A DECADE OF THE REFERENDUM

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Part One.

Chapter I.

Development Of The Referendum.

The Des Moines Plan of City Government is unique in that it combines the commission plan of administration with the added features of the Initiative, Referendum, and Recall. These modes of action have come into American city politics due to a reaction of popular sentiment against the corruption of many city councils. The purpose of the Referendum, in a general way, is to enhance democracy and prevent corruption. Its use has been justified at times by the interest of feeling the pulse of the people and we find many municipalities incorporating the Referendum in their charters, sometimes in connection with the Initiative and Recall.

This study will cover the municipal and school elections of the past ten years in Des Moines with the object of drawing some general conclusions with regard to the success of the Referendum. The Referendum should be clearly distinguished from the Recall and Initiative. While these three institutions all act in the same manner, in that they are designed to apprehend the will of the people by

(a)American Government and Politics, Chas. A. Beard, Page 600.
A clear understanding of the development of the Referendum is essential to a complete comprehension of this subject. Contrary to common belief, the Referendum has been utilized in American politics for a long time. In recent years its activity and use have increased very greatly; hence the idea common to most Americans that the Referendum is a sort of new and modern cure—all for most political ills. (a)

The Referendum has for many years been used in our National and State Politics usually in connection with Constitutional Amendments, location of State Capitols and, State bond issues. More recently the city governments have taken this method of feeling the pulse of "the people" and we find many municipalities incorporating the Referendum in their charters, sometimes in connection with the Initiative and Recall.

The Referendum should be clearly distinguished from the Recall and Initiative. While these three institutions all act in the same manner, in that they are designed to apprehend the will of the people by a direct vote, yet they serve quite divergent purposes.

(a) Government By All The People—Wilson, Page 131
The Initiative is used when a considerable portion of the voters desire to initiate legislation of any kind. This may be done despite the wish of the legislative body, and usually at a time when that body refuses to favor an act especially popular with the press and people.

The Recall is a similar mode of procedure used to remove an unpopular office holder from his position.

In 1846 an Act of Congress providing for the recession of part of the District Of Columbia to Virginia was submitted to a popular vote of the qualified electors of the District of Columbia.
of Columbia.

In cases when the States have employed the Referendum there has always been a question as to its Constitutionality. In the early days of American History the various State Supreme courts upheld its use and contended that when the power to use the Referendum was not specifically granted in the Constitution, still it could be used as merely cooperation and not a delegation of a power. (a)

In 1847 the Supreme Court of Delaware, reversed these decisions and declared the use of the Referendum unconstititutioinal. (b) Later Pennsylvania's Court ruled in the same way. Iowa has been notable for the number of decisions rendered against the Referendum. (c) In order to establish its constitutionality, therefore, many states incorporated the Referendum in their Constitution. As an instrument of more general ordinary legislation the Referendum had its birth in South Dakota in 1898, and from 1908 to the present time a great many of the central and western states have incorporated it in many divisions of their law-making machinery.

(a) Rive v. Foster, 4 Harr. 479.
(b) Parker v. Commonwealth, 6 Barr. 507.
(c) Geer v. State, 5 Iowa 491; State v. Weir, 33 Iowa 134; Weir v. Cran, 37 Iowa 649.
One of the outstanding states in the movement to "let the people rule" is Oregon. Here the use of the Initiative and Referendum so greatly developed that there is practically no limit to the power of the people to do as they wish in politics. It has been described by some authors as being the "most democratic democracy in the world". While there are other features of the Oregon system, yet the two main cogs in the wheel of its Government are the Initiative and Referendum. An increasingly large number of measures is being submitted to the people of Oregon each year on the ballot for acceptance or rejection. (a) decided by popular vote. Many of the most interesting features of the government of the city through five commissioners elected at large, has incorporated with it the Initiative, Referendum, and Recall. (b)

(b) The Des Moines Plan Of Commission Government-Page 7.
By petition signed by twenty-five per cent of the number of qualified electors who voted for mayor at the preceding election, a measure may be brought before the people for vote. This thesis deals more particularly with principal Referendum votes in Des Moines during the last ten years, in both city and school elections.

It has been customary for many years to refer certain questions dealing with school matters to the people for decision. The matter of bond issues, sale and purchase of property, erection of school houses, location of school houses and other questions have long been decided by popular vote. Many of the most interesting plans of the Referendum system are discovered in connection with the school elections of Des Moines for the last decade.

A study of the Referendum as authorized in the Iowa Codes is interesting. In the Code of 1873 there were several provisions for majority rule, notable of which were the submitting of school financial questions to the people. (a)

(a) Code of 1873, Sec. 482, Page 71.
of tax levy, (a) and annexing territory to towns.

The Code of Iowa for 1888 contains in all twenty-nine provisions for the submission of questions to popular vote. (b) The Code of 1897 has thirty-five while the supplement to the Code of 1907 contains forty-four. (c)

The 1913 Code shows a further increase, one interesting feature being related to the franchise question for Heating Plants and other public service utility corporations. (d)

(a) Code of 1873, Sec. 516, Page 55.
(b) Code of 1873, Sec. 428, Page 71.
(c) McClain's Annotated Code of Iowa-1888.
   Code of Iowa, 1897.
   Supplement to Code of Iowa 1907.
(d) Supplement to Iowa Code of 1913, Page 721.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part One.

Chapter II.

General Arguments For The Referendum.

Some of the main arguments advanced in favor of direct legislation by means of the Referendum will be given briefly.

1. One of the most common points made for the direct vote on certain measures and laws is that while the men elected may change their views and break their party promises, a law, once passed by the people is past the power of law makers and politicians to change. It is argued that the method of referring laws to the people is a time-saving device as the laws wanted are passed directly, rather than men elected to pass the desired laws. (a)

2. The objection that the Referendum system is complicated and past the comprehension of the ordinary voter is answered by the argument that all bills to be submitted would be published well in advance so that all voters would have ample chance for study and investigation of the subject. His task would

(a) Government By All The People—Wilcox—Page 199.
then be simple and on election day he would merely go to the polls and record his opinion on the proposed topics.

As a proof of the validity of this claim upholders of the Referendum point to the election of 1909 in Portland, Oregon. Voters who voted for mayor voted on thirty-five measures, passing thirteen of them. There was every evidence of good reason and judgment being used, it was declared by the press also.

In the May election of 1910 in Denver the voters considered twenty-one measures, "some of them trickily worded", and the claim of the press was that the people were victorious.

3. Many good statesmen become exceedingly unpopular and lose their positions because of their instrumentality in passing bills which do not meet with public favor. By the use of the Referendum, such questionable bills would be decided by the people themselves and it would be unnecessary to remove a good statesman to defeat an occasional unpopular bill. There are two sides, of course, to this argument. The opponent of the Referendum main-
tains that such procedure is conducive to irresponsibility on the part of office holders.

The experience of Referendum states is so limited that there have been no authentic cases cited to uphold this idea. However, it is quite evident that such might be the case if the Referendum were abused, and used merely as a means of shifting responsibility. Hence, the success of the Referendum is questionable.

The great success of the direct vote system in Switzerland is pointed out as a proof that this system of law making would be a success in every state.

The success of the Referendum in Switzerland is generally accepted as a fact and it is true that the Swiss people, as a rule, are ardent supporters of the plan. Whether the success of the Referendum in Switzerland is conclusive proof of its efficiency as a form of municipal government is questionable. Many investigations and examinations of the government of Switzerland have been made and it is the result of most findings that the people are highly pleased with the direct vote system.

(a) The Referendum In America-Oberholtzer-Page 404.
Switzerland, however, by reason of her peculiar status in international law, being a "neutralized" state, is not a typical state. Political life is restricted and, therefore, unnatural.

It is reasonable to suppose, however, that there are some radical differences between the Country of Switzerland and the City of Des Moines. It seems unreasonable to suppose that the success of the Referendum plan in Switzerland can be accepted as evidence which many voters undoubtedly take. In proof that the same system would prove successful in municipal government in the United States.

5. Perhaps the most substantial argument for the Referendum is that it will increase the interest of the people generally in politics. It is maintained that voters who are in the habit of expressing an opinion at election time on mighty questions and problems of state, will soon become much superior, in a political way, to the citizens who merely choose among certain men. The Direct vote system is an old as questions and problems of state, will soon become as old as the political vocabulary, and it was the Swiss be refuted by the opponents of the direct vote system. It is the claim, however, of the anti-referendum forces that, while it may increase the

interest and political knowledge of many voters, still there is a great percentage of voters who will pay no attention whatever to the questions submitted. By forming this habit on the part of the voter the political fibre of the people is injured and the keen sense of responsibility on the part of the voter demoralized. However, this argument, is offset by the greater amount of interest which many voters undoubtedly take. In support of these statements many returns on various elections have been cited showing that a great per cent of the voters really voted intelligently on the Referendum questions submitted.

6. The objection to the Referendum on the grounds that it is a modern fad is, of course, groundless. The direct vote system is as old as our political history—and older. It was the method of procedure found in the old Plymouth Colony and the New England Town Meetings. In Switzerland it has long existed as the "Swiss Landesgemeinde" and in Germany as the "Folk-Moot". (a)
It was a political institution of Athens and Rome. (a) The first chapter of this thesis treats quite extensively of the history and development of the institution.

Quite recently the Referendum with its customary accompaniments has been extended in Switzerland to all the cantons there and finally took in all Federal Legislation also. The Referendum was adopted in 1874 and the Initiative for Constitutional Amendments in 1891.

However, the situation in Switzerland, however, hardly offers a fair comparison with that of the United States. Switzerland is a country quite different country in every way from the United States. The area of Switzerland is 15,965 square miles and thus from a geographical point of view it is incomparable with either state or city politics of our country. For example the area of Iowa is 55,000 square miles. Also the industrial life of the people of Switzerland is greatly unlike our mode of living and many customs very well suited to Switzerland would not be acceptable in the United States.

(a) Government By All The People—D.F. Wilcox—Page 3.
It must be admitted, however, that the apparent success of the Referendum in Switzerland is a strong argument in its favor. Were the facts reversed, it is very probable that the failure of the Referendum in Switzerland would be cited as a leading argument against its adoption in this country.

7. Some advocates have advanced, in support of their proposition, the theory that the Referendum ballot would seldom be used and would merely act as a silent threat to legislatures in case they failed to do their duty. This may be true in some cases, but it certainly cannot be accepted as a general rule in some states in which the Referendum is in operation. It is true that the people have not been called on to express an opinion or render a decision. However, that this is not always the case is evidenced by the record in Oregon for a series of about ten years. In 1902 there were submitted several propositions for approval. In 1904 there were two, in 1906 there were eleven; in 1908 there were nineteen and in 1910 there were not only thirty-two propositions to vote on but also one hundred thirty-one candidates to choose from. (a)
booklet of two hundred two pages set forth the thirty-two measures and it was said that some voters disposed of this mammoth ballot in two and one-half minutes.

However, in a state like South Dakota there are very seldom any unreasonable number of issues laid before the public.

The argument, therefore, that the Referendum is to be used as a silent threat depends entirely upon the locality of the place under consideration. In a state like Oregon, which is sometimes termed the haven of all political cranks and faddists, it is certainly not true.

A few of the more common objections and also several of the principal arguments for the Referendum have been cited.

In considering the Referendum in the City of Des Moines these may act as a sort of background against which to review the various elections.

While it is impossible to study the Referendum without coming to view it with favor or disfavor, an attempt will be made to interpret the
facts fairly and draw all possible deductions for
and against its success in the civic elections of
Des Moines.

Hoping to get forth some of the history and development of the
Des Moines vote in recent years and to make
a more intelligent analysis of the
Des Moines vote to be considered later.

In the early days when great numbers of people
would vote together and take a look at the
vote in a better light in the August of
1871.

