The Municipal League of Philadelphia.

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Of all the evils and dangers which beset our government, the corruption in our municipal government is one of the very worst. It is slowly but surely undermining the that Freedom and liberty for which our fathers fought and banded over all that we hold dearest to the custody of unprincipled men. For by our present system not only are ignorant men elected to offices which require a high grade of intelligence to fulfill them for the best interests of the people but even corrupt men, known to be so in their private and public
lines, are put into offices of trust and honor. What is the result of this? What result can there be but the downfall of the nation sooner or later; for, just as sickness in the human body is not restricted to one portion if it is allowed to gather strength without measured being taken to check it, so the corruption of our city governments will, if not cleansed out of the body politic, attack our national government and the United States will be cited as an example of the instability of republican forms of government by the European monarchies and look
ed down upon us honor and contempt. There is but one way to prevent this catastrophe which to a true American is the greatest that could befall him and that is to oppose the confederation of evil with a league of good and to awaken the better class of citizens to the sense of their responsibility and force the political criminals, for such they are, to retire and replace them by staunch and honest men. This is what the Municipal League purposes to perform. The Municipal League is a league formed of a
number of men of Philadelphia for the purpose of securing the best municipal govern-
ment for their city. The League was organized in the later part of 1891 and the earlier part of 1892. It is an organized body, for without or-
ganization individuals could never hope to cope successful-
ly with such organization as now controls the govern-
ment of the city where every man is drilled and held to his leader by the hope of future rewards or the desire to keep those spoils which he already holds.
The Municipal League has grown to such proportions that it was last year recognized as a party in the eyes of the law just like the Republican or Democratic, although to make nominations by means of certificates. It happened because, although the League became a recognized party when, in the elections of a year ago, the total number of votes cast for the Municipal League's ticket was over the two per cent required by the law to constitute a political party, this privilege was lost at the election last Fall when the central
Board of Managers of the League decided that since the League was only a municipal party there was no need for them to enter into state or county elections. Here they made a false step for the City Commissioners, who are not in favor of this reform movement, declared that since the League had not put a ticket in the field that they had foreclosed the right to this privilege. Now the League will have to make their nominations in the old way by nomination papers and then when a large enough number of votes is cast for their ticket they will again
become a recognized party and after that they will be compelled to enter into the state and county elections with a ticket.

The League has become such a potent factor in the municipal election that in some wards of the city the Ward Association of the Municipal League is consulted as to what candidates they would approve of and only those men are nominated by them. In other words the League holds the balance of power. Thus they achieve a great work by forcing the other political parties to nominate their best men in order to gain the endorsement.
of the League which frequently means the election of their candidates.

The By-laws of the League set forth in Rule II as objects the following statement: "The objects of the League shall be to eliminate all National and State politics from our Municipal politics; to secure the nomination and election of candidates solely on account of their honesty and fitness for the office; to see that our Municipal government be conducted upon non-partisan and strictly business principles; and to encourage every civic project for.
adding to the comforts and con-
venience of our citizens and to
the prosperity and development
of our city." The League further
believe in the application of the
principles of Civil Service Reform
to our municipal government; for,
if all the appointments to the
minor positions in the govern-
ment of our city were to be gain-
ed only by competitive examin-
ation, the backbone of the cor-
rup­tion would be broken and
the impetus given to righteous
government would do much to
bring about other much needed
reforms. For, left without the
minor appointments to distribute,
the political 'breeze' would have nothing but money to offer to their followers as a reward for loyal and active service, and as the amount required would be vastly greater than any man could afford, their present well-trained, efficient bands of supporters would fade away, leaving them alone to sink into the oblivion they deserve.

The League is thoroughly organized and is divided into wards and divisions which correspond to the wards and divisions in the city. Fifty or more members of the League, residing in the same ward, may
form a Ward Association, pro-
vided that there is no other
ward association of the Municipal
League formed there already and
that they gain the consent of the
Board of Managers to their organi-
zation. These Ward Associations
are supposed to look after the
interests of the League in that
ward and see that the men who
are elected from that ward are
properly fitted for their office
and to take care that the elec-
tion judges and officers are
honest and as far as it is possi-
bile they are to secure an
honest count of the votes.
The words are further di-
vided into divisions to facilitate
the work. Fifteen men or more
who are members of the league
and residents in the division are
authorized to form a division
association of their own, none in that
division and subject to the ap-
proval of the Executive Commiss-
tee of the ward of which they are
a part. Each division has the
privilege of sending one represent-
ative to make up the Executive
Committee of his ward, which has
in addition ten members elected
at large through the ward.
The members of the Executive
Committee are elected for one year
and by the By-laws no member
of the league who holds a position under the municipal government can hold any office in the Municipal League. The Executive Committee meets once every month and has control of the whole ward. The whole League is managed by a President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Treasurers and the Board of Managers. The Board of Managers is composed of all the officers just mentioned and one representative from each ward with an additional twenty-five men elected at large at a meeting of the whole League. As in the lower offices, the higher ones run for one year and can
ry no emolument.

