

A Heritage For The Future

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“Let us remember the past with pride as we move forward by continuing to help strengthen democratic, responsive, and effective local government.”

Traditions can be limiting and stifling, or they can be the foundation upon which growth and change take place. This is an issue about our heritage—about the profession and the Association. And, our heritage is one which is a foundation for growth and change. Six decades have created traditions for the profession and the Association that are conducive to meeting new challenges.

Dimensions—There are, in effect, three dimensions to our heritage. The first is the council-manager plan, whose creation in 1908 meant the creation of our profession, whose growth since then has meant the growth of our profession, and whose strength in the future will mean the profession's continued strength.

The second dimension to our heritage is the profession itself, its contribution to understanding and working toward solving local government problems. The third dimension is ICMA, the Association of the municipal management profession, which this year celebrates its 60th year of service to local government managers and administrators.

These three dimensions—the plan, the profession, the Association—are all dealt with in this issue. The history of each sums up to our heritage for the future.

The plan—The issue begins with a discussion of the history of the council-manager plan. Upon reading the history, one of the virtues of the plan emerges that is often overlooked. The council-manager plan is quite adaptable. Robert P. Boynton, director, Doctoral Program in

Public Management, College of Public Affairs, the American University, points out in his article, *The Council-Manager Plan: An Historical Perspective*, that in the adoption of the plan, compromises are made with the requirements of the local situation. It is not the plan that is often bought, but its essential ingredient—the professional city manager.

Our heritage began because of the rapid growth of cities and the failures of traditional government arrangements to meet changing conditions. It is these values of adaptability, change, and service that come through as we look at the past 60 years.

The profession—The second dimension to our heritage is the contribution the profession has made to local government. Perhaps our most profound and longest-lasting contribution has been ethical. The profession is characterized most by its determination to define what is ethical and then live by it.

In 1924, the profession adopted a Code of Ethics. The Code, amended four times since then, has provided a heritage of true value—for it asks each member to assume a commitment that is both personal and professional to make the Code a part of the member's life. It demands observance of standards for public life that provide a goal for others. The Code sets standards of integrity that forbid turning the values of service, change, and adaptability into a rationale for any action.

There are many other aspects of the profession, however. Stephen B. Sweeney, in his article, points out the profession's contribution to the education and training needs of local government. This, of course, is a subject that Dr. Sweeney is well equipped to discuss, as the many hundreds of students of city management under him at the Fels Institute for Local and State Government for some 30 years can attest.

Carleton F. Sharpe, president of ICMA in 1957-58, in his article, *Reflections of a Veteran Administrator*, and William J. Leiding, city manager, Richmond, Va., in his article, *Commentary of a Young Professional*, give us a split image of the profession from both ends of the seniority spectrum. As a veteran manager, Mr. Sharpe gives us a broad brush-picture of changes in the profession over the last several decades. As a relative newcomer to the profession in a position of considerable responsibility, Mr. Leiding gives his views on the challenges to the profession today.

This section concludes with a profile of the profession today, authored by Stanley M. Wolfson, director of ICMA's Urban Data Service Center.

We have always been concerned with what needs to be done to meet people's needs, not just with efficiency *per se*. In the 1920's, the *City Manager Magazines* were filled with how council-manager government was cen-

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tered on service. In the 1930's, articles in *PM* reflected the growing concern over intergovernmental problems and the problems of the depression.

Even where resources were scarce, city managers did their best to meet the needs of people caused by the depression. Fred M. Stephenson, city manager of Edmond, Okla., in 1934, reported that he paid much attention . . . to getting the people in town out of the dumps. Many things were done to cheer up the people and to cater to the enforced leisure time of the unemployed.

