

How British Cities Manage Public Utilities

The Secret of the Success of Municipal Ownership Lies In the Unimpeachable Honesty and Civic Zeal of City Officials

By FREDERICK UPHAM ADAMS

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XII.
CRITICISM is made by those who for various reasons are opposed to public ownership that elected officials cannot be expected to possess the detailed technical knowledge and the experience necessary to the proper administration of such complex and diversified enterprises as street railways, gas works, electric lighting and power plants, the erection and supervision of dwellings and cottages and the numerous other undertakings assumed or in contemplation by the municipalities of Great Britain. Next to the fear of offering added opportunity for official plunder this is the more quoted argument made against the system by those who discuss and write of it in the United States.

Such a plea is rarely made in England and never in Scotland even by those who have most reason to call a halt on any extension of the field of public ownership. I talked with scores of business men and large property owners, and it is only the simple truth to state that without exception these men asserted that no such charge was even entertained by the responsible element of the community.

It is difficult for an American to comprehend the possibility of a municipal legislative and executive body actuated solely by an intelligent desire to so administer affairs as to safeguard and promote the common interests of citizens and taxpayers.

The British taxpayer selects his alderman or councilor with the same care and with the same object in view that actuates him when he has a vote for the choice of directors in a private corporation. He looks for a man who possesses judgment, ability and unimpeachable integrity. He does not demand a man who necessarily has an exact technical mastery of all of the details pertaining to the undertakings he will aid in supervising. Neither does he insist that the director of a railroad in which he is a stockholder shall be able to regulate the executive work of the general manager of the system.

An Englishman seldom seeks higher honor than an election as alderman in the town or city of his birth. As a stepping stone to this great distinction he must first serve as councilor, and one must stand high in a parish before he may hope to be chosen councilor. From their number the councilors elect one-third of their members to the exalted office of alderman, and if an alderman lives long enough he is certain to become mayor or lord mayor of his town or city.

Not until a man has acquired a competence of this world's goods does he aspire to civic honors in Great Britain. The man who at the age of forty-five has won a modest fortune must hold himself in readiness to retire at the call of his neighbors or to surrender a large share of his time to the service of his community. There are scores of official positions he may be called on to fill, but in none of them will he receive one penny of salary, nor need he expect any material benefit or business prestige from the holding of such an office.

Mayors, aldermen, councilors, trustees and other elective officials in Great Britain serve absolutely without pay. The majority of these men devote a large share of their time to the cities which have thus honored them. They enter into this executive work with as much or more enthusiasm as was formerly displayed in the amassing of private fortunes. They take a pride and delight in mastering the details pertaining to the committees on which they are placed and gradually develop until they are capable of taking charge of any branch of the municipal service.

I would that every careless American citizen could witness a session of the city council of Manchester, which is of a type common in Great Britain. The members of this distinguished assembly are in fact as well as in name "the selectmen" of their city. They are not placed in these positions of honor because of a purchased popularity, with groups of partisan ward heeler; they do not owe their elections to nominations dictated by corporations in need of their services. They are the representatives of their city.

When they meet the galleries are not filled with a horde of office seekers. No lobby lurks on their flank. The papers which record the proceedings do not flame with headlines or bristle with editorials denouncing the "latest aldermanic steal."

There are men in the Manchester city council whose heads are white from forty or more of years spent in unpaid and unselfish service to the city of their birth or adoption. The dean of the council is Alderman King, who was elected councilor in 1856 and made alderman eleven years later. He has served as lord mayor, and in two years from now he will celebrate the completion of a half century of official life. The average time served as councilors by the twenty-six men who now are aldermen is eleven years. In that length of time the average man of intelligence should become well acquainted with the duties of his position. When an alderman resigns or dies a councilor is

raised to his place and a new one elected. There are twenty-six wards, and each one has three councilors and an alderman, making a legislative body of 104 members. Elections for councilors are held once in three years, but it is seldom that a man is opposed who has shown himself a capable representative. The changes are so slight that the council is to all intents and purposes a permanent assembly.