When the first citizenshad not been
in the political field and were
not interested in its activities, one
authority pointed out numerous objections to
keeping vote secret. Some of the main objections
are summarized below.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part One.

Chapter III.

General Arguments Against The Referendum.

Having set forth some of the leading facts connected with the history and development of the Referendum as a sort of foundation from which to work and certain points in favor of the Referendum as viewed by modern students of the question, some of the objections will be considered. This will facilitate a more intelligent examination of the elections to be considered later.

In early days when great numbers of people could gather together and make known their will by a direct vote there were not many valid objections to the plan.

However, since such strides have been made in the complication and multiplicity of modern life, many new factors have entered into the political field and many authorities point out numerous objections to a direct vote system. Some of the main points noted are summarized below.
Objections To The Referendum.

1. It is maintained by many close political students that the ordinary man who goes to the polls to vote can vote more intelligently and effectively if the issue is drawn between two men than if the question is put to him whether a law should be passed or not. In other words, it is argued that men are more easily discriminated than laws. It is certainly true that the average man can recall school elections and perhaps city elections in which he was given a ballot to vote for or against a proposition concerning which he had no information whatever.

2. The sense of responsibility of both voter and law maker is diminished by the direct legislation system, according to certain economists. The law makers become accustomed to leaving the decision of important questions to popular vote and soon they reach the frame of mind in which they consider that no great responsibility rests on them. Also the voters who are asked time and again to vote on topics of which they know nothing, finally become disgusted and lose their sense of responsibility in
voting. Overburdened with a mass of details they lose sight of the general politics which they are really capable to vote on.

3. There are valid objections also to the mechanical side of the direct voting system. In the first place it is extremely expensive, necessitating many more elections, an infinite amount of printing and a great outlay of money for the other expenses usually dependent on elections. Not only is there a great financial burden to bear, but also there is a great mental and nervous strain put on the electors which is entirely needless, or they lose interest and take no pains to study the question.

4. The government of Switzerland and the old Town Meeting are sometimes held up as examples of excellent cases of good government by direct legislation. The opponents of the system object very strenuously to the use of these two examples.

They claim that the Swiss analogy is not well drawn because there is just one legislative
body in that country and there is no veto power or court ruling on legislative acts. Therefore, while this might be a case similar to that of the municipal government of the United States, it is not a case parallel to those of the Federal and State Governments.

The New England Town Meeting and old Teuton "Moot" are not on the same basis, as these men were all legislators and not in the status of voters. (a)

5. The last objection which will be noted is that voters will not take the time and trouble to study acts upon which they are to pass judgment. Some extremely good examples of this are found in our "direct vote states" elections.

In South Dakota in the election of November 1912 there were submitted a constitutional amendment and three initiative measures. One measure was a complicated, technical affair which covered thirty pages and would require weeks of

(a) New American Government And Its Work, Page 609, Young.
study for a working knowledge of it. The title of this act was as follows:

"An act to provide for regulation of political party transactions; for the purpose of determining organic provisions and definitions of terms, party enrollment, party organization, independent and representative proposals of candidates for party nomination to elective offices, official primary ballot, conduct of primary elections, official party endorsement of United States Senators and appointive government positions other than postmasters, postmaster primary, party Recall, official state publicity, pamphlet, violations, penalties and contents." (a)

In the Oregon election of 1910 the voters were asked to consider, and decide for or against thirty-two measures many of which were so technical that no ordinary citizen could hope to be competent to judge them.

(a) The Referendum, Initiative and Recall In America, 1890-1924, 1925.
Having thus considered several of the chief advantages and objections to the Initiative and Referendum, a study of the elections of Des Moines will be considered.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Two.

Chapter I.

A Study Of Municipal Elections.

Having treated in a general way the subject of the direct vote, I shall now make a somewhat detailed study of the use of the Referendum in several city elections which have occurred in Des Moines since 1906.

The election returns are exceedingly hard to find and to present because of the negligence of city officials who are supposed to compile and file them. Many recent election returns cannot be found at all and those which have been filed are often in poor form. For example, one set of election returns which was called for was found, after much searching, under the blotter on the city clerk's desk. Others were torn and mutilated and in some cases were incomplete. Therefore, often the newspaper count was the only source of information. This is not a fault peculiar to the Des Moines Plan administration as records kept before the new plan went into operation are just as elusive.
In each of the elections considered, the vote for commissioners is not considered as our interest is in the Referendum vote cast, not in the matter of election of officials. The number of votes cast for mayor is noted, however, as a guide to the comparative number of votes cast for the measures as against the number for mayor.

The wards, those wards are numbered from west to east, the First Ward being upon the extreme west of the city and the Seventh at the extreme east. A description of the points of interest connected with each ward will be made.

The First Ward which is divided into nine precincts is the largest in the city and in a general way includes all the territory between Seventeenth and the western city limits. One people of which is the highest type of the wards

...
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Two.

Chapter II.

A Description Of The Wards And Precincts Of Des Moines.

Des Moines is divided into seven Wards, four on the West Side and three on the East Side of the river. These Wards are numbered from west to east, the First Ward being upon the extreme west of the city and the Seventh at the extreme east. A description of the points of interest connected with each Ward will be made. (a)

The First Ward which is divided into nine precincts is the largest in the city and in a general way includes all the territory between Seventeenth Street and the western city limits. The people of this Ward are of the highest type of Des Moines citizenship and include most of the more cultured and refined class of the city. It is interesting to note the vote of this Ward as compared to other Wards of the city of a lower class.

(a) See Map in Part V.
The Second Ward extends from Twelfth Street to Seventeenth Street between the Raccoon and Des Moines Rivers. It is split into six precincts. The people of the Second Ward are of the great middle class of American cities, being for the most part people of moderate salaries and comfortable inexpensive homes.

The Third Ward, having eight precincts, is a large section between Sixth Street and Twelfth Street extending from the Raccoon River on the south to the northern limits of the city beyond Highland Park, which it includes. This Ward also is composed, for the greatest part, of the average working city man, and many clerks and employees in the business life of the city make their homes in this section.

The Fourth Ward divided into seven precincts includes the section known as "Southwest Des Moines", and also the territory between the Des Moines River and West Sixth Street. Except for the Seventh precinct at the north this Ward is composed largely of a laboring class of people of rather limited means. Many employees of the railroads and factories make their homes in this part of the city.
and in the southwest section especially the foreign element is quite pronounced. The Fourth and Fifth Wards include the majority of the poorest class of people of Des Moines. Here are found most of the Italian citizens of the city and the Jewish element is especially strong in the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth precincts of the Fourth Ward.

The Fifth Ward on the East Side of the river is a strip about ten blocks wide running along the river and on north beyond Union Park. This Ward contains the nearest approach to "slums" which Des Moines possesses and many illiterate foreigners are found, especially in the first three precincts. These are largely Swedes and Italians, with a few Russian Jews. A comparison of the election returns of this Ward and the aristocratic First Ward reveals some interesting facts which will be considered later.

The Sixth Ward, lying east of the Fifth, contains seven precincts and the best class of people of East Des Moines. This Ward corresponds somewhat to the Second or Third Wards and is composed of citizens of moderate circumstances—the great middle class again.
The extreme eastern Ward, the Seventh, extends from East Sixteenth Street to the eastern edge of the city and is divided into five precincts. The people of this Ward are not as prosperous as their neighbors to the west but are largely laborers who desire to live away from the crowded sections of town, where they can have a small garden and a more independent home life. The First precinct of this Ward is the section of Des Moines east of on the south side of the Racoon River and is practically an agricultural district. The Second precinct north of the river is known as Chesterfield and has a resemblance to a small independent town. The Third and Fourth precincts just west of the State Fair Grounds are composed of laboring families of small means. The Fifth Ward extends north to Grand View Park and also is populated by a laboring class of people.

This brief summary of the political divisions of the city may serve as a setting for the discussion of the election returns to follow.

In a general way it may be said that the river precincts—the Fourth and Fifth—are the poorest in the city. To the outside of these, the Sixth on
the east and Third on the west, lie two sections quite similar, containing a fairly prosperous working class. The Second and First Wards to the west, in general, contain the best citizens of the city, while the Seventh, to the extreme east, differs but little from the Sixth Ward on the East Side.
Chapter III.

City Election Of March 1906.

In the regular city election of March, 1906, six special Referendum questions were submitted to the public for approval. (See Table #1) (a)

1. The improvement of the Des Moines and Racoon rivers.
2. The building of a municipal heating plant.
3. The purchase of the water works.
4. The purchase of the gas plant.
5. The purchase of the lighting plant.
6. The purchase of a power plant.

These questions will be considered in the order mentioned.

1. The improvement of the Des Moines and Racoon Rivers carried by a safe margin in all the precincts save two. The Fifth precinct of the Sixth Ward and First of the Seventh voted the proposition down. The former is the section of East Des Moines known as
"Capitol Park" or Capitol Hill, just east of the State House, while the latter is a rural community east of Chesterfield. The locality of these sections explains in part their lack of interest in the welfare of the river bottom sections. Of course, other sections of the city as remote from flood danger supported the measure but the sections mentioned are peopled for the most part by men of small means.

2. On the heating plant proposition all precincts in the city except the First of the Seventh and Third of the Third voted for the project. The probable reasons for the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the residents of the First of the Seventh have been stated. The Third of the Third is an old residence section of the city just north of the down town business section extending from Sixth Street to Twelfth Street and Center to University Avenue. This old residence section, at one time the best in Des Moines, has deteriorated until now it is composed in a large part, of modest homes and rooming houses for the workers who wish to live within walking distance of their business.
3. All precincts of the city were in favor of the purchase of the water works except the First of the Seventh which voted against every proposition submitted. As the total vote in this precinct was only thirty-one their total had little bearing on the election.

4. All precincts except the First of the Seventh were in favor of the gas works project although in many precincts the voters showed a lack of interest in this question and failed to vote.

5. The largest vote was cast on the light question which carried in all precincts except the First of the Seventh. A total of 8451 votes were counted on this question. Even so about three thousand men cannot have cared to express an opinion as there were 11,635 votes cast for mayor.

6. The power plant project met with disfavor in the First of the Seventh and First of the Third--two sections of the city most diametrically opposed in all their characteristics. The First of the Third is the heart of the business section of Des Moines and its negative vote is explained as being due to action of labor leaders who feared
that a municipal power plant would compete with the activities of many union workers.

There are many interesting deductions which can be made from the above elections.

All the measures referred to the public were favored by about a three to one majority.

In all questions submitted the precincts of the "slum districts" of southeast Des Moines voted in close agreement with their more refined neighbors in the northwest section of the city. An interesting phase of the voting is noticed in that each precinct voted with practically the same majority on every question. For instance the figures for the First precinct of the Fourth Ward in the six questions are:--(a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>% For</th>
<th>% Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>276</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>260</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This would indicate that voters are inclined to vote a "straight ticket" without much thought or deliberation, as it is hardly conceivable

(a) See Table #1. Part V.
that three hundred men would come as near the same agreement on six diversified topics if each man studied each question thoroughly.

One interesting feature of the election was the fact that the Third of the Fourth, which is in the section of town just west of the river, north of the Center Street dam, voted without a negative vote for all six questions. The highest return in this precinct was 326 - 0 for the water works project.

The interest at the 1906 election, however, was so intense in the fight for mayor that these six measures received very little publicity in the newspapers. An examination of the newspaper files for two months prior to the election shows very little indeed and it is safe to say that had the ballots been printed, omitting these special questions, fifty per cent of the voters would never have known the difference.

The total vote for mayor was 11,635 and the highest number of votes cast on a question was 8,451 on the light question. The lowest number were cast on the river improvement project which was 7,145.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Two.

Chapter IV.

Special Election Of June 20, 1907.

The special election of June 20, 1907 was perhaps the most important one in the history of the City of Des Moines. In this election two important questions were submitted to the people. (See Table #2)(a)

First, "Shall the proposition to organize the City of Des Moines under Chapter 48 of the acts of the 32nd. General Assembly be adopted?"; and second, "Shall the City of Des Moines erect a city hall at a cost not to exceed $350,000?"

