we might call the county manager plan. The picture would not be complete without a presentation of this method of county government. Mrs. Isabelle McCarthy is going to tell us of the merits of the county manager form of government as compared with the commission and supervisory forms.

The Merits of the County Manager Form of Government as compared to the Commission and Supervisory Forms.

Mrs. Isabelle McCarthy,
Cottage Grove, Wis.

Ex-Governor John Harbell of Iowa in his inaugural address in 1929 said, "County Government is trying to do 1929 business with a 1900 model. It is time a survey be made of our forms of County Government to ascertain whether or not the most possible service for the tax dollar is being given." Apparently such a survey has been made in three counties in Wisconsin and a change in local government deemed advisable. However, in all three counties the change was made to the Commission form of government.

There is another form of County Government being used quite extensively throughout the United States, but of which the average citizen has heard very little. This is known as the County Manager Plan. During the past few years several counties in Virginia, North Carolina and Montana have adopted this form of county government and it has proven very successful in all instances.

I should like to quote from H. S. Gilbertson's, "The County, The Dark Continent of American Politics," "The County of the future will employ a manager, chosen appropriately with sole reference to his fitness to manage public affairs, and without regard to residence, religion, or his views on the Mexican situation, who will pick up the authority of the county where the board of directors leave it off."

If this is to be a fact perhaps it would be well if we consider the merits of the County Manager Plan as compared with the Commission or Supervisory Systems of Local Government.

Perhaps the first thing to consider is how the County Manager Plan is organized. The County Manager Plan is similar to the Commission Form of County Government in that they both provide for a small board of Supervisors. There are usually from five to nine members of this board and they are elected by the people from the county at large. This Board of Supervisors hires the County Manager and as he need not be a resident of the county it is usually possible to hire the best man obtainable, a man who has made a thorough study of county government and is a successful executive. The Manager is to the county what a general manager is to a corporation, thereby putting the county on a business basis.

The duties of the County Manager are very definite. They are as follows:
1. Appoints all county officers, except the district attorney, judge and sheriff. He hires these persons not on how good a politician they are but on their qualifications for the particular position they are to hold. They will be hired as stenographers, bookkeepers and accountants and not as county clerk, treasurer, etc.

2. The County Manager must attend all meetings of the Board of Supervisors. He must submit his plans to them and see that all orders and resolutions given by the Board are carried out as planned.

3. The County Manager must prepare a tentative budget and present it to the Board for their approval.

The Board may grant the county manager the power to enter into contracts not to exceed $500; and to purchase all supplies for the county, thereby effecting a saving by buying in large quantities.

The County Manager Plan has many merits over either the Commission or Supervisory systems. In the first place it provides the county with an administrative head. No matter how small an organization or unit of government you consider they all have one person at the head of it. The school district has the clerk; the township a chairman; the city or village a mayor; the state a governor; and the United States a president. At the present time in Wisconsin who is at the head of the counties. Is it the county clerk, treasurer, or sheriff?

Today in Dane County we have eighty-one members on the County Board. With this number there certainly is an opportunity to shift responsibility. The only time a member of the County Board will assume responsibility is when something has been done that has the approval of the people in the county. In that case every member tries to claim the credit. With a small board of five to nine members this shifting of responsibility would be impossible. This board under the County Manager Plan is directly responsible to the people and the County Manager is in turn responsible to the Board.

At the present time our county officers are elected for two years. They must spend a part of the two years campaigning for re-election. They must be paid a substantial salary as a portion is necessary to pay campaign expenses. Under the County Manager plan the county officers are hired by the manager and would devote their entire time to their positions. They would be directly responsible to the Manager and should they prove inefficient he would have the power and authority to dismiss the person and fill the vacancy. Can you imagine the state of affairs under our present system should a county officer be found inefficient. By the time an investigation has been conducted, election time would have come and gone and the party being investigated no doubt re-elected, especially if he happened to be a member of the most popular party, for instance, in 1932 a Democrat.

One authority on County Government states that under our present system we have several government-ettes rather than one united system.
The County Manager plan would eliminate the worthless long ballot. With our present system it is impossible to study the qualifications of the candidates on the ballot and in most instances we vote by party only. In the election in 1932 many persons were elected only because they were Democrats. After election many of the candidates were as surprised at their election as we were to think of some of them as now being county or state officers. R. S. Childs states "The long ballot is the politician's ballot."

Last year the County Board of Supervisors in Dane County cost the county $11,509.56. It is reasonable to believe that the County Manager plan would be more economical.

The County Manager would be on the job all the time and the Board of Supervisors would meet every month. With our present system the Board meets twenty days during the year and with the Commission Form the Commissioners would meet once a month. Under those systems there is no one "on the job" between meetings. I believe we can apply that age-old proverb of "one boy will do one day's work, two boys will do one-half day's work and three boys will do no work at all" to the average county board of Supervisors.

When we consider the success of the County Manager in Virginia and North Carolina and in several foreign countries namely, France, Germany and England, we must realize that it is no longer just an experiment. All counties that have tried this plan have found that it improves the calibre of the board of supervisors, it gives the county a budgetary control such as has not been possible under the Supervisory System, and it has proven more economical in its operations than any other system tried.

Alfred E. Smith, ex-governor of New York in his message to legislature in 1926 said "Local government has made practically no change since 1676, the local tax system is a joke and something has to be done about it." He made two recommendations, first a plan of local government similar to the County Manager Plan and second a shorter ballot which he said was essential to better government.

Therefore, I believe that the County Manager plan which provides for a small board of supervisors, and a manager who is an executive, appointed and subject to dismissal by the board in case of incompetency would prove more economical, business-like, serviceable, and progressive than either the commission or supervisory systems.

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Mr. Embank (Chairman): As we have listened to these six discussion leaders, we have wished that we might interrupt them to ask questions. Perhaps we wished to express our agreement; or it may be that we disagree with them and desired to express our opposing opinion. Some have information that the rest of us should know about. The time for this informal exchange of opinions and information has now arrived. Who will be first?