issue of charter reform re-emerged in January of 1914 when Mayor Wright, having just received the largest plurality of any mayoral candidate in a contested election, again urged the creation of a commission to undertake “a most thorough study” of the city’s charter, present its recommendations to the state legislature, and then seek “the consent of a majority of the voters.”¹⁵¹ Perhaps with the events of last year in mind, local papers and the city council for most part seemed to ignore Wright’s plea.¹⁵² Yet Worcester’s Progressive Party, which had vocally supported Wright’s plans regarding the charter the previous year, undertook efforts of its own to revise the city’s charter, though perhaps not in the way that Wright envisioned.¹⁵³ At a meeting of the City Committee of the Progressive Party, members decided to file a bill with the state legislature requesting a new charter that would establish a commission form of government for Worcester.¹⁵⁴ Whether or not, in so doing, the Progressives were attempting to circumvent a local discussion of the matter was not clear. The following month, when the state legislature’s Committee on Cities came to Worcester

¹⁵⁰ “Charter Plan Opposition Is Looming Up,” *Worcester Gazette*, May 2, 1913, pp. 1, 2; “Order Passed to Name Committee on City Charter,” *Worcester Gazette*, March 18, 1913, p. 10; “Order Adopted for a Committee to Consider Changes in City Charter,” *Worcester Telegram*, March 18, 1913, pp. 1, 4.

¹⁵¹ *Second Inaugural Address of Honorable George M. Wright, Mayor of Worcester, Massachusetts, January 5, 1914* (Worcester, MA: Commonwealth Press, 1914), 30; “Second Inaugural of Mayor George M. Wright,” *Worcester Magazine* XVII, no. 2 (February 1914): 53; “City Charter,” *Worcester Telegram*, January 6, 1914, p. 11.

¹⁵² For example, the following articles on the Mayor’s speech neglected to mention Wright’s call for charter revision. “Second Inaugural of Mayor George M. Wright,” *Worcester Magazine* XVII, no. 2 (February 1914): 53; “Mayor’s Inaugural Address Dissected,” *Worcester Telegram*, January 14, 1914, p. 8.

¹⁵³ On their support the previous year, see “Progressives Favor New Charter Plan,” *Worcester Telegram*, February 14, 1913, p. 10.

¹⁵⁴ “Petition in House,” *Worcester Telegram*, January 22, 1914, p. 7; “Progressives for Commission Form,” *Worcester Telegram*, January 16, 1914, 3; “Progressives Elect Officers,” *Worcester Gazette*, January 16, 1914., p. 13. The version of the commission plan proposed by the Progressive Party followed that passed by the Pennsylvania legislature for all cities with 40,000 or fewer residents. It provided for five councilors elected at-large, non-partisan elections, and the initiative, referendum, and recall. See “New Charter Wipes out City Council,” *Worcester Gazette*, February 20, 1914, pp. 1, 19.

for a public hearing on the bill in city hall, the *Worcester Telegram* accused the Progressives of attempting a “coup” and “hoping to catch the opposition asleep,” urging opponents of the commission plan to attend the meeting if they wanted their voices to be heard.¹⁵⁵ The *Worcester Gazette* dismissed this “fake story printed in The Telegram ... about the Progressives trying to pack the meeting in City Hall,” claiming that it “was all rot.” Regardless, both papers agreed that the meeting, which was very well attended, made clear that most residents of Worcester did not want to adopt the commission plan, with only twenty-four of over five hundred people in attendance voting in favor of the bill.¹⁵⁶ As a result, the Committee on Cities recommended that the petition to revise Worcester’s charter be tabled until the next legislative session, and the legislature agreed.¹⁵⁷

One reason for this decisive failure was that the Progressive Party’s political isolation. The Party was never successful on the state level, and in Worcester itself the Progressive candidates were decisively defeated in the election of December 1913.¹⁵⁸ Yet while the Republic Party continued to dominate city politics, this fact alone did not necessarily mean that the Progressives hopes for charter reform were doomed. In other cities, reform associations formed alliances – with the major parties, with labor unions, and/or with commercial organizations – and were successful. Unions in the 1910s were not a

¹⁵⁵ “Coup in Favor of Government by Commission,” *Worcester Telegram*, February 20, 1914, pp. 1, 2.

¹⁵⁶ “Commission Gov’t for Worcester Strongly Opposed,” *Worcester Gazette*, February 21, p. 2; “But 24 out of over 500 for Commission Government,” *Worcester Telegram*, February 21, 1914, pp. 1, 5. The *Gazette* even claimed that those present described the vote as “24 in favor, to about 1,000,000 against.”

¹⁵⁷ “Goes over until 1915,” *Worcester Telegram*, February 28, 1914, p. 4; “Committee for Delay,” *Worcester Telegram*, February 26, 1914, p. 4.

¹⁵⁸ On the state level, see Abrams, *Conservatism in a Progressive Era*, 285-86. In Worcester, see “City Election,” *Worcester Magazine* XVII, no. 1 (January 1914): 22. At the hearing of the committee of cities in city hall, Alderman O’Rourke equated the electoral failure of the Progressives with their advocacy of a commission charter, claiming, “They say that the people of Worcester have no brains.... At [the] city election last fall this very outfit that is here trying to push this charter business through went before the voters with the very same charter proposition. What happened? The candidate for mayor received 747 votes out of over 24,000 cast. The people of Worcester wanted the charter revised, didn't they?” See “Commission Gov’t for Worcester Strongly Opposed,” *Worcester Gazette*, February 21, 1914, p. 2.

strong force in Worcester's politics. Labor was relatively unorganized in the city, with ethnic divisions blocking greater unionization among the city's many industrial workers.¹⁵⁹

Worcester's business organizations, in contrast, were flourishing in these years. The Board of Trade reorganized itself into a Chamber of Commerce in 1913 and soon after organized a successful membership drive. The Merchant's Association voted the next year to merge with the Chamber, which had rapidly become a powerful voice in local politics and an active promoter of Worcester's commercial interests.¹⁶⁰ Had the Progressives courted such powerful allies in local politics as often occurred in other cities, the outcome of their efforts to secure a commission charter might have been different.

Yet attempts to secure commission government also failed in part because most residents seem to have been generally satisfied with local government. Interpretations of municipal reform that focus exclusively on class conflict fail to take into account the extent to which the effectiveness of the existing local government and the dynamics of local political conflict influenced the outcome of movements for reform. Electoral fraud, political corruption (franchise and otherwise), and poor provision of services created dissatisfaction with existing municipal government, making voters more likely to support structural

¹⁵⁹ Bruce Cohen, "The Worcester Machinists' Strike of 1915," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 154-56. Abrams adds that this ethnic division helped strengthen the Republican party in Worcester, with Swedes, French Canadians, and Russian Jews voting Republican in opposition to the heavily Irish Catholic Democratic party. See Abrams, *Conservatism in a Progressive Era*, 51.

¹⁶⁰ "Come to Worcester for Convention City," *Worcester Telegram*, February 13, 1914, p. 3; "Housing Survey Is to Cost About \$500," *Worcester Telegram*, January 17, 1914, p. 1; "Legislative Delegation," *Worcester Telegram*, January 3, 1914, p. 2; "Membership Campaign of Worcester Chamber of Commerce Adds 325 to Its Rolls and \$9525 to Its Revenue," *Worcester Telegram*, May 3, 1913, p. 1; "Hustle for Members," April 21, 1913, p. 2; "Gain in Members Object of Chamber of Commerce Men," *Worcester Telegram*, February 18, 1913, p. 13; "Chamber of Commerce is Formed by Board of Trade," *Worcester Telegram*, February 1, 1913, p. 1; "Board of Trade to Take Action Tonight," *Worcester Telegram*, January 31, 1913, pp. 1, 3; "All Plans Are Made," *Worcester Telegram*, *Worcester Telegram*, January 21, 1913, p. 8; "Board of Trade's Development Plans," *Worcester Telegram*, January 20, 1913, p. 16.

reforms.¹⁶¹ In Worcester, such circumstances were absent. In making their case for commission government at the public hearing in city hall, leaders of the Progressive Party did not argue that the city's present government was corrupt or ineffective. Charles Nutt, chair of the party's executive committee, explained that "[i]t is not our purpose to claim that there is any overwhelming demand for a change. We do not rest our case on general dissatisfaction with municipal government here." Though Worcester, according to Nutt, "has been free from corruption and graft" and "has a better charter than many other cities," adopting the commission plan nevertheless would, as it had in three hundred cities across the country, create "more economical and efficient" government, and yielding lower taxes. Underscoring this point, Dr. George Slocumb, chair of the party's city committee, read letters from the mayors of Lowell and Haverhill, Massachusetts, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Memphis, Tennessee all claiming that the adoption of the commission plan improved the performance of municipal government. Opponents of the Progressives, however, mocked the notion that Worcester should consider revising its charter with no evidence of "scandal" under the present form of government.¹⁶²

Satisfaction with local government in Worcester was partly due to the effectiveness of state regulatory commissions in Massachusetts. Massachusetts pioneered the regulation of railroads and other public service corporations with the creation of the Massachusetts Railroad Commission in 1869 (which had jurisdiction over municipal street railways) and the Board of Gas and Electric Light Commissioners in 1885, both the first of their kind in the

¹⁶¹ Seth M. Scheiner, "Commission Government in the Progressive Era: The New Brunswick, New Jersey, Example," *Journal of Urban History* 12, no. 2 (February 1986): 157-58, 168.

¹⁶² "But 24 out of over 500 for Commission Government," *Worcester Telegram*, February 21, 1914, pp. 1, 5; "Commission Gov't for Worcester is Strongly Opposed," *Worcester Gazette*, February 21, 1914, p. 2. On Nutt and Slocumb's positions in the Progressive Party, "Progressives Elect Officers," *Worcester Gazette*, January 16, 1914.

nation. Though later Progressives would describe these commissions as weak, armed more with advisory than compulsory powers, they provided a relatively successful system of regulation for the day.¹⁶³ According to a paper presented to the National Municipal League by Joseph P. Eastman, executive secretary of Massachusetts's Public Franchise League, the commissions, especially Railroad Commission, had an "excellent record" of providing "impartial adjudication" in disputes between citizens and public service corporations. As a result, there had not been any "gross scandals in connection with the public-service corporations of Massachusetts since ... the [eighteen] eighties."¹⁶⁴

Residents of Worcester in 1913 likely agreed that the state railroad commission provided effective regulation. In February of that year, the *Gazette* published a scathing attack on the services provided by the Worcester Consolidated Street Railway Company, "a dilatory public services corporation," and urged Mayor Wright to act to rectify "the trolley situation." Adopting rhetoric similar to that used by critics of the franchise system throughout the country, Mayor Wright agreed with the *Gazette* that it was time for "the men behind the throne in the Consolidated, the men who are drawing big salaries and getting big, fat juicy dividends out of the Worcester riding public without returning anything like decent service" to "do something." The Board of Aldermen soon joined in the campaign against the corporation, passing a resolution asking the city solicitor to petition the Massachusetts Board of Railroad Commissioners to investigate charges of inadequate provision of power, poor lighting and equipment, overcrowding on cars, and filthy conditions. The *Gazette*, in turn,

¹⁶³ Abrams, *Conservatism in a Progressive Era*, 5-8. Abrams also notes that critics felt that the Massachusetts commissions focused too much on preventing overcapitalization and not enough on ensuring fare rates and quality services.

¹⁶⁴ Abrams, *Conservatism in a Progressive Era*, 59-60; Joseph B. Eastman, "The Public Utilities Commissions of Massachusetts," *The Regulation of Municipal Utilities* ed. Clyde London King (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1921 [1912]), 280, 292, 294. Eastman also noted, however, that he and others would prefer that the state commissions expand their activities beyond the examination of accounts and returns and the regulation of the issuance of securities to include the provision of better services and the charging of fair rates to all (294-95).

urged Worcester residents to write to the city solicitor detailing any grievances “and arm him with a mass of facts that will compel the railroad Commission to act.” The Chairman of the Commission, however, responded within less than a month that it needed no additional proof for it had sent its own inspector to Worcester to investigate the charges who had found them all to be true. The chairman also emphasized that “the commission intends to remedy the conditions.”¹⁶⁵ With such a commission acting to ensure the provision of adequate services, neither Mayor Wright nor the Progressive Party could, as reformers in countless other cities did, argue that charter reforms were needed to prevent “special privileges” and “corrupt bargains” in the granting of railway franchises.

Conclusion: Commission Government in Operation

Despite defeats, the commission plan continued to spread rapidly through the mid 1910s. Its sustained popularity stemmed in large part from its reputation for creating more open and efficient structures that enabled cities to undertake new endeavors. In 1911, the Committee on the Operation of Commission Government of the National Municipal League declared that residents were “generally more content” and felt “more effective politically” under commission charters and that, as a result, their municipal governments manifested “a striking increase in efficiency and a higher standard of municipal accomplishment.”¹⁶⁶ That

¹⁶⁵ “All Charges Against Consolidated True, Says Head of Railroad Commission, Need No Proof But Report of Own Inspectors,” *Worcester Gazette*, March 14, 1913, p. 1; “Mr. Citizen, It’s Up to You,” *Worcester Gazette*, February 21, 1913, p. 1; “City Council Orders Consolidated Probe,” *Worcester Gazette*, February 18, 1913, p. 1; “Mayor Probes Consolidated, Finds Gazette Charges True,” *Worcester Gazette*, February 8, 1913, p. 1; “Public in No Temper to Wait Longer for Consolidated to Make Good Broken Promises,” *Worcester Gazette*, February 7, 1913, p. 1.

¹⁶⁶ National Municipal League, *The Commission Plan and Commission-Manager Plan of Municipal Government: An analytical study by a committee of the National Municipal League*, 1914. (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, [1914]), 2, 6-8.

same year, Henry Bruère, co-director of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, concluded his study of ten cities governed by commissions that the “most conspicuous effect” of the commission plan was a marked increase in money spent on physical improvements that was “willingly borne” by residents more confident in their governments.¹⁶⁷ To determine the accuracy of claims about the improved performance of municipalities operating under commission charters, the Bureau of the Census published a comparative study of cities under council and commission government in 1913 and 1915. These data demonstrate that initially commission-governed cities undertook greater debt and spent more on public service enterprises than their “unreformed” mayor-council counterparts.¹⁶⁸

In the long run, however, commission government failed to deliver much of what its supporters had promised. Bruère’s study stressed the fact that most new programs resulted from “campaigns for commercial betterment,” concluding that “the social welfare aim of the commission movement is chiefly a commercial welfare aim.”¹⁶⁹ Additionally, the measures of direct democracy, originally heralded as a means to destroy the hold of public service corporations on local government, restore popular control, and establish municipal ownership, were in practice not used very often. As of 1914, only twenty-five percent of the commission-governed cities with provisions for the initiative, referendum, and recall had used at least one of them.¹⁷⁰ Finally, the commission plan completely failed to eliminate the

¹⁶⁷ Henry Bruère, *The New City Government: A Discussion of Municipal Administration Based on a Survey of Ten Commission Governed Cities* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1912), 84.

¹⁶⁸ Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce, *Comparative Finance Statistics of Cities under Council and Commission Government, 1913 and 1915* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 9.

¹⁶⁹ Bruère, *The New City Government*, 84-87.

¹⁷⁰ Charles F. Taylor, “Municipal Initiative, Referendum, and Recall in Practice,” *National Municipal Review* III, no. 4 (October 1914): 693-94. Taylor sent surveys to all of the 335 cities currently governed by the commission plan. 279 replied, and of these 261 provided for some combination of initiative, referendum, and/or recall. Of the 261, 31 used the initiative, 27 used the referendum, and 7 used the recall.

control of “bosses” and “machines” over the administration. In Fort Worth, Oakland, and many other commission-governed cities, the candidates elected as commissioners were not the disinterested civic leaders envisioned but rather the same type of party politicians that had dominated municipal government under the mayor-council form, and with individual commissioners in charge of specific administrative departments, politics, log-rolling, patronage, and even outright corruption continued as before.¹⁷¹ In short, neither commercial leaders nor proponents of expanded social welfare were happy with the results of the commission plan. As a result, residents of Fort Worth, Oakland, and dozens of other cities that had adopted commission charters in the 1900s and 1910s would by the 1920s turn to the latest innovation in municipal reform promoted by elite reformers and the National Municipal League, the city manager plan.

¹⁷¹ Bridges, *Morning Glories*, 79-81, 104-05; Rice, *Progressive Cities*, 96-99; Bruère, *The New City Government*, 97. Blutz, “Oakland’s Commission and Council-Manager Plans,” describes similar results in Oakland (207-10).

Chapter 7

The Professionalization of Reform: The Transformation of Municipal Reform Associations and the Rise of the City Manager Plan, 1905-1920

In 1916, with World War I underway in Europe, political scientists were forced to reconsider their fondness for German models of local government. Charles Beard, then a professor of politics at Columbia University and Supervisor of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research's Training School for Public Service, declared "that the supreme question of the hour is whether democracy and efficiency are inherently irreconcilable." Beard went on to consider how Americans could administer government in such a way that the reliance on professional experts did not preclude real popular control. The concept of the "expert administrator" had recently been popularized by political scientist and Harvard President A. Lawrence Lowell. Lowell applied the concept of expertise to municipalities by arguing for an extension of the professionalization of local government beyond legal training for city solicitors, medical training for city physicians, and scientific training for city engineers. Real administrative reform, Lowell argued, required more than merit-based exams and an end to patronage. Control over the entire apparatus of government needed to be granted to a professional, permanent class of trained experts. Lowell's writings on experts drew much attention, and Beard and many others devoted a great deal of consideration to how such a system could remain democratic.¹

The movement to professionalize municipal reform was closely connected to this rising interest in expertise among scholars. The establishment of bureaus of municipal

¹ Charles A. Beard, "Training for Efficient Public Service," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 64 (March 1916): 215-226; A. Lawrence Lowell, "Expert Administrators in Popular Government," *American Political Science Review* 7, no. 1 (February 1913): 46, 51-59.

research as part of the “efficiency movement” implicitly criticized the emphasis of charter reformers on political rather than administrative structures of government as a failure to recognize that effective popular control depended not upon electing honest candidates but rather on securing the services of trained, scientific experts. In order to assert their own authority as such experts, leaders of the bureaus criticized the work of other municipal reform associations as inefficient and sometimes self-interested and portrayed their own bureaus not as voluntary but rather as professional organizations. Yet in a quest to replace voluntary organizations staffed by amateurs with professional bureaus staffed by trained experts, the bureau movement further distanced the work of women’s municipal reform organizations from the predominately male world of structural reform.

In these years, the leaders of the National Municipal League turned away from their original goal of creating a venue for local civic organizations to come together and worked to make the League more like bureaus of municipal research and other professional organizations. Though the National Municipal League had never been as strongly committed to a participatory vision of urban democracy as some of its contemporaries, it had in the 1890s worked to provide a venue for lay reformers to come together and discuss municipal problems and thereby generate widespread popular involvement in reform. By circa 1910, however, its leaders were working to transform the League into a more professional organization where academics and other professionals came together to discuss technical matters of municipal administration rather than to consider how to reform the representative structures of local government.