The scope of the work relegated to the council is faintly indicated by the titles of the standing committees, which are as follows: Art gallery, baths and washhouses, cleansing, electricity, finance, gas, improvements and buildings, markets, parks and cemeteries, paving, sewerage and highways, public free library, rivers, sanitary, town hall, tramways, police and waterworks. There are also special committees on technical instruction, aided institutions, allocation of gas profits, collection of rents, electrolytic action upon pipes and mains, Manchester Royal Infirmary, Manchester ship canal, telephones and ventilation of sewers.

Each of the standing committees has from three to twelve subcommittees, the vast work of the council being thus divided among the 164 members, each one being held responsible for the faithful performance of one or more specific duties. The plan in its entirety is in almost every particular superior to the prevailing organization of kindred bodies in the United States. I do not believe that there is an elective body in this country which can compare with the city council of Manchester in the matter of organization and in executive capacity. The plain truth of the matter is that, compared with Manchester and Glasgow, our American cities are the merest novices in the science and practice of municipal government.

I had an interesting talk with our American consul in one of the larger cities of Great Britain. Our conversation was confidential, and his name and station are not material.

"What is the secret of the success of municipal ownership in this city?" I asked.

"The unimpeachable honesty and civic zeal of the members of the city council and back of them an honest and zealous body of electors," was his unhesitating response. "That is all that is secret or mysterious about it. So far as a system of checks or of book-keeping is concerned there is nothing to prevent the officials from stealing the city blind. Any of the cliques in our great cities would loot this town and drive it into bankruptcy in a year. It would be like handing the keys of a safe to a burglar and promising him immunity from arrest. But the citizens of this place elect men whom it is not necessary to watch. In half a century suspicion has never been directed against a member of this city council. Public ownership is a success here, but that does not imply that it would be one in the United States. The conditions are entirely different."

"By which you mean that the standard of morality and of civic consciousness is higher here than in the United States?" I ventured.

"You may draw your own conclusions," he said. "Most of your readers will not believe your statement that there is such an institution as an honest and patriotic city council, and, never having seen one, they are not to be blamed for such unbelief."

From this gentleman and from others I learned that with the increase in the responsibilities assumed by the various cities there has occurred a corresponding change in the personnel of the municipal councils. The acquiring of street railways, gas works, electric light and power plants and the erection of dwellings for the working classes have caused the electors to seek as councilors men whose life work and business interests have been along the same lines. Vacancies are filled with architects, manufacturers, mechanical engineers and others familiar with the enterprises in which the city has invested millions of pounds.

The statement has repeatedly been made in the United States by certain writers that those who have the direct management of these municipal enterprises serve without pay. This is not true. The aldermen and councilors as well as the mayor and other officials do not receive a penny in compensation for their services, and their duties demand a large share of their time, but the general managers and superintendents of tramways, gas plants and other undertakings receive the same or more pay than would be awarded to them were they employed for private rather than public corporations. The council committees select these men, and they search the world for the most capable experts and executives at the command of salaries. Not the slightest preference is given to local ability. Selections are made on the same principle which guides a private board of directors in search of a manager who is capable of increasing the efficiency of a plant and of adding to the revenues. The active heads of the great reproductive municipal departments in Great Britain receive from \$5,000 to \$15,000 a year. The cities have outbid the private companies in the quest for executive and engineering talent.

AMMUNITION GOVE; THEN SURRENDERED

Was the Course Pursued By
Admiral Nebogatoff.

ROJESTVENSKY IS RESTING EASY

Officers of Russian Battleship Orel Refuse to Accept Parole—Cruiser Lena to Become a Hospital Ship.—An Earthquake Shakes Japan.

St. Petersburg, June 5.—The statement that the ammunition on board Admiral Nebogatoff's ships was exhausted when he surrendered was received with some relief, this being one of the conditions, which, according to the Russian naval regulations, a commander is allowed to surrender, the other conditions being when the crew of a vessel is so depleted as to be unable to manage her and work her guns and when the ship is burned to the water's edge, and about to sink.