As a result of the vote taken on the two questions above, there was organized the now famous "Des Moines Plan" of Municipal Government and the ancient city hall at Second Street and Locust Street was replaced by a beautiful structure on the east river bank, between Grand Avenue and Locust Streets.

The vote at this election was on special Referendum questions and not for certain men. Therefore, at first glance the large vote cast would

(a) From Des Moines Capital, June 21, 1907.
indicate that the voters take an interest and come out to vote on abstract questions. Upon closer examination of the election, however, there seems to be room for doubt as to whether the interest of the voters in this special election was greater in the questions or in the promoters of "The Plan" that stood behind them.

When the questions were submitted for argument some months before, if the vote could have been taken it is highly probable that the vote would have reflected the true interest of the populace in the propositions. It would have been a true test of the value and efficiency of the Referendum vote. The press switched the propositions into the background, however, and turned the search light, not on the general utility of the proposition, but upon the men and the political forces which had lined up for and against it.

The following extracts from the Des Moines Capital, starting three months previous to the election, indicate the trend of the popular mind on the subject.

April 6, 1907, "Petitions circulated, stores
"Heads of factories had the petition circulated among their employes and the apprehension that it would be turned down by the laborer was found to be groundless. A fourth of the signatures on the petitions came from the working class of the city. Many workers secured twenty-five names on their blanks in twenty-five minutes."

April 8, 1907, "Mayor and Big Guns at City Hall shy at Petitions."

April 12, 1907, "Voters retain control of City."

"If the commission fails in its duty and passes laws which the citizens oppose, the voters have immediate redress."

May 11, 1907. At this stage of affairs the paper brings personalities into the fight and asserts that the opponents of the plan are the political bosses who now control the destinies of the city."

May 15, 1907. The Committee of the Anti-Des Moines Plan will not open up a campaign against it until three weeks before election day."
May 22, 1907. Mayor Mattern finally takes his stand with the forces against the new plan and from this time the fight is virtually one between the old administration and their enemies.

May 22, 1907. The City Council adds two new Wards and thus provides for the election of two new aldermen for certain districts. This is construed by advocates to be most unjust and a very powerful argument of the Des Moines Plan against the old city government, as 512 voters in Highland Park will thereby receive as much representation as Wards in which many times that number are to be represented.

May 29, 1907. The newspaper stories turn from the efficiency of the new plan to a discussion of the desirability of the old Council. The fight has turned practically in its entirety to one of men, not abstract projects.

June 5, 1907. "First Ward For Plan." This heading opened a discussion, not of the arguments for the new style of government but an harangue against the inefficiency of the old plan.
June 7, 1907. "New Plan Will Win At Polls, says McVicker."

June 8, 1907. Anti-Plan writeup is hidden in the center of the paper.

June 10, 1907. Des Moines Plan Meetings and their places are announced on the front page.

June 11, 1907. Civic League upholds Des Moines Plan. Attacks present system.

June 13, 1907. "City Hall gang getting Cold Feet on Plan". The above caption was followed by an article about the lack of coal in the city hall and had nothing whatever to do with the Des Moines Plan.

June 14, 1907. "Johnny Lucas" turns against City Hall Gang". The fight turns more and more into a personal one--rather than one of principle.

June 15, 1907. "Vote with us to hold your job, says Boss". An article asserting that men employed by the city were discharged because they favored the new plan.
June 17, 1907. "Registration Lists Padded for June 20th."

June 18, 1907. More articles appear alleging corruption of the present administration and turning the focus of popular attention almost entirely on the question as to whether the office holders are a desirable group of officials or not.

June 18, 1907. "Election Eve Shows Bright For Plan."

June 21, 1907. The following excerpts from the story of the election are interesting and show the general feeling with regard to the election.

"Business won over politics in Des Moines yesterday and the Des Moines plan was adopted with the handsome majority of 2,251 votes.

The city hall proposition was carried also by a safe majority and Des Moines will build a fine new home to house its splendid new form of government."
The city hall ring was completely routed. The East Side which was counted upon by the politicians to throw 1,500 votes against the Des Moines plan, brought to the river line but 387 votes against. The river line was in fact wiped out by yesterday's special election. Only in the strong city hall precincts—where city employes outnumbered the citizens in other walks of life, was there much of a majority against the new form of government."

An analysis of the vote is very interesting and reveals many of the eccentricities of municipal politics. A fashionable West Des Moines precinct, the Third of the First, returned a vote of 658 to 137 in favor of the plan. Yet this same precinct voted down the city hall proposition by a count of 465 to 116. This apparent paradox is explained by politicians as being caused by a fear in the minds of the voters that the plan would fail and their unwillingness to have the old council enjoy a new city hall. A year later when the city hall question

(a) Des Moines Capital. June 21, 1907.
came up again this same precinct totalled 487 to 252 in favor of the building.

The two principal slum districts, the First of the Fourth and First and Second of the Fifth voted against the new plan. This was probably due to influence exerted by city hall politicians. These precincts all voted for a new hall, however. These districts had been created into a ninth ward about a month previous to the election and favored the old plan, therefore, as they would, under it be entitled to an alderman of their own.

One surprising development was the fact that many precincts counted as certain by each faction turned completely against predictions. The Second of the Fourth in which the city hall was located was counted one of the most certain for the retention of the old system. However, the vote revealed a majority of five votes for the new plan.

Another precinct which was considered solid for the old government was the Fourth of the Fifth which is the Capitol Park precinct. To make
assurance doubly sure city hall employes were stationed here all day but the election returns showed a clean majority for the new plan.

While the plan carried by a good margin the City Hall proposition had a scant lead of 435 votes. This vote was later cast out and the subject was submitted for approval in the 1908 election again.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Two.

Chapter V.

Election Of November 3, 1908.

The election of November 3, 1908 was held in connection with the regular Presidential election. At this election three subjects were submitted for approval, as follows: (See Table #3) (a)

1. Shall the City of Des Moines erect a City Hall at a cost not to exceed $350,000?

2. Shall the city council of Des Moines in the future, in its discretion, for the purpose of assisting and encouraging industries in said city, omit making valuations and assessments of property for city taxes used by said manufacturing industries for a period not exceeding five years from the date of any such resolution?

3. Shall the council of Des Moines in its discretion carry out the resolutions heretofore passed by the city council of said city, exempting manufacturing industries from assessment and pay-

(a) From Records at City Clerk's Office.
The question of the city hall had been carried at the election of 1907, previously reviewed. However, this was declared illegal as the women did not have an opportunity to vote.

As the Presidential election was held the same day this did not constitute a very fair example of a Referendum election. For President, in the City of Des Moines a total of 18,444 votes were cast. The greatest number of votes cast on the Referendum questions was 13,753 thus indicating that one-third of the voters did not take the trouble to mark the ballot even after they were at the voting booth.

The City Hall proposition carried everywhere precinct in the city except the First of the Seventh which precinct has consistently opposed every improvement suggested by the city. The vote at this section was 24 to 6, therefore, having practically no bearing on the election.

Also the exempting of corporations from taxation was easily carried and met favor in every precinct in the city except the First of the Seventh.
The third proposition which in effect was
to legalize the past actions of the council in offer-
ing inducements to prospective corporations was carried
in all precincts except the First of the Seventh and
Fifth of the Third. The latter section is a West Side
precinct in the vicinity of North Des Moines High
School. In this precinct the vote was 145 against the
proposition and 123 for it. The vote of the women in
this precinct was 12 for each side.

Although the women had objected to the
former election on the city hall question because
they had not been allowed to vote, yet they displayed
little interest in the election when they were awarded
the right to pass judgment on the questions. Only
1364 women cast a ballot on the city hall question
and less than that number on the other two propositions.
As the number of eligible women voters was probably
at least 20,000 for the city, it would indicate that
only about five per cent were enough interested in
the question to go to the polls and vote on it.

Most of the so called "slum precincts"
were overwhelmingly in favor of the city hall
proposition while the more prosperous parts of the
city were more evenly divided. For example, in the "slum districts the Second of the Fourth returned a vote of 363 to 77 for the Hall, the First of the Fifth 218 to 39 and the Second of the Fifth 395 to 50. The University Place precinct showed a vote for the new Hall of 575 to 301 and the Grand Avenue precinct 469 to 237. This may be explained as due to the fact that most voters in the lower parts of the city owned no property and, therefore, paid no taxes, while many voters in the more select sections were property owners and, therefore, voted against a new city hall, fearing an increase of taxes.

The public and press displayed very little interest in this election and without the Presidential election to draw the voters it is quite certain that an exceedingly small vote would have been polled.
Chapter VI.

City Election Of March 28, 1910.

The election of March 28, 1910 illustrates quite vividly the occasional absurdity of a Referendum election. While it may be true that some Referendum votes are well worth while and may reveal an acute public interest and knowledge, yet an election such as the one held in Des Moines on March 28, 1910, is a glaring example of a burlesque on good government. (See Table #4) (a)

For some time in the press, there had appeared articles strongly advocating a market place. This apparently was all well and good and met the approval of most of the citizens. However, some loyal East Des Moines citizens became imbued with the idea that their side of the city should be represented in the market house activities of the city and started an agitation for an East Side market as well as the one conceded to West Des Moines. (a) was authorized to build not only the

(a) Des Moines Register, March 29, 1910.
Meanwhile the council and Mayor Mathis had been arguing the validity of the petition to submit the question to vote. After many parleys the matter was finally brought to the voters of the city on March 28th at the regular city election.

As stated on the ballots the voters were to express an opinion on two subjects. First, they were to vote "Yes" or "No" on the proposition that the city erect a Central Market House. Second, they were to vote "Yes" or "No" on the proposition that the city erect two market houses, one on the East Side and one on the West Side.

Naturally the council never intended to erect a Central Market House and also two others. However, this is exactly what the will of the people demanded, for when the votes were counted, both propositions had carried and the city council was in a dilemma. As matters rested at the conclusion of the election the majority who wanted a central market house was 5699 to 467. The vote on the two market houses was 3037 to 340. Therefore, the council was authorized to build not only the central proposition. It is probable that they
Central Market but also the two markets, one on each side, after several weeks of debate. The matter finally was decided by the council and a central market erected at West Second and Locust.

The election returns reveal several interesting facts. The total vote for Mayor was 15,129 and the most votes cast for either question was 6166. Therefore, it is evident that only about one-third of the voters considered the proposition important enough to devote the time to mark a ballot for or against it. (a)

In nearly every case the majority was very pronounced in favor of the proposition in some precincts the measure carrying with no negative votes at all. Both questions enjoyed the same popularity as far as adverse votes were concerned although the central market proposition had the greater support from the affirmative voters.

In only two precincts did the voters decide to rule against the market. The Third of the Second was in favor of two market houses but against the central proposition. It is probable that they

(a) See Table #4, Part V.
were hopeful of landing the West Side Market in their neighborhood in case the plan carried. The First of the Seventh ran true to form and voted down both improvements. In one case their decision was by the vote of 7 to 1 and in the other by a margin of 6 to 1.

As stated in the opening paragraphs, a more useless, pointless, worthless election would be hard to imagine, than this expression of the people of Des Moines on March 28, 1910.
At the election of March 30, 1914 there were two propositions submitted to the public for approval or rejection. The first proposition was the much argued question of purchasing the water works. This project had been discussed pro and con by the newspapers for many weeks and there was really a great deal of interest in it. The second question was with regard to granting the Automatic Telephone Company a franchise in the city. (See Table #5) (a)

The question of purchasing the water works was a very tangible one for the people to decide. It is an accepted fact that voters will take more interest and vote more intelligently upon some such rather definite thing than upon some vague and often complicated bill or statute. Almost every citizen of Des Moines had read so much on the subject of municipal control of the

(a) From Records at City Clerk's Office.
water works or had heard the question discussed
at such length that nearly every voter had quite
a clear idea as to the merits of the case as he
judged them. Therefore, we find a very close vote
on the project, 7535 being for the issue of bonds
and 4993 against it. A two-thirds majority of
the preceding election which would total 8640 votes,
was necessary to carry the bill, and, therefore, the
measure was lost. The vote to purchase was
favorable by a vote of 11,362 to 9,286.

