OUTLINE FOR WORK IN MUNICIPAL COUNCILS
OUTLINE FOR WORK

IN

MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

Printed by the Challenge Press Pty. Ltd.,
For the Australian Communist Party, 9th Floor, Elizabeth Street,
Melbourne, C.1

Publishers;
INTERNATIONAL BOOK SHOP Pty. Ltd.,
180 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, C.1
FOREWORD.

Municipal Councils cover a field in which it is possible to develop the widest activity. In this field are the most elementary needs of the people, the demands and claims of the widest non-controversial character. As such, the means of organising large numbers of people are to be found in this realm. In municipal work the Party can find the key to unity in the struggle for the realisation of Teheran and Yelta.

Local Government is not difficult, nor does it depend on great technical knowledge. As in all other mass work, success in local government depends on quality of work amongst the people, leadership given and gains made.

The Councils are a fertile field for mass political development. The role of the Councils will grow, their place in government will expand, their importance to the people as a whole will develop immeasurably. Further, the Councils, which lie at the base of government, are the most stable stepping stones to parliamentary leadership. They can be made the mass rallying ground for great national movements towards the achievement of Victory, Peace, Security and the objectives of the Programme of the Australian Communist Party.

These are some of the reasons why the importance of work in the Councils is so strongly urged.

The call is, therefore, to every Party organ and to every comrade to go seriously into the relationship of the Party to the local Council in every area, to find the way to leadership of the people's local needs, and to identify our Party and our Party comrades with the most progressive, the most urgent, demands in the municipalities and the shires.

This pamphlet should give to our party organs and prospective candidates a ready survey of the political aspects of local government, a simple statement of those things that are essential for an intending candidate to know, and in Part II., a brief outline of most aspects of the whole field of local government as provided in the Local Government and other Acts.
Outline for Work in Municipal Councils

PART I.

POLITICS AND THE COUNCILS.

Politics in local government is just as important a factor as in any other field of government. However, due to the domination of the property owners and the fact that the greater number of the people have not been organised effectively in their own interest, the political aspect is not always as apparent as elsewhere.

There are many civic minded councillors or would-be councillors who do not believe they are attached to a Party. Such people very often are against “party politics” in a council; they really believe that they are independent. In effect, they are influenced by personalities, and, in most cases, come under the influence of the conservatives. They should be distinguished from those known to be directly connected with the conservative political parties. Despite the presence of a number of such people, the political line-up is ultimately very much the same as in Federal and State politics.

Generally speaking, non-Labor candidates term themselves Progressives. This, however, is a broad term. It may be used for a straight out conservative candidate; the candidate may be, on the other hand, an independent or a candidate sponsored by a genuine Progress Association. This would apply mainly in a growing area which lacks the facilities of older areas, and an agitation is necessary to gain such facilities. An alternative term used is that of Ratepayers candidates.

Labor Party candidates in most cases stand with the direct Labor label. Their policy, too, is similar to that of their Federal and State counterpart. Labor candidates generally press forward the interests of
"growing industry." This means more workers, more unionists, a strengthening of their own position. Labor councillors often, particularly if in the minority, push forward some democratic reforms such as extension of franchise. This, too, means a strengthening of their own position.

There are ample opportunities for working in unity with Labor Party branches, members and candidates. Such opportunities as this must never be overlooked, and in most cases this method will be found preferable to running a full Party team.

It is desirable at all times that our candidates should identify themselves with the Party organisation. If this is not practicable, broader work should not be avoided. The Party will, in any case, find the means for active assistance of the candidate. This is rendered possible by the fact that the political line-up is not as clearly defined in the councils as it is in the State or the Federal spheres. Further, we must see these conditions objectively and work within them in the most effective manner we can devise. We must develop our politics on the basis of local issues, and on this basis, win the people to an understanding of our Party and the acceptance of our leadership.

THE PART THE PARTY CAN PLAY.

Something has already been said of the part the Party must play in the affairs of the councils, and where Party candidates can be found, the role of the Party becomes obvious. Candidates, however, are not found growing on trees ready to be plucked and placed at the council table. It is the duty of the Party, therefore, to give the most serious attention to the local government of its area, to the possibilities of campaigns around local issues, and to developing progressive workers in local affairs.