Nevertheless, most of the naval men continue to be of the opinion that the seacocks should have been opened and the ship sunk. Stories of the mutiny on board the Russian vessels continue to circulate in the clubs and cafes, but the admiralty will not admit that it has received any information tending to substantiate them. The officials admit, however, that some of the sailors mutinied off the coast of Madagascar, and that a number of them were shot by Admiral Rojestvensky's order.

Rojestvensky Resting Easy.

Tokio, June 3—10:45 a. m.—Rear Admiral Rojestvensky is resting well with no dangerous symptoms and his speedy recovery seems certain.

The officers of the Russian battleship Orel have declined to accept parole. They have been given an additional day to further consider the question.

Cruiser Lena Released.

New York, June 5.—A special dispatch received here from San Francisco, says the officials at Mare Island navy yard have received from Washington formal instructions to permit the Russian auxiliary cruiser Lena, now interned at that yard, to proceed to Asiatic waters for use as a hospital ship. She will put to sea within a month and it is expected her first destination will be a Japanese port where wounded Russians can be taken aboard.

The guns and munitions of war removed from the Lena when she arrived in San Francisco will not be replaced.

Earthquake in Japan.

Tokio, June 3—7:30 p. m.—The governor of Hiroshima province telegraphed that an earthquake which took place on June 2, killed six people, wounded 79 and destroyed 33 houses in Hiroshima and Ujima. The reports from other affected districts are incomplete, but it is believed that the loss of life and the destruction of property has been comparatively slight. The first shocks of the earthquake destroyed the telegraph system which, besides making it impossible to communicate with the earthquake district, cut off Tokio from western Japan and the rest of the world, which created an impression that some great disaster had taken place.

Death a Wedding Guest.

Alpena, Mich., June 5.—Wedding gaiety was quickly turned into sadness and merry laughter changed to tears when Mrs. Arthur Jones, 19, who came from her home in Benton Harbor to attend her sister's wedding at the home of their father, Alfred Girard, in Alpena township, was suddenly seized with convulsions and died. She was apparently well on her arrival and throughout the day entered with spirit into the merrymaking, but when the ceremony was over and the guests were extending congratulations to the happy couple, Mrs. Jones was seized with convulsions and expired very soon after the attack.

Indiana Leads in Pedagogues.

Indianapolis, June 5.—The county superintendents and institute directors of the state are to hold a meeting with state superintendent Fasset A. Cotton during the last week in June for the purpose of considering more particularly the vacation work of the educational authorities of Hoosierdom. The work of the state teachers' reading circle will come in for especial attention. In the size of her teachers' reading circle, Indiana leads all the states of the union with nearly 15,000 pedagogues enrolled.

Speaker Cannon to Visit Alaska.

Portland, Ore., June 5.—Speaker Cannon, of the house of representatives and a large party of congressmen and their families have left this city for Seattle from which the party will go to Southern Alaska, for a short visit. The following are in the party: Speaker Joseph G. Cannon, Senator Hemenway, son and daughter; J. A. Tawney, wife and daughter; C. A. Bartlett and wife; H. B. Beidler, J. McAndrews, W. F. Busbee and wife; Henry Casson and wife and Alexander McDonald.

COMMITTEE MAKES REPORT.

Equitable Squabble Still in Limerick of Financial Circles.

New York, June 5.—Liberal extracts are published today of the report made to the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States' directors by the Frick investigating committee.

The report consists of 38 printed pages. Its principal points follow closely the outline forecasted several days ago and in closing, the committee declared:

Excessive salaries; excessive commissions, excessive expenses and superfluous offices should not be tolerated.

Investments should be carefully made and all precautions employed to insure the location of the moral responsibility of the officers who are charged with the duty of making them. The committee having pursued its investigation of the present management of the society sufficiently far to convince it that the personnel of the management should be radically changed, and the methods of conducting the business of the society brought back to sound legal and ethical lines, begs to be relieved from further duty.

Excitement on Wall Street.

