

FORMER MAYOR CARLSON SPEAKS AT CONFERENCE

Tells What American Municipalities May Learn From the Cities of Europe.

OBSERVATIONS OF HIS TRIP ABROAD

Says German Cities Have Succeeded in Doing Many Things Better Than Cities in This Country. 5/12/37

Former Mayor Samuel A. Carlson gave an address before the New York State Conference of Mayors yesterday afternoon on "What American Municipalities Can Learn From European Cities." Mr. Carlson is a former president of the conference. He said in part: "I spent several weeks in Germany last Summer with a group of American City officials and professional men investigating Municipal Government under the auspices of the Carl Schurz Foundation.

"German cities have always been recognized as well governed. There is an impressive beauty, cleanliness and picturesqueness about these cities. They have a background of historic traditions. Some of these cities were founded at the very beginning of the Christian era. But it was difficult to understand how these splendid German people who built and governed these great cities should suddenly have become converts to this strange Nazi cult.

Most of these German Municipalities have until the recent revolutionary upheaval continued the old cumbersome bicameral form of government with various boards in control of specific departments.

"But notwithstanding the handicaps of a system of government embracing many branches, the German cities have nevertheless succeeded in doing many things much better than most American cities have been able to do. This has been due to wide home rule power and to the fact that a higher caliber of scholarly men have heretofore been placed in charge of important administrative departments with no political or partisan strings attached to their appointments.

Municipal Ownership.

"Municipal ownership is carried on on a far wider scale in German cities than is the case in America. Not only do these cities operate water and lighting plants but they are engaged in such undertakings as street railways, bus lines, theatres, banking, apartment houses, hospitals, cemeteries, restaurants, forests and even lotteries. These enterprises are generally conducted on the basis of providing service at the lowest cost to the people. Lotteries and theatres, however, are conducted on a profit making basis to help maintain welfare departments. Recently many German cities have built vast numbers of Subsistence Homesteads for the benefit of the unemployed. These homesteads are usually three room houses, with a plot of ground for gardening purposes. Those assigned to these dwelling places are

officers ends at the city line, while the criminal's field of operation is on a nationwide scale. Moreover, local influences in America are often a hindrance to efficient action.

Fire Departments.

"In the matter of fire prevention cost we can profit from the German cities where fire protection is amply secured with less than 50 per cent. of the fire department membership in American cities. For instance, Essen, with a population of 650,000, has only 147 paid firemen. Hannover, with a population of 450,000 has only 195 paid firemen. In these cities policemen are required to assist at every fire.

Budgets and Taxation.

"The budgets of German cities are prepared usually by a Director of Finance in conjunction with various departments subject to approval by the Mayor and Council as is done in most American cities with the exception that a review of the budget is made every two months in order to prevent an overdraft in appropriations.

"Taxes in the average German city are considerably higher than in the average American city because of the multiplicity of public agencies in the German city.

"While there is a great variety of taxes imposed upon German citizens, yet, they seem to feel the burden lightly because taxes are collected in monthly installments and in some cases in weekly installments.

Stockholm.

"In the city of Stockholm, Sweden, the council is selected by a plan of Proportional Representation. Stockholm, being the capital city, the mayor is chosen by the Premier and his Cabinet from one of three persons nominated by vote of the people. In that city every policeman is a university graduate. Stockholm boasts that it has never had a bank failure nor a bank robbery. Kidnapers and gangsters are an unknown element in that city. American tourists are all agreed that Stockholm has an attractiveness that surpasses all other cities on the continent. In that city hospital service is free to all persons of limited incomes. Firemen and policemen unite in putting out fires and thereby reduce the budgeting cost for general public safety about 33 per cent. less than in our American cities. There is practically no drunkenness because the liquor traffic is controlled by the government and all excess profit is turned over to the state.

"This I also found to be the situation in the cities of Leningrad and Moscow with the exception that in Russia all proceeds from the sale of liquor goes to the state so that there is no incentive for anyone to seek an increase in the sale and consumption of liquor in order to make a private profit. And in this connection I venture

different voters who are marshalled into decisive majorities by scheming politicians could be greatly improved by the Cincinnati plan of Proportional Representation, or by dividing the electorate into three groups, a taxpayer group, a non-taxpayer group and a group representing professional and business interests. Each of these groups given equal representation in national and local governing bodies would mean less partisanship, more stability and result in better laws and better government."