An interesting point was brought out in
this election. The purchase of the water works would,
of course, entail the added duty of issuing bonds
for the purpose of raising the money to do it with.
Now, every voter who favored the purchase of the
water works would be assumed to be in favor of
issuing the bonds to carry this out. However,
strange to say, less than one-half of the voters who
cast a ballot on the proposition, either way, went
to the trouble of marking the ballot expressing
their favor or disapproval of the bond issue. On
this question 7535 votes were cast for the issue of
bonds and 4993 against it. The vote for Mayor was 19,095. Thus it will be seen that about one-half the voters who went to the polls cast a ballot on the bond issue which would naturally go with the former question.

The women had the right to vote on the bond issue and the newspapers had published articles telling of the great interest taken by the feminine politicians and the prospect of a strong vote from the women. The day of election found about ten percent of the eligible women voters at the polls. The vote of the suffragists was 1601 in favor of the purchase and 1035 against it. On the bond issue the woman vote was favorable, 1479 to 875. Thus, it will be seen that the women apparently voted the more progressive way. This has been the general experience with the woman vote. In only three precincts did the women vote down the water works purchase. One was in the Third of the Sixth. This section of the city is in East Des Moines just southeast of the Capitol. As the total vote by the women here was only 10 to 6 against the measure it is evident that there was
practically no influence exerted by it. In the First of the Second the vote stood 3 to 0 against the purchase and in the Third of the Second by a vote of 10 to 9.

A comparison of the number of women voting with the number of men is not a fair comparison in this case as the men had the right to vote for commissioners and this, no doubt, explains the very good showing made by the male population. The largest number of women turning out in any one precinct was in the Eighth of the Third which is the Highland Park precinct. Here the agitation to promote the woman vote had been pushed quite extensively. In some precincts no women voted at all. This was true in the Third of the Fourth which is the precinct in the heart of the West Des Moines business district. Also in the Second of the Fifth no women went to the polls. This section of the city is the heart of the business section of East Des Moines. The First and Second of the Seventh also failed to register a single feminine vote. These precincts are the rural section of southeast Des Moines. In several other
precincts the total woman's vote would total under ten votes. While this is not a fair comparison with the vote of the men, yet it does furnish an indication that the women would not take a great deal of interest on simply Referendum votes. Had they been allowed to cast a vote for Mayor, undoubtedly a greater number of the women would have gone to the polls.

The fashionable Grand Avenue precinct, the Third of the First, registered an exceedingly small vote from the women, the total reaching only 36 votes -- 20 for the purchase and 16 against it. The men of this precinct were against the measure by a count of 239 to 130.

Most of the precincts voted for the proposition. In the First Ward, the First, Second, Third, Fourth and Seventh precincts voted it down. In the Second Ward there were no negative precincts nor were there in the Third or Fourth Wards. In the Fifth, which is the first Ward east of the Des Moines River, the Fourth and Fifth Wards were against the purchase. In the Sixth Ward the Fourth
precinct was against the purchase although the vote in all the precincts of this Ward was very close.

In the far east Seventh Ward, the Second, Third and Fourth precincts were against the municipal water works. The First of the Seventh, which has voted against practically every improvement of any kind, turned to the other extreme and totalled a vote of 18 to 0 for the purchase.

However, although the question carried most of the precincts, still the voting was so close that the two-thirds majority was missed by about one thousand votes.

The Automatic Telephone project received little or no publicity from the press and met with disfavor from the start. Very few voters stopped to read the notice of the Company which had been posted in conspicuous places. They simply voted for or against the franchise on general principles.

This was also a definite proposition and one which most men either favored or opposed. Many predicted a landslide against the Company but
the final returns showed a fairly close fight and in the Telephone Company lost its right to operate in Des Moines by the vote of 10,137 to 7755, in this election. The entire First Ward went solid against the franchise, but all the other Wards had their vote very evenly divided with the negative side of receiving just a little the best of the support in all the Wards. There were also other points to note. This election was especially interesting because of the entrance of the woman vote and the oversight of the voters in providing for the bond issue to carry out their instructions to purchase the water works.

In the Fifth of the Fourth 247 men voted to purchase the water works while not a single man voted to issue the bonds with which to get the money to do it.

The interest in the water works project was really quite intense. Mayor Hanna wrote three articles in The Des Moines Capital favoring the municipal ownership of public utilities while Ralph Bolton answered them with three articles on the opposite side of the question.
The election was one of the most bitter in the city's history, one incident in the week's proceedings being a fist fight which occurred in the City Hall after a political argument between the leader of the miner faction and the City Hall forces.

It was maintained by all the advocates of the purchase that the confusing nature of the ballot was responsible for the defeat of the measure.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Two.

Chapter VIII.

Special City Election Of November 29, 1915.

The election of November 29, 1915 was a special election to determine the attitude of the voters on the question of the street car franchise and also upon the question of installing a municipal court. (See Table #6) (a)

The street car franchise had been a bone of contention for years in city politics. Several times the franchise had been on the verge of being accepted by the council. However, politics had so entered in to the consideration of the merits of the case that it was impossible for the city council to view the matter without prejudice. The factions for and against the franchise blocked several efforts to bring the project to a vote. Finally on November 29, 1915 the people met to decide the question.

The question had been so long discussed and argued through the press that most voters were

(a) From Records At City Clerk's Office.
in the frame of mind of one citizen who remarked that he didn't care how much or how little the street car company made if they would only improve the service and rebuild some of their tracks. It is quite certain that this was the attitude of a great many of the voters in this election.

The street car company in the meantime had published articles and arguments in all the Des Moines newspapers, pointing out the great advantages to be extended the public in case the franchise carried. Bills were posted on the bill boards about the city and no pains were spared to insure the success of the election.

Among other improvements promised were, new cars, new tracks, three cent fare for school children and other inducements.

The success of the campaign of the street car backers was evidenced by the result of the election. The various commercial organizations of the city, seeing the great benefit of an up-to-date street car system to Des Moines and disgusted with the petty wrangling and arguments of the city...
council, backed the proposition enthusiastically and the measure carried by a four to one majority. The final count was 8284 to 1877.

In this election again the women showed a woeful lack of interest for persons supposedly in dire need of the ballot and on the Municipal Court proposition but 202 women cast the ballot at all. The total vote on the street car franchise was 10,161 and on the Municipal Court 10,041. As the prior election showed a vote for Mayor of 19,095 total ballots it would indicate that the Referendum vote in this case reflected a lack of interest in general propositions. Only about fifty per cent of the voters of the election a year prior to this time were interested enough to cast a ballot for or against a measure that would mean an exceedingly great improvement in the civic life of the city.

For example, in the Grand Avenue precinct, the Third of the First Ward, had a total of only 106 votes in this election whereas their total in the preceding election was 492 votes. In very few precincts was a normal vote cast and in most cases
the number of votes cast was comparable with the above example.

The popularity of the franchise is shown by the fact that it carried every single precinct in the city by a comfortable margin. The highest number of votes registered against it was in the Seventh of the Fourth where the vote stood 238 to 94. In the Seventh of the First not a single vote was cast against the franchise. This is the section of the city just east of Waveland Park. (a)

The Municipal Court did not have as easy a time as the street car franchise and carried by a very narrow margin. The vote was 5063 to 4978. Thus it will be seen that less than one hundred votes stood between the two sides.

The results of this election authorized the two great advances of the political year in the city. The street car company, no longer hampered by lack of a franchise, has been continually improving their property since the people granted them their charter. Whether the people should decide such questions is debatable but the beneficial results of this particular election are beyond question.

(a) See Table #6, Part V.
A matter, apparently incapable of being decided by the council was overwhelmingly approved by the public and has evidently proved a most successful and happy decision.

A complicated franchise which had been argued and quarrelled over by the politicians in the municipal affairs for months was speedily settled by the public which had long since lost interest in anything connected with the street car company, except an improvement in its service. Believing that the most effective way to improve the service would be by granting the company its desires, the public unhesitatingly did so by a majority of four to one, as to the effect of the success of the project upon their interests.
The most recent election in city politics to be discussed is the election of March 27, 1916. In this election the electorate was to decide two Referendum questions. The first was the matter of a heating franchise to the Des Moines Electric Company which wanted to enter business in the city and furnish heat to a considerable portion of the business district. There was considerable interest in this topic as the laboring men were concerned as to the effect of the success of the project upon their interests.

Many of the miners of East Des Moines opposed the plan for two reasons. In the first place there was a suspicion that the success of the project meant a lack of employment for certain classes of laborers who would be thrown out of work. Also the proposed heating plant by its known plans, would affect West Des Moines much more than East Des Moines needed a better and more efficient heating plant.
Des Moines. The rivalry between the two sides of
Des Moines is indicated by the bitterness contingent
upon the location of all public buildings and the
market house and school buildings.

As a class, labor was against the heating
franchise from the first while the business men's
vote went solid for the adoption of the plan. The
totals were 9077 against the franchise and 6790 for
it. Thus it will be noted, that while the contest
was quite close still the margin against the franchise
was quite decisive.

The other question submitted to the
electorate for consideration was the approval of
$100,000 worth of bonds to establish a Garbage
Disposal System, to be established in the city of Des
Moines. Believing that the method of disposing of
garbage was antiquated and unsanitary, the council
submitted the proposition that the city establish a
garbage disposal system for the purpose of dealing
with this civic problem in a more scientific and
sanitary way. The merits of the case were quite evident.

Des Moines needed a better and more up-to-date method
of dealing with the garbage question.

There had been much discussion of the subject in the daily papers and many methods of disposing of the mass of city garbage had been outlined. Several parties had offered to dispose of all garbage free if allowed to have it for use in stock farms which, in case the plan was approved, would be established near the city limits.

The council received reports from various cities and finally submitted the matter to vote. The project carried by a fair margin, the vote being 8710 to 6675. On this question the women had the right to vote but as usual did not avail themselves of their opportunity. The woman vote was 595 to 125 in favor of the bond issue. While the vote of the women in all city elections in Des Moines has been exceedingly small, yet it may be said in behalf of them that their vote is always much more inclined to progressiveness in supporting public improvements than that of the men.

In this election the women voted for the issue of bonds by more than a five to one vote.
while the vote of the men was by somewhat less than an eight to six majority. Organized opposition and a mistaken conception of the charter's purpose are responsible for the defeat of the heating franchise at the last city election when the vote of the people was opposed by the voters refusing the Des Moines Electric Company the right to operate a public heating plant.

With the growth of the city the smoke nuisance is becoming more of an evil daily. No amount of smoke inspection can check Des Moines' "stringent anti-smoke ordinance," held to be valid by the United States Supreme Court, apparently has not served the purpose for which it was adopted.
declared a strict enforcement of the ordinance requiring the use of modern smoke consumers would eradicate the smoke pest; thus answering the argument that a central heating plant serving big fuel users in the business district was needed to eliminate the dense clouds of smoke pouring daily from scores of chimneys.

This contention will have very little weight should the city council again decide to submit the franchise to the people; for the city smoke ordinance has been strictly enforced since its validity was upheld--according to the smoke inspector--and the smoke nuisance has not been abated.

Business men of the city have asked the council to adopt again an ordinance, safeguarding in every possible way the interests of the city, granting the electric company a heating franchise. It is planned to submit the proposed charter to the people at a
Special election. Part Three.