In the 1910s the League also revised its Municipal Program, recommending the new city manager plan in place of a mayor-council form of government. The city manager plan,

in which an elected council appointed a city manager to organize the entire municipal administration, embodied Lowell's call to professionalize the administration of government under a system of expert control. Yet the authors of the New Municipal Program also used the concept of a city manager to formulate diverse arguments for how the Program would democratize municipal government. Though the Program still claimed to propose governmental structures that would facilitate functional expansion while maintaining popular democratic control, the meaning of such control had changed. The authors of the New Municipal Program relied on the role of administrative experts rather than a representative council to frame their work as democratic, and democracy came to mean municipally-owned utilities, improvements in public welfare, and the adoption of a short ballot rather than a deepening of popular interest in the process of government. Richard S. Childs, the original architect of the city manager plan who would lead the League for decades to come, believed his plan made democracy workable in a modern era in which technological innovations required a new level of expertise in the administration of government. In the end, however, the theory of city manager government would provide a conceptual framework for the critiques of mass democracy that dominated the 1920s.

Efficiency as Reform: Bureaus of Municipal Research

If, as Ambassador [James] Bryce wrote, years ago, 'Municipal government is America's most conspicuous failure,' the cause, according to Mr. Bruère, is to be sought not in the corruption of men, but in the inefficiency of methods.

- *The Independent*, 1907²

² "The Bureau of Municipal Research," *The Independent* 58, no. 3080 (Dec. 12, 1907): 1444.

Just as New Yorkers pioneered municipal reform associations in the 1890s with the formation of the City Club and its allied Good Government Clubs, they also initiated the municipal research bureau movement in the 1900s and 1910s. With the first election of a consolidated “Greater New York” approaching in 1897, officers of the City Club decided to take the lead in the organization of a municipal reform party. Though the resultant Citizens’ Union, which absorbed many of the Good Government Clubs and collaborated closely with others, initially met with defeat, by 1901 it helped to elect Seth Low as mayor as a fusion candidate with the Republican Party.³ Low’s victory was perceived as a great victory of the movement for municipal reform, and his defeat two years later sparked widespread disillusionment. In the aftermath, William Allen, the head of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP), approached R. Fulton Cutting, a leading figure in both the AICP and the Citizens’ Union, about the formation of an alternative type of reform organization, focused on the administration of municipal departments rather than the election of “good men” to office. As a result, in 1905, the Citizens’ Union established a Bureau of City Betterment, and two years later, the Bureau became the independent New York Bureau of Municipal Research (NYBMR).⁴ Word of this new instrument for achieving good city government rapidly spread through newspapers, magazines, and academic journals

³ David Israel Aronson, “The City Club of New York,” (Ph.D. Diss., New York University, 1975), 281-89, 380-82. The Citizens’ Union is one of the few municipal reform associations of the Progressive Era still in existence. See <http://www.citizensunion.org>.

⁴ For more details on the formation of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, see Camilla Stivers, *Bureau Men and Settlement Women: Constructing Public Administration in the Progressive Era* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000), 27-33; Jane S. Dahlberg, *The New York Bureau of Municipal Research: Pioneer in Government Administration* (New York: New York University Press, 1966), 5-17; Norman N. Gill, *Municipal Research Bureaus: A Study of the Nation’s Leading Citizen-Supported Agencies* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1944), 12-15.

and at conventions of the National Municipal League and other national organizations.⁵ By 1926, over forty cities maintained bureaus.⁶

The early leaders of the NYBMR envisioned their organization as the key to improving municipal government permanently, contrasting their work with previous efforts at reform. Just as proponents of charter revision in the 1890s often claimed that structural flaws rather than corrupt individuals were mainly responsible for the failures of local government, these leading figures of the “efficiency movement” now blamed inefficient administrative procedures rather than graft. They also, however, critiqued the emphasis of charter reformers on the political rather than the administrative structures of government as a failure to recognize that effective popular control depended not upon the election of “good men” but rather on securing the services of trained professionals. According Henry Bruère, joint director of the Bureau, the configuration of the representative system mattered less than the details of administration in creating efficient and accountable government. For example, he argued that the success of Fort Worth’s government under its new charter was not due to adoption of the commission plan but rather to the institution of a modern system of accounting. He explained that attempts to remove the administration of government from the political realm by replacing the spoils system with a civil service system had “failed to

⁵ Edward M. Sait, “Research and Reference Bureaus,” *National Municipal Review* II, no. 1 (January 1913): 48-55; Myrtle Cerf, “Bureaus of Public Efficiency: A Study of the Purpose and Methods of Organization,” *National Municipal Review* II, no. 1 (January 1913): 39-47; Henry Bruère, “The Bureau of Municipal Research,” *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* 5 (1908): 111-21; Rufus E. Miles, “Municipal Research – A New Instrument of Democracy,” *Proceedings of the Cincinnati Conference for Good City Government and the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League, Held November 15, 16, 17, 18, 1909 At Cincinnati, Ohio*, ed. Clinton Rogers Woodruff (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1909), 284-90; Rufus E. Miles and William H. Allen, “The Bureau of Municipal Research Idea,” *Proceedings of the Pittsburgh Conference for Good City Government and the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League, Held November 16, 17, 18, 19, 1908 At Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*, ed. Clinton Rogers Woodruff (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1908), 122-29; “For a Bureau of Municipal Research,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 24, 1908, p. 8; Henry Bruère, “Government and Publicity,” *The Independent* 58, no. 3080 (December 12, 1907): 1422-27; “The Bureau of Municipal Research,” *The Independent* 58, no. 3080 (Dec. 12, 1907): 1444; “Municipal Research,” *New York Times*, May 22, 1907, p. 8.

⁶ Dahlberg, *The New York Bureau of Municipal Research*, 66.

produce the specially trained employee.” Similarly, “new devices of popular control” – including the recall, non-partisan elections, direct primaries, and systems of preferential voting – had failed “to produce specially equipped candidates for office.”⁷

His co-director William Allen agreed, arguing in *Efficient Democracy* (1907) that it was a mistake to think that the election of “good men” was sufficient to solve municipal problems because “government cannot be good unless it is efficient, not matter how honest the official.” Allen faulted the leaders of “so-called reform movements” for failing to recognize that what was most needed was information regarding the functioning of administrative departments. Only when armed with “the facts,” as provided by experts, would citizens be able effectively to control local government.⁸ He also disputed the claim that the adoption of a commission charter could solve the problems posed by the corruption of the franchise system. Speaking at a convention of the League of American Municipalities meeting in Norfolk, Virginia, Allen maintained that “[h]undreds of communities ... are now being misgoverned by commissions” because “the commission plan of itself does not insure intelligence on the part of the general public as to Government results and community needs.” “Misgovernment in a democracy,” Allen concluded, “is due primarily to ignorance on the part of the general public as to official acts and community needs.”⁹

⁷ Henry Bruère, “Efficiency in City Government,” *Efficiency in City Government*, ed. Clyde L. King (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1912), 14-17. See also Henry Bruère, *The New City Government: A Discussion of Municipal Administration Based on a Survey of Ten Commission Governed Cities* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1912), 103. Here, Bruère critiqued the commission plan specifically: “Commission government seeks to achieve all these things by changing the form of government, assuming that relief from obstacles to efficiency erected by the checks and balances of a government of divided responsibilities will enable the officials and public desiring efficiency to attain it. The efficiency movement, on the other hand, has given its attention to administrative methods and publicity of facts regarding them, rather than to forms of organization, or the theory that inadequate or wasteful methods, and citizen ignorance of citizen business are at present the principle obstructions to progressive government.”

⁸ William H. Allen, *Efficient Democracy* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1907), x, 1, 280-85.

⁹ “Chadwick Favors Trained Mayors,” *New York Times*, September 20, 1907, p. 6.

With its passion for unearthing the “facts” about the actual administration of government, the Bureau movement clearly developed out of the realist impulse of political science particularly as it pertained to the study of administration. Later commentators would describe the NYBMR as a conscious attempt to implement Frank Goodnow’s distinction between the political and the administrative functions of government, citing both Goodnow’s work and the bureau movement as the foundations of the field of public administration.¹⁰ Municipal political scientists and the staff of the bureaus shared similar training, ideals, and modes of inquiry, employing the language of science and the concept of a politically-neutral realm of administration to be both impartial analysts of and active participants in municipal politics. Bruère, Allen, and Frederick Cleveland, the joint directors of the NYBMR, all had graduate training and viewed themselves as social scientists applying their training to the real-world problem of governmental administration.¹¹

These three directors portrayed bureaus of municipal research as the embodiment of realist methodology of political science, undertaking “scientific” surveys of various subjects in order to propose specific solutions rather than relying on theoretical visions of how

¹⁰ Charles A. Beard, “Administration, A Foundation of Government,” *American Political Science Review* 34, no. 2 (April 1940): 232-33. Dahlberg’s portrayal of Goodnow’s theory in *The New York Bureau of Municipal Research* illustrates the common misreading of his distinction between politics and administration as normative rather than descriptive, as advocating the insulation of administration from politics to shelter neutral specialists from partisan influence (see chapter two). At one point, she writes that “[t]he Bureau men did not believe, any more than did Goodnow and Wilson that the technical side of administration ... operated isolated from politics. They insisted, however, that for the many purposes of municipal research, administrative techniques could be developed and applied apart from the political situation.” In the end, however, she concludes, “Implementing Frank Goodnow’s theory of the separation of politics from administration for the purposes of study and analysis, the Bureau men sought a nonpartisan objective approach. They tried to avoid the making of value judgments about men and offices while attending to the structure, process, technique, and methodology of administration” (41-42, 240).

¹¹ William Allen graduated from the University of Chicago and then studied in Germany before receiving his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Pennsylvania. He and Frederick Cleveland, who also held a Ph.D., both studied with the economist Simon Patten at the University of Pennsylvania. Allen was a member of the American Political Science Association, the National Municipal League, and the American Statistical Association. Henry Bruère graduated from the University of Chicago and received a law degree from Harvard University. Dahlberg, *The New York Bureau of Municipal Research*, 7-9; John Louis Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement: Social Science and Progressive-Era Reform in New York City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007): 103-07

government should ideally function.¹² In 1908, Bruère, speaking at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, described bureaus as models “of the inductive method of political science” and “opposed to a static conception of political principles and ideals.” Instead, they proposed “on the basis of experience and contemporary social conditions” to produce “a new interpretation ... of governmental ideals.”¹³ Similarly, in explaining the activities to be undertaken as part of the larger effort to “promote efficient and economical municipal government,” Allen, in an article in *Political Science Quarterly* from the same year, presented staff of the NYBMR as scientists whose investigations would yield better understandings of the actual workings of municipal government. These scientists would work “to promote the adoption of scientific methods of accounting and of reporting ... with a view to facilitating the work of public officials” and “to collect, to classify, to analyze, to correlate, to interpret and to publish facts as to the administration of municipal government.”¹⁴

The connection between political science and bureaus of municipal research existed on an institutional level as well. Within a year of its founding, Columbia University invited the NYBMR to offer a course in “Public Business,” which Allen described as “emphasizing facts rather than personalities, administration rather than legislation, needs rather than theories and results rather than political speculation.”¹⁵ Soon the NYBMR set up its own Training School for Public Service to combine the theoretical training of academic social sciences with real-world, practical training for public service in the administration of

¹² For more on the survey method, see Stivers, 76-81; Dahlberg, *The New York Bureau of Municipal Research*, 53-64. Dahlberg also describes the influence of Frederick Taylor’s *Shop Management* (1903) in the Bureau’s aspiration to make local government more efficient (42).

¹³ Bruère, “The Bureau of Municipal Research,” 111.

¹⁴ William H. Allen, “Instruction in Public Business,” *Political Science Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (December 1908): 607.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 605.

government. Charles Beard, a professor of political science at Columbia and former student of Frank Goodnow, was deeply impressed with the work of the Training School. In 1913, in a report to the American Political Science Association and the American Economic Association, Beard concluded that “the Training School fulfills every requirement of a university” and even recommended that political science graduate students “spend a portion of their time at the Training School” while researching their dissertations. Beard also set up his own “Politics Laboratory” at Columbia in 1911, and after resigning from the University, he became the director of the NYBMR’s Training School.¹⁶ Harvard also instituted its own Bureau for Research in Municipal Government in the 1910s, and soon many state universities established bureaus as well.¹⁷

In order to assert their own authority as trained and scientific experts, leaders of the bureaus criticized the work of other municipal reform associations as inefficient and sometimes self-interested and portrayed their own bureaus not as voluntary but rather as professional organizations. Though William Allen believed that without civic organizations,

¹⁶ Beard as quoted in Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement*, 109-10; Stivers, *Bureau Men and Settlement Women*, 104. Goodnow was a strong influence on Beard, and Beard’s famed resignation from Columbia in a protest over academic freedom was partly a reaction to the denial of the Ruggles Professorship to Goodnow in 1912. See Clyde W. Barrow, *More than a Historian: The Political and Economic Thought of Charles A. Beard* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 148; R. Gordon Hoxie, *A History of the Faculty of Political Science at Columbia University* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 106.

¹⁷ Two key publications by the Harvard Bureau for Research in Municipal Government were William Bennett Munro, *A Bibliography of Municipal Government in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915) and Nathan Matthews, *Municipal Charters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914). For financial records of the Harvard Bureau, see Folder 904 “Government Department – Municipal Research,” Series 1919-1922, Folder 14 “Government Department – Municipal Government, Series 1917-1919, Folder 78 “Government Department – Bureau of Municipal Research,” Series 1914-1917, Folder 726 “Government, Department of – Bureau for Research in Municipal Government (Wm. B. Munro),” Series 1909-1914, Records of the President of Harvard University, Abbott Lawrence Lowell, 1909-1933, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA (hereafter cited as Lowell Papers).

Charles McCarthy, “Preliminary Report of the Committee on Practical Training for Public Service,” *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* 10 (1913): 307-10 lists bureaus affiliated with the Universities of Oregon, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin, Cincinnati, and Iowa and Harvard University. T.B. Elbridge, “State Bureaus of Municipal Research and Information,” *Journal of Social Forces* 1, no. 1 (November 1922): 47-48 discusses Bureaus affiliated with the Universities of Kansas, Minnesota, Texas, and North Carolina and a Bureau run directly by the state of New Jersey.

elections alone could not make a democratic society “truly representative,” he also warned of “the importance of keeping foundations and all other volunteer activities in their places, as aids to and not obstructions to Democracy.” He went on to critique those civic groups that worked to persuade local government to undertake projects that did not benefit the entire community, even comparing the “secret lobbying or extensive advertising” of such “outside special interests” to “interference by ‘politicians,’ ‘party managers,’ and ‘bosses.’”¹⁸ Yet Allen and his colleagues did not consider that their own Bureau might, as a civic organization, also be susceptible to such criticisms. One of the later directors of the NYBMR celebrated the “unique contributions of the ‘government researchers,’” contrasting their work with that of other “civic organizations” “dealing broadly with government and citizenship” by describing the early bureaus as “pioneers in applied political science.”¹⁹

The self-image of bureaus as professional organizations distinct from civic voluntary organizations had two important consequences. Bureaus did not rely on volunteers to carry out their work. They were to be staffed by paid professionals, an essential component of their mission of replacing what they perceived to be the unorganized, inefficient, and haphazard efforts of lay people with those of trained experts. One consequence of this professionalization of municipal reform was a greater reliance on wealthy donors. Bureaus required greater funding than the municipal reform associations of the 1890s. In cities across the country, local commercial organizations were often the principle backers of bureaus, and,

¹⁸ William H. Allen, *Universal Training for Citizenship and Public Service* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1917), 87-90.

¹⁹ Luther Gulick, “Voluntary Organizations That Promote Better Government and Citizenship,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 105 (January 1923): 71-75. By this time the New York Bureau of Municipal Research had become the National Institute of Public Administration, and Gulick served as its director.

as a result, some questioned the alleged impartiality of the bureaus.²⁰ Another consequence was a widening of the gulf between male and female municipal reformers. A recent study contrasting the efforts of bureaus of municipal research and settlement houses argues that predominantly male bureaus used the “masculine” language of science and professionalism to counterbalance their efforts to introduce “feminine” concerns with morality and social welfare into the administration of municipal government. In a quest to replace voluntary organizations staffed by amateurs with professional bureaus staffed by trained experts, the bureau movement further distanced the work of women’s municipal reform organizations with the largely male world of structural reform.²¹

Bureaus sought to replace voluntary organizations dedicated to municipal reform as the intermediary between elected officials, administrators, and the people of the city. A major underlying premise of the bureau movement was that the average citizen was simply incapable of understanding the complexities of municipal administration on his or her own. According to William Bennett Munro, professor of municipal government and a leader in Harvard’s Bureau, bureaus “take it upon themselves to act as public advisers in matters that are ... too complicated and too technical for the public to understand and form opinions without assistance.” To prevent inefficiency in the administration of “the city’s business,” bureaus proposed “to provide an effective centre of trustworthy information and to bring this

²⁰ According to Bruère, “Where government is progressive a progressive commercial organization is likely to be found. Commission government, for example, is often made a part of the progressive programs of ‘boosting’ commercial organizations” (19) Henry Bruère, “Efficiency in City Government,” *Efficiency in City Government*, ed. Clyde L. King (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1912), 3-22. In Toledo, the Commerce Club initiated the move to form a bureau of Municipal Research. See “Commerce Club Elects Trustees,” *Toledo Blade*, September 16, 1914, p. 8; “For Municipal Research Bureau,” *Toledo Blade*, July 21, 1914, p. 4. For more examples of bureaus funded by commercial organizations and business leaders, see Gill, *Municipal Research Bureaus*, 17-21.

²¹ Stivers, *Bureau Men and Settlement Women*, 3-11. 75.

information to the ears of every citizen”²² Charles Beard’s textbook on *American City Government* celebrated the work of bureaus “educating the public in municipal science” particularly as it pertained to focusing less attention on elections and more on “less spectacular but more important questions of city administration.” In fostering a better understanding of the importance of administration, Beard credited bureaus with many improvements, among them compelling public-service corporations “to fulfill more exactly the terms of their franchises.”²³

Though most supporters of the concept of bureaus of municipal research expressed a desire to educate the public as to the details of local administration, they often did not agree on exactly what it meant to do so. The directors of the New York Bureau were forced to address their differences regarding this matter when a major financial contributor attempted to exert his control over the activities of the Bureau. In New York, the primary backers of the Bureau included some of the wealthiest Americans of the day, with such illustrious names as John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and J.P. Morgan topping the list of donors.²⁴ When Rockefeller attempted to dictate its agenda, the leaders of the Bureau were forced to consider exactly what it meant to participate in local politics as impartial experts.²⁵ By the early 1910s, Rockefeller suggested that the Bureau, among other changes, stop publishing weekly postcard bulletins to the public and, in Allen’s words, end its “fight to secure democratic, progressive, informed management of New York city’s school system.”²⁶

²² William Bennett Munro, *The Government of American Cities* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1912), 377.

²³ Charles A. Beard, *American City Government: A Survey of Newer Tendencies* (New York: Century Co., 1912), 78-79.

²⁴ Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement*, 114-15.

²⁵ For more on the question of how to function as impartial social scientists while relying on private donors for funding, see Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement*, 113-23. For more on the confrontation with Rockefeller, see also Stivers, *Bureau Men and Settlement Women*, 41-45, 72-73.

²⁶ Quoted in Stivers, *Bureau Men and Settlement Women*, 42-3.

Allen was the most radical of the three directors of the Bureau and viewed himself as a progressive and a feminist. He was strongly committed to the ideal of public participation in the process of government, and he believed that it was only a lack of information that prevented the general public from appreciating the true causes of misgovernment. When provided with such information, Allen insisted that most people would be able to understand what needed to be done and join in the battle for good city government. Cleveland, in sharp contrast, was less confident that the general public, even when provided with such information, would ever be able to comprehend the increasingly complex administration of government.²⁷ His ideal of citizen participation in government envisioned that a few wealthy elites would determine “the welfare needs of the community” by funding “staffs of trained experts.”²⁸ When asked to choose between efficient government in the name of promoting public welfare or democratic government relying on wider public participation, Cleveland would have chosen the former.