The practical work is done, of course, to a large extent in the work itself. At the time of the election of councilmen and school directors, the Ward Association appoints a committee of men who have leisure and have a thorough interest in the work to take care of the nominations of the League decide to enter the field with a ticket of its own. These men, by letter and interview, get together the names of a number of men who are willing to seek the office and are thoroughly fitted for it. The names of these men are then placed on
a ticket, along with any other names which may have been sent to the Executive Committee of the Ward endorsed by any five members of that Ward Association. A general meeting of all the members of that Ward Association is called for a certain night at a certain place. The ticket, containing a list of the candidates and a vote stating how many are to be nominated, is then distributed among the members present to be voted for those men whom they consider the best. The names of the men thus elected are put on a list as the nominees of the Ward.
icinal League of that Ward and this list is sent to the city
Commissioners and placed on a column on the official ticket to
be voted for at large. Sometimes
the Ward Associations simply en-
dorse the candidates of one
of the other parties and
then the energies of the As-
sociation are directed toward
finding out all that is possible
about the characters, private
and public.

Sometimes, when it is expedi-
tent, there is a door-to-door can-
vass of the voters in the ward
but this is difficult since a-
mong the members of the Ward
Association. There are only a few men who are zealous enough for
the cause to devote their time
to this form of practical politics.
This sort of course is of value when
you have no public record of the
opposing candidate though you
may know that he is totally in-
competent for the position; it
is also of great service in bring-
ing the merits of your own can-
didate forcibly before the voters.

Two years ago in the Thirty sec-
ond Ward the man elected by the
Republican Party had been a mem-
ber of Council from that ward be-
fore, and his public record was
known, just how he had voted
or certain measures for the public welfare. This record was decided against him so that the Ward Association of the League for that ward simply sent a round circular to the voters stating her public record without much comment on it. The result was that she was defeated by an overwhelming majority. In this ward the door-to-door canvass has only been tried once and then it with little phenomenal success.

At times the Ward Associations have consolidated with one of the existing parties but this is found to be unprofitable for some
instances after entering into an
agreement with a party they have
failed to keep their part of the
bargain thus using the Ward
Association as a sort of cat's paw
for their own ends. This was
well demonstrated two or three
years ago in the Thirty-second
Ward. At that time the Repub-
licans thought they could not
possibly carry the Primaries
so they agreed to adopt the
Municipal League's ticket as their
own. This ticket included four
men who were members of the Lea-
gue, two of which were active
members in the Ward Association and
the other two had been to Corru-
cils before. So the Republican Party agreed to make this ticket their own, provided they obtained the support of the League in that ward. When the primaries were held, the opposing party was split by internal quarrels and some of the members of the League who were Republicans went and voted for that ticket at the primaries. The result was that the Republicans carried the primaries much to their own astonishment and when they found themselves secure they deliberately broke faith with the League and put on their ticket the two
men who were already in Council and two other men from their own ranches thus leaving out the two men who would have been especially valuable to the League. The League then simply withdrew its ticket and worked against the Republican ticket and defeated it.

The energies of the ward associations are directed against the Council especially because they are acknowledged by all to be the most corrupt spot in our Municipal government and in whose hands lay what most concerns our private comfort and well-being for they
levy the taxe and give away
franchises that could be sold
for such amounts of money that
our taxes could be greatly reduc-
ed in amount. The Council has
some men in it, unfortunately not
few in number, whose hands are
always ready to receive money or
its equivalent from any company
who wants a certain privilege from
the City. Rightly then they should
be the first point of corrup-
tion attacked for if we can
get honest men in Council the
other strongholds of corruption
will fall all the sooner.

The central Board of Managers
are principally advisory in their
function. They call all the
general meetings of the member
and decide whether the League
shall enter the field with
nominations or not. Another im-
portation function is the pres-
entation to the Legislature
of bills referring to the welfare
of Philadelphia and their en-
dorsement or condemnation of
any other bill which may come
before that body. They also de-
cide whether the ward associa-
tion shall be admitted as qualifi-
ced to represent the League in
that ward and if any friction
should arise in the ward as-
ociation, it is settled by the
Board of Managers.