Interest in local affairs means more than just participating in matters of a political character. It means participation in the cultural, social and sporting life of the people. At this moment with an intense interest by the people in such activities, the Party branches must
take their rightful place as leaders of culture. In the municipality, Party candidates must seriously take a leading part in such affairs.

In matters of patriotic appeals, mayoral activities, the Party should always be represented—councils' select committees are generally taken from people who are most prominent in these activities.

Then there is the local football or cricket club. These sports are the Saturday afternoon pleasure of the average man. Those active in the club have prestige in the eyes of the people. John Curtin began in the Brunswick Football Club. There are hundreds of councillors whose influence dates from their prominence in football clubs, and football and cricket are to boom in the future as never before.

By playing their part in these activities, Party members and progressive persons will be raised to popularity and public regard, and their election to the council will follow on the type of leadership they provide. This fact emphasises the enormous importance of every locality Branch having its own local programme and basing its activity on winning the local citizens to support and to co-operate with the Party in realising this programme.

In doing this, Party branches must take the greatest care to avoid narrowness, and must strive at all times to bring into activity wider strata of local residents and their organisations.

The Party branch has the task of drawing up a programme for work in the municipal field. But this must be regarded as a part only of the whole of the Party's work in the locality. While municipal activity cannot proceed without regard to the wider needs of the people, so it is also essential to regard work associated with the local council as part of the whole pattern of work in the localities.

It may be said that, in addition to its activities around specific issues, the Party's more important tasks are those of planning and co-ordination in the widest possible spheres of local activity.
THE PARTY PROGRAMME.

The importance of a good programme for the Party's activities in municipal affairs cannot be overstressed. The programme should meet the real demands of the people and the immediate points should be based on the most urgently felt local needs. Care should be taken to see that the programme includes only practicable objectives. At the same time, any attempt by conservatives or obstructive persons to sidetrack the Party's demands by the raising of purely technical points must be resisted. This can be avoided if the Party, in the initial stages, obtains competent advice on the issue in which it is involved. It is thus able to meet the situation if such technical points are pushed into the foreground.

The programme should always be regarded as a two-part fighting platform. The first part should be designed to meet immediate needs; the second should state long-term objectives. It should always be kept in mind that the government may be induced to assist a council financially with major works. The programme should, therefore:

(a) Meet the immediate and urgent demands of the people.

(b) Include also long-term objectives.

(c) Be practical and concrete in form.

THE CANDIDATE.

It has already been noted that the candidate should be associated with local activities, and that the Party should play its part in bringing prospective candidates under public notice. Once again attention must be drawn to Comrade Fred Paterson's experience, and to that of other Communists who have entered the councils. This is not to say that candidature should be considered only as the concluding act of a lifetime of local activity. Every case must be considered on its merits, and the candidate chosen both on his past work and on the part he will play in putting the Party's programme into action.
While it is obvious that it is best for the Party to sponsor the candidature of a Party member, if a Party member is not in sight, support may be given to other candidates who are prepared to work for progressive objectives.

THE CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE AND THE CAMPAIGN

The Campaign Committee should be set up early in the campaign. Voting is not compulsory (except in a limited number of municipalities) and elections are won mainly on personal contact; the most efficient campaign in most cases wins. A Campaign Committee of at least 8 people should be organised. The Committee should be broadly organised on as wide a basis as possible.

The Party programme and the personal history of the candidate should be printed. Special attention should be paid to the need to vote, and throughout the whole of the campaign the voters, particularly working class, should have the need for them to vote continually emphasised.

As soon as the printed material is ready, a map of the whole of the area, or ward, or riding, concerned, and the State and municipal rolls should be procured, the latter from the council, and the ward divided and canvassed. In local government elections the canvassing is most important.

The visit of the canvasser is often the first intimation the voter gets of the election. A careful note of the reception should be kept. A second canvass with HOW TO VOTE cards should be conducted, and finally the candidate should visit the electors, making a personal appeal.

The personal touch is most important. The candidate should be introduced to all sympathetic people. Hall meetings, street and factory-gate meetings, cottage meetings, should all be used where practicable.

A campaign headquarters should be established and a well-known person appointed as Director. Finance should be raised by the usual methods of collections, donations, social functions, etc.
Publicity is also of great importance. There should be continual press advertising, and all meetings should be widely advertised in the press and by means of handbills, etc. The programme should be given constant prominence, and should appear in at least two press issues before the election. The programme and instructions on HOW TO VOTE should also be published in the press. The candidate should write frequently to the papers and issue well-composed public statements. All publicity material should be stylishly produced.