The Rockefeller Foundation clearly preferred Cleveland’s vision for the NYBMR, as was made clear in the reply of one of the trustees to Allen’s report on the administration of public schools. He suggested that the NYBMR should “confine its function to investigation, study and recommendation” and avoid “promotion, persuasion and agitation” in order to maintain “that scientific detachment from partisan strife.” Allen soon resigned in protest, and the NYBMR moved towards what an internal memo described as “the Cleveland point of view,” emphasizing “a high degree of scientific detachment” that while “not indifferent to the necessity of proper publicity” focused more on “the educational, as distinguished from the agitating or propagandist type of publicity” and cooperation “with the city administration,

²⁷ Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement*, 105-07; Stivers, *Bureau Men and Settlement Women*, 70-72.

²⁸ Frederick Cleveland, *Organized Democracy: An Introduction to the Study of Politics* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913), 104.

regardless of what political party was in power.”²⁹ With Allen’s resignation, the NYBMR began to focus more exclusively on technical and procedural details of administration, moving away from its original concern with the connection between the means and ends of municipal government.³⁰

In the early years, however, bureaus of municipal research, like so many other types of municipal reform associations, developed out of a coalition among those who believed that more efficient administration was a necessary precursor to expanding the social welfare function of local government. Leaders of the bureau movement repeatedly insisted that they were not interested in efficiency as a tax-saving measure, but rather as a means to increasing the functional capabilities of municipalities. This perspective was not unique to the NYBMR. Lent D. Upson, director of the Dayton Bureau of Municipal Research, told an audience of businessmen at the Toledo Commerce Club that “no city government has a right to be only economic and efficient. It must be the leader in community welfare.”³¹ Even Frederick Cleveland, the most conservative of the three co-directors of the NYBMR, insisted that the purpose of democratic government was not “the protection of private property” but rather to serve as “the welfare agency of the individual.”³²

The most vocal proponent of this view of municipal government as an agency of social welfare was Henry Bruère. In a paper prepared for the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Bruère maintained that “the efficiency movement in cities grew out of recognition of the dependence of community welfare upon government activity.” To this

²⁹ Quoted in Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement*, 118-20.

³⁰ Stivers, *Bureau Men and Settlement Women*, 33.

³¹ “Dayton Manager Describes System” *Toledo Blade*, April 6, 1914, p. 7.

³² Frederick A. Cleveland, “The Need for Coordinating Municipal, State and National Activities,” *Efficiency in City Government*, ed. Clyde L. King (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1912), 24.

end, he proposed that when bureaus set out to “frame an efficient city program,” they consider both “the work and service” currently undertaken by municipalities as well as new possibilities to meet “existing needs toward which community services have not as yet been directed.” Bureaus needed to seek out “opportunities for service.”³³ In his study of commission government, Bruère further expanded upon his “conviction that only through efficient government could progressive social welfare be achieved.” In his discussion of “New Standards of City Government, he provided an expansive list of the “simple prerogatives of citizenship,” including

- Personal and community healthfulness
- Equitable taxation for community benefits
- Purposive education
- Protection from exploitation by tradesmen, landlords and employers
- Prevention of injury to persons or property
- Adequate housing at reasonable rents
- Clean, well-paved, well-lighted streets
- Efficient and adequate public utility service
- Abundant provision for recreation
- Prevention of destitution caused by death, sickness, unemployment or other misfortune
- Publicity of facts regarding government’s programs, acts and results

Demonstrating his faith in the ability of the efficiency movement to achieve these goals, Bruère even concluded, “Sooner or later all organized welfare effort[s] relating to any matter affected by government action or service will seek to establish efficiency in government as the first step in securing permanent improvement in social conditions”³⁴

These promoters of the bureau movement clearly thought of themselves as democratic, but theirs was a democracy that consisted of civic leaders acting for rather than

³³ Henry Bruère, “Efficiency in City Government,” *Efficiency in City Government*, ed. Clyde L. King (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1912), 6-8.

³⁴ Bruère, *The New City Government*, 2, 100, 124. Allen would later credit the bureau movement for encouraging government to adopt the role of a “welfare state.” See Allen as quoted in Dahlberg, *The New York Bureau of Municipal Research*, 32.

with the wider public and as such reflected a loss of the more participatory visions of early municipal reform associations. Even Bruère's "prerogatives of citizenship" included only the right to receive certain services from municipal government and not the right to participate in decisions about what those services should be. At the time of its founding, the NYBMR claimed that it would simply "ascertain and publish facts concerning city needs and governmental means of protecting them" in order "to furnish information upon which the public may base sound judgment regarding problems of municipal government"³⁵ Allen, decades after his resignation from the NYBMR, later described the bureaus as part of "a movement to make democracy a living, vital thing."³⁶ And yet as early as 1908, when he described the work of the NYBMR, it involved little input from the wider public. The Bureau would "study governmental problems through scientific analysis of community needs" and then "focus public attention" on those needs and, by-passing the public altogether, work "to improve administrative methods in coöperation with public officials."³⁷ Under this model, citizens were simply consumers who had the right to have their needs met by local government but not to participate in the determination of those needs. Moreover, their conviction that the details of daily administration mattered more than yearly elections in order to improve the provision of services led them to minimize the importance of representative structures in determining what those needs would be.

From Natural Leaders to Trained Experts: The Transformation of the National Municipal League

³⁵ Quoted in Dahlberg, *The New York Bureau of Municipal Research*, 34.

³⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 32.

³⁷ Bruère, "The Bureau of Municipal Research," 111.

Though the National Municipal League had never been as strongly committed to a participatory vision of urban democracy as some of its contemporaries, it had in the early years worked to generate widespread popular involvement in municipal reform through its network of affiliated organizations, hoping to spark a civic revival and deeper popular interest in city government. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, however, the League increasingly turned away from this original vision and sought to become more like bureaus of municipal research and other professional organizations. Although the League was originally created as a federation of member organizations, in 1911 it altered its constitution to allow individuals to join as well. Within three years, its members were overwhelmingly individuals rather than local municipal reform associations (see Appendix 7A), and by 1919, the new constitution did not even mention organizations as a category of membership.³⁸

This shift was partly the result of an intentional effort to transform the League into a more professional organization where academics and other municipal experts came together to discuss technical matters of municipal administration rather than to consider how to reform the representative structures of local government. When discussing possible ways to increase membership in 1907, the League's Executive Committee informally decided first to solicit new members among "members among the graduates from political science courses in educational institutions" and only second "among good government associations

³⁸ Frank Mann Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform: The History of the National Municipal League* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), 183. Internal minutes of the executive committee in 1903 and 1905 reveal that the League considered several alternatives regarding the composition of the League's membership, including promoting a network of good government clubs in colleges and university and organizing membership by states. See April 23, 1903, Carton 1, Folder 70 "Executive Committee Minutes, 1903" and April 26, 1905, Carton 1, Folder 71 "Executive Committee Minutes, 1904-1905" in Series 1 "Administrative Records, 1894-1989," National Municipal League Papers, Archives of the Auraria Library, Denver, CO (hereafter cited as NML Papers).

generally.”³⁹ Moreover, not only did individuals out represent civic organizations by a margin of nearly twenty to one by 1914, universities and libraries also outnumbered civic organizations by a margin of over two to one (see Appendix 7A). The League increasingly functioned as a venue for experts alone to discuss municipal problems and for the publication of authoritative literature that students and local political actors, who no longer attended League conferences, could consult at public and university libraries.

Several other decisions regarding the activities and publications of the League also reflected its changing goals. After 1910, the League ceased referring to its annual meetings as “conferences for good city government” (they simply became annual meetings) and publishing proceedings of those conferences, deciding to replace them with a *National Municipal Review*.⁴⁰ The style of the *National Municipal Review* emulated academic journals such as the *American Historical Review* and the *American Political Science Review*.⁴¹ While the proceedings had contained both transcriptions of discussions and papers presented at the conferences, the *Review* contained articles (presented as such, despite the fact that many were actually still speeches from the conferences) and book reviews.⁴² The League also began publishing the *National Municipal League Series*, volumes of papers presented at conferences edited by political scientists, and issued fewer short pamphlets.⁴³

³⁹ November 19, 1907, Carton 1, Folder 73 “Executive Committee Minutes, 1907,” Series 1 “Administrative Records, 1894-1989,” NML Papers.

⁴⁰ From 1894-1910, the proceedings were the major publication of the League. See Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 152, 182.

⁴¹ W.B. Munro to A. Lawrence Lowell, April 26, 1911, Folder 738 “Government, Department of – Munro, William Bennett,” Series 1909-1914, Lowell Papers.

⁴² According to Stewart’s *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, a history of the League published in 1950, “The *Review* records monthly, through its major articles and departments, the progress of improvements in municipal, county, and state government. Articles are contributed by academic men, professional researchers, public officials, editors, civic leaders, and laymen. No payments are made for such articles.... Shorter articles in the form of notes and comments are found in the different departments...” (148).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 151. Some of the volumes in this series include: *The Regulation of Municipal Utilities* ed. Clyde Lyndon King (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1921); *Experts in City Government* ed. Edward A.

Many political scientists favorably regarded the *Review*, welcoming this move towards the professionalization of the National Municipal League. When the editorship of the new journal was offered to Harvard's William Bennett Munro, he wrote to University President A. Lawrence Lowell, "It seems highly desirable that this *Review* should be brought to Harvard if possible, for it would fit nicely with our new Bureau of Municipal Research and give us a marked advantage over other institutions in this field." Albert Bushnell Hart, chair of the department of government, concurred regarding the potential of the *Review*, writing to Lowell that when combined with their other work in municipal political science, "the editorship of the only real periodical in municipal government would reasonably give Harvard prestige above all other universities in this field."⁴⁴ Munro ultimately declined the offer, and though the secretary of the League, Clinton Rogers Woodruff, became the editor, two of his associate editors were political scientists Charles Beard and John A. Fairlie of the University of Illinois. In its first issue, the editors declared that the *Review* would not be "an organ of the League, or of any other organization." Rather, it would "aim to present fairly

Fitzpatrick (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1919); *Lower Living Costs in Cities: A Constructive Programme for Urban Efficiency* ed. Clyde Lyndon King (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1915).

⁴⁴ Albert Bushnell Hart to A. Lawrence Lowell, April 28, 1911 and W.B. Munro to A. Lawrence Lowell, April 26, 1911, Folder 738 "Government, Department of – Munro, William Bennett," Series 1909-1914, Lowell Papers. Lowell explained his reasoning as to why he opposed Munro accepting the editorship as follows: "I have known in another department, when some criticism was made of lack of productive scholarship, the explanation being given that so much time had to be taken up in editing as to leave little for productive scholarship. I know of another department which refused to accept the editorship of a *Review* on the ground that it would be a burden, and has never regretted the decision. All this does not mean that I believe it better not to bring the *Review* to Harvard; but that I do not feel sure it would be an unmixed blessing." A. Lawrence Lowell to Albert Bushnell Hart, April 29, 1911, Folder 733 "Government, Department of – Hart, Albert Bushnell," Series 1909-1914, Lowell Papers.

Hart also approved of the decision to end the system of membership by organization rather than individuals. In a letter to Lowell later that year complimenting the League for "its work and promise," Hart wrote, "The League began in a small and rather uncertain way on the general plan of the National Civil Service Reform League, and until a few days ago its membership was nominally made up of organizations rather than individuals." See Albert Bushnell Hart to A. Lawrence Lowell, November 24, 1911, Folder 733 "Government, Department of – Hart, Albert Bushnell," Series 1909-1914, Lowell Papers; May 25, 1911, Folder 23 "Business Committee Minutes, 1911," Carton 3, Series 2 "Office files, 1894-1989," NML Papers.

and impartially the municipal programs of all parties and all organizations and to have technical matters treated by qualified experts....”⁴⁵

The National Municipal League’s changing relationships with other organizations also reflected its leaders’ aspirations to professionalize municipal reform. The League had attracted individual political scientists from its inception, and 1907 it began corresponding officially with the American Political Science Association. Over the coming decades, the two groups organized several joint events.⁴⁶ The League had also closely partnered with other elite civic reform organizations from the start such as the National Civil Service Reform League and the American Civic Association. These organizations, politically active but officially non-partisan, were consistent with their own self-image as objective, unbiased reformers.⁴⁷ Despite their shared interest in urban reform the League never formed an official alliance with the League of American Municipalities (LAM). Composed of elected officials, the League considered the LAM a partisan organization.⁴⁸ Yet after 1900 the

⁴⁵ Title page of the *National Municipal Review* 1 (1912). The other three associate editors were Adelaide R. Hasse, a noted librarian who had worked in the Government Printing Office and at the New York Public Library, John A. Lapp, director of the Indiana Bureau of Legislative and Administrative Information, and Arthur Crosby Ludington, a prominent ballot reformer who had attended Yale, Heidelberg, and Columbia who had published several articles in the *American Political Science Review*. See http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/history/hasse.html; Russel Lawrence Barsch, “Progressive-Era Bureaucrats and the Unity of Twentieth-Century Indian Policy,” *American Indian Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 8; John Boyton Kaiser, *Law, Legislative and Municipal Reference Libraries: An Introductory Manual and Bibliographic Guide* (Boston: Boston Book Company, 1914), 170-73.

⁴⁶ November 21, 1917, Folder 40 “Council Minutes, 1917,” Carton 2, Series 1 “Administrative Records, 1894-1989” and January 24, 1907, Folder 73 “Executive Committee Minutes, 1907,” Carton 1, Series 1 “Administrative Records, 1894-1989,” NML Papers; Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 79, 103-04, 164-65.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the ties between the National Municipal League and the National Civil Service Reform League, see chapter one. The American Civic Association (ACA), founded in 1904, worked “to cultivate higher ideals of civic life and beauty, to foster city and town improvement, to preserve natural scenery and to promote outdoor art.” See “American Civic Association,” *The Chautauquan* 39, no. 5 (July 1904): 496. The ACA had close ties to the National Municipal League. Several officers served in both organizations, including Secretary Clinton Rogers Woodruff, and the two organizations held joint conventions in 1907, 1908, 1909, 1921, and 1932. See November 19, 1907, Folder 73 “Executive Committee Minutes, 1907,” Carton 1, Series 1 “Administrative Records, 1894-1989,” NML Papers; Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 131.

⁴⁸ According to the Executive Committee Minutes, “At the Rochester Convention, a resolution was adopted that suggested the NML should consider an official federation with the League of American Municipalities and the

League eagerly sought to collaborate with professional organizations composed of appointed rather than elected officials such as the American Association of Public Accountants and the City Managers' Association. Moreover, two organizations that sought to professionalize civic associations themselves developed out of League conferences: the National Association of Civic Secretaries and the Governmental Research Association.⁴⁹ The League's success in situating itself as a professional rather than simply a civic association in these years perhaps culminated with the invitation in 1918 to attend a convention to discuss the unique challenges faced by government in the time of war along with the American Political Science Association, the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, the City Managers' Association, the Civic Secretaries Association, the Governmental Research Conference, and the Association of State Municipalities.⁵⁰

Given these efforts to define itself as a professional organization, it is somewhat surprising that in these same years the League also actively sought out closer alliances with women's voluntary organizations and as a result developed closer relationships with many local groups and the General Federation of Women's Clubs. In 1900, only one and a half percent of the League's member organizations were distinctively women's groups, but by 1914 this figure had risen to seven percent. Additionally, eight percent of the 1,923 individual members of the League were female in 1914 (see Appendixes 1A and 7A). This

American Society of Municipal Improvements and other national bodies. They discussed it and decided to form a sub-committee to consider the matter and present a report." Yet there is no record that they ever attempted to create such a federation. Frank Mann Stewart's history of the National Municipal League simply dismisses the LAM as "composed of public officials" who "represented primarily the official point of view in municipal affairs." See January 7, 1902, Folder 69 "Executive Committee Minutes, 1902," Carton 1, Series 1 "Administrative Records, 1894-1989," NML Papers; Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 162.

⁴⁹ April 19, 1916, Folder 39 "Council Minutes, 1916," Carton 2; April 17, 1914, Folder 37 "Council Minutes, 1914," Carton 2; January 24, 1907, Folder 73 "Executive Committee Minutes, 1907," Carton 1, Series 1 "Administrative Records, 1894-1989," NML Papers; Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 162.

⁵⁰ April 19, 1919, Folder 42 "Council Minutes, 1919" and April 24, 1918, Folder 41 "Council Minutes, 1918," Carton 2, Series 1 "Administrative Records, 1894-1989," NML Papers.

increase in membership was likely due at least in part to the decision in 1907 to form an official Auxiliary Committee of Women to aid in the League's work. In these years the League also developed a closer relationship with the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and leaders from both organizations spoke at each others' conventions.⁵¹ Though on the surface this decision seems inconsistent with other efforts to professionalize the League, a closer look women's municipal reform associations reveals that on one level male and female organizations sometimes shared similar outlooks and goals.

Male and female reformers, even those from within the same social class, often pursued distinctive political agendas. Not only did men dominate bureaus of municipal research and women dominate settlement houses, but local male and female reform associations tended to interact with local government in different ways. A study of municipal reform in Chicago argues that the (men's) City Club primarily regarded the city as a place to conduct business, the Women's City Club primarily regarded it as a home. As a result, the former focused its energies on ensuring that the municipality was run efficiently and economically, according to proper business principles, while the latter emphasized the role that it should play in promoting the welfare of all residents.⁵² In another example, in Fort Worth in the midst of the male-run campaign to revise the city's charter and adopt the commission plan, the City Federation of Women's Clubs collaborated with the current

⁵¹ It also published Mary Ritter Beard's *Woman's Work in Municipalities* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1915) as part of the National Municipal League series, and in 1918 the League officially and unanimously voted to endorse women's suffrage. Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 167-68; April 24, 1918, Folder 41 "Council Minutes, 1918" and November 21, 1917, Folder 40 "Council Minutes, 1917," Carton 2, Series 1 "Administrative Records, 1894-1989;" April 25 and 26, 1906, Folder 72 "Executive Committee Minutes, 1906," Carton 1, Series 1 "Administrative Records, 1894-1989;" February 18, 1905, Folder 20 "Business Committee Minutes, 1904-05," Carton 3, Series 2 "Office files, 1894-1989," NML Papers.

⁵² Maureen Flanagan, "Gender and Urban Political Reform: The City Club and the Woman's City Club of Chicago in the Progressive Era," *American Historical Review* 95, no. 4 (October 1990): 1032-50.

councils on several programs, inspecting cemeteries and requesting funds to hire a female police officer and improve public parks.⁵³

Yet to emphasize only the differences among male and female reform associations is to risk missing what they had in common. Settlement and charity work were not exclusively female domains, nor were municipal leagues and bureaus of municipal research exclusively male, and both types of organizations often shared a commitment to expanding the scope of activities undertaken by municipalities.⁵⁴ When the leaders of the City Federation of Women's Clubs reached out to Fort Worth's council, they expressed their faith that municipal government could play a more positive role in the lives of urban residents. Dr. Neva R. Deardorff, a woman who worked for the Philadelphia Bureau of Municipal Research, celebrated such efforts, declaring that with "the change from the old ideal of as little government as possible to the new ideal of government as an active, positive agency of

⁵³ "Council Session Was a Busy One," *Fort Worth Telegram*, December 18, 1906, p. 3; "Police Matron May Be Given by Council," *Fort Worth Telegram*, August 14, 1904, p. 21; "City Council," *Fort Worth Telegram*, August 6, 1904, p. 6; "Chief Rea Favors Employment of a Matron," *Fort Worth Telegram*, July 8, 1904, p. 8; Mrs. John F. Sawyer, President of the City Federation of Women's Clubs, and Mrs. A.H. McCarty, Chairman of the Civic Committee, to the Hon. Mayor and City Council, December 14, 1906 and Mrs. John F. Sawyer, President of the City Federation of Women's Clubs, to the Hon. Mayor and City Council, November 22, 1906, Box "Council Proceedings, October – December 1906," Council Proceedings, Local History Collection, Central Branch, Fort Worth Public Library, Fort Worth, TX.