As to the way some of the ward associations are formed we might take the Thirty-second Ward as an example. About four years ago there was a man nominated from that ward who was known to have a bad public record but he was supported by the Republican Party which is exceedingly strong in that ward. Three or four men then called on a man who was known to be a prominent member of the Municipal League and said that they thought some organized stand ought to be made against this candidate.
So they wrote personal letters to about a dozen men whom were members of the League in that ward requesting them to meet at a certain gentleman's house for the purpose of organizing a movement against the obnoxious candidate. Of these men only one man came and he came simply to say that he could not possibly remain if one may use an 'h'ishion.' The little nucleus of determined workers then got the assessors list and picked out about five hundred names at random but trying to get them as much representative of the different professions and trades as possi-
ble so that it might not be said that they were exclusion in any sense. Then they sent a circular to each of these five hundred requesting them to come to a certain hall which had been hired for the purpose on a certain night in order to form a ward association of the Municipal League in the Thirty-second Ward. Out of the five hundred about forty-five were present and thus the Ward Association of that ward was formed. The Executive Committee then consisted of ten members elected at large, but after a time it was decided to enlarge this wo
her which was done by an amendment to the By-laws. The number was raised to twenty-five and among the new members of the Executive Committee were placed a Jewish Rabbi, a Catholic priest and a Protestant clergyman who though they seldom attended the meetings of the Committee were of great benefit through the weight which their names carried for the people of their different creeds. In this way the Ward Association was put on a firm working basis and is said to be one of the best in Philadelphia.

The success of the Municipal
League has been wonderful when you take into consideration the short time it has been in existence. Already honest men are beginning to see that politics may be considered an honorable profession for any man to enter, or as the last Report of the Board of Managers expresses it "the business men are beginning to realize that municipal government is business, not politics." This is perhaps demonstrated better in New York than in Philadelphia where the New York Chamber of Commerce, which is, perhaps, the best among the commercial bodies in
The United States supported the Leaven Committee for investigating the corruption of their city and they were also influential in bringing together the Committee of Seventy to overthrow Tammany in the Campaign of 1894. Their sentiment is best expressed in their resolutions drawn up in January, 1894, of which the following is a portion: "It is the opinion of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York that the government of municipalities, when corrupt, is a source of great danger, and unless honest and efficient adds to the strength and stability
of the nation, and the commercial prosperity of a city is intimately connected with its government."

"Through the literature, issued by the League and distributed broadcast, the eyes of the people are being opened to the fact that they have a duty to perform to the city, as Christians and they are being shown that, by not voting consecutively, they are to a great degree responsible for the corruption of our city government. As I have said the League is becoming so great a factor in the politics of our
city that the politicians often consult the wishes of the League officers as to the men that will be satisfactory to the League. And only those men, therefore, are nominated. When these men get into office, they are much more careful to administer that office for the good of the city rather than their own private gain, for they know that there is a body which is watching them and which will call them to account if there is the least suspicion of unfair dealing. This body has a bad habit, at least from the point of view of a corrupt
politician, of not forgetting past offenses which are sure to be brought up against him if he attempts to run for office again.

There is another Municipal League which is not restricted to the cities individually, I mean the National Municipal League which is strictly speaking a league of leagues. It grew out of a meeting of representatives from all the leagues for municipal reform in the United States at Philadelphia in January of 1896. It is simply an organization for the promotion of good government in the cities throughout the country.
It has no authority to enforce any rules but is simply for con-
ference and advice on these subjects. By this means the
League of one city can learn from that in another what
plans succeeded well in cleaning the government and it can
communicate to others the success or failure of its own
scheme of work. The National Municipal League al-
excites the people by means
of series of pamphlets on sub-
jects referring to an individual's
duty to his city and state, point-
ing out in what way this duty
can best be performed. It has
been organized so lately that very little has been done as yet but its organizers are determined, zealous men and it also will be of inestimable benefit to reform movement in municipal government throughout the United States.
Amount of Work.

I wrote to Mrs. Clinton Rogers Wood and obtained from her some of the literature of the League. Then I got a letter of introduction to him and called on him and obtained some valuable information and more literature. Then I interviewed Rev. Albert Leffingwell, a member of the executive committee of the Thirty-Second Ward who, after giving me all the information in his power, gave me a letter of introduction to Col. George Major, a member of the Executive Committee of the same Ward and one of the Board of Managers of the League, who introduced me to Mr. Greenwald whom he designated as delegate to Board from the Thirty-Second Ward. I joined the League.