Timely action by the council should be taken in the matter. A central heating plant apparently is the only solution of the smoke problem." (a)

While school elections are perhaps on a different plane than the ordinary city elections, still it is a fact that many interesting and perhaps enlightening deductions may be made concerning the general trend of the public mind on subjects submitted to it for acceptance or rejection. In a general way it may be shown that the public will usually look upon measures submitted for inspection in the same way.

The school elections which will be reviewed in this study are the elections of 1909, 1910, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915 and 1916. In these seven elections some very interesting phases of the

(a) Des Moines Capital, January 30, 1917.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Three.

Chapter I.

A Study Of School Elections.

In connection with practically all school elections in the political history of Des Moines there have been several Referendum questions for the public to decide.

While school elections are perhaps on a different plane than the ordinary city elections, still it is a fact that many interesting and perhaps enlightening deductions may be made concerning the general trend of the public mind on subjects submitted to it for acceptance or rejection. In a general way it may be shown that the public will usually look upon measures submitted for inspection in much the same way.

The school elections which will be reviewed in this study are the elections of 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915 and 1916. In these seven elections some very interesting phases of the
typical characteristics of the Referendum vote have arisen which will be noted in connection with each election.

With regard to the matter of records and memoranda concerning past elections, it may be said that the school statistics of Des Moines have been compiled in a much more businesslike way by the school authorities than have the city elections been kept by the city clerks. Many figures on comparatively recent elections cannot be found at all at the City Hall. While of minor importance, it is probably indicative of many other slack business methods employed by the city authorities.

The Referendum question of school affairs in general will fall in one of seven classes, as follows: (a)

1. The voting of bonds for erecting school property.
2. The question of location of school houses.
3. The question of buying or selling of certain property.
4. Questions of general policy, such as length of school year and use of buildings for meetings of public interest.

(a) School Laws of Iowa, Ed. 1915, Sec 2749, Page 37.
5. The revision of the course of study.

6. The direction of a change of text-books regularly adopted.

7. The voting of a school house tax.

In the following elections the vote for directors will not be discussed except as a matter of comparison of the number of votes cast for the measures to the number cast for directors.

(See Table $7$) (a)

Last year was up for approval; this being the only question submitted to the public for decision.

(a) Des Moines was in dire need of a new High School building and the consensus of opinion all over the city was that it should be built. Although the sentiment was quite generally in favor of the erection of the new structure, yet there are some quite interesting deductions to be drawn from this election.

As on all school Referendum questions, the women had a right to express their preference. (a) however, the showing made by the feminine voters...
The first school election which will be reviewed is the election of March 14, 1910. At this election the appropriation of $400,000 for the building of a new High School in East Des Moines was up for approval; this being the only question submitted to the public for decision.

Not a single woman voted against the project and East Des Moines was in dire need of a new High School building and the consensus of opinion all over the city was that it should be built. Although the sentiment was quite generally strong for the erection of the new structure, yet there are some quite interesting deductions to be drawn from this election.

As on all school Referendum questions, the women had a right to express their preference. (b) However, the showing made by the feminine voters

(a) From Records at School Board Office.
(b) Iowa 94, Kinney v. Howard.
was exceedingly poor, but 1215 women voting. Practically three-fourths of these women lived on the East Side, which, of course, was to receive the benefit of the appropriation.

An unusual phase of this election is the vote on the two sides of the river. On the East side the vote was very heavy. The precinct in which the new building was to be situated, the Fifth of the Sixth, although a very small precinct showed the highest number of votes cast of any precinct in the city. (In this precinct 448 men and 176 women cast ballots.) Not a single woman voted against the project and only 24 men did so. The lack of interest on the West Side was remarkable. The Ninth of the First, which is a University Place precinct, was the only West Side precinct to register over 300 votes.

The First Ward showed the greatest opposition to the appropriation, but even so, it carried every precinct but the First, which is a section of the city south of the Raccoon and west of Eighteenth Street out near the cement plant. Curiously the only
other precinct in the city to vote down the
appropriation was an East Side precinct, the First
of the Seventh. This precinct, which is out in the
Chesterfield section, will be recalled as the one
which so consistently opposed all public improve-
ments in the city elections which have been
discussed.

It is doubtful if a more interesting
school question had been up before the people of Des
Moines for some time. Not only this small portion of
cases, however, carried easily--usually by a vote
of eight or ten to one and sometimes even more.

Some opposition had been heard by West
High supporters who wanted an addition to their
building. It had been claimed that the South Side
of the city was anxious to send their children to
East Side or West Thirteenth Street.

West High and would, therefore, vote against the
East High building. This theory proved to be with-
out foundation and the South Side, from Eighteenth
Street to the Chesterfield section carried in favor
of the building by almost a ten to one vote.

The total vote for the question was 9,848
and the number of voters was 10,807. Thus it will
be seen that 959 voters who went to the polls failed
While the East Side sections usually gave to express an opinion on the East High building. However, while this total was about ninety per cent of the voters who went to the polls, still it was only about thirty per cent of the number of citizens eligible to vote, including the women.

It is doubtful if a more interesting school question had been up before the people of Des Moines for some time, yet only this small portion of the thinking population of the city considered it of sufficient importance to cast a ballot on it.

The appropriation carried easily by practically a four to one margin and one of the finest school structures of the state now graces the East Side on East Thirteenth Street.

The outstanding feature of this election was the fact that the interest in the election and the size of the vote cast seemed to rest entirely upon the matter of location. The East Side precincts all polled heavy votes in favor of a new school while the West Side precincts all showed much less interest but more equal division of votes.
While the East Side sections usually gave a vote of from four or ten to one, the West Side as a rule voted about two to one in favor of the new East High School. 

Election of March, 1911.

The school election held in March 1911, was rather uninteresting from the standpoint of the referendum feature as there were submitted merely the questions of building or selling five school buildings. In fact, the only point of interest is the lack of interest taken. (See Table # 8) (a)

The highest number of votes cast on any proposition was 1213 which is probably less than one-seventh the voting male population of the city and about one-twelfth the number of voters eligible to vote on these questions. In one precinct, the first of the Seventh, the few that voted for directors failed to vote on these questions entirely and to vote against or in favor of the measures. 

The number of votes cast was the smallest of any election yet held and from this standpoint only does it have any point worthy of mention. In this study, it might be said that the few citizens who availed themselves of the right to vote were

(a) Records at School Board Office.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Three.

Chapter III.

School Election Of March, 1911.

The school election held in March 1911, was rather uninteresting from the standpoint of the referendum feature as there were submitted merely the questions of building or selling five school buildings. In fact, the only point of interest is the lack of interest taken. (See Table #8) (a)

The highest number of votes cast on any proposition was 2513 which is probably less than one-seventh the voting male population of the city and about one-twelfth the number of voters eligible to vote on these questions. In one precinct, the First of the Seventh, the few that voted for directors ignored the referendum questions entirely and no vote was cast for or against the measures.

The number of votes cast was the smallest of any election yet noted and from this standpoint only does it have any point worthy of mention in this study. It might be said that the few citizens who availed themselves of the right to vote were

(a) From Records at School Board Office.
evidently quite public spirited and all five
propositions were carried by a vote of about 1600
500.
A small portion of the voters expressed an
The schools under consideration were the
Lincoln, East Woodlawn, Jordan, Beaver and West
Woodlawn.
One odd fact was that the five measures
carried every precinct in Des Moines except the
Eighth of the Third and Fifth of the Fourth.
The First precinct mentioned turned down
the East Woodlawn, Beaver and West Woodlawn
questions. It is the Highland Park precinct which
evidently opposed the measures due to the fact that
they were too remote to receive any of the benefits
of the improvements.
The other precinct to oppose the changes
was the Fifth of the Fourth which vetoed the East
Woodlawn, Jordan, Beaver and West Woodlawn
improvements. This precinct is situated just west
of the river between Ascension and Chestnut Streets.
The vote of the women in this election
was so small that the returns were not even recorded
by the Secretary of the Board.
The value of the above election in determining the public attitude was very slight as so small a portion of the voters expressed an opinion on the subject. That such an expression can decide a matter to better advantage than a well informed, intelligent school board is inconceivable. (See table 9) Three of these were to secure the authority to issue bonds, one for a levy of 2.4 mills, one to decide the question of teaching physiology and hygiene more extensively in the schools, especially along certain much argued lines, one on the use of houses for grade work, and the last to ascertain the will of the people on the length of the school year. (a)

On all the subjects except one, the interest was exceedingly small and even on this proposition—the bond issue to purchase $50,000 worth of furniture and fixtures for East High—the rather small number of 9,227 voters cast the ballot. This was 2,153 less also than the number of men who voted for Directors. The fight for the positions on the school board was quite hot this year and as a result
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Three.

Chapter IV.

School Election Of March 1912.

The Board of Directors in the election of March 1912, submitted seven subjects to the voters for consideration. (See Table #9) Three of these were to secure the authority to issue bonds, one for a levy of 2.4 mills, one to decide the question of teaching physiology and hygiene more extensively in the schools, especially along certain much argued lines, one on the use of houses for grade work, and the last to ascertain the will of the people on the length of the school year. (a)

On all the subjects except one, the interest was exceedingly small and even on this proposition—the bond issue to purchase $50,000 worth of furniture and fixtures for East High—the rather small number of 9,327 voters cast the ballot. This was 3,123 less also than the number of men who voted for Directors. The fight for the positions on the school board was quite hot this year and as a result

(a) From Records at School Board Office.
a very large number of voters were out. However, the
3,123 men who failed to vote on the only topic of
much interest up for approval was an evidence of the
value of a Referendum vote in determining matters of
public policy in school affairs. On the other six
questions a smaller number of voters expressed an
opinion.

Therefore, a campaign was organized in
For nearly a year the magnificent East
High building, probably the finest high school in
the State of Iowa, had been greatly impaired in its
efficiency by the lack of furniture and equipment.
Newspapers in the city had set forth the handicaps
of the situation, there being $340 for the
appropriation of $60,000 and $301 against it. How
pictures were published showing the East High
students marching to the splendid new structure
carrying their old, worn out, unattractive desks.

However, under the law there was no help
for the conditions save by a vote of the people
authorizing a bond issue to raise the necessary funds.
So a daily example of the futility of the modern
system of conducting school finances might be seen
at East High School.
As the time approached for the school election, there were some misgivings on the part of the East High authorities as to whether the appropriation would be granted. There had been an intimation that the West Side precincts would be loth to grant more money to the Lee Township school.

Therefore, a campaign was organized in which newspapers, high school students and East Side business men combined forces to insure the needed money for their school. That there was ground for their fears was proved by the rather close result of the election, there being 5945 for the appropriation of $50,000 and 3381 against it. How the high school could have pursued its work with any degree of efficiency without the needed equipment is a question. Still this is the predicament which faced the authorities at the East Side school. To leave the decision of such a vital thing to the hands of a small number of voters, many of whom look at the problem, merely from the standpoint of increased taxes, rather than to the deliberate judgment of a carefully selected, well informed board is an absurd state of affairs.
In this election again is discovered the tendency of a section of a city to vote quite exclusively for its own particular interests. In all the East Side precincts the measure carried by large majorities in all except the First of the Seventh which as usual voted against the proposed improvement.

The Fifth of the Sixth, which, it will be remembered so nobly supported the cause of the new high school which was to be built in it, again turned out a large vote of 607 although on another question of less concern to the particular interests of the precinct it only polled 403 votes.