The 1930's were a forerunner of what was to come. C. A. Dykstra, president of ICMA in 1932, stated in 1934: *The problem of urban organization today is to so condition a thronging population that it can live under the most complex social conditions in the face of centuries of experience which develops habits, customs, and institutions to meet an entirely different kind of life. . . . There is no inherent reason why we cannot, through a representative system and sound administrative practice, meet the challenge thrown down to a democratic government and maintain our values for which democracy has stood. . . . In any event the city will be the battle ground and we will be participants."*

The battle of creating effective and responsive urban organizations has been with us since—and we have been participants. The battle has been somewhat diverted at various times. The war years (1941-1945) created their own set of problems revolving around one great national effort. After the war, we had at least 15 years of catching-up from the depression and war—housing, repair of existing facilities, new roads, and new communities in the suburbs which created urban sprawl.

In the 1960's, we began to return to fundamental questions of urban organization as we wrestled with how to provide more voice and service in government for all people and how to meet the growing, complex urban problems. This is taking place today in all size communities because urban does not mean just central city. It describes the type of society in which we live. It is a society that must deny privilege, accept different life styles, and, above all, maintain faith in its governmental institutions.

The Association—The third dimension to our heritage is the Association. ICMA's history is one of service to the profession and growth. This picture emerges from the articles in the third section of this issue.

Clarence E. Ridley, ICMA executive director in 1929-56, in his article succinctly describes the years between 1914 and 1947. Clarence H. Elliott, president of ICMA, 1952-53, takes up the thread of our history in 1947-53. And, Elder Gunter, city manager of Stockton, Calif., and ICMA President, 1962-63, takes us from 1962 to the present.

This leaves two gaps in our Association's activities. The first is our international activities, which are treated in depth in the article by Orin F. Nolting, executive director, 1956-67. The second is the period from about 1956 to 1962, which is discussed briefly below.

Years of consolidation—The history of the Association is marked by the needs of the profession and the growth of

council-manager government. By 1956, most of ICMA's basic programs of service had been established, upon which the expanded program (1963-67) was built. The expanded program (see Elder Gunter's article) led to the move to Washington and the extensive Goals Study of 1968. In 1969, the membership approved broadening the membership base, and the Association began again to expand its program.

In July of 1967, Mark E. Keane was appointed director of ICMA. A past president of ICMA, he had served as city manager of Tucson, Ariz., Oak Park, Ill., and Shorewood, Wis. Under his directorship, the Association has continued to broaden and expand its activities to anticipate and respond to the needs of its members.

The fundamental purpose of the Association has not changed—it has always been to increase the proficiency of local government administration and to strengthen local government. The development of basic services, such as the Year Book, MIS, and Green Books, has been fundamental to ICMA's service and success. Mr. Ridley's article points out that it was not until the early 1950's that ICMA became financially independent. This independence was made possible because of the development of these basic services that covered their own cost, i.e., Green Books, in-service correspondence training, MIS, and so on.

The period 1956-1962 was largely one of consolidation. It was during this period that many existing services were refined and enlarged. For instance, 1959 marked the first week-long seminar on management with 80 in attendance. A new Green Book, *Supervisory Methods in Municipal Administration* (the predecessor to *Developing the Municipal Organization*), was published, and MIS reports were expanded. A monograph written by Clarence Ridley entitled *The Role of the City Manager in Policy Formulation* caught wide attention for it said what the profession had known all along—managers were concerned with the *what* as well as the *how*. It was during this period that the Association accumulated the cash reserve that enabled it to implement the expanded program of 1962 and move to Washington in 1967.

The future of our history—We began by talking about heritage and tradition. But, to look back, as this issue largely does, has little value if it does not point the way to the future. The future of the profession and the Association looks bright. It looks bright because all of us are working together to strengthen each member and to continue to live up to our Code of Ethics, which requires all of us to be dedicated to concepts of effective and democratic government. It is the element of professional integrity that more than any other factor has built a profession and an Association.

Our 60 years of tradition has left us legacies of growth, creative adaptability, and success—and yes, some failures. It has left us leaders of the profession to remember and the basis for future leaders to build upon. Let us remember the past with pride as we move forward by continuing to help strengthen democratic, responsive, and effective local government. □