New York, June 5.—Not since the Northern Pacific corner of four years ago has there been so much excitement in financial circles as exists today as a result of yesterday's developments in the Equitable Life Assurance Society's affairs. A stirring contest for control has been expected, but the vehement debate in the directors' meeting, the bitter character of the defense made by James H. Hyde, and the resignation of Messrs. Frick, Hariman and Bliss from the society's directorate, have created a situation wholly unforeseen and indicating a new alignment of forces in high finance astonishing the general public. According to the Herald, Mr. Frick in handing in his resignation said he never again would sit as director in any corporation of which Mr. Hyde was also a director.

High Chinese Refused Admission.

Boston, June 5.—Detention by local immigration officials of four Chinese, three brothers and their sister upon the arrival here aboard the steamer Iverna Thursday, has resulted in a vigorous protest by prominent cotton manufacturers in New England, and the matter has been formally called to the attention of President Roosevelt. The Chinese, who are known by the name of King, and are of high rank in their native country, having been touring the world. They had a letter from Ambassador Choate but were refused admission to the country until each furnished a bond of \$500. The cotton manufacturers base their protest on the ground that their business interest in China will be affected materially by such treatment of Chinese of high rank.

Big Elephant Put to Death.

Buffalo, June 5.—Prince, a gigantic trick elephant, was put to death in the Yammerthaw quarry. The beast had shown signs of madness, and his owners decided to kill him. It took a hundred men with block and tackle 90 minutes to put the pachyderm out of existence. Twice the havers broke, and the dangerous operation of replacing them had to be undertaken by the trainer. Prince offered no resistance, submitting quietly to the commands of his trainer. The hide was removed from the carcass and given to the Buffalo Historical society.

North Carolinian Indicted.

Washington, June 5.—Louis R. Smith, of North Carolina, formerly an employe in the general land office, was indicted today by the grand jury of the District of Columbia, on a charge of abstracting and selling 30 land warrants. Smith was employed in the land office from July 1, 1901, to July 6, 1904, and it was during this time that the warrants were taken. He confessed the theft when confronted with the evidence against him. The warrants taken were worth \$5,000.

Girls Refused to Climb Stairs.

Syracuse, N. Y., June 5.—One hundred and eighteen girls employed in the Nettleton shoe factory in this city refused to go to work because the use of the freight elevator in ascending to the fifth floor of the factory had been denied them. The girls said that five flights was too much of a climb for the "fat and puffy," and the thin ones also expressed the opinion that the effect of the exercise was bad.

Young Teddy to Hunt Bear.

Fresno, Cal., June 5.—Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., is going to hunt bears, catch trout and see the big mountains this summer. He has been invited to spend the summer in the Sierras with Stewart Edward White, author of "The Blazed Trail," and has sent word here that the invitation had been accepted.

Well Known Confederate Dead.

New Orleans, June 5.—Douglas M. Kilpatrick, former United States sub-treasurer and prominent in commercial circles, died her etoday aged 61. For many years he was a leader in the carnival celebrations. He served all through the civil war with the Washington artillery.

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— OF —

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A MINCING APPETITE,
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OCALA, FLA., Oct. 22, 1904.

Messrs. Strauss & Co., Wholesale Whisky Merchants, Ocala, Fla.,

Gentlemen.— In accordance with your instructions, I visited your warehouse on the 19th, instant, and personally selected from your stock a sample of

"Strauss' Royal Reserve"

whisky, the analysis of which shows it to contain:

Alcohol (by weight), per cent.....	36.66
Alcohol (by volume), per cent.....	43.61
Degree proof, per cent.....	87.10
Residue on evaporation, per cent.....	0.660
Ash, per cent.....	0.011
Reducing sugar, per cent.....	0.225
Volatile acids, per cent.....	0.027
Amyl alcohol (fusel oil), per cent.....	0.073

The above results show the whisky to be a carefully blended brand of high grade and that it has been distilled from a clean, pure grain mash. The amount of fusel oil and of volatile acids is very low.

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F. T. SCHREIBER, Chemist.

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