That intelligent people of an American city should appropriate $400,000 for a modern high school building and then refuse to allow another appropriation of $50,000 without which the structure would be well nigh useless is inconceivable. Yet such are the facts in one of the precincts in which some of the buildings of Drake University are located. The total vote for the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth precincts of the
First Ward was 520 for the appropriation and 622
against it. Thus it will be seen that these four
precincts which represent what is known as
"University Place", which should contain perhaps
t3st these four precincts the women did not vote at a
majority against an appropriation of absolute
necessity to the efficient educating of East Des
Moines boys and girls. That a feeling of city
rivalry between the two sides of the city was
responsible for this condition is most probable.
There is but one excuse for the apparent
lack of reason shown by the West Side voters in
this election. There was a feeling current among
some of the West Side voters that the East Side
voters or the School Board had deliberately exceeded
the amount allotted and had built a finer building
than originally planned. That the $400,000 first
voted was to have paid for the building and also
the furnishings. Hence, the resentment and resulting
negative vote of the West Side.
In behalf of the women it can be said that
in these four precincts the appropriation carried by
a vote of 130 to 83. As in nearly all elections noted
the women, although turning out a very small part of those eligible to vote, proved to be much more inclined to vote for public improvements than the men. In several East Side precincts the women did not cast a single negative vote against the appropriation.

The other measures were of little interest and in the press received little attention. Many voters who went to the polls were absolutely unfamiliar with the questions and either voted blindly or did not vote at all. That many did the latter is evidenced by the small number of ballots counted on several of the questions.

These were for five schools situated in various parts of the city and all met with favor. The first measure was a $200,000 appropriation which lost by one vote of a precinct. An appropriation for $130,000 at South High was also carried.

Two questions, however, that were of more interest were the two first mentioned—the $200,000 appropriation for a South High addition and a $130,000 appropriation for an addition at North High.

The vote at this election was quite small, 2,451 men and 1,971 women voting on the proposition which
The special school election of February 5, 1913 was to secure the will of the people concerning the building of additions to West High and North High. While the two questions noted were the main bones of contention, yet considerable interest was aroused in the appropriation for several graded schools which were being submitted at the same time, in certain localities. (See Table #10) (a)

These were for five schools situated in various parts of the city and all met with favor except the Brooks school appropriation which lost by the narrow margin of 23 votes. An appropriation for the purchase of certain land was also carried.

The questions, however, that were of more interest were the two first mentioned—the $200,000 appropriation for a West High addition and a $150,000 appropriation for an addition at North High.

The vote at this election was quite small, 3413 men and 1921 women voting on the proposition which

(a) From Records at School Board Office.
received the most votes. This was about one-tenth of the number of voters eligible to cast the ballot on these questions. The voting population of Des Moines at this time was about 20,000 and as the women had the right to express an opinion on all these measures, the number of eligible voters was practically doubled.

The fight on the West High addition will be considered first. Practically every student in the high school had an active part in the campaign and circulated literature in behalf of the West High addition. On the East Side the precincts spelled defeat for the cause of West High. Every single precinct on the East Side voted down the appropriation for West High, even though, two years before, nearly all the West Side precincts expressed a favorable decision for the new East High School.

Whether prejudice, jealousy, or honest conviction caused the whole East Side to vote the appropriation down by a two to one majority is open to argument. However, it is probable that the old
jealousy between the adherents of the two schools was responsible for the defeat.

An interesting feature of this election is the vote returned by the Fifth of the Sixth, which it will be recalled turned in 607 votes on the East High appropriation a year before. In this election, the result of which was of no immediate interest to them, the vote was only 76, there being 25 for the measure and 51 against it. It must be remembered that this is the precinct in which East High is situated.

West High was unable to carry many of the precincts on its own side of the river, the University Place section turning the measure down by a substantial margin. However, the precinct in which the high school is located, the Third of the Second, turned in a vote in favor of the appropriation of 116 to 23.

There were several reasons why the West High measure failed. In the first place the East Side was reluctant to grant the West Side appropriation. Also among West Side citizens there was much argument as to the wisdom of adding to the equipment at Fifteenth and
Center. Many citizens had the opinion that a new complete structure should be put up here. Others maintained that a new West High building should be erected at Twenty-Fourth and Drake Park or even farther west. Therefore, with so much opposition the measure met an 812 majority against it.

As usual the First of the Seventh returned a negative vote on every question except the $3000 appropriation for improvements at Benton school which is located at Twelfth and Shaw which is quite near the vicinity of the precinct.

In the North High addition appropriation several interesting points are to be noticed. In the first place the measure would have lost except for the saving vote of the women who turned a 1717 to 1619 vote against the addition to a 554 majority for it. This is another proof of the well nigh unfailing progressiveness of the women on matters of public welfare.

As most of the argument was on the addition at West High, many voters who voted against the West High addition gave an affirmative answer to North High.
This addition was approved by nearly all West Side precincts and several East Side precincts also.

The two precincts near North High, the Sixth of the Second and Sixth of the Third returned an interesting vote. Upon the question of appropriating $200,000 for West High the opinion of the voters was about two to one against it, while upon the appropriating of $150,000 for North High the vote was in favor by a vote of about eight to one. This is another indication that a precinct will vote quite selfishly for its own interests.

In the West High precinct the reverse was true. While the voters of this section of the city were about six to one in favor of the addition at West High, these same public spirited voters were against a $150,000 addition at North High. Again the women rose to the occasion and magnanimously gave a 27 to 25 vote for the North High addition after having voted 64 to 11 for the West High appropriation.

In the minor questions each school received strong support in its own precinct and a lack of interest by the other precincts was the outstanding feature.
The North High addition carried largely because the West High question received the brunt of the attack from opponents to public improvements. Also the fact that North High asked for $50,000 less than West High probably had a psychological effect on some of the voters who were willing to grant one appropriation but not two -- therefore, favoring the one with least expense except three which were for the sake of property.

The propositions were as follow:

$19,000 building in Ram addition near Valley Junction.

$80,000 for the Brooks school.

$10,000 for playgrounds.

$4,000 to save the State Kindergarten.

$5,000 for general improvements.

$50,000 for improvements at North High.

$3,000 for maintenance of playgrounds.

Authority to sell Brewer school.

Authority to sell Bryant.

Authority to sell one-half acre at Thirtieth and Hickman.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Three.

Chapter VI.

School Election Of March 1914.

In the school election of March 9, 1914 there were eleven propositions submitted for approval. In all, about 13,000 votes were cast and the women had the right to vote on all measures except three which were for the sale of property. (See Table #11). (a)

The propositions were as follow.

- $19,000 building in Reaz addition near Valley Junction.
- $20,000 for the Brooks school.
- $10,000 for playgrounds.
- $4,000 to move the Sabin Kindergarten.
- $24,000 for general improvements.
- $8,000 for improvements at North High.
- $5,000 for maintenance of playgrounds.
- Authority to sell Bremer school.
- Authority to sell Bryant.
- Authority to sell one-half acre at Thirtyeth and Hickman.

(a) From Records at School Board Office.
As stated above, the women had the right to vote on all except the last three measures. However, as usual they failed to avail themselves of the privilege to any great extent, practically all the woman vote coming from the First Ward. The cause of the greater interest of the women in this section was due to the fight over the new building in the Raaz addition. The residents near the Hanawalt School wanted their children to go to school there and favored the erection of a second story put on the Hanawalt building to make it amply large to accommodate the increasing number of pupils. Thus it happened that the women did what they have seldom done--turned down a public improvement measure. However, the men gave the proposition a large enough majority to carry it.

An interesting feature of the election was the fact that every measure submitted passed with the approval of the citizens. As usual the location of the sections of the city to be affected by the improvements could nearly be ascertained by a study of the election returns chart. The vote in every instance was heavier than in the sections not affected.
This, of course, is but natural.

The interest in this election was quite slight because of the fact that no very important matter, such as had appeared in the recent preceding years, was up for consideration. The highest appropriation asked was $24,000 which was for general improvements. This, of course, is an allowance which few intelligent voters would refuse.

The only real clash was between certain factions in the Valley Junction district, over the proposed school in the Raaz addition. The women agitated considerably to poll a good vote in this section and succeeded in turning out a very considerable number especially in the Second Precinct of the First Ward.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Three.

Chapter VII.

School Election Of March 1915.

In the school election of March 8, 1915 the vote was one of the lightest in years. (See Table #12) The voting population of the city was about 45,000 men and women while the number of those who availed themselves of the right to direct the destinies of the Public Schools was only 4268 or less than ten per cent. (a)

That this ten per cent was better able to direct the financial proceedings of the city schools is noted. While the women voters were not numerous than the Board of Directors was the assumption under which the Referendum system works.

The questions up for consideration were as follow.

1. A $30,000 appropriation for new building and addition purposes.

2. A $10,000 appropriation for the purpose of purchasing additional playgrounds and school house grounds.

(a) From Records at School Board Office.
3. A $10,000 appropriation for general improvement and repair purposes.

In addition to the above questions upon which the women were allowed to vote, there were two sales which the Board desired to make and which required the approval of the public.

All five measures were approved, the first three by an average majority of 250 votes and the sale propositions by about a two to one vote. The electors seemed more willing that the Board should sell than buy. This has been true of nearly all the elections in which the subject of sale has arisen.

In this election one peculiar fact is to be noted. While the women voters were not numerous enough to represent the general characteristics of the female voters, the 133 who cast the ballot were quite unusual in their expressed will.

The playground proposition was favored by the women as shown by their vote for it of 67 to 55. However, the two appropriations for $30,000 and $10,000 met with disfavor, the former losing by a vote of 69 to 20 and the latter 68 to 65. That there
was no concerted action by these women against the measures is indicated by the fact that the highest number of votes registered by the women was 16 which were cast in the Third of the Seventh, an East Side precinct. In this case the result was 11 to 5 in favor of the $10,000 improvement appropriation.

The highest male vote was polled in the Third of the Sixth, another East Side precinct, by a total of 237 ballots. In this instance the men favored the $10,000 playground measure by a majority of 123 to 114.

The vote for directors was very uninteresting as Dr. Conkling and Mrs. Hoffman had practically no competition, each polling over 2200 votes while the nearest candidate had less than 1100.

1. $40,000 for a Preparatory School.
2. $10,000 for an open air school.
3. $11,000 for Phillips school.
4. $25,000 for Willard school.
5. $10,000 for Stowe school.
6. $18,000 for Hise school.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Three.

Chapter VIII.

School Election Of March 1916.

The school election of March 13, 1916 was held in conjunction with the Primary to the city election. As a result there is a deep contrast between the small vote polled in the 1915 school election and that of 1916. (See Table #13) (a)

The total number of votes cast by the citizens at this election was exactly 16,000 there being 14,248 male votes and 1752 female votes.

The propositions which numbered fourteen were as follows.

1. $60,000 general fund for expenses and improvements.
2. $25,000 for a Prevocational School.
3. 10,000 for an open air school.
4. $15,000 for Phillips school.
5. $25,000 for Willard school.
6. $10,000 for Stowe school.
7. $18,000 for Rice school.

(a) From Records at School Board Office.
8. $25,000 for a South Des Moines school.
9. $40,000 for Highland Park school.
10. $55,000 for Lucas school. Did not meet the
    public approval.
11. $45,000 for Forest Avenue school. And the
    appropriation took the form of a
    public vote on the ballot.
12. $75,000 for Nash school. The public did not
    approve this appropriation.
13. $10,000 for Urbandale school. Thus two
    Urbandale school propositions were defeated.
14. $575,000 for Wash school.

This enormous budget of $438,000 was all
granted, in all cases by a better than a 1,200 majority.
Why the measures should meet with such general approval,
when three years before a small appropriation won out
by a narrow margin is past explanation. Nevertheless, the voters
were either too interested in the city Primary to find fault with
school appropriations or were in an exceedingly
strong public spirited mood, for this appropriation
which was the largest in many years met practically
no objection. The appropriation of $400,000 in 1910
for the East High building was given ten times the
publicity and attention that this $438,000 request received. One of the most instructive incidents in
the Referendum in connection with the Des Moines
school elections occurred at this time. The Board had drafted in their request a $10,000 appropriation for a school at Urbandale. This, did not meet the approval of the residents of this district, and the strong objection which finally took the form of a petition which was successful in placing on the ballot the request for a $25,000 structure. Thus two Urbandale appropriations were incorporated on the ballot, and oddly enough, both carried. The original $10,000 request was granted by a vote 3378 to 1709 while the $25,000 appropriation was approved by a majority of 3172 to 1538.