⁵⁴ In *Bureau Men and Settlement Women*, Stivers recognizes that men and women sometimes belonged to the same organizations, writing that "[m]any settlement workers joined reform organizations led by business and professional men, formed to encourage honest and efficient city government. Settlement workers in New York, Boston, and Chicago worked with businessmen to revise antiquated city charters.... Thus female and male social reformers shared the municipal arena with male structural and administrative reformers. The two approaches went on side by side, sometimes even intertwined." Yet despite this recognition, Stivers still divides the line between male and female reformers too starkly, as when she concludes that "[t]he men of the research bureaus and other structural reformers viewed government as a potential threat to individual liberty or as a service provider of last resort; settlement folk tended to see it as a potential guarantor of social rights" (60-62). Moreover, though Flanagan in "Gender and Urban Political Reform" demonstrates that the men of the City Club of Chicago were wary of schemes for municipal ownership (1037), it is a mistake to assume that all male reformers held similar beliefs. As discussed in chapter five and above with regard to Henry Bruère in particular, many male structural reformers were deeply committed to municipal ownership and/or other plans to expand the activities of local government to improve the welfare of urban residents.

community welfare” women would take on even more important roles in local government.⁵⁵ Similarly, Jane Addams, a national leader in the settlement house movement, celebrated the fact that “the most vigorous effort at governmental reform, as well as the most generous experiments in ministering to social needs, have come from the largest cities.” Though never an active leader in the movement for charter revision, she lamented the fact that current political structures prevented cities from becoming more of a positive force in the daily lives of urban dwellers. According to Addams, many “carefully prepared city charters” prevented municipalities from meeting the expanding “social needs” of modern urban populations.⁵⁶

As Addams’ quotation suggests, sometimes efforts to enable municipalities to meet specific “social needs” led women to support charter revisions. As early as 1901, Samuel Jones appointed three women to the Toledo Charter Commission to aid in the reorganization of the department of education.⁵⁷ In Oakland, even before women could vote the leaders of a variety of women’s clubs argued that the adoption of a commission charter would facilitate the implementation of specific programs currently advocated by their organizations. A.A. Denison of the Equal Suffrage League and the Oakland Club asked “her club sisters” to a sign a petition calling for the election of a board of freeholders to revise the charter,

⁵⁵ Neva R. Deardorff, “Women in Municipal Activities,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 56 (November 1914): 75. On Deardorff’s involvement with the Philadelphia Bureau of Municipal Research, see Stivers, *Bureau Men and Settlement Women*, 10, 142.

⁵⁶ Jane Addams, “Problems of Municipal Administration,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 10, no. 4 (January 1905): 428, 444.

⁵⁷ Although never explicitly stated, the record of the proceedings of the Toledo Charter Commission clearly suggests that the women were appointed to the body only to voice their opinions on educational matters. All three women had backgrounds in education. Miss Jane A. Brownlee was the principal of a local school, Mrs. Dr. Emma Butman was a teacher, and Dr. Mary Law was the director of Toledo’s kindergarten program. On the Commission, all three were appointed to the committee on education, and they rarely even spoke on any matters not pertaining to the schools. In one exception, Law recommended the creation of the position of police matron in the police department. See “Charter Framers at Work,” *Toledo Bee*, April 21, 1901, pp. 1, 3; “Charter Commission Elects Another New Member,” *Toledo Bee*, March 31, 1901, p. 2; “Permanent Officers Selected,” *Toledo Bee*, March 10, 1901, pp. 1, 8; “These Persons Constitute the New Charter Commission,” *Toledo Bee*, February 18, 1901, p. 2. For an example of the many lengthy debates of the Commission in which the women remained silent, see “Ward Representation or Election at Large?” *Toledo Bee*, May 5, 1901, p. 5.

promising that “the adoption of modern ideas in city government” would yield “beneficial effects ... in the way of better sanitation, better school facilities and better homes.” Minnie U. Rutherford of the Child’s Welfare League of Alameda County praised neighboring Berkeley’s “model charter” when speaking on behalf of the establishment of a system of juvenile courts.⁵⁸ After the enfranchisement of women in 1920, women’s groups Oakland, Fort Worth, and many in many cities emerged as prominent supporters of movements for city manager government.⁵⁹

Though these types of women’s clubs and other organizations never presented themselves as professional organizations along the lines of the bureaus of municipal research, they nevertheless largely escaped the accusations of self-interested partiality directed at predominately male voluntary organizations. Partly, gendered ideals of women as morally superior protected women’s groups from such criticisms. Yet leaders of these groups also at times made use of language suggestive of the professional aspirations of some of their male counterparts, describing themselves as impartial leaders who would bring specialized information to a wider public and thereby shape public opinion. One president of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs described the organization as “in no sense political.” Though “broadly sympathetic with reform,” she maintained that “it is not a reform organization *per se*,” concentrating its efforts only “in disseminating knowledge and arousing

⁵⁸ “Woman Praises City Charter of Berkeley,” *Oakland Enquirer*, August 8, 1910, p. 6; “To Present Petition for Election,” *Oakland Enquirer*, May 1, 1908, p. 9; “Clubwomen Ask That New Charter Be Adopted,” *Oakland Enquirer*, April 16, 1908, p. 9.

⁵⁹ Harold A. Stone, Don K. Price, and Kathryn A. Stone, *City Manager Government in the United States: A Review After Twenty-Five Years* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1940), 41; “Women Unite in Manager Campaign,” *Oakland Post-Enquirer*, March 28, 1930, p. 28; “Both Sides Perfecting Charter Fight Forces,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 18, 1924, p. 6; “Name Charter Workers,” *Fort Worth Press*, November 15, 1924, p. 6.

public sentiment.”⁶⁰ Likewise, in *Woman’s Work in Municipalities* (a publication of the National Municipal League Series), Mary Ritter Beard wrote that “in “printing and circulating ordinances, discussing charters, asking citizens what they need, and helping to show them how their needs may be met,” women “seek to arouse public opinion by explaining problems of government to the people.”⁶¹ Clinton Rogers Woodruff agreed, celebrating the “important function” performed by women’s clubs “in the creation of public opinion.”⁶²

Though in the long run the professionalization of municipal government and reform would marginalize women, in the 1900s and 1910s many women held high hopes that the expansion of local government and the training programs offered by bureaus of municipal research would provide women with new opportunities for public service. According to Neva Deardorff, as government became more of “an active, positive agency of community welfare, the services of many kinds of people are being required. And among those new workers are women.” Deardorff believed that the expansion of hospitals, social services, juvenile courts, and many other municipal departments would require the employment of women.⁶³ Mary Beard agreed, arguing that women had a “special aptitude ... for certain municipal posts.” She also celebrated the work of the training programs offered by the New

⁶⁰ Sarah S. Platt Decker, “The Meaning of the Woman’s Club Movement,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 28 (September 1906), 1-6.

⁶¹ Mary Ritter Beard, *Woman’s Work in Municipalities*, 319. Helene Silverberg critiques the National Municipal League for relying on a gendered conception of political participation that excluded women, yet she cites Beard’s *Woman’s Work in Municipalities* as presenting an alternative vision of politics (compared to that of most political scientists) without noting that this was a publication of the National Municipal League itself. Thus, while the League certainly did not operate apart from many gendered political assumptions of the day, it is an oversimplification to dismiss the work of the League as excluding women entirely. See Helene Silverberg, “A Government of Men’: Gender, the City, and the New Science of Politics,” *Gender and American Social Science: The Formative Years*, ed. Helene Silverberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 168-78.

⁶² Josiah Strong et al, “Men’s Views of Women’s Clubs. A Symposium, by Men Who Are Recognized Leaders in the Philanthropic and Reform Movements in America,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 28 (September 1906): 88.

⁶³ Deardorff, “Women in Municipal Activities,” 75.

York Bureau of Municipal Research (led by her husband Charles Beard), claiming that the participation of women in their training programs “is evidence of the desire on the part of women for training in public service and demonstrates woman’s ability to adapt herself to the requirements of that training.”⁶⁴

**“Experts in Municipal Government”:
Realism, “Functionalism,” and Political Science, c. 1905-1915**

A. Lawrence Lowell’s call for a greater reliance on “expert administrators” in democratic government marked a new stage in the realist movement of political science, which increasingly relied on the language of functionalism to justify not only an expansion of the apolitical realm of administration in government but also the need for political scientists, as objective scientists, to shape such expansion. As argued in chapter two, in the 1890s municipal political scientists disagreed as to whether they should focus on the structures of municipalities (i.e. their relation to the state, the powers of the mayor and the councils) or their functions (i.e. the construction of streets and sewers, the provision of utilities, etc.). Early discussions of function candidly promoted the expansion of the range of activities of local government. Yet to avoid the open advocacy of such a “political” issue, political scientists soon turned to Frank Goodnow’s distinction between the two roles of government – the political and the administrative – to redirect the discussion of function towards a depoliticized realm of administration. The result was the emergence of a style of public activism that allowed political scientists to participate in organizations such as the National Municipal League as neutral experts imparting their knowledge concerning universal and apolitical fundamental truths rather than as interested partisans advocating contested ideals.

⁶⁴ Beard, *Women’s Work in Municipalities*, 328, 336-37.

Though A. Lawrence Lowell is considered one of the central figures of the realist movement in early political science, his brand of realism differed from that of James Bryce, Woodrow Wilson, and Frank Goodnow with its strong reliance on scientism and an early functionalism.⁶⁵ While these pioneers had advocated a realism based on the use of history, Lowell's realism emphasized science through the use of statistical and comparative analysis to yield greater knowledge about how contemporary politics actually transpired. This perspective owed much to Lowell's background in mathematics, which he honored in as an undergraduate at Harvard before attending its School of Law.⁶⁶ Lowell developed a functional understanding of politics based on an organic metaphor of government. In "The Physiology of Politics," Lowell's presidential address to the American Political Science Association in 1910, he defined a functional realism and applied it to municipal reform. Explaining how political science might become more like a "modern science," Lowell suggested that they study politics in the same way that physiologists studied organs: by examining their functions. Using the language of realism, he reminded his listeners that this meant they must not study "the functions [for] which the organs are intended" but rather "those which they actually do perform." He faulted studies of a number of topics, including "the reform of municipal government," for continuing to be "theoretical, treating mainly

⁶⁵ For an account that treats Lowell as a realist in the same vein as Bryce, Wilson, and Goodnow, see Bernard Crick, *The American Science of Politics: Its Origins and Conditions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1959), 101-07. Though functionalism now largely refers to paradigm in sociology and to a lesser extent political science popular in the mid twentieth century that argued that social structures exist to perform functions that fulfill societal needs, many municipal political scientists of the period increasingly discussed municipal government as an instrument for fulfilling certain functions to meet the needs of urban residents. One article published in 1968 even insisted that what political scientists then called functionalism was in fact "a continuation of the original paradigm" initiated by the founders of political science in the 1890s, 1900s, and 1910s (380). See Martin Landau, "The Myth of Hyperfactualism in the Study of American Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (September 1968): 378-99.

⁶⁶ Lowell was more conservative than his fellow realists, largely rejecting the evolutionary vision of political institutions celebrated by so many of his contemporaries and adhering to a vision of government as the protector of individual liberty and private rights. He did, however, believe that American democracy needed to adapt its system of administration to meet the increasingly complex needs of modern state. See Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 290-97.

what ought to happen, rather than what actually occurs.” One consequence was that, without information on “the actual workings of political institution,” many “[e]arrest men, overflowing with public spirit” wasted their energies on ineffectual reforms.⁶⁷

In *Public Opinion and Popular Government* (1913), Lowell applied these methodological convictions and in so doing defended the need for parties in the American political system. With its assertion that public opinion was not the result of logical, reasoned deliberation, Lowell’s book foreshadowed the popular critiques of 1920s of the general public as irrational and incapable of understanding the complexities of modern government.⁶⁸ In exploring the constraints on public opinion, however, Lowell also provided an important analysis of parties that drew upon the earlier realist interpretations of their role in the governmental system by Bryce and Goodnow (see chapter two). Arguing for the necessity of parties in a representative system, Lowell wrote that the “essential function” of parties “in any democracy” was “bringing public opinion to a focus and framing issues for the popular verdict.” While he believed that the existing party system was deeply flawed, he argued that

⁶⁷ A. Lawrence Lowell, “The Physiology of Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 4, no. 1 (February 1910), 1-15. Lowell’s use of the organic metaphor differed markedly from earlier realists in its stark scientism, devoid of any ethical content. In contrast, Leo S. Rowe, professor at University of Pennsylvania and one the authors of the first Municipal Program, had presented a city in organic terms to urge citizens to dedicate themselves to a common purpose. He wrote that real civic progress could only come “from new standards of action, created through the recognition of the full meaning of a better city environment; and from the belief that the city contains within itself the possibility of the highest type of social life. Under such conditions, civic activity results, not from the balancing of effort and return, but rather from the new meaning, which the city, as an organic and in many respects ideal, unit has attained.” See L. S. Rowe, “American Political Ideals and Institutions in their Relations to the Problem of City Government,” *Proceedings of the Louisville Conference for Good City Government and the Third Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League Held May 5, 6, and 7, 1897* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1897), 81.

⁶⁸ Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, 296; Terence Ball, “An Ambivalent Alliance: Political Science and American Democracy,” *Political Science in History: Research Programs and Political Paradigms* ed. James Farr et al (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 51-52. Regarding Lowell’s views on public opinion, Ball concludes: “The upshot is twofold. So far as American political science is concerned, the traditional task of educating citizens is less important than is the training of experts in public administration and allied fields. And so as American democracy is concerned, the role of the citizens is considerably diminished” (52)

its shortcomings resulted from “a perversion to improper ends of perfectly normal functions.”⁶⁹

Yet unlike some of his contemporaries, Lowell did not believe that municipal reform associations or any nonpartisan organizations could rectify the flaws of the contemporary party system in American cities by replacing parties as leaders of public opinion. Many of the leaders of municipal reform associations founded in the 1890s hoped that these organizations would supplant parties as the primary moulders of public opinion in local politics, claiming that they, as disinterested leaders, would be better able to unite urban residents in the name of the public good. Initially, early members of the National Municipal League expressed similar sentiments, declaring that “[t]he mission of this League is to create the right kind of public sentiment.”⁷⁰ Additionally, the political scientists who participated in League conferences in the 1890s portrayed it as apolitical as well, thereby providing the perfect vehicle for academics to be involved in politics without being tainted by partisanship. Reflecting this vision of reform associations as above partisan motivations, the earliest texts on municipal politics in the 1890s made no mention of them at all as part of the political system.

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, such texts included discussions of reform associations and other civic groups as parts of municipal political systems. These discussions, however, reflected the extent to which the role of civic groups in relation to public participation in the process of governance continued to be contested in the

⁶⁹ A. Lawrence Lowell, *Public Opinion and Popular Government* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913), 70, 99.

⁷⁰ *Proceedings of the Second National Conference for Good City Government Held at Minneapolis, December 8 and 10, 1894 and of the First Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League and of the Third National Conference for Good City Government Held At Cleveland, May 29, 30 and 31, 1895* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1895), 225.

discipline of political science. William Bennett Munro and Charles Beard were in many ways quite similar. Both were professors at elite institutions and both were active in the National Municipal League and the research bureau movement, and yet their text books on municipal politics provided strikingly different assessments of the value of civic associations.

In *The Government of American Cities* (1912), Munro's chapter on "Municipal Reform and Reformers" highlighted the dangers and limitations of reform associations, warning that "non-partisan organizations" such as the Municipal Voters League of Chicago could "be captured by active partisans." His criticisms of "non political associations," defined as "that legion of associations, clubs, leagues, federations, and so on which are chiefly civic in aim," were more numerous. Munro claimed that the "tangible results" of their efforts were "astonishingly meager" because they were inefficient. They spent too much on paid secretaries, they did not cooperate with government when appropriate, and they did not operate "in a businesslike fashion." Not surprisingly, Munro portrayed bureaus of municipal research in a more favorable light, as undertaking "thorough" studies" of the "actual conditions" of their cities and then presenting "trustworthy information ... to the ears of every citizen." Criticizing reformers for focusing their energies on charter reform as a means to improve local government, Munro commended bureaus for turning their attention to the "efficiency of its internal organization" and "to the functioning mechanism of government." In short, Munro presented bureaus of municipal research as superior intermediaries between municipal governments and citizens than municipal reform associations. Moreover, such critiques of voluntary organizations do much to explain why

the National Municipal League increasingly moved to associate itself with professional rather than civic groups in these years.⁷¹

In sharp contrast, Charles Beard's *American City Government: A Survey of Newer Tendencies* (1912) continued to view civic organizations as effective mechanisms for citizens to participate in local politics. Though, like Munro, Beard favorably assessed the contributions of bureaus of municipal research, he still celebrated the participatory dimension of voluntary associations as an alternative means by which citizens could influence the course of local government beyond merely voting in municipal elections. In his chapter on "Municipal Democracy," Beard embraced a wider variety of groups as legitimate participants in local politics, including discussions of the socialist parties and women's activism that were absent in Munro's text. Beard also complimented the work of "associations and city clubs," writing that "[t]hrough these organizations the citizen is able to voice continually his views on municipal administration and to bring pressure to bear upon public authorities in many ways." He expressed his faith in these types of organizations to undertake endeavors that many of his contemporaries reserved for experts alone, arguing that "[s]uch associations may study the city budget and recommend increases or decreases in appropriations, advise the undertakings of new functions or the revision or discontinuance of old functions...."⁷²

Lowell's assessment of the worth of civic associations was closer to Munro's than Beard's, and his writings on the role of interests in democratic government begin to explain his position. When Lowell urged political scientists in 1910 to observe "clubs, associations, organizations and institutions of all kinds" as part of his call to study "the actual working of

⁷¹ Munro, *The Government of American Cities*, 367-82. Munro's treatment of national organizations, specifically the National Municipal League and the American Civic Association, was far less critical, if not totally favorable. He concluded: "They have been called clearing-houses for the exchange of municipal ideas, and they have, to some extent at any rate, fulfilled the functions implied in this designation" (360-61).

⁷² Beard, *American City Government*, 75-87.

government,” he argued that members of such groups often behaved much like politicians, even claiming that in so doing they often created “a little machine of their own in some society.”⁷³ Lowell likely compared voluntary organizations to parties because he rejected one of their central assumptions. Most municipal reform associations continued to adhere to a belief in a singular common good, hoping to reunite currently competing interests to work for the good of the entire city. Lowell, however, rejected what he called the “Doctrine of the Harmony of Interests” in *Public Opinion and Popular Government*. Beginning with the work of the Enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, Lowell explained that “in Rousseau’s ideal state, everyone desires the same end, whether we call it the common will or the common welfare, and men differ only about the means of attaining that end.” By his own day, however, Lowell believed that “[e]ven the strongest advocates of popular government have discovered ... that the interests of all members of the community are not identical” and that “in many cases men seek to cloak selfish aims by arguments designed to prove that their own subjects will promote general prosperity.”⁷⁴ Lowell’s rejection of the existence of a “common will” thus partly inspired his critique of voluntary organizations claiming to speak for such a will.

