

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

THE STATE OF UTAH.

The State of Utah began its career with mostly untried men in the posts of responsibility, just two months ago. This is hardly sufficient time within which to either figure up results as to what has gone before or cast the horoscope of the future, but enough to give us all an idea of the general drift of our craft in the open sea of political independence. So far, we have encountered no breakers, reefs or derelicts, but it has not been altogether smooth sailing by any means, and will probably be somewhat rougher as time wears on; in this respect, however, we will not be at all unique, there being no monopoly of such a thing attaching to the early or even the later career of any commonwealth.

Governor Wells, who never before held a high executive office and is not a law graduate, who is young in years and untimely in statecraft, is holding well to his promise to give the people a business administration. It has so far been quite free from partisanship or apparent bias; his suggestions to the Legislature are frank, plain and sensible, while his vetoes are not only based upon such grounds as the majority of the people will approve of, but are not withheld because of the fear of frequency diminishing their potency, and he has not been overridden yet. We can all, Democrats and Republicans alike, agree upon the proposition that he is doing very well indeed and promises to make a record of which any executive might be proud.

With the exception of the judges, the other State officials have had no such prominence before the public placed upon them, but each seems to be conducting his department in accordance with the law and the spirit which obtains at headquarters. Speaking of the judges reminds us that the new dispensation of things judicial, by which each county looks after and disposes of its own affairs and all offenses arising within its borders, was a rather trying one to place upon some of them where experience in that line was wholly wanting; but so far as can be learned they have all become accustomed to it with a readiness and facility which bespeak high intelligence and an excellent public spirit on the part of the people. Those of the judges who have never before sat on the bench—meaning all of them but two or three—are showing remarkable aptitude and giving the best of satisfaction; and as they are nearly all young men this evinces on their part not only learning in the law but a studious disposition which alone can keep the jurist abreast of his work.

The outlook as a whole is most encouraging. Not only is the political mechanism working with but few jars, but constant additions to our material resources are promising abundantly to meet all the added expense which our new estate has placed upon us, and considerably more than that. At the same time if the law-

makers would but occasionally permit their minds to rest upon the fact that the ninety days time granted them by the Constitution was intended merely as a limitation, not at all as the definition of the term, it would be much more satisfactory, especially in view of the important fact that two-thirds of the period is gone.

MAYORS VS. CITY COUNCILS.

As there is now considerable discussion among legislators regarding the relative powers that should be held by mayors, city councils and commissioners to administer affairs in different municipal departments, it might not be amiss to quote what a high authority on political science and social economics—George Gunton, editor of Gunton's Magazine—has to say of a proposition in the state of New York to enact a law authorizing the mayors of cities to appoint and remove the heads of executive departments, and have direct supervisory powers over the police. It is specially noted by Mr. Gunton that the proposed law does not go to the extreme of making mayors members of city councils or presiding officers thereof, but excludes them therefrom; yet of the other proposition he says:

The chief intent of this portion of the proposed law seems to be to belittle and emasculate the common council, and to make of each mayor a petty autocrat, responsible to no one—a policy it may be remarked exactly opposite to that of all English city governments, and which seems to imply that in America a city council must, of necessity, be a nuisance.

The discussion of the subject is continued at length, and closes with a series of questions, of which the following have particular interest because of their application to the subject generally throughout the country:

There are some who would like to know whether there is any virtue in the system so prevalent in England of creating the heads of departments by election out of members of the city council, somewhat as committees of Congress are chosen. Can Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Bradford, all have their city legislatures, while cities here must choose between being governed in some matters by an elective czar and in all others by appointed satraps? Are we incapable of having a city legislature in which all the executive chiefs of the city government shall sit as members, so that each can explain, in advance of its adoption, how any legislation proposed by the others will affect his department?

In the modern American system of converting the city council into a dummy, without power, or utility, or honor, and governing the city by a bureaucratic system like that of Germany or Russia, divorced from any responsibility to a deliberative body, a supremely perfect thing? Does it work well, as illustrated in the costliness and corruption of American city governments since it has come into vogue?

Is it a true rescue from the evils of city government to erect the mayor into a

czar, while allowing the council to collapse into a putrid reminiscence?

Yet the State House of Representatives passed a bill Wednesday, making the mayor in first class cities a member of the council and presiding officer thereof, with the power of voting and and of afterwards using the veto, in addition to powers already possessed by that official.

SALARIES OF COUNTY OFFICIALS.

The question of salaries of county officers is causing considerable discussion among members of the Legislature, with no immediate prospect that a settlement will be reached on present lines and within Constitutional restrictions. In its efforts to fix amounts to be paid to county employees the committee classified the counties, of which there are twenty-seven in the State, into fifteen classes, which would seem to be sufficient for all purposes that could be reached by such a system. Yet this did not prove satisfactory, as it was claimed that by this plan some counties which by the classification rule, whether on population or property valuation, were placed in a stated class would not be able to pay the salary which would be proper in another county in the same rank. As to the various claims on this point, the News does not propose to question their accuracy, believing, as we do, that the issues are well taken, in most cases at least; but we feel that a suggestion on the subject may be of use in indicating a way out of the dilemma.

The Constitution provides that the officers referred to shall be paid fixed and definite salaries. It does not indicate whether the amounts shall be fixed by the Legislature, or by any board, county commissioners or otherwise, that the Legislature may provide. It is left to the legislative body of the State to determine what the procedure shall be; but its effect is definitely stated. Under this provision, the lawmakers may authorize county commissioners to name the amounts, provided these are not placed on a sliding scale which would eliminate the definite feature. A plan giving the county commissioners such power would have to restrict them so salaries could not be changed except within certain limits.

For the Legislature, however, to fix the salaries in certain counties and not in others would be a manifestly unfair discrimination in exercising legislative control. As a matter of governmental principle, the county commissioners of Salt Lake have as much claim to the privilege of fixing salaries of county officers as have those of Garfield; and the law should make no distinction in this regard unless it is an absolute necessity, which does not appear to be the case in this instance.

We do not forget that the proposed salary measure provides that the State shall pay one-half the salaries of certain county officers, and that the State Legislature cannot feel that it is the proper thing for county commissioners to regulate the expenditure of State funds. With this feature eliminated, the subject might be left to the counties, but certainly not otherwise. Its retention, however, seems to