By a glance at the election returns (Table #13) the precinct in which the Urbandale school was to be erected may be easily detected by the large vote polled. This tendency which was noted also in the East and West High elections was extremely well illustrated here where 584 men and 106 women went to the polls. Thus over 100 more men than voted in any other precinct in the city and in only two precincts did the vote of the women exceed the woman vote in this precinct, the Eighth of the First. Thus the
effect of local improvements on a precinct's voting strength is observed.

By the result of this election the Board had the right to spend the $10,000 they had originally asked for and also the $25,000 granted in reply to the request of the people. In this dilemma the logical result was that the new building would be erected at a cost of $35,000 which was the decision arrived at by the Board.

The remarkable thing about the above election was the fact that such an enormous appropriation was made with so little opposition.

It is exceedingly probable that the Board of Directors, after careful thought, took the time opportune to submit the appropriation bills as the interest and natural antagonism of certain classes of people would be burned out in the city Primary and the school measures would slip by untouched. Whether this is true or not is debatable but the result of the election would indicate that the voters of nearly all the precincts voted a "straight ticket" through practically all the measures.
General Deductions From Referendum Questions Studied. The Referendum.

The subject will be viewed from four angles.

In stating the general conclusions or deductions to be drawn from the elections reviewed in Part Two and Part Three there are several points to be considered.

1. The success of the Referendum from the standpoint of wise and fair decisions.

2. The conclusions are based upon the Des Moines elections of the last ten years. That a difference of opinion may exist as to the application of certain phenomena in the election returns cannot be denied.

In the first place statistics are often misleading and often may be interpreted in several ways. In the following pages the deductions are made after considering as many cases bearing on these subjects will be dealt with in four the question as is possible to obtain in the Des Moines elections of the last ten years. That a difference of opinion may exist as to the application of certain phenomena in the election returns cannot be denied.

The conclusions drawn, based upon the Des Moines elections will, of course, be applicable, strictly speaking, only to the Referendum as applied to matters of municipal governments in cities of
the same class. That certain tendencies of voters may be detected, which would appear in any Referendum elections, also is true.

In the study of the general deductions which may be drawn with respect to the Referendum, the subject will be viewed from four angles.

1. The success of the Referendum from the standpoint of active interest.
2. The success of the Referendum from the standpoint of wise and fair decisions.
3. The women and Referendum.
4. General conclusions as to the desirability of the Referendum in Des Moines.

These subjects will be dealt with in four subsequent chapters, correlating and combining the more specific inferences drawn from the elections described in Part Two and Part Three.
In discussing this question of the interest taken by the voters in the various elections several obstacles to an impartial and fair judgment are encountered. In the first place it can never be said with any great amount of certainty whether the interest of the voters in a given election was sufficient to vote returned an opinion upon it.

In the city elections of Des Moines in practically every case where a Referendum question with the primary to the city election, was submitted the interest aroused was very slight
indeed and unless the election was held in conjunction with some regular city election, there would be an exceptionally small vote polled. A striking example of this was the special election of 1915. (a) In this election in which the Street Car Franchise and Automatic Phone projects were submitted, there were about 10,000 out of an eligible number of 25,000 voters, who cast a ballot. However, when the subject for consideration was submitted for approval at the time of a regular city election a much better proportion of the citizens eligible to vote returned an opinion upon it.

In school elections this tendency is even more striking and often as low as five per cent of the voters have decided important financial matters for the city's schools. Elections in school politics which have been favored by large election returns were those in which much interest was manifested in the election of the directors. The largest school election ever held in the City of Des Moines was the election of 1916 which was held in connection with the Primary to the city election.

(a) See Table #6.
The interest of the voters is also largely a matter of locality as a general thing. Thus voters in precincts which are to be affected by the result of the election will be particularly interested. However, their interest extends but little farther than their own precinct and the number of votes on other measures will invariably decrease, sometimes to a mere shadow of the number polled in support of the local issue. An unusually good example of this sort of voting may be had by noting the vote of the three high school precincts at times when their appropriations were submitted for ratification. (a)

This matter of local interest is not confined to the school elections. In the city elections the same phenomenon may be noted. As an example the vote on the Market House project will be recalled. In this election the East and West Side precincts to be affected by the location of the new market house were unusually well represented at the polls.

So in practically every election the precincts to be directly affected may be detected by a close survey of the election returns. A vivid

(a) See Table 812.

(a) See Part Three, Chapter V.
example of this is the poll of the Urbandale precincts in the School Election of 1916. (a) This precinct, the Eighth of the First, showed a total of practically 700 votes which was nearly 200 more than was polled by any other precinct in Des Moines. This large vote was occasioned by the fact that the conflict as to whether Urbandale was to possess a new $10,000 school or one to cost $25,000 was up for settlement. It will be recalled that both measures carried, thus entitling this district to a structure worth $35,000.

One of the most instructive elections considered was the special city election of 1907 in which the voters decided to adopt the now famous "Des Moines Plan". Here is an example of an election in which a great deal of interest was displayed with apparently no personal element entering in.

As reviewed in the account of this election, however, it has been indicated that there is room for doubt on the assumption that the voters were taking the great interest they showed, in deciding an abstract (a) See Table #13.

(a) See Part Two, Chapter 16.
impersonal measure. It has been pointed out that while apparently the voters were deciding for or against a form of municipal government, still, virtually they were voting between two factions of men—the city council which was against the new plan, and a combination of business men who were backing the plan. That this was the fact is evidenced by the upheaval in the following city election. A little bit of the story of the political issue is as follows: The clever way in which the newspapers brought the issue to a personal fight has been described. (a) The average voter in casting his ballot in 1907 considered not the theoretical facts commending or denouncing the new plan, but rather the backers of each side of the question. By voting for the new form of government he considered—and rightly so—that he was aiming a blow at the city council then in office. There was no attempt to induce the voter to believe otherwise.

In the City of Des Moines, in the elections of the last decade, an examination of the vote and newspaper fight with the subject quite

(a) See Part Two, Chapter IV.
election returns shows in every case a smaller vote for the measure receiving the greatest number, than the total vote for Mayor. This is merely an indication of the fact that voters do not take the same live interest in a vote for or against abstract measures, that they do in selecting an office holder.

It has been argued that the use of the Referendum will induce the ordinary citizen to devote more time to the study of the political issues of the day. The Referendum elections in Des Moines show that it is a fact that many citizens display great interest in the questions submitted as shown by the political meetings held in the various halls during the discussion of the Des Moines Plan. Also the press notices of the Referendum questions are often prominent enough to attract the attention of the ordinary voters. This was particularly true in the Des Moines Plan election which has been mentioned and also in the campaign for the Water Works purchase.

In the case of the purchase of the water works the newspapers dealt with the subject quite extensively, with the Market House and Tax Exemption projects.
extensively and published a series of articles on the subject, both in favor of the purchase and against it. (a)

Therefore, the general conclusion with regard to the subject of the enhancement of the political knowledge of the voters, may besaid to be, that some of the citizens are undoubtedly better informed on political questions than they otherwise would be. Whether the proportion which keeps well informed on the political issues up for decision is large enough to warrant the use of the Referendum, is questionable.

It may also be said, however, that the great majority of the Referendum questions submitted in Des Moines have not received sufficient advertising or publicity to make them especially instructive to the people. For example, while much interest was manifested and discussion took place at the time of the streetcar franchise election, in the two city elections immediately prior practically no discussion took place and very little newspaper comment was made. The questions of those two elections were the Market House and Tax Exemption projects.

(a) See Part Two, Chapter VII.
The voters were so poorly informed on the Market House question that they authorized the city council to erect a central market and also two other markets—one on the East Side and one on the West Side. The question up for decision was as to which plan to follow. (a)

So while it may be rightly and truthfully said that some citizens certainly profit from the discussion of matters of public interest it does not follow that any considerable majority does so.

Another glaring example of the ignorance of the ordinary voter upon the Referendum subjects which have been submitted is the water works purchase. Here nearly one-third of the voters who favored the purchase did not vote for the issue of the bonds to carry out their will. (b)

In the school elections it is evident that the common voter of even superior intelligence cannot possibly be well informed upon the measures to be voted upon. To vote with any degree of intelligence upon fourteen questions of appropriating

(a) See Part Two, Chapter VI.
(b) See Table #5.
money for new buildings, would require a week of careful study. Therefore, most electors did the logical thing and voted a straight ticket for or against the desired appropriations, on general principles. To decide wisely whether one community really needs an addition or improvement would require careful study and consideration. To settle this problem for fourteen communities was the work for each voter in the school election of 1916. That all measures carried shows that the citizens of Des Moines progressively upheld the educational appropriations on "general principles".

In the case of the average voter it is probably a fact that his knowledge of political questions and government is increased by the Referendum system. Whether the advantage hereby occasioned is sufficiently great to be a serious argument in its favor is doubtful.
To affirm that the passage of certain Referendum measures is an evidence of wise and careful consideration by the voters, is almost entirely a statement of opinion. A project which would meet the hearty support of some intelligent students of political economy would meet as enthusiastic opposition by others. Therefore, it is well nigh impossible to maintain, with any degree of certainty, that a Referendum decision is either wise or absurd.

In the first place practically every election has followed the dictates of the press. The measures which have received the bulk of the
support from the newspapers have invariably shown great strength. This is entirely logical, as the great majority of the voters receive their information and form their convictions from the newspaper notices upon the subject. The one striking exception to this rule was the Heating Franchise project. In this instance the measure lost in spite of newspaper support.  

This being true, the blame or credit for Referendum decisions seems to shift in a great measure to the newspapers and their editors.  

Thus in the city election of 1907 the papers' great opposition to the "City Hall Gang" was largely responsible for the acceptance of the Des Moines Plan of City Government. The press, in this case, it will be recalled, simmered the question down to a choice between two groups of politicians rather than a decision as to the desirability of the new type of municipal government. (a)  

The case above mentioned is also a superb example of one in which different authorities will  

(a) See Part Two, Chapter IV.
disagree upon the wisdom of its selection. The choice of this plan of government might be pointed to as a shining illustration of the wisdom of the common people, by certain critics. Others might very well indicate it as an example of the complete unfitness of the ordinary vote to take an active part in legislation. Thus the difficulty to state whether the voters displayed keen judgment or childish ignorance.

It is highly probable that many voters who cast their ballots at the polls realize their incapability of making a wise decision and, therefore, fail to vote at all. In every election noted the votes cast for the mayor has exceeded by hundreds the total votes cast upon any given question.

Any voter who has faced the array of questions submitted at certain School elections, as for example the election of 1916, knows how futile would be an attempt at an intelligent and studied decision. To state that the voters displayed evidence of a fine judicial sense of justice would
scarcely be a statement of the facts. Rather is it probable that the great bulk of the voters voted for or against the school appropriations with scarcely a thought of the specific cases.

In the election just mentioned there were fourteen questions for the people to decide, which involved the expenditure of over $400,000. (a) It seems scarcely possible that an intelligent Board of Directors could judge with less intelligence and wisdom than the ordinary average voter who most probably could not tell the location of two-thirds of the proposed buildings and additions.

The voters were asked to decide off hand the question of a playground appropriation—a problem which would take an expert in the work a week to figure out. Similarly certain course of study changes are submitted to the people to decide which might much more effectively be left in the hands of an expert committee.

In behalf of the people's cause in the decision of Referendum questions, the street car

(a) See Table #13.
franchise case may be recalled. In this instance it is apparently a fact that the voters eliminated a great turmoil and political strife in the City Hall and settled the matter once for all. It will be remembered that the politicians at the City Hall had fought the franchise question with great rigor and after innumerable quarrels and conferences had failed to agree.