Lowell’s explanation for the flawed nature of the American party system, then, did not rely on the common criticism that parties no longer represented the common good but were instead merely tools of “the interests.” Instead, Lowell argued that the problem was that people placed “an excessive burden” on parties and expected them to do “too much.”

⁷³ Lowell, “The Physiology of Politics,” 2, 10.

⁷⁴ Lowell, *Public Opinion*, 29-30. This critique of the notion of a common welfare played an important role in his critique of public opinion based on his concern for minority rights. According to Lowell, “The maxim ... that the people as a whole cannot want to injure itself, and hence that public opinion when enlightened must always be right, is all very well if the people have an essential solidarity based upon the fact that the true interests of all citizens are identical. But if not, the foundation of the maxim crumbles away. The majority may desire to injure the minority wrongfully; or the people now living may, in pursuit of their own objects, disregard the welfare of posterity” (29).

According to Lowell, “The plain fact is that in American democracy undertakes more work, tries to attend to more details for which it is not fitted, than in any other country in the world.” Americans expected parties and their elected representatives to fill a great number of administrative offices and pass an incredibly large amount of specialized legislation that was simply beyond the scope of their skills.⁷⁵ The solution that Lowell proposed, one that would solidify his position as one of the leading political scientists of the day, was his call for a greater reliance on “Expert Administrators in Popular Government.”

In advocating such a reliance, Lowell proposed removing much of the details of governance from the popular decision-making process. Lowell argued that many Americans had lost their “faith in representative government as a universal means of solving political problems.” The complexities of governance increased alongside the expansion of the scope of the state. In cities, where much of this expansion was taking place, Lowell suggested that neither the voters nor the mayors had the capacity to select those individuals best qualified “to construct the roads and bridges, direct the education, manage the finances, purify the water supply, or dispose of the sewage.” In the business world and among professionals, a greater dependence on the advice of trained experts was widely accepted. Yet in government, because of “the democratic dislike of permanence of tenure” and “an insistence on equality,” resistance remained strong. Regardless, Lowell insisted that “[i]f democracy is to be conducted with the efficiency needed in a complex modern society it must overcome its prejudice against permanent expert officials as undemocratic.” For Lowell, the decision to

⁷⁵ Lowell *Public Opinion*, 105-06.

use experts was simply a matter of making use of “the best tools” available, and “the expert of high grade” was “the best living tool of modern civilization.”⁷⁶

While Beard also believed in the need for greater dependence on experts in the administration of modern government, he considered at greater length how to balance the need for both efficiency and democracy. In “Training for Efficient Public Service” (1916), Beard raised the essential question of “whether democracy and efficiency are inherently irreconcilable.” Beard suggested that they were not but that to join the two Americans needed to stop attempting to copy European, and particularly German models, under which democracy was subordinated to efficiency, and instead create their own solutions. Building on Goodnow’s distinction between political representatives who determined public policy and administrators who enacted those policies, Beard argued that the only expert that a democratic society “ought to tolerate is the expert who admits his fallibility, retains an open mind and is prepared to serve.” Implicitly, Beard reminded his readers that expert administrators were not to make decisions regarding the purpose of government. Moreover, providing a concrete suggestion for how to democratize the staffing of governmental administration, Beard suggested that “our civil service commissions should become less and less examining bodies and more and more training bodies. Unless we can endure this thought we might as well give up all notion of reconciling democracy and efficiency.”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ A. Lawrence Lowell, “Expert Administrators in Popular Government,” *American Political Science Review* 7, no. 1 (February 1913): 46, 51-55. A largely identical treatment of this topic can be found in Chapters XVII and XVIII (“Expert Administrators in Popular Government” and “Experts in Municipal Government”) in *Public Opinion and Popular Government*. The simultaneous publication of these chapters as an independent paper in the *American Political Science Review* was indicative of the importance Lowell placed on the concept of experts in his larger argument about what public opinion should and should not dictate in a democracy.

Lowell also connected his argument on the need for experts to the popular crusade against public service corporations in American cities, arguing that “the disadvantage at which our cities fight with great public service corporations is largely due to the difference in the calibre [sic] of the officials employed” (55).

⁷⁷ Charles A. Beard, “Training for Efficient Public Service,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 64 (March 1916): 215-18, 220. Beard also concluded, “There are many things in this world

In contrast, Lowell's writings on the role of experts focused almost exclusively on achieving efficiency by distinguishing between the proper roles "of the layman and the expert," particularly when applied to the administration of municipal government. Adhering to the argument of previous municipal political scientists that "city government is essentially an administrative, not a legislative, concern," Lowell largely ignored the issue of how to create representative structures in local government. Cities played an important role in Lowell's work because municipalities were perceived as providing new services that expanded the reach of the state into domains requiring increasingly technical skill more than other levels of government. Rejecting the applicability of the Jacksonian principle of rotation in office to contemporary cities, Lowell argued that "such a custom is quite out of place in the administration of a large modern city, complicated as it must be by a variety of public services, most of which use the results of recent scientific discovery and mechanical invention." The maintenance of public water supplies, the construction of streets, bridges, and sewers, and "the treatment of disease, pauperism and crime" were "not matters with which even the most intelligent citizen" was familiar. According to Lowell, they could "be mastered only by special study or long experience" and "dealt with efficiently only by persons who have mastered them." As a result, he argued that reformers were mistaken in assuming that the election of "good citizens" rather than career politicians would solve the problems of urban government because even "the best elective officers" would be "helpless without good permanent administrators."⁷⁸

worse than very dirty streets, a high death rate and a larger percentage of crime. Anyone who is so overcome by a passion for efficiency and expertness that he is willing to sacrifice everything else for the sake of securing any kind of mere mechanical excellence has no message for democracy in America" (217).

⁷⁸ Lowell, "Expert Administrators," 56-59.

Lowell then went on to criticize both the National Municipal League's Municipal Program (1899) and the commission plan for failing to recognize the importance of these truths. In many ways, it was not remarkable that he criticized commission government. Most political scientists had never fully endorsed it given their concern over its fusion of executive and legislative functions in a single body. For Lowell, however, its more fundamental flaw was its assumption that any citizen could lead an administrative department. He claimed that in most commission-governed cities, commissioners functioned as "the actual administrators of their departments," which was problematic because "election by popular vote is a very poor way of selecting expert administrators." His extension of this principle to the Municipal Program, however, was more novel. The authors of the Program provided for an elected mayor to serve as the administrative head of a city and believed that in so doing they had successfully removed the administration from the control of the council, the policy-determining and therefore the political organ of government. But Lowell now claimed that it was a mistake to assume that elected mayors could or would ensure that municipal administrations were staffed by a permanent core of professional experts.⁷⁹

Despite his criticism of the Municipal Program, Lowell himself was a vice-president of the National Municipal League. In 1911, the National Municipal League and the National Civil Service Reform League organized a joint-committee to report on "the feasibility of putting and keeping in expert hands the administration of departments of city government (like streets, parks, water, etc.) requiring technical knowledge and skill," agreeing with Lowell the frequent change of department head was inefficient. Lowell did not serve on this

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 59-62. In *Public Opinion and Popular Government*, Lowell also claimed that Goodnow's own writings reached similar conclusions: "Professor Goodnow, one of the authors of the model charter, has himself pointed out that heads of city departments are likely to be recruited too frequently from professional politicians rather than professional administrators or men of proved executive talent" (284).

committee, but two years later, he agreed to serve on another committee that would revise the original Municipal Program. As he explained in a letter to his colleague Albert Bushnell Hart, then chairman of the executive committee of the League, "The fact is that there are matters on the use of experts that I am very anxious to see given a chance of trial."⁸⁰

**City Managers as "Expert Servants":
The Commission Manager Plan and Second Municipal Program, 1912-1919**

The National Municipal League announced the formation of a committee to revise its Municipal Program in 1913 far less dramatically than it had announced the decision to draft a program in 1897. The original resolution calling for a committee to consider the matter called for the creation of a "working plan or system" that embodied "the essential features that must underlie successful municipal government."⁸¹ Though the resulting Municipal Program was initially quite influential in countless cities around the country, the rising popularity of the commission plan in many ways left strict adherents of the Program somewhat out of touch with contemporary trends in charter revision. The widespread preference for the commission plan made the claim that the Municipal Program represented the "essential" and "fundamental" principles of local government seem misguided at best. Regardless, the League tried to portray the popularity of commission government as a positive reflection on its work. Secretary Clinton Rogers Woodruff at one point even claimed that though there was "a slight difference as to the form," "the commission form

⁸⁰ "Experts in Municipal Government," Folder 30 "Committees and Projects, Experts in Municipal Government, 1911," Carton 50, Series 4, Part 1 "Committees and Projects, 1894-date," NML Papers; A. Lawrence Lowell to A. B. Hart, December 20, 1913, Folder 1229 "National Municipal League," Arthur Dexter Brigham to A. Lawrence Lowell, December 6, 1911 and draft of the Report on the Selection and Retention of Experts in Municipal Service, Folder 730 "Experts in Municipal Government," Series 1909-1914, Lowell Papers. The League hired Brigham who worked at Harvard "to gather information," and Brigham sent a copy of his report to Lowell for comments.

⁸¹ "Proceedings of the Louisville Conference and Third Annual Meeting," *Proceedings ... 1897*, 6-7.

succeeded because it embodied certain fundamental principles of the Municipal Program.”⁸² Yet the League had never actually endorsed commission government or amended its Program to encompass it. In 1913, Woodruff continued to argue that “[t]o the extent to which the commission form of municipal government mingles the policy-determining and the policy-executing functions in one and the same body of men, there is serious danger.”⁸³ The innovation of a new and more attractive form of municipal government in 1911, however, led to the decision to revise the original program. And so the League declared that because of “the great strides in the evolution in city charter making” over the past fifteen years, the time had come to consider “a new program and model charter.”⁸⁴

Richard S. Childs’s initial prominence as a reformer was due to his role as the unofficial leader of the Short Ballot Movement. Childs, an advertising executive and businessman from New York, graduated from Yale in 1904 and quickly became deeply involved in municipal reform. Though Childs’ cited James Bryce’s *The American Commonwealth* and Lincoln Steffen’s *The Shame of the Cities* as his inspirations, he was also deeply influenced by political scientists such as Graham Wallas of the London School of Economics.⁸⁵ He was also undoubtedly influenced by Frank Goodnow, who, among others, had long argued that cities required citizens to elect so many officials that most simply voted the straight party line. The “elective principle,” according to Goodnow, had been overused and misapplied to positions that required “skill” rather than “representation.”⁸⁶ For Childs, however, this issue became something of a crusade. When Childs first voted at the age of

⁸² Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “The Municipal Program: Old and New,” *A New Municipal Program*, ed. Clinton Rogers Woodruff (D. Appleton and Company: New York, 1919), 14.

⁸³ Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “Simplicity, Publicity and Efficiency in Municipal Affairs,” *National Municipal Review* II, no. 1 (January 1913): 3.

⁸⁴ “Rapid Strides in City Making; For Home Rule,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 19, 1914, p. 14.

⁸⁵ Bernard Hirschhorn, *Democracy Reformed: Richard Spencer Childs and His Fight for Better Government* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 22.

⁸⁶ Frank J. Goodnow, *Municipal Problems* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897), 181-86.

twenty-one in 1903, he was dismayed by the fact that he knew nothing about the vast majority of the nineteen names on the ballot. Within six years, Childs initiated a self-conscious campaign to promote the need to shorten the ballot through the press and several prominent civic associations. In 1908, he sent a copy of a pamphlet he had drafted on the concept of the short ballot to Goodnow, who replied, ““I fully agree with your view of the subject and have myself been preaching this doctrine for the last ten or fifteen years.”⁸⁷ The following year, Childs published “The Short Ballot” in *Outlook* magazine and spoke on “Ballot Reform: Need of Simplification” before the American Political Science Association. He wrote of the “overburdened” voter who simply could not “afford the time to fulfill the unreasonable requirements that are now essential to intelligent voting.” To rectify the situation, he proposed that no more than five offices appear on the ballot in any election so that the average voter could actually be familiar with all the candidates and not have to rely on partisan affiliations. When “the electorate votes only for men it knows,” Childs promised, “we shall have real popular control, real democracy, and government that more accurately responds to public opinion.” To this end, he organized the National Short Ballot Organization (NSBO), successfully soliciting the support of several very prominent individuals, including Woodrow Wilson, who agreed to serve as president.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Frank J. Goodnow to Richard S. Childs, December 16, 1908 and Richard S. Childs to Frank J. Goodnow, December 15, 1908, Folder “Ce-Ch,” Box 3 ““Correspondence: C – China Medical Board,” Collection 3 “Correspondence,” Frank Johnson Goodnow Papers Ms. 3, Special Collections, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University (cited hereafter as Goodnow Papers).

⁸⁸ John Porter East, *Council-Manager Government: The Political Thought of Its Founder, Richard S. Childs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), 4-5, 43-54; Richard S. Childs, “Ballot Reform: Need of Simplification,” *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* 6 (1909), 69-71; Richard S. Childs, “The Short Ballot,” *Outlook* (July 17, 1909), 635. Childs soon published a book length endorsement of the short ballot. See Richard S. Childs, *Short-Ballot Principles* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911). In Childs memoirs he very clearly stated that he originally envisioned his plan as a continuation of the commission plan, not a replacement for it. Only later did it become known as the council manager and then the city manager plan. See Richard S. Childs, *Civic Victories: The Story of an Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), 145, 151.

Childs soon turned his attention to municipal reform, using the same methods to promote his own vision of the ideal form of municipal government, which would eventually become known as the city manager plan. In 1908, the city council of Staunton, Virginia passed an ordinance empowering a “general manager” to undertake all executive and administrative duties on behalf of the council. While initially interested in the commission plan, the state constitution required all cities to elect a mayor and a bicameral council. The present council instead decided to create the position of a “general manager.” Childs read about Staunton’s innovation and felt it would work better if paired with the smaller elected body of the commission plan. With the aid of a graduate student of Charles Beard, he drafted a variation of the plan that he called the “commission manager plan” (which only later became known as the city manager plan), combining a short ballot under which only the commissioners would be elected and an administration under the control of an “expert administrator” in the person of the appointed city manager similar to a German burgomaster. As Childs explained, the manager was not to be involved in politics at all, but rather operated as “simply the expert servant of the commission.” He convinced the Board of Trade of Lockport, New York to petition the state legislature to grant such a charter in 1911. Though the legislature declined, Childs managed to publicize the “Lockport Plan” through the NSBO, particularly by its inclusion in Charles Beard’s *Lose-Leaf Digest of Short Ballot Charters* (commission charters), a publication of the NSBO. As Childs later described these early efforts, “papers on the ‘Lockport Plan’ were gotten into various civic conventions and magazines; and thus the idea was put on the map in a campaign which went on for ten years under my personal and enthusiastic direction.” The Plan quickly attracted the attention of

newspapers, magazines, and academic journals throughout the country, and by 1912 Sumter, South Carolina became the first city to adopt it under a new charter.⁸⁹

The decision to form a committee to revise the Municipal Program in the fall of 1912 was not a coincidence, for the emergence of this new plan provided the perfect opportunity to align the League with a popular trend and thereby reassert the League's reputation as a leader in municipal reform. Childs' commission manager plan conformed to the ideals of many of the leading figures of the League in a way that the commission plan never had. As discussed at greater length in chapter five, in 1911, the League's Committee on the Operation of Commission government, composed of Childs, Munro, Beard, Woodruff, and Ernest S. Bradford, presented only a qualified endorsement of the commission plan for use in smaller cities.⁹⁰ Two years later, the same Committee issued a supplemental report endorsing the commission manager plan. The Committee listed twelve separate reasons why it preferred the commission manager plan, notably including that unlike the commission plan it permitted "ward elections or proportional representation." Its essential argument, however, was that a city manager would be an "expert administrator" along the lines called for by Lowell. "The commission manger plan," according to the Committee, permitted "expertness in administration at the point where it is most valuable, namely, at the head," allowing for a "comparative permanence in the office of the chief executive" and opening "up a splendid

⁸⁹ Robert Bradley Rice, *Progressive Cities: the Commission Government Movement in America, 1901-1920* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 100-02; Excerpts of 1931 interview with Childs reprinted in Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 219-20; Richard S. Childs, "The Theory of the New Controlled Executive Plan," *National Municipal Review* II, no. 1 (January 1913): 79; *Loose Leaf Digest of Short Ballot Charters: A Documentary History of the Commission Form of Municipal Government* ed. Charles A. Beard (New York: The Short Ballot Organization, 1911), 61001—61007. Initially Childs attempted to convince the New York Short Ballot Organization to endorse his commission manager plan, but the officers declined, preferring to focus on state-level issues.

⁹⁰ National Municipal League, *The Commission Plan and Commission-Manager Plan of Municipal Government: An analytical study by a committee of the National Municipal League* (Philadelphia: The National Municipal League, 1914), 2, 6-12; Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 74.

new profession.” The Committee commended the plan for abandoning “all attempts to choose administrators by popular elections,” which was “desirable” because the people were not qualified to “judge administrative ability.”⁹¹ Woodruff would later celebrate this Committee’s report, claiming that it “constitutes the connecting link between the old and new Programs” by describing the commission plan as a necessary “evolutionary step” along the road to the new Program.⁹²

Initially, the Executive Committee of the League hoped to convince five members of the original Committee from 1897 to serve alongside five new members, and Woodruff was particularly interested in securing Goodnow’s participation. Goodnow, however, declined, writing to Woodruff that he would simply “be too busy in the near future to be of any service.”⁹³ In reality, however, Goodnow no longer believed that it was possible to frame a uniform model form of city government without taking into account the unique conditions of individual cities. Moreover, in a letter to Horace Deming he wrote that “further study on the subject has led me to think that our plan [the Municipal Program] has some serious defects and to believe that the question of municipal organization is not nearly as important a

⁹¹ National Municipal League, *The Commission Plan and Commission-Manager Plan of Municipal Government*, 16-23. Committee member Ernest Bradford, author of *Commission Government in American Cities* (1911), dissented from this final report, claiming that the commission-manager plan granted too much power to the manager and that it ought not be considered a variation of the commission plan, but rather a unique system entirely. Ernest Smith Bradford, *Commission Government in American Cities* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911).

⁹² Clinton Rogers Woodruff, “The Municipal Program: Old and New,” 21.

⁹³ After Goodnow initially declined Woodruff’s invitation to serve on the new committee, Woodruff wrote to Goodnow again asking him if he would “let us have the benefit of your suggestions.” Goodnow agreed, and two months later Woodruff sent Goodnow a letter including him as an official committee member. Though there are no further letters on the subject in Goodnow’s papers, he likely objected because his name does not appear on the final list of members of the new Committee on Municipal Program. See Clinton Rogers Woodruff to Frank J. Goodnow, February 5, 1913; Goodnow to Woodruff, December 5, 1912; Woodruff to Goodnow, December 4, 1912; Goodnow to Woodruff, December 3, 1912; Woodruff to Goodnow, November 27, 1912, Folder “Woodruff, Clinton Rogers,” Box 19 “Correspondence: Wo – Z,” Collection 3 “Correspondence,” Goodnow Papers.

question as I formerly thought it was.”⁹⁴ Publicly, the League simply stated that the previous members were unable to serve and they appointed eleven new members (Secretary Woodruff was the only individual to serve on both committees).⁹⁵ Among the eleven members were both Childs, currently a member of the League’s Executive Committee, and Lowell, currently a vice president.⁹⁶ Appointed in 1912, this Committee first produced a draft at the annual convention of 1914, which the League then published in revised form for all members in 1915. After further revision, the final version of the Program, consisting of state constitutional provisions for home rule and a model charter, was published the following year and then in a volume with a collection of explanatory essays three years later.⁹⁷

Though the League celebrated the debates that surrounded the drafting of the new program as a mark of its openness, the many points of contention suggest that the diverging commitments of leading figures of the League made it increasingly difficult to maintain a coalition based upon a conception of structural reform as an objective matter of unearthing the universal tools for achieving good government. While the explanatory essays described the New Municipal Program as “the best that has yet been proposed for American cities,”

⁹⁴ Ross, *Origins of American Social Science*, 296; Frank Goodnow to Horace Deming, March 24, 1909, Folder “Deming, Horace E. . . .”, Box 5 “Correspondence: Co-D,” Collection 3 “Correspondence,” Goodnow Papers.

