

Council-Manager Plan in Oklahoma Cities

BY JEWELL CASS PHILLIPS, '21, '29

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. 1935.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT K. CARR

STUDENTS of government in Oklahoma have long been proud of the fact that their state is to be found numbered among the first half-dozen states of the union in the utilization of the city manager plan. Unfortunately, Mr. Phillip's admirable study proves conclusively that while Oklahoma ranks high so far as numbers of cities using the plan is concerned, it has little else of which to be proud. In fact, while the author, himself, does not draw this conclusion, the information that he presents leads one to question whether the true city manager plan is even to be found in Oklahoma. Mr. Phillips was granted his B. A. degree at the University in 1921 and for a time was a member of the faculty.

Mr. Phillips' study was undertaken as a part of his graduate study at the University of Pennsylvania and served as his thesis for the Ph. D. degree. It is accordingly a careful, thorough piece of work of a distinctly practical nature. The author spent several years visiting the thirty or more manager cities in the state and interviewed hundreds of managers, councilmen, and prominent citizens. The result is an extremely valuable volume containing a minimum of theory and a wealth of first-hand factual information.

The problem was carefully outlined in advance. In the author's own words,

"The council-manager cities of Oklahoma, with their background of experience, constitute a significant experimental laboratory within which the practical operation of the manager plan has been tested. It has been the purpose of this investigation to determine the extent to which the fundamental principles underlying council-manager government have been applied in the thirty-two cities of Oklahoma." Accordingly, the author considered such subjects as the conditions underlying the adoption of the plan in the different cities; the effect of various restrictions in the Oklahoma Constitution and statutes upon the conduct of manager government; the actual provisions of the thirty-two manager charters; and the character of the managers who have been selected to serve Oklahoma municipalities. But the heart of the study is to be found in chapters five and six in which Mr. Phillips examines the relative roles played by the manager and the council in the determination of municipal poli-

cies, and the administration of city government. It is at these points that results in Oklahoma have been so unsatisfactory, for contrary to the principles of the manager plan, Oklahoma councils have not hesitated to interfere in purely administrative work, and managers have been all too willing to influence the determination of policies.

In addition the author concludes that the manager plan has failed in Oklahoma because of such varied reasons as the voters' lack of understanding of the real nature of the plan at the time they were adopting it, the failure of nonpartisan citizens' league to remain active after the adoption of the plan, the interference in the affairs of city government by such outside agencies as the county excise boards and assessing officials, and the selection by city councils of non-professional men to fill the office of manager.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Phillip's book will be widely read throughout the state for it is one of the most valuable studies upon an Oklahoma political subject to appear in recent years. Certainly it should be in every school and city library in the state, and it is not too much to say that no Oklahoma city manager or councilman in a manager city is fulfilling his obligation to his city unless he reads this book. The state of Oklahoma is deeply indebted to Mr. Phillips for having made this remarkable study and we have only ourselves to blame if we fail to profit by his findings.

The book may be purchased from the University Book Exchange, Norman, Oklahoma.

Thirty-Six Different States

EVERY county in the state, 36 states and 7 foreign countries are represented in the cosmopolitan student delegation attending the University this semester.

The largest group comes from Oklahoma county which has a total of 1,086 students enrolled in the university. Of this number 1,044 are from Oklahoma City. Second high is Cleveland county with 709 representatives including 671 from Norman.

The other four counties with more than 100 students attending the university are Tulsa with 318; Pottawatomie 119; Garfield, 116; Kay, 111.

The 515 out-of-state delegates come from every part of the nation including 36 different states. Texas leads this division with a total of 209 students. Next in line comes Kansas with 51, followed closely by New York with 41, and Arkansas with 28. Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana and Pennsylvania each have 13 representatives on the Oklahoma campus.

The nine foreign students come from Canada, Mexico, Persia, Peru, Colombia, Edea (West Africa) and Japan. The two Canadian students are brother and sister from Toronto. The two Persian students are both from Tabriz and are both studying petroleum engineering.

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