The Campaign Committee must explore every means for gaining the support of other local bodies.

ELECTIONS.

Elections to municipal councils take place annually. The polling day is the fourth Thursday or the following Saturday, in August, as the Council determines. The term of office as councillor is for a period of three years; each year, one third of the councillors come up for re-election.

Voting is by attendance at polling places. Postal votes can be obtained by application to the Returning Officer before the election if the elector cannot attend the polling booth. This is most important in shires, where because of distance and paucity of voting facilities, postal voting is very heavy. The hours of voting vary according to the status of the municipality. In cities and towns, voting takes place between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

WHO CAN STAND?

The Local Government Act 1928 reads:

(1) The following persons shall be qualified to hold the office of Councillors in any municipality:

1. Every person liable to be rated in respect of property in the municipal district whether consisting of one or more tenements of the rateable value of Twenty pounds at the least.

Note—

1. Such people must be on the rolls at least 3 months before the day for nominations.
2. Every owner of property of the above value.
3. Where property is in the occupation of a tenant, the tenant is the only person “liable to be rated.” One does not have to be the actual owner.
4. Rateable value generally equivalent to 5 per cent. of the actual sale value. The value shown in the Council rate book is usually the figure, but is open to challenge.
5. No one employed by or receiving remuneration from a Council is eligible to stand.
6. If property is of rateable value of £40 and jointly in the name of husband and wife—either or both are eligible to stand or vote.

NOMINATIONS.
Candidates must obtain from the Returning Officer nomination forms which must be signed by the candidate himself and 10 citizens who are on the roll as ratepayers. A roll should be obtained. It is advisable to have more than 10 names in case any are struck out as ineligible. This form must then be lodged with the Returning Officer, together with a deposit of £10, some day or time before 4 p.m. on nomination day. (The Returning Officer gives notice of elections by advertisement in a local or daily paper between the 22nd and 15th day (inclusive) before any election. He must fix the Nomination Day between the 5th and 7th day (inclusive) after date of advertisement.)

WHO CAN VOTE?
Councillors are elected by ratepayers. These are those who over the age of 21, are liable to be rated in respect of any property within the area of which all sums payable in respect of any rates made three months or more before such day have been paid shall be entitled to be enrolled in that year. There is multiple voting. In a city, town or borough, if such a property is rated on a value less than £50 there shall be one vote, £50-£100 two votes, over £100 3 votes. In a shire, under £25 one vote, £25-£75 two votes, £75 and over three votes. Where the rateable value is under £5 and no house is on the property, there shall be no vote. The occupier of the house is entitled to be enrolled as the voter, and if this is so, the owner cannot vote.
POLLING DAY.

The activities of the Campaign Committee and the candidate himself on polling day can make a decisive difference in local government elections. Where voting is voluntary, the job will continue to be one of getting the voter to the booth. This is aided by the setting up of a "Tick Board." This can be made by pasting on boards the complete rolls. One person from each booth should, at set periods, report the names of those who have voted. These can be obtained from the scrutineers. Such names should be ticked off on the Board. By these means, the actual people who have not voted are seen at a glance, and steps can be taken to get them to the booth.

Cars should be used where circumstances permit.

At the polling places, the most strategic positions should be secured early, and a good display of posters set up, and the tables plentifully manned. Great courtesy should be shown by workers at the tables, and no attempt should be made to force our cards or our candidates crudely on the electors. It will frequently be possible during polling day to gather future workers and campaign committee members.

At Campaign Headquarters a result board should be set up, and after the poll, as results come through, the headquarters should be made the centre for results for the whole area.

Finally, it must be stressed again that the key to effective activity on polling day is personal contact, and ensuring that our supporters and sympathisers really get to the booth to cast their votes.

THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE.

When the efforts of the candidate, the Party and the supporters who have assisted, have resulted in success on polling day, a new phase of the candidate's work begins. Further, the Party cannot regard its job as completed. The candidate must set about implementing the Programme on which he has been elected; he must inform himself as fully as possible of the functions and organisation of the Council. The Party must continue
its work and support for the newly-elected alderman or