⁹⁵ March 31, 1913, Folder 24 “Membership Report, 1913,” Carton 3, Series 2 “Office files, 1894-1989,” NML Papers; Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 50-51.

⁹⁶ For the positions of Lowell and Childs in the League, see November 24, 1911 letter (on National Municipal League letterhead) from Albert Bushnell Hart, chairman of the Executive Committee, to A. Lawrence Lowell, Folder 733 “A.B. Hart,” Series 1909-1914, Lowell Papers. The other members of the committee included political scientists William Bennett Munro (Harvard University), Herman G. James (University of Texas, secretary of the League of Texas Municipalities), A. R. Hatton (Western Reserve University), and John A. Fairlie (University of Illinois). The remaining five members were William Dudley Foulke, President of the League from Richmond, Indiana, M.N. Baker of Montclair, NJ (*Engineering News*), Delos F. Wilcox of New York, NY (Assistant Commissioner of Water), Mayor Fessler of Cleveland, OH (President of the Cleveland Civic League), and Roger T. Paine of (former vice president of the League, Democratic candidate for governor of Massachusetts in 1896) Boston, MA. See Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 51, 216-17; Woodruff, “The Municipal Program: Old and New,” 22; *A New Municipal Program*, ed. Clinton Rogers Woodruff (D. Appleton and Company: New York, 1919); vii-viii.

⁹⁷ Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 50-53; *A New Municipal Program*, 295-370; *Municipal Home Rule and a Model City Charter* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1915).

they did not, like those accompanying the original Program of 1899, claim that it embodied the fundamental or essential principles of government applicable to all cities. Woodruff even noted that the members of the Committee did “not assert that the Model Charter is the last word, but the latest,” claiming that “it embodies the form and content which it is believed will at the present state of public mind and practice on the subject yield the largest measure of efficient, democratic government.” Moreover, not only were there several significant differences between the 1915 and 1916 versions of the Program, the Committee did not unanimously endorse several provisions of the final draft.⁹⁸ The League attempted to frame these disagreements in a positive light. The review of the Program printed in the *National Municipal Review* celebrated the fact that the Committee was not “a group of like-minded enthusiasts” who sought “by propaganda and skillful publicity to inculcate reform ideas.” Rather, the League’s Committee brought “together intelligent citizens, holding varied and independent views [to] construct a reform program from the common ground of principles and methods which all can accept.”⁹⁹

Childs, speaking for the League, summarized that the fundamental goal of the New Municipal Program in one word: “democracy.”¹⁰⁰ Yet a close reading of the accompanying essays of the Program make clear that the Committee was divided regarding the question it meant for their Program to be democratic. The League had described the first Municipal Program as a system consistent with “the demands of radical democracy” in that it widened the sphere of home rule and granted more powers to city councils as the people’s representatives. Yet in their discussions of the Program, these early figures in the League

⁹⁸ Quotations from Woodruff, “The Municipal Program: Old and New,” 24-25; Abbott Lawrence Lowell, “Experts in Municipal Government and the New Model Charter,” *A New Municipal Program*, 45.

⁹⁹ C.C. Williamson, Review of *A New Municipal Program* ed. Clinton Rogers Woodruff, *National Municipal Review* VIII, no. 6 (August 1919): 442-43.

¹⁰⁰ Richard S. Childs, “The Short Ballot Principle in the Model Charter,” *A New Municipal Program*, 118.

also voiced their belief that structural reform needed to be accompanied by a revival of popular interest in local affairs. Nearly twenty years later, such talk of a civic revival in American cities had almost entirely vanished. Though reformers and political scientists in the League still hoped to propose governmental structures with the potential to facilitate functional expansion while maintaining popular democratic control, the meaning of such control had changed. The authors of the New Municipal Program relied on the role of administrative experts rather than a representative council to frame their work as democratic, and democracy came to mean municipally-owned utilities, improvements in public welfare, and the adoption of a short ballot rather than a more participatory system of government.

The New Municipal Program argued for an even wider sphere of local self-government than had the original Program by including charter revision as a legitimate component of home rule. The provisions for home rule, though similar to those in the original Program, now encompassed the right of individual cities to frame their own charters. As in the first Program, following Goodnow's theories, the second Program granted cities general rather than enumerated powers, allowing them to do anything that was not expressly prohibited under state law.¹⁰¹ Yet by allowing cities complete control over the framing of local charters, the New Municipal Program rejected the need for "uniformity in the organization of cities" and embraced "the idea of local freedom as to the forms of government." This position, according to committee-member Delos F. Wilcox, reflected the continued commitment of the League "to define as well as to advocate the principle of municipal self-government."¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ "Municipal Home Rule Constitutional Provisions," *A New Municipal Program*, ed. Clinton Rogers Woodruff (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1919), 302-307.

¹⁰² Wilcox was also concerned, however, about the exclusive association of home rule with charter revision. Though in supporting the New Municipal Program he agreed that cities should frame their own charters, he had

In part, the League's continued commitment to home rule enabled it to continue to avoid taking a firm stance on municipal ownership and thereby risk alienating either side of this contentious topic. Wilcox, however, used the concept of administrative expertise to challenge the need for state regulatory boards by arguing that under the new Program, cities could develop their own experts under a system of home rule. By the 1910s, many academics and reformers increasingly expressed a preference for "expert public service commissions," often on the state level, over plans for municipal ownership as a solution to the problems posed by the current system of granting franchises. Some proponents of this position were members of the League as demonstrated by the declared preference for state-level commissions in the volume on *The Regulation of Public Utilities* (1912) edited by Clyde L. King as part of the National Municipal League Series.¹⁰³ Yet other members, including Wilcox, who had chaired the League's Committee on Franchises in 1913, feared that such proposals for achieving expert regulation through state boards would destroy the achievements of home rule.¹⁰⁴ Notably, likely indicating continued tensions between these two groups, the earlier draft of the Program stressed municipal ownership and the use of popular referenda on franchises more so than the final draft.¹⁰⁵

Regardless of these revisions, Wilcox's explanation of "The Franchise Policy of the New Municipal Program" used the concept of expertise to defend municipal ownership and

earlier argued that the right to determine the structures of local government was not as important as the right to determine the policies of local government. As he explained, "I think that more important than the right to choose between the commission form of government and the city-manager plan ... is the right to *do things*." See Delos F. Wilcox, "The Franchise Policy of the New Municipal Program," *A New Municipal Program*, 173, 178; Delos F. Wilcox, "Home Rule for Cities," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Political Science in the City of New York* 5, no. 2 (January 1915): 68.

¹⁰³ *The Regulation of Municipal Utilities* ed. Clyde Lyndon King (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1921 [1912]), v-vi.

¹⁰⁴ Delos F. Wilcox, "Municipal Home Rule and Public Utility Franchises," *National Municipal Review* III, no. 1 (January 1914): 13-27.

¹⁰⁵ "The Model Charter," *A New Municipal Program*, 354-60; "The Model Charter," *Municipal Home Rule and a Model City Charter*, 41-55.

local control of public utilities as a viable solution to the “franchise problem” despite the increasing popularity of state-level regulation. Wilcox argued that in the years since the issuing of the first Program, “popular resentment against perpetual and long-term franchises and against the exploitation of the streets by public service corporations” had become “acute” and that as a result “the sentiment in favor of municipal ownership and operation of all public utilities” was “ascendant.” Thus, while, in deference to the principle of home rule, the new Program did not explicitly endorse municipal ownership as the only or ideal system for the provision of utilities, it was designed, reflecting the “theoretical and ultimate bias” of the League, to remove all “obstacles from the path of municipal ownership.” To this end, the proposed constitutional provisions of the new Program specified that cities be allowed “to furnish all local public services; to purchase, hire, construct, own, maintain and operate or lease public utilities” and “to acquire ... property necessary for any such purposes.” Moreover, without condemning state regulatory commissions outright, Wilcox maintained that the “vitality of local self-government could not be more seriously threatened than by the complete centralization of the control of public utilities in the hands of state commissions.” In place of such commissions, he concluded that cities, whether they opted for municipal ownership or granting franchises to public service corporations, needed to “develop their own experts.”¹⁰⁶

While for Wilcox and others this call for a turn to experts enabled them to argue for the continued feasibility of local self government, for Lowell and an increasing number of

¹⁰⁶ Wilcox, “The Franchise Policy,” 176-79, 188, 194-96. Wilcox also explained that the New Municipal Program alternatively allowed for or “to grant local public utility franchises and regulate the exercise thereof.”; and “to issue and sell bonds on the security of any public utility owned by the city, or of the revenues thereof, or of both, including ... if deemed desirable by the city, a franchise stating the terms upon which, in case of foreclosure, the purchaser may operate such utility” (179). The new Program made clear, however, that these enumerated powers were not meant “to limit or restrict the general grant of authority” granted to cities (305).

League members it was a harbinger of a far less participatory vision of the public's role government. Lowell, eager to see certain "matters on the use of experts ... given a chance of trial," presented to the League's membership a vision of democracy in which experts outweighed popular opinion in providing for the public welfare.¹⁰⁷ Speaking before a crowd of over two thousand at the League's annual meeting in Baltimore in 1915, Lowell began by claiming that just as cities now employed physicians to serve as public health officials and engineers to build roads and bridges, they now needed to hire "expert" administrators "to deal with the vast amount of business to be transacted," making sure that the work of the city ran "smoothly, efficiently, and economically." Though he never went into any details on the specifics of what this would encompass, elsewhere Lowell also spoke of the potential of "expert knowledge" to generate "progress in civic welfare," and in this speech, he defined democratic government as "that which provides its citizens with the greatest amount of happiness." Notably, however, Lowell neglected to mention popular participation or representation in his definition of democracy. In fact, in a sharp critique of the capabilities of the people, though he mentioned the need for the "layman," represented by an elected board, to "control the expert," he also insisted that "if our people cannot control experts, they are not fit for self-government on the modern scale."¹⁰⁸

For Childs, the original architect of the city manager form, delegating administrative control to appointed experts facilitated the realization of his ultimate goal: the short ballot as a means of reinstating true popular control over government. Childs perceived himself to

¹⁰⁷ A. Lawrence Lowell to A. B. Hart, December 20, 1913, Folder 1229 "National Municipal League," Series 1909-1914, Lowell Papers.

¹⁰⁸ Lowell's speech of November 19, 1914, was reprinted as A. Lawrence Lowell, "Administrative Experts in Municipal Government," *National Municipal Review* IV, no. 1 (January 1915): 26-31. His application of his theories to the New Municipal Program provided an extremely similar argument. Abbott Lawrence Lowell, "Experts in Municipal Government and the New Model Charter," *A New Municipal Program*, 28-45. On "progress in civic welfare," see p. 31. For the attendance at Lowell's speech, see "Progress in City Government," *Outlook* 108, no. 14 (December 2, 1914): 750.

be an ardent believer in democracy, and his version of democracy solved current problems by asking less of rather than more from citizens, giving up entirely on the alternative vision of citizens coming together to solve mutual problems. Supporters of the original Municipal Program hoped that it would create structures that would both encourage and demand that urban residents take a deeper interest in local affairs. Horace Deming, in “Public Opinion and City Government under the Proposed Municipal Program” (1899), argued that no “scheme of city government” would improve municipal conditions without developing “an effective and general interest among the voters themselves in the actual conduct of the public affairs of the city.”¹⁰⁹ Wilcox also described the original Program as a democratic one, which, when paired with a “long-continued processes of education and social development,” would deepen “popular responsibility” in municipal government.¹¹⁰ Childs, in sharp contrast, dismissed the “old remedy” that hoped to encourage “good citizens to go into politic” as “sound in theory, but unworkable in practice, for a wholesome citizenry has much else to do.”¹¹¹ The new Program mentioned the importance of popular interest in local government once, in a footnote warning that cities should not create the position of a city manager without also adopting “the other principle features accompanying it” because “the manager,

¹⁰⁹ Horace E. Deming, “Public Opinion and City Government under the Proposed Municipal Program,” *Proceedings of the Columbus Conference for Good City Government and Fifth Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League, Held November 16, 17, 18, 1899*, ed. Clinton Rogers Woodruff (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1899), 77, 85.

¹¹⁰ Delos F. Wilcox, “An Examination of the Proposed Municipal Program,” *Proceedings ... 1899*, 53, 62. Committee member Leo S. Rowe expressed similar sentiments regarding the importance of public opinion: “Civic advance in general and municipal efficiency in particular are the result of a combination of forces, of which higher standards of public opinion and lofty civic ideals are the most important. The form of governmental organization is to be judged by the ease and readiness with which it gives expression to these forces.” See Leo S. Rowe, “A Summary of the Program,” *Municipal Program: Report of the Committee of the National Municipal League, Adopted by the League, November 17, 1899, Together with Explanatory and other Papers* (New York, NY and London: The Macmillan Company, Published for the National Municipal League), 172.

¹¹¹ Childs, “The Short Ballot Principle in the Model Charter,” 112.

might prove to be susceptible to perversion in the interest of a boss in cities with an undeveloped and inactive public opinion.”¹¹²

These other features included provisions for the initiative, referendum, and recall and a recommendation for proportional representation in the election of the city council, all important for many who conceived of the Program as democratic. Yet they were not universally supported by the Committee. While the first draft in 1915 of the model charter required council members to be elected under a system of proportional representation, the final version only recommended it as one of three options, though the preference of “a majority of the committee.” The sections on the initiative and referendum, likewise, were not unanimously approved, but rather “inserted by a majority vote of the committee.”¹¹³ Though the final version of the New Municipal Program did not list the positions of individual members of the Committee, privately Lowell commented that he did not “have much faith in the initiative, referendum, and recall or proportional representation” in municipal government.¹¹⁴ Lowell’s participation in the Committee stemmed from his support of the city manager plan and did not reflect any commitment to these other reforms. For others such as Childs, however, combining a short ballot, proportional representation, and measures for direct democracy with an appointed city manager effectively solved the

¹¹² “Model City Charter,” 334. The New Program did claim that public interest ultimately mattered more than structural reform alone, but it did so only once in a footnote, suggesting that the Committee members perhaps felt obligated to acknowledge this sentiment that pervaded discussions of the first Program without really believing in it themselves. “It is also true that no form of government can in and of itself produce good results. The most that any plan can do is to provide an organization which lends itself to efficient action, and which at the same time placed in the hands of the electorate simple and effective means for controlling their government in their own interests. The evils in city government due to defective and undemocratic organization can thus be removed; beyond that, results can only be achieved through the growth of an active and enlightened public opinion” (334).

¹¹³ Mayo Fessler, “Electoral Provisions of the New Municipal Program,” *A New Municipal Program*, 101; *A New Municipal Program*, 325,329; *Municipal Home Rule and a Model City Charter*, 13, 15, 19.

¹¹⁴ A. Lawrence Lowell to Charles M. Fassett, March 9, 1915, Folder 552 “Municipal Government,” Series 1914-1917, Lowell Papers.

problems posed by the expansion of the scope of municipal government in the twentieth century.

Childs and the City Manager Plan: Good Government or Democracy?

Childs's vision of the city manager plan as the ideal form of municipal democracy would dominate the League in the coming decades. Despite the fact that the New Municipal Program initially received far less attention than the first, in part due to the outbreak of World War I, its long term influence was far greater. In many ways, the *Atlanta Constitution* was accurate when it declared that the New Program marked "the close of a period in municipal reform – a period of forging good tools for democracy to work with."¹¹⁵ Ironically, even though, unlike the grandiose portrayals of the first Program, Woodruff described the New Program as not "the last word, but the latest," the League would continue to endorse essentially the same form of city manager government in its four subsequent model city charters published in 1927, 1933, 1941, and 1964.¹¹⁶ Lowell later chaired the League's committee on City Manager as a Profession in 1916, and Childs became president of the League from 1927-31 and was actively involved in the third, fourth, and fifth revisions of the Municipal Program.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the League's absorption of the Short Ballot Organization in 1920 and the Proportional Representation League in 1932 and its close collaboration with

¹¹⁵ "A New 'Model' Charter for Cities," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 22, 1916, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ On the model charters of 1927, 1933, and 1941, see Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 65-72. The final edition was published after Stewart's history of the League. See National Municipal League, *Model City Charter, 6th Edition* (New York: The National Municipal League, 1976 [1964]).

¹¹⁷ Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 65-67, 75, 206, 218; November 23, 1916, Folder 39 "Council Minutes, 1916," Carton 2, Series 1 "Administrative Records, 1894-1989," NML Papers.

the City Manager's Association during its existence from 1914 -1929 indicated the extent to which it had become a vehicle for the promotion of the city manager plan.¹¹⁸

Childs himself remains something of a conundrum, for though he passionately defended his city manager plan over the next forty years as a tool that would make municipal government more democratic, his own explanations of the plan were somewhat contradictory and thus allowed for multiple readings of its purpose. In his later writings, Childs contrasted "good government," marked by "economy of tax funds, expertness in the technical departments, [and] efficiency of administration" with democracy, a system of "obedient government" controlled by citizens, regardless of the outcome.¹¹⁹ Childs supported the expansion of municipal services as a means to improve the welfare of urban populations but insisted that democracy was his paramount goal.¹²⁰ He also viewed himself as a champion of average voters, arguing that the "difficulties of democracy" were "mechanistic" rather than "moral" and, therefore, that they could be solved by "mechanistic corrections" such as the adoption of city manager plan.¹²¹ For Childs, the plan, by limiting elective officers to a small council selected by a system of proportional representation, made the short ballot a reality. With a city manager appointing all over officers, voters could elect more truly representative councilors to legislate on their behalf.

¹¹⁸ Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform*, 75, 100, 166. Stewart also notes that after 1920 the League used the *National Municipal Review* to promote the city-manger plan, the short ballot, proportional representation, and other reforms (150).

¹¹⁹ Childs, *Civic Victories*, xvii; Richard S. Childs, "A Democracy that Might Work," *The Century: A Popular Quarterly* 120, no. 1 (Winter 1930): 11, 13.

¹²⁰ In a sympathetic and largely uncritical biography, Bernard Hirschhorn, argues that "A vast expansion of the role that imaginative city government was to play in people's lives was central to Childs' political philosophy" (85) and notes that Child supported municipal ownership. See Hirschhorn, *Democracy Reformed*, 85-87.

¹²¹ Childs in the *National Municipal Review* in 1955 quoted in Richard J. Stillman II, *The Rise of the City Manager: A Public Profession in Local Government* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 17.