In the meantime the street car service rapidly deteriorated, and needed repairs and improvements were left undone. New cars, new tracks and new power were needed and very naturally were not supplied by the street car company while without a franchise.

The public became disgusted with the petty bickering and quarrelling of the council and passed the franchise decisively. It is probable that this was as wise a decision as the people could make. However, certain critics still assert that the street car company received a franchise in which the city did not receive its just dues. Hence, the difficulty in pronouncing any Referendum decision, wise or just.
In this case the subsequent developments seem to bear the people out in their decision. New cars, tracks and improvements of all kinds have been added and the service has been improved most rapidly since the ratification of the franchise.

Here again the influence of the press may be detected. Practically the whole newspaper support was behind the project and large advertisements of the company laid before the voters the advantages and improvements to be installed after its ratification. A point especially popular was the reduction of the fare for school children and the sale of street car tickets at the rate of six for a quarter. These apparently minor points seemed to make a strong impression and were well advertised.

Occasionally the judgment of the people was very faulty according to the press opinions upon the subject. Thus the heating franchise which met with such favor in some quarters in the election of 1916 was turned down by the voters. This project met with the favor of the property owners of the business section as it was the logical cure of the
smoke problem which has come to be such a civic nuisance. However, the opposition of the labor unions which feared an encroachment upon their field of work, especially in the case of miners and teamsters, swung the tide of public opinion against the electric heating franchise.

So it is an example of an apparent mistake of the public in the decision of a matter vital to the civic welfare of the city.

To sum up the situation as to the general wisdom of the electors in deciding matters of public policy, it may be said that as it is all a matter of opinion it is exceedingly hard to state. As a general rule the public does as the press dictates and invariably considers the politicians and forces which back the measure under consideration. In the nature of things, the popular vote will make occasional blunders and occasional commendable decisions. Time only can be the judge of their worth.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Four.

Chapter IV.

The Women And The Referendum.

In many questions submitted to the public for approval the male vote does not alone give the decision. In measures requiring the expenditure of money the women have the right to cast the ballot stating their preference. Also in school elections in which appropriations are up for ratification the women have the right to vote for or against the measure.

In the elections in Des Moines during the last ten years there have been several city elections and many school elections in which the women have had the right to vote. A survey of their activity in exercising this right is profitable.

Before stating any conclusions which have been drawn it may be said that the rather poor showing made numerically by the women can hardly be mentioned justly as there is little
satisfaction to a woman to go to the polls and vote on only a few of the subjects submitted for decision. For example, in the election of November 3, 1908 (a) in which the City Hall proposition was submitted for approval, the total woman vote was only 1364 out of a total eligible vote of about 25,000.

At this time, however, a comparison with the number of male votes is not fair to the women as the men were entitled to vote for President and naturally much more interest was attached to this election than to the Referendum projects held at the same time. The percentage of women who voted as compared to the number eligible was about five per cent. as compared to the number eligible to vote in a referendum.

As stated above, a criticism of the women for not voting is evidently unfair. But, it does certainly follow that the system of allowing the women to vote on Referendum questions only, is useless and absurd. In practically every election the same result will be found. As the right to vote

(a) See Part Two, Chapter V.
for the candidates is denied, so the interest is lax and the great majority of the women fail to vote at all.

Thus the first main conclusion with regard to the women and the Referendum, is that it is absolutely insane for the government to entail the added expense of special ballots and judges for a few women to vote. That the number is small is attested by the election returns of every municipal election.

Whether the women should vote on all subjects or not, is not the point of this discussion. However, it is maintained that for them to be allowed to vote on a few Referendum questions to the exclusion of other vital ones is absurd and useless.

The most ardent suffragette cannot deny that the meager number of voters who have appeared at the polls on practically every occasion is a proof of the futility of giving the women the right to decide these few classes of propositions. This
may be a stepping-stone to more complete suffrage for the women and, therefore, prized by their leaders but as an actual asset to their cause it is useless.

As a general rule the gentler sex has seemed more interested in school affairs than in civic questions. For example, the three high school appropriations met the hearty support of the women, especially in the precincts to be affected. (a) The number of votes in several cases exceeded that of the men. In precincts not to be concerned in the result of the election, however, the women fell far below the men in the total number of votes registered.

This would seem to indicate that matters of general interest are more liable to be seriously considered by the men while specific affairs of local interest meet the stronger support from the women. In several cases strenuous campaigns have been conducted by the women to poll a large vote in certain sections of the city. These attempts
have met with great success in certain cases as for instance the East High building project. In other cases they have failed utterly to turn out a decent showing.

Some curious conclusions may be drawn from the few votes cast at certain elections by the women. As a general thing the women are exceedingly public spirited in their decisions. If this is due to their impractical frame of mind or to their strong belief in civic improvements is hard to say, but it is a fact that the proportion of women favoring appropriations and improvements, in all cases has exceeded the male majority. From the results of the Des Moines elections it would appear that a community wishing the passage of a public improvement measure should get as many women as possible out to the polls.

An extremely interesting example of this phenomenon is the school election of February 5, 1913. In this case there were very few votes cast by either sex,—there being 3413 men and 1921
women who voted on the subjects which received the highest totals. (a)

The male vote on the question of an addition for North High was negative, 1717 to 1619. However, when the vote of the women was counted the tables were reversed and the measure carried with a 354 majority. Most public spirited citizens will concede that this election was a victory for the women in more ways than one.

In the election above noted there were also several grade school appropriations up for approval. These were defeated in some cases by the men but upheld by the women with such vigor that the final result was affirmative.

From a study of the elections reviewed it is apparent that the women care little to vote on Referendum questions except in isolated cases of school affairs. In these exceptional cases the desire to vote does not exist if the personal knowledge of the voters does not extend to the subject under discussion. An excellent proof of this statement is seen by noting the election returns of the school
elections of 1912 and 1913 for the Fifth precinct of the Sixth Ward. These returns show an enormous woman vote in 1912 when the appropriation for East High was under consideration. A year later there were a mere handful out to the polls. The explanation is that East High is located in this precinct. (a)

In considering the votes of Des Moines for a series of ten years the outstanding fact with regard to the woman vote on Referendum questions is the futility of it all. Their total vote is in nearly all cases so small that it would not affect the election if all turned for or against any proposition. It is a waste of time and money and utterly useless.

(a) See Tables #9 and #10.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Four.

Chapter V.

General Conclusions As To The Desirability Of

The Referendum In Des Moines.

_in studying the Referendum in Des Moines at any length, one finds arguments of great weight in favor of the system of submitting certain questions to the people. Also many objections are discernible and worthy of consideration. An impartial study of the question should cite all the evidence on each side of the problem obtainable. This has been the attempt in the foregoing chapters.

There are many points to be noted in favor of the Referendum as used in Des Moines. Several of the more important of these will be indicated.

The principal feature commending the use of the direct vote for legislation in Des Moines, politics has been the interest aroused in public affairs by the submission of subjects for the
voters to decide. Many voters who had formerly paid little or no attention to the workings of government received their first lessons in civic government from the consideration of Referendum subjects which they were called upon to approve or reject. The argument that the number, so educated, is quite small is worthy of note.

The real value of this interest is also debatable. There is room for doubt, as to the value of the interest of the voter in affairs of municipal business although from the standpoint of pure Democracy it is beyond reproach.

That the voters who receive the added interest and knowledge are often misinformed and thus often better off before their change of interest is also contended.

In the elections considered in Des Moines, it has been pointed out that the interest is always less with regard to the Referendum topics than for the men who are candidates for office.

The desirability of the Referendum from the standpoint of the interest aroused in public affairs is not great in Des Moines although in all
justice is must be stated that many voters undoubtedly have been made better citizens through the interest occasioned by these elections.

The second cardinal point favoring the direct vote of the people on legislative matters in Des Moines is the elimination of the question from the petty maneuvering and quarrelling of the city councils. The commission of five men have, in nearly every set of officers under the Des Moines Plan, been men of quite different character and ideals. That these men will have serious disagreements is inevitable and will always occur. A good example of this state of affairs might be cited of a council in office several years ago. This collection of representatives quarrelled and argued incessantly and often nearly came to blows.

Under such auspices the sober intelligent consideration of any weighty measure was out of the question. The common voter however ignorant could be very little more incompetent. A peculiarity of the Des Moines Plan which combines the legislative and executive functions of the city government in
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Under such suspicions the sober intelligent consideration of any weighty measure was out of the question. The common voter however ignorant could be very little more incompetent. A peculiarity of the Des Moines Plan which combines the legislative and executive functions of the city government in
the same set of five men makes this condition quite common. The newspapers, always eager to publish anything resembling news from the City Hall, have always added fuel to the flames.

Therefore, it actually has been a satisfaction to the voters to take some of the bones of contention from the Council room. An example of this sort is the special election of January 29, 1915, (a) in which the people settled the street car franchise argument which had been before the council for months.

The franchise had been in dispute so long, while all the time the service deteriorated, that the voters returned a vote of four to one to grant the street car company its franchise and settle the argument. This is one of the most striking examples of a profitable Referendum vote, which met the universal popularity of the people.

However, all the features recommending the Referendum in Des Moines are given some extremely keen competition by facts noted which

(a) See Table #6.
tend to prove the uselessness of the Referendum.

As has been pointed out before, every election shows a much smaller number of voters casting a ballot on the most popular Referendum vote in every case than for the mayor and councilmen. This in itself does not prove anything, as it is natural that the same interest in candidates will not be evident in deciding Referendum questions. However, the proportion is so small in some elections noted, that it seems absurd to consider the result the "will of the people". Rather would it be preferable to submit the question for decision to a well selected and highly competent council and allow their judgment to be final. That this would be more intelligent, more economical and more satisfactory in most cases, would undoubtedly be true.

It is true that certain flaws may be detected in the method described, yet such is the method by which most of our most pressing matters of state are settled.
A socialist paper in Kansas, "The Appeal To Reason", advocates the Referendum for declaration of war against a foreign nation. Thus it will be seen that opposition to our representative method in affairs of State may be cited also.

However, the common stockholders of a corporation turn the finances over to men capable of conducting them. Why not use the same good business methods in municipal affairs?

In the Des Moines elections, also, it has been shown that the vote has always followed the lead of the influential newspapers. It is true that these opinions and recommendations may be all well and good--yet it seems a rather powerful influence for a particular organization or set of organizations to yield. The ordinary voter, occupied with his own business affairs and troubles, has little time for the consideration, in an analytical way, of the technical questions of government which are sometimes submitted to him for approval.

In the Des Moines elections it can be seen that the tendency of the majority of the voters has
been to vote a straight ticket either for or against the proposed question. That this is due to the influence of newspaper articles is very probable and it is safe to say that any project which receives the enthusiastic and concerted support of the press, in Des Moines, will carry, and that easily.

The desirability of the Referendum in Des Moines depends on the same factors which recommend any other measure of public policy to the use of a city or state. The success of its operation is the only reliable way to judge of its work. That the judgment is difficult to make has been indicated.

From the elections studied in Des Moines and the data collected the advantage seems to lie against the success of the Referendum in attaining the desired results.

It is assumed that the questions would be decided by the council, if it were not the plan to get the wish and will of the people on the matter.

Since this is true, it follows that the use of the Referendum is not wholly successful as
in all cases the proportion of people expressing
a preference on the questions is small. Therefore,
the plan fails in its purpose, merely getting the
will of a few of the people, usually less than
fifty per cent.

It has been the attempt in this thesis
to set forth the facts impartially and draw the
conclusions logically. That there is room for a
difference of opinion is admitted. In any case
the study of the facts is enlightening to the
advocate or opponent of the Referendum movement.

The summaries and conclusions compiled
are subject to dispute. However, in the light of
the facts presented and specific instances noted,
it must be said that the Referendum in Des Moines
has failed in its mission—that it has been tried
and found wanting.
A Decade Of The Referendum In Des Moines.

Part Five.

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