Yet beyond the seeming simplicity of this characterization of city manager government, in practice the ambiguity of Childs own writings partly facilitated an interpretation that viewed the plan as primarily a system that enabled appointed managers, as professional experts regarding the needs of municipalities, to make policy decisions. Although Frank Goodnow originally intended his characterization of politics and administration as the two functions of government to be descriptive rather than normative and argued for both their separation and integration, many future readers misinterpreted his work as advocating the insulation of a neutral sphere of administrative expertise protected from partisan influence. Childs's biographer presents his vision of the city manger plan in a similar light, claiming that he too argued that though the council would serve as the political arm of government and the manager as the administrative, in practice their duties could never be fully divided and that it was unrealistic to expect that a manager would never advise a council on matters of public policy. Childs also repeatedly maintained that real "merit of the plan" did not lie in its administrative innovations per se but rather in its creation of an electoral system whereby voters could truly control their elected representatives in the council that would in turn control the administration of the municipality by hiring a city manager.¹²²

Yet regardless of these statements, Childs somewhat paradoxically also contributed to the interpretation of the program as a tool for empowering appointed administrators over elected councilors. While Childs expected managers to become involved in the political side of government (albeit in a limited way), he emphasized the importance of preventing councilors from becoming involved in the administrative side. In his memoirs, he celebrated the influence of the New Municipal Program by noting that a passage (written by A.

¹²² Hirschhorn, *Democracy Reformed*, 71-76.

Lawrence Lowell) that banned council members from contacting any administrative officials other than the city manager “[e]xcept for the purpose of inquiry” was often copied verbatim in revised charters.¹²³ As early as the 1920s, many managers understood themselves to be more than administrators, expressing doubts about the ability of elected councils to understand the needs of municipal populations and act in the best interest of the community.¹²⁴ In the coming decades, scholars of public administration came to recognize and normalize city managers as playing “significant policy-making roles” in American municipalities.¹²⁵

Additionally, though Childs adamantly maintained that the city manager plan would secure the election of workers and other minority groups in councils, in practice councils in manager cities were most often dominated by business groups. While Childs’s original vision of city manager government included councils elected by systems of proportional representation to facilitate the representation of multiple groups, most manager charters adopted in American cities would replace ward elections with at-large elections. He also insisted that one of the central purposes of creating an appointive city manager was to enable voters to elect representatives without any professional training to serve in a legislative council. According to Childs, “the requirements that elective officers shall be competent to perform executive duties is [sic] a denial of accurate representation to many classes of the community, for the requirements practically attempt to limit the people to the selection of members of the employer class.” He believed that in cities “with a larger laboring class” it was important that councils “should contain a due proportion of laboring men.”¹²⁶

¹²³ Childs, *Civic Victories*, 151-52,

¹²⁴ Leonard D. White, *The City Manager* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 289-91.

¹²⁵ For example, see Stillman, *The Rise of the City Manager*, 3.

¹²⁶ Childs quoted in Hirschhorn, *Democracy Reformed*, 67.

In operation, however, cities governed by manager charters were often controlled by business groups, and despite his disillusionment over this outcome, Childs and other reformers were partly responsible. As early as the 1910s, Childs and other leading municipal reformers voiced their concerns that the manager plan, particularly when paired with at-large rather than proportional elections, was enabling business groups to dominate many municipalities.¹²⁷ To an extent, however, many reformers were willing overlook the fact that business groups often initiated movements for manager charters, hoping that once these charters were adopted, other groups would see the merits of the plan and benefit accordingly. The internal minutes of a committee meeting of the National Municipal League in 1912 made somewhat vague statements to this effect, admitting that “hardhearted businessmen” often wanted their cities to host meetings of the League “to advance their own particular ends.”¹²⁸

Additionally, Childs’s own rhetorical style contributed to the attraction of business groups to his plan. Though he often maintained that the problems of democracy were “mechanistic” rather than “moral,” he too used the language of moralist reform. After it became clear that proportional representation had not taken hold as an integral component of the city manager plan, Childs would later praise at-large elections as destroying “the ancient evils of the ward system.”¹²⁹ Moreover, his passionate declarations that manager government would crush political machines often overshadowed his belief that it would improve the functioning of democracy. In relying on business analogies to explain the workings of the plan that compared a city manager to a general manager in a business corporation, he also appealed to commercial organizations but alienated many unions and other working-class

¹²⁷ Hirschhorn, *Democracy Reformed*, 73; Lent D. Upson, “Letting City-Manager Charters Grow,” *National Municipal Review* VIII, no. 8 (October 1919): 567-71.

¹²⁸ Folder 3 “Committees and Projects, National Conference on Government – 18th, 1912,” Carton 57, NML Papers.

¹²⁹ Childs, *Civic Victories*, 141-42.

groups.¹³⁰ As a result, over the 1920s city manager government increasingly became associated with business goals. In 1930, the national Chamber of Commerce officially endorsed the plan, distributing pamphlets to local affiliates promising not only that it would eliminate “politics” from municipal politics but also that it would yield lower taxes.¹³¹

The alliances among business and labor leaders based on the belief that charter revisions would increase popular control over public service corporations and thereby facilitate an expansion of municipal services broke down in the 1920s. The rapid spread of city manager government after World War I owed much to local commercial organizations. A study of city manager government published in 1927 argued that organized groups of businessmen most often initiated movements to bring city manager government to their cities (and also credited the “persistent and effective agitation” of the National Municipal League for its rising popularity).¹³² By 1929, twenty-two percent of cities with 30,000 or more residents had already adopted the plan (eighty cities in total), but almost none had paired it with proportional representation (see Appendix 7C). It would continue to grow at a remarkable pace over the following decade, particularly in smaller cities, and by 1939 four hundred and seventy two cities operated under manager government.¹³³

Though unions had formed alliances with local business groups and provided crucial backing in campaigns for commission government, they did not typically support movements for city manager charters. In both Oakland and Fort Worth in the 1920s, where central labor unions had supported commission charters in the 1900s and 1910s, unions and other groups campaigned against city manager charters as tools of commercial organizations designed to

¹³⁰ Hirschhorn, *Democracy Reformed*, 76-77.

¹³¹ Stillman, *The Rise of the City Manager*, 20-21.

¹³² White, *The City Manager*, x.

¹³³ See Stone, Price, and Stone, *City Manager Government in the United States*, v.

consolidate business control over local government.¹³⁴ Promises that commission government, paired with the initiative, referendum, and recall, would yield greater popular control over public service corporations proved untrue. Rather than centralize power and accountability, commission government in practice was marked by factionalism, and elections that were often devoid of substantive questions attracted little interest.¹³⁵ In short, past experiences left many voters wary of promises that structural reforms would result in the growth of municipal services to improve community welfare. Yet low turnout, widespread apathy, and the superior organization of business groups combined to secure the adoption of manager charters in popular elections.

¹³⁴ "Labor Opposes City Manager," *San Francisco Examiner*, June 28, 1930; "New Charter Favors Classes Over Masses 'Anti' Speakers Say," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 14, 1924, p. 3; Steven J. Blutz, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans – Causes and Consequences: An Historical and Analytical Study," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1978), 291.

¹³⁵ On commission government in operation in cities in the southwest generally, see Amy Bridges, *Morning Glories: Municipal Reform in the Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 72-75, 83. On commission government in operation in Oakland, see Blutz, "Oakland's Commission and Council-Manager Plans," 207-17.

Epilogue

Municipal Government and American Democracy in the 1920s

While the sub-field of municipal politics once broke new ground in the larger discipline, after the 1920s it stagnated. Exemplifying the realist impulse of the turn of the century, municipal political scientists had once pioneered a new style of scholarship focused on historical and comparative research and a model of scholarly activism that encouraged practitioners to become involved in contemporary movements for political reform. Frank Goodnow was the most prominent example of the sub-field's importance, with his writings on city government leading him first to his participation in the National Municipal League and his landmark work on *Politics and Administration* and later to his presidency of the American Political Science Association, his membership on President's Taft's Commission on Economy and Efficiency, his service as a constitutional advisor to the Chinese Government, and his presidency of Johns Hopkins University. Ironically, it was the misreading of Goodnow's work as a call to insulate a value-free administrative realm from the political process that came to dominate municipal political science as sub-field declined. Textbooks on city government continued to base their analyses on this premise well into the 1950s, long after other political scientists had developed alternative theories of public administration that rejected the ideal of an impartial administrative sphere. Municipal political scientists, however, still presented the total separation of politics and administration, embodied in the city manager plan, as the ideal form of government and held that there could

be no legitimate differences of opinion regarding matters of municipal policy, continuing to treat city government largely as matter of administration rather than politics.¹

Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, however, municipal politics continued to play an important role in the larger discipline as it increasingly turned towards technocracy and scientism. While the desire to be involved in politics had once led political scientists to participate in groups with large memberships such as the National Municipal League, involvement in municipal reform in the 1920s increasingly centered on participation in bureaus of municipal research or other efforts to train professional public servants, particularly city managers. The new city management profession now provided the perfect opportunity to realize aspirations to influence the world of politics outside of academia by training technical experts. In his presidential address to the American Political Science association in 1928, William Bennet Munro, originally a municipal political scientist who was active in the National Municipal League, now ridiculed campaigns to promote the participation of citizens in government as futile, irrational, and unscientific.² At the University of Chicago, political scientist Charles Merriam institutionalized support for the city manager profession. Merriam, who had once studied with Goodnow at Columbia, became a prominent critic of the historical and comparative style of realist scholarship, leading political science in the turn towards a purportedly more scientific style based on psychological, sociological, and statistical techniques. To this end, Merriam worked to bring several public service associations to the University of Chicago, including the International City Managers Association (ICMA). With financial and academic support, in the late 1920s

¹ Lawrence J. R. Herson, "The Lost World of Municipal Government," *American Political Science Review* 51, no. 2 (June 1957): 330-45. See esp. pp. 330-41.

² William Bennet Munro, "Physics and Politics: An Old Analogy Revised," *American Political Science Review* 22, no. 1 (February 1928): 7.

and early 1930s the ICMA thrived, developing a professional identity based on principles of scientific management and technical efficiency characteristic of Taylorism.³

Leonard White's *The City Manager* (1927) illustrates the larger importance of this new profession with regard to conceptions of professional expertise and their relationship to the redefinition of democracy among scholars, reformers, and emerging public professionals themselves in the 1920s. White was a student of Merriam, and his was the first book-length academic treatment of the new profession. White, like many of his contemporaries in the 1920s, continued to believe that urban areas would continue to grow unabated and that, as a result, "[t]he government of people in the United States is destined to be the government of municipalities." Moreover, with municipalities undertaking increasingly complex projects, White also believed that "[t]he government of municipalities ... presents in the sharpest form most of the problems of modern democracy and raises insistently the question of whether local government can rest on a popular base and hold high standards of operating efficiency." Yet White was optimistic that the new professional of city management provided the solution to these problems. "The council-manager plan," he argued, "is the most perfect expression which the American people have yet evolved of the need for combining efficient administration with adequate popular control." Further emphasizing the larger significance of the city manager, White concluded "he is now one of the best illustrations found in this country of the emerging technical-professional official."⁴

³ Richard J. Stillman II, *The Rise of the City Manager: A Public Profession in Local Government* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), 21-53; Mark C. Smith, "A Tale of Two Charlies: Political Science, History, and Civic Reform," *Modern Political Science: Anglo-American Exchanges Since 1880* ed. Robert Adcock, Mark Bevir, and Shannon C. Stimson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 122-26; Barry D. Karl, *Charles Merriam and the Study of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 144-45, 182-83.

⁴ Leonard D. White, *The City Manager* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 287, 292-93, 295. On White and Merriam, see *The Rise of the City Manager*, 50-51. For a similar assessment of the importance of city managers, see Clarence E. Ridley and Orin F. Nolting, *The City-Manager Profession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

White's conviction that the city manager plan solved the problems of "modern democracy" by combining efficiency and popular control rested on a conception of democracy as primarily a matter of ensuring that cities provided residents with services "for the purpose of securing as far as possible the conditions of good life." White discussed popular control in terms of the provision of public utilities (often through programs of municipal ownership) and other endeavors that would expand the scale and quality of municipal services. To achieve this end, he elevated the importance of appointed managers over that of elected councils. He argued that politics and administration should and could be totally separated in local government if managers refused to participate in the determination of public policy. Yet despite this claim, White expressed little faith that an elected council could "measure up to its responsibilities" by developing municipal policies that would foster the long-term good of the community. In contrast, he believed that managers, as trained experts, were better equipped to work for the good of the entire community without showing preference to any particular group.⁵

This type of elevation of expertise was crucial to the critiques in the 1920s of Progressive theories of reform that had held that increasing popular participation and popular control in government would solve the problems of modern democracy. Yet while in the aftermath of World War I, many political leaders, theorists, and academics became disillusioned with the Progressive faith in "the people," their critiques directly stemmed from certain elements of Progressive discourse. In the social sciences, a scientific methodology based on investigation and research that had initially opened-up decision making processes now became a tool of social control. In John Dewey's hands, the philosophy of pragmatism justified the need to decentralize decision making and revitalize local, deliberative

⁵ White, *The City Manager*, 293, 300-01, 305.

communities of average citizens. In the hands of many social scientists of the 1920s, new readings of pragmatism now supported the need to use science and scientific investigation to study and modify the behavior of such citizens through social engineering.⁶

Walter Lippmann's rejection of Dewey's faith in the abilities of "the public" to participate in political decision-making exemplifies the widespread disillusionment with democracy of the 1920s and the turn towards expertise as the solution. Lippmann's searing critique of democracy in *Public Opinion* (1922) argued that most citizens were simply not capable of rational political judgments and that consequently much of the details of public policy needed to be delegated to a class of trained experts. Notably, Lippmann pointed to cities as a premier example of the conditions of modernity that made the ideal of an actively engaged citizenry a practical impossibility. For James Bryce in the 1880s, cities had been a "conspicuous failure" in an otherwise healthy democracy. For Frederick Howe in 1900, they had become "The Hope of Democracy," embodying a vision of cities as communal organisms in which individuals not only were committed to the welfare of the larger group but also actively participated in making decisions regarding common needs. For Lippmann in 1922, cities illustrated the inability of citizens to act as Howe and so many other Progressives believed that they could. The "bath of noise" created by living conditions in modern, industrial cities "will depress intelligence" and thus cause the "sovereign people" to make "flat and foolish" political judgments.⁷

This distrust of average voters that emerged was not unconnected to the rising support for pluralism in the 1920s, for both theories of democracy rejected the ideal of citizens

⁶ James T. Kloppenberg, "Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century America," *The Virtues of Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 132-34. On tensions in Progressive era social science, see John Louis Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement: Social Science and Progressive-Era Reform in New York City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

⁷ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997 [1922]). On cities, see pp. 46-47.

coming together to work for a singular common good. During the Progressive era, “group theory,” a nascent form of pluralism that portrayed politics as a clash between legitimate competing group interests, had begun to emerge, prevailing over conceptions of politics that relied on the existence of a single, public good. Cities, marked by the great diversity among their residents, played an integral role in this development.⁸ The problems posed by the corruption of the franchise system and the rapid expansion of the scope of activities undertaken by municipalities in these same years had also strongly shaped emerging understandings the nature of group participation in politics. Support for home rule and direct democracy as measures to establish local control over the provision of public utilities and transportation was not simply a matter of improving the quality of services but rather of achieving a higher form of democracy that enabled urban residents to come together to resolve common problems by creating greater opportunities for people to make decisions about their own lives. Yet later reformers came to reject local control as a viable possibility, emphasizing the specialized, technical nature of the provision of public services and proposing the matter be removed the political process altogether and placed instead in the hands of expert administrators.

From this perspective, citizens were simply consumers who had the right to have their needs met by local government but not to participate in the determination of those needs. As one study of the struggle to create publicly-owned street cars in Chicago argues, the failure of the movement for municipal ownership strengthened the functionalist interpretation of local politics put forth by supporters of railway services by regulated private franchises. This functionalism allowed for only a narrow sphere of civic participation in which citizens were

⁸ Phillip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 8-11.

discriminating consumers, concerned primarily with obtaining quality services from local government. Echoing this reading of political motivation, political scientist Arthur Bentley, a key early theorist of pluralism, argued in a study of the street-car debate that distinct groups of urban residents acted according material (rather than ideological) interests, seeking primarily the provision of efficient transportation. Such readings of functionalism and pluralism portrayed urban residents as objective political actors concerned more with practical matters than larger ideological commitments, as more concerned with receiving quality services than participating in the decision-making process.⁹ Regardless of original hopes to formulate institutions that would encourage a more participatory vision of municipal democracy, in their desire to maintain a coalition based on a common commitment to functional expansion municipal reformers in the end created the formal structures of local government that facilitated a passive view of citizens as consumers whose rights were to be protected by trained experts acting on their behalf. Group politics in cities thus became a struggle for residents to obtain specific services from their local governments.¹⁰

Much as the formation of the National Municipal League in the 1890s had pioneered the model of the national, issue-based reform organization that flourished in the Progressive era, its transformation in the 1910s and 1920s and the parallel rise of the bureaus of municipal research also anticipated larger changes in American civic life over the course of the twentieth century. During the Progressive era, Americans had begun to experiment with new means by which organized groups might participate directly in politics. A variety of

⁹ Georg Leidenberger, *Chicago's Progressive Alliance: Labor and the Bid for Public Streetcars* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 6-10, 128-29, 135, 151. Leidenberger argues that the "functionalist ideology which stipulated that any policy proposals must adhere to immediate needs and practical solutions and ascribed to the average citizen the role of passive consumer of urban services rather than that of an active agent in the political process" became dominant after the 1907 defeat of the public-ownership movement and of Mayor Edward Dunne, one of its most prominent leaders.

¹⁰ For more on citizens as consumers in later twentieth-century politics, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar American Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

groups that felt frustrated and marginalized by mainstream party politics began to lobby elected representatives directly.¹¹ Organizations such as the bureaus of municipal research began to professionalize lobbying itself, ushering in a model of civic participation in which experts advocated reforms on behalf of a passive public rather than as leaders of an actively engaged citizenry. In so doing, they helped pave the way for the later transformation in American civic life of the post World War II period in which professionally-managed advocacy groups and other non-profit institutions staffed by paid professionals replaced membership-based voluntary organizations.¹² Forecasting future patterns, a political scientist active in the National Municipal League in the 1930s noted that while in “the organization’s earlier years,” conferences for good city government “were attended largely by prominent citizens whose interest in municipal affairs, though vigorous, was unprofessional,” contemporary “meetings are attended almost exclusively by highly trained and salaried specialists.” Though “prominent citizens continue to finance the forces of municipal reform, ... the problems have become too specialized for them to take more than a minor part in the discussion.”¹³

A hundred years later, the questions that animated the Progressives are still very much with us today, as are many of the institutions they created. The history of the movement to create “good city government” does much to explain not only the origins of the political structures of American municipalities in the twentieth century but also of the roots of pluralistic and technocratic theories of government. As this dissertation has demonstrated,

¹¹ Elisabeth S. Clemens, *The People’s Lobby: Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890-1925* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1-4.

¹² On this later transformation, see Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 7, 12-18, 126-74.

¹³ Quoted in Frank Mann Stewart, *A Half-Century of Municipal Reform: The History of the National Municipal League* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1950), 182.

in order to improve our understanding the dynamics of reform, in the Progressive era and throughout American history, historians need to examine the interactions between academics and elite reformers in national organizations and the political actors who worked to enact changes on the local level and the connections between theories of democracy and the institutions of government created to embody them.

Appendix I:

Summary of Charters Adopted and Rejected in Worcester, Toledo, Norfolk, Fort Worth, and Oakland, 1890s-1930s*

	Worcester	Toledo	Norfolk	Fort Worth	Oakland
1890s	Strong Mayor 1893 (+)				
1900s		Strong Mayor 1901 (-)	Board of Control 1906 (+)	Commission Plan 1907 (+)	
1910s	Commission Plan 1913 (-)	Commission Plan 1914 (-)	City Manager Plan 1917 (+)		Commission Plan 1911 (+)
1920s		City Manager Plan 1928 (-)		City Manager Plan 1924 (+)	City Manager Plan 1929 (+)
1930s	City Manager Plan 1931(-)	City Manager Plan 1931 (-) 1934 (+)			

*(+) indicates this form of charter was adopted; (-) indicates that this form of charter was not adopted

**Appendix 1A:
Member Organizations of the National Municipal League, 1899**

Name	City	State	Date Admitted
Citizens' League of Phoenix	Phoenix	Arizona	May 1896
Board of Trade	Little Rock	Arkansas	November 1899
Alameda Municipal Ownership League	Alameda	California	May 1897
Board of Trade	San Jose	California	November 1899
Board of Trade	Oakland	California	November 1899
Board of Trade	Pasadena	California	November 1899
Chamber of Commerce	Fresno	California	November 1899
Citizens' League	Los Angeles	California	January 1895
Civic League of Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara	California	February 1899
Good Government Club	Berkeley	California	October 1894
Good Government Club	San Francisco	California	January 1895
League for Better City Government	Los Angeles	California	November 1896
Municipal League	Alameda	California	November 1896
Citizens' Reform League	Boulder	Colorado	November 1899
Civic Federation	Denver	Colorado	November 1896
Municipal League of Denver	Denver	Colorado	March 1895
City Club	Hartford	Connecticut	October 1894
Civic Club	Hartford	Connecticut	November 1899
Civic Centre	Washington	DC	December 1895
Washington Board of Trade	Washington	DC	November 1899
Board of Trade	Wilmington	Delaware	November 1899
Board of Trade	Jacksonville	Florida	November 1899
Chicago Municipal Voter's League	Chicago	Illinois	May 1897
Citizens' Association	Chicago	Illinois	January 1895
Civic Federation	Chicago	Illinois	January 1895
Municipal Club of Decatur	Decatur	Illinois	1894
Taxpayers' Defense League of Cook County	na	Illinois	May 1897
Commercial Club	Indianapolis	Indiana	November 1899
Citizens' Reform Club of Dubuque	Dubuque	Iowa	March 1895
Civic Federation	Des Moines	Iowa	November 1896
Good Government Club	Council Bluffs	Iowa	April 1894
Good Government Club	Cedar Rapids	Iowa	November 1896

Civic Federation of Leavenworth, Kansas	Leavenworth	Kansas	October 1898
Commercial Club	Bowling Green	Kentucky	November 1899
Good City Government Club	Louisville	Kentucky	April 1894
Ballot Reform League	na	Louisiana	January 1895
New Orleans Citizens' League	New Orleans	Louisiana	May 1897
Citizens' Municipal Association	Biddeford	Maine	November 1896
Civic Progress League of Lewiston	Lewiston	Maine	December 1895
Baltimore Reform League	Baltimore	Maryland	October 1894
Baltimore Union for Public Good	Baltimore	Maryland	January 1895
Citizens' Reform Movement	Baltimore	Maryland	October 1894
Taxpayer's Association	Baltimore	Maryland	October 1894
Town Improvement Association	Port Deposit	Maryland	November 1899
Union for Public Good	Baltimore	Maryland	December 1894
Citizens' Association	Boston	Massachusetts	October 1894
Citizens' Committee on the Municipal Ownership of Street Railways of Boston	Boston	Massachusetts	May 1897
Citizens' League	Watertown	Massachusetts	May 1897
Citizens' Municipal League	Salem	Massachusetts	May 1897
Good Government Association of Lawrence	Lawrence	Massachusetts	December 1898
Library Hall Association	Cambridge	Massachusetts	October 1894
Municipal League	Boston	Massachusetts	October 1894
Good Government Club of the University of Michigan	na	Michigan	October 1898
Good Government League of Detroit	Detroit	Michigan	February 1899
Board of Trade	Minneapolis	Minnesota	October 1894
Christian Citizenship League	St. Paul	Minnesota	October 1898
Commercial Club	Minneapolis	Minnesota	May 1895
Commercial Club of St. Paul	St. Paul	Minnesota	December 1898
Duluth Civic Federation	Duluth	Minnesota	May 1897
Municipal League of Duluth	Duluth	Minnesota	December 1898
Six O'clock Club of Minneapolis	Minneapolis	Minnesota	December 1898
Civic Federation of Kansas City	Kansas City	Missouri	December 1895
Municipal Improvement Association	Kansas City	Missouri	December 1895
National Civil Service Reform League	na	National	October 1894
Municipal League	Omaha	Nebraska	April 1895
Board of Trade	Jersey City	New Jersey	November 1899
Christian Citizenship Union	Newark	New Jersey	April 1895

Christian Citizenship Union	Camden	New Jersey	December 1895
City Club of New Brunswick	New Brunswick	New Jersey	May 1895
Committee of 100	Camden	New Jersey	May 1895
Good Government Association No. 1	Jersey City	New Jersey	January 1895
Good Government Club	Patterson	New Jersey	April 1895
Good Government Club of Bayonne	Bayonne	New Jersey	October 1897
Good Government League	Bordentown	New Jersey	December 1895
Englewood Law and Order League	Englewood	New Jersey	November 1899
New Brunswick City Improvement Society	New Brunswick	New Jersey	May 1897

Albany Civic League	Albany	New York	November 1896
Albany Vigilance League	Albany	New York	November 1896
Brooklyn League	Brooklyn	New York	December 1898
Citizens' Association	Albany	New York	October 1894
Citizens' Association	Troy	New York	May 1895
Citizens' Union	Brooklyn	New York	October 1894
City Club	New York	New York	October 1894
City Club	Troy	New York	April 1895
City Improvement Society of New York	New York	New York	March 1895
City Vigilance League	New York	New York	October 1894
Civic Club of Binghamton	Binghamton	New York	December 1898
Civic League of Albany	Albany	New York	March 1895
Civitas Club	Brooklyn	New York	October 1894
Council of Confederated Good Government Clubs	New York	New York	October 1894
Council of Good Government Clubs	Buffalo	New York	May 1895
Good Government Club	Syracuse	New York	December 1895
Good Government Club	Richmond County	New York	December 1895
Good Government Club	Troy	New York	October 1894
Good Government Club	Yonkers	New York	October 1894
Good Government Club of Cortland, New York	Cortland	New York	October 1894
Law Enforcement Society of the City of Brooklyn	Brooklyn	New York	April 1895
Municipal Club	Rochester	New York	April 1895
Municipal League	Schenectady	New York	May 1895
Municipal Reform League	Syracuse	New York	October 1894
New York Reform Club Committee on Municipal Administration	New York	New York	October 1898
Utica League for Clean Streets	Utica	New York	October 1898
Woman's Municipal League of New York	New York	New York	December 1898

Citizens' Association	Marietta	Ohio	December 1895
Citizens' Federation	Toledo	Ohio	December 1895
Civic Federation	Cleveland	Ohio	May 1895
Civic League of Dayton	Dayton	Ohio	October 1897
Cleveland Municipal Association	Cleveland	Ohio	May 1897
Good Government Club	Sandusky	Ohio	May 1895
Taxpayers' Association	Cincinnati	Ohio	November 1899

Municipal League of Portland	Portland	Oregon	May 1896
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Board of Trade	Reading	Pennsylvania	November 1899
Citizens' Association	Erie	Pennsylvania	December 1895
Civic Club	McKeesport	Pennsylvania	November 1899
Civic Club	Pittsburg	Pennsylvania	November 1896
Health Protective Association	Philadelphia	Pennsylvania	November 1896
Men's Patriotic League/Citizens' League	Pittsburg	Pennsylvania	November 1894
Municipal League	Philadelphia	Pennsylvania	October 1894
Women's Health Protective Association	Philadelphia	Pennsylvania	November 1896

Advance Club	Providence	Rhode Island	October 1894
Municipal League of Providence	Providence	Rhode Island	November 1896

Good Government Club	Galveston	Texas	May 1895
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Good Citizenship League	Salt Lake City	Utah	May 1895
Salt Lake City Municipal League	Salt Lake City	Utah	May 1897

Chamber of Commerce	Spokane	Washington	November 1899
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Chamber of Commerce	West Superior	Wisconsin	December 1895
Civic Federation	Ashland	Wisconsin	April 1895
Good Citizenship Federation	Racine	Wisconsin	May 1895
Municipal League	Milwaukee	Wisconsin	October 1894

SOURCES: Executive Committee Minutes, Carton 1, Folders 62-67, National Municipal League Papers, Archives of the Auraria Library, Denver, Colorado ; "National Municipal League," *New York Times*, October 18, 1898, p. 5; "The National Municipal League," *New York Times*, November 24, 1896, p. 2; New Clubs in the Municipal League, *New York Times*, April 24, 1895, p. 2; "National Municipal League," *New York Times*, January 1, 1895, p. 3; "Next Conference of Municipal League," *New York Times*, November 16, 1894, p. 7; "Municipal League Work Outlined," *New York Times*, October 7, 1894, p. 4; "The National Municipal League," *Good Government: Official Journal of the National Civil Service Reform League* XIV, no. 13 (July 15, 1895): 182.

Appendix 1B:

National Municipal League Membership and Urban Areas by Region*, 1900

	U.S. Cities in 1900 (population 8,000+)	NML members in November 1899**	NML members at founding in 1894
Total	546	128	31
North Atlantic States (CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)	231 (42%)	59 (46%)	16 (52%)
South Atlantic States (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)	43 (8%)	10 (8%)	4 (13%)
North Central States (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NB, ND, OH, SD, WI)	192 (35%)	34 (27%)	7 (23%)
South Central States (AL, AK, KT, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX)	49 (9%)	6 (5%)	1 (3%)
Western States (AZ, CA, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY)	30 (5%)	19 (15%)	3 (10%)

Sources: Appendix 1A (NML membership data); Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Volume I – Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 46; "Urban Population in 1900," *Census Bulletin* 70 (July 11, 1901): 2.

* Regions defined by combining several categories according to the Census of 1920. East includes "New England," "Middle Atlantic," and "South Atlantic." East Central includes "East North Central" and "East South Central." West includes "West North Central," "West South Central," "Mountain," and "Pacific" (46).

** NML members exclude the one national body that was a member, the National Civil Service Reform League.

Appendix 5A:

State Laws Regarding the Adoption of Commission Government

States in which the state legislature allowed cities to adopt charters without interference			States in which the state legislature controlled the adoption of charters.		
permissive or general option charters	constitutional home rule charters	optional model charters	obligatory, self-executing charters	special commission charters	no commission laws or cities
Alabama Arkansas California Idaho Illinois Iowa Kansas Kentucky Louisiana Mississippi Missouri Montana Nebraska Nevada New Jersey New Mexico North Dakota South Carolina South Dakota Tennessee Texas Washington Wisconsin Wyoming	Arizona California Colorado Michigan Minnesota Missouri Nebraska Ohio Oklahoma Oregon Texas Washington	Ohio Massachusetts New York Virginia	Utah Alabama Missouri Pennsylvania	Florida Georgia Idaho Maine Maryland Massachusetts Nevada New York North Carolina Tennessee Texas West Virginia	Connecticut Delaware Indiana New Hampshire Rhode Island Vermont

Source: Tso-Shuen Chang, "History and Analysis of the Commission and City Manager Plans of Municipal Government in the United States," *University of Iowa Monograph Series: Studies in the Social Sciences* VI (1918): 99-157.

* Several states appear in more than one of the six categories, but only Alabama and Missouri had contradictory laws allowing some cities to adopt commission charters without state interference as well as obligatory laws requiring other cities to adopt commission charters. Nevada, Texas, Idaho, Tennessee, Massachusetts, and New York all initially allowed individuals to adopt the commission plan through special charters passed by the legislatures but soon passed general laws allowing cities to adopt commission charters without state legislative approval.

Appendix 5B:

State Laws Regarding the Adoption of the Commission Plan (CP) by Region*, 1918

	Percentage of States allowing CP w/o State Interference (by region)	Percentage of States not allowing CP w/o State Interference (by region)
East 16 states**	31% (5 of 16)	69% (12 of 17)
East Central 9 states**	88% (7 of 8)	13% (1 of 8)
West 22 states	91% (20 of 22)	9% (2 of 22)

Sources: Tso-Shuen Chang, "History and Analysis of the Commission and City Manager Plans of Municipal Government in the United States," *University of Iowa Monograph Series: Studies in the Social Sciences VI* (1918): 99-157; *Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Volume I - Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 46.

* Regions defined by combining several categories according to the Census of 1920. East includes "New England," "Middle Atlantic," and "South Atlantic." East Central includes "East North Central" and "East South Central." West includes "West North Central," "West South Central," "Mountain," and "Pacific" (46).

** Alabama and Missouri are not included because they had laws that fall into both categories.

**Appendix 5C:
Adoption of Commission Charters by Region***

	% of Cities Adopting Commission Charters by 1922	% of Total U.S. Cities** in 1920	% of U.S. Urban Population in 1920
East 17 states	25% (109 of 444)	42% (1169 of 2788)	49.50%
East Central 9 states	26% (117 of 444)	27% (755 of 2788)	27.70%
West 22 states	49% (218 of 444)	31% (864 of 2788)	22.80%

Sources: *Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Volume I – Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 52-56; Bradley Robert Rice, *Progressive Cities: The Commission Government Movement in America, 1901-1920* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 113-25.

*For definitions of these regions, see Appendix 5B.

**Cities are defined per the stipulation in the 1920 Census that any place with a population of 2,500 or more was "urban."

Appendix 6:

Organizations Sending Delegates to the Greater Oakland Charter Convention, 1910

(unions in bold)

Alta Vista Improvement Club
Alameda County Progress Club
American Federation of Musicians, Local No. 6
Anti-Saloon League
Association of Master Plumbers
Brotherhood of Centennial Presbyterian Church
Brotherhood of the First Presbyterian Church
C.L.A.S.
California River and Harbor League
Carpenters and Joiners Local No. 36
Catholic Ladies' Aid Society
Central Improvement Club
Central Improvement Club of East Fruitvale
Central Labor Council
Citizens' Club of Melrose
Civic League of Greater Oakland
Civic Welfare Committee of Oakland Church Federation
Clinton Improvement Club
Danish American League
Dennison East Oakland Club
Deutsch-Amerikanischer Verband
East Oakland Heights Improvement Club
Electrical Contracts Association
F.O.A, Court Harmonie No. 25
First M.E. Church
Fifth Ward Improvement Club
First Ward Club
Fitchburg Improvement Club
Fourth Congregational Church Men's League
Fruitvale Board of Trade
Fruitvale Improvement Club
Gas Workers' Union
German-American League
Good Government League of East Oakland
Harbor League
Hopkins Street Improvement Club
International Alliance Theatrical State Employees
International Brotherhood of Leather Workers
Judean Society
Latham Terrace Improvement Club
Laurel Grove Improvement Club
Leather Workers on Horse Goods Local No. 172
Men's Brotherhood of the First Baptist Church
Men's Club of First Christian Church
Men's League of the First Congregational Church

Men's League of the Fourth Congregational Church
 Men's League of Pilgrim Congregational Church
 Men's League of Plymouth Church
 Men's Teacher's Club of Oakland
 Merchants' Exchange
 Moot Court Association of Alameda County
 Mosswood Improvement Club
Musicians Union Local No. 6
 National Association of Letter Carriers
 Oakland Board of Fire Underwriters
 Oakland Chamber of Commerce
 Oakland City and County Consolidation
 Oakland Mannerchor
 Oakland New Century Club
 Oakland Turn Verein
Oakland Typographical Union
 Oakland Verein Eintracht
 Oakland Woman's Christian Temperance Union
 Oakland Young Men's Christian Association
Pacific Coast Federation, Maritime Builders
 Peralta-Claremont Improvement Club
 Piedmont Improvement Club
 Pioneer Improvement Club
 Progress and Prosperity Committee
 South Side Improvement Club
 Steinway Terrace Improvement Club
 Suffrage Amendment League of Oakland
 Taxpayers' Improvement Club
 Tri-City Rotary Club
 Twenty-third Avenue Improvement Club
 U.S.W.V., E.H. Liscum Camp
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, No. 36
 Vernon Heights and Lake Shore Improvement Club
 West Oakland Improvement Club
 Westall Improvement Club
 Western Waterfront League
 Yookem Avenue Improvement Club
 Vorwärts Club

Sources: "Charter Delegates Outline their Plan," *Oakland Enquirer*, March 18, 1910, p. 10; "To Frame Oakland's Charter," *Oakland Enquirer*, February 25, 1910, pp. 1, 2.

**Appendix 7A:
Membership of the National Municipal League in 1900 and 1914**

	NML members in 1900	NML Members in 1914
Total	128	2364
Civic and Reform Associations	112 (87%)	110* (4%)
Commercial Bodies	16 (13%)	47 (2%)
Individuals	0	1923** (81%)
Public Libraries, Colleges, Universities, and Schools	0	240 (10%)
Departments of Government	0	24 (1%)
Private Corporations	0	17 (1%)
Other	0	3 (.001%)

Sources: *Handbook of the National Municipal League, 1914* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1914) (membership data for 1914); Appendix 1A (membership data for 1900).

* 8 of the 110 civic groups were distinctively women's organizations

** 153 women and 1770 men

**Appendix 7B:
National Municipal League Membership and Urban Areas in 1914**

	U.S. Cities in 1900 (population 8,000+)	NML members in 1900	NML Members in 1914
Total	546	128	2364
North Atlantic States (CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)	231 (42%)	59 (46%)	1238 (52%)
South Atlantic States (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)	43 (8%)	10 (8%)	168 (7%)
North Central States (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NB, ND, OH, SD, WI)	192 (35%)	34 (27%)	561 (24%)
South Central States (AL, AK, KT, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX)	49 (9%)	6 (5%)	94 (4%)
Western States (AZ, CA, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY)	30 (5%)	19 (15%)	303 (13%)

Sources: *Handbook of the National Municipal League, 1914* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1914) (membership data for 1914); Appendix 1A (membership data for 1900); "Urban Population in 1900," *Census Bulletin 70* (July 11, 1901): 2 (data on total U.S. Cities).

* NML membership numbers exclude the one national member, the National Civil Service Reform League.

**Appendix 7C:
Form of Government* in Cities with Populations of 30,000 and over by Region**,
1929**

	Form of Government			Partisanship		Council Elections		
	MC	COM	MGR	P	NP	W	AL	W/AL
National	50%	28%	22%	44%	56%	27%	52%	21%
North Atlantic States (CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)	69%	25%	7%	69%	37%	34%	38%	29%
South Atlantic States (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)	33%	24%	42%	42%	58%	28%	56%	16%
North Central States (IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NB, ND, OH, SD, WI)	52%	26%	22%	30%	64%	23%	51%	26%
South Central States (AL, AK, KT, LA, MS, OK, TN, TX)	14%	52%	34%	34%	66%	21%	76%	3%
Western States (AZ, CA, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY)	25%	46%	29%	8%	92%	21%	79%	0%

Sources: Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, Inc., *The Form of Government in 288 Cities: A summary of a questionnaire sent cities over 30,000 Population in August, 1929* (Detroit: Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, Inc., 1931); *Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Volume I – Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 46.

* MC = mayor council, CP = commission plan, P = partisan elections, NP = non partisan elections, W = wards, AL = at large, W/AL = a combination of wards and at large

** Regions defined by combining several categories according to the Census of 1920. East includes "New England," "Middle Atlantic," and "South Atlantic." East Central includes "East North Central" and "East South Central." West includes "West North Central," "West South Central," "Mountain," and "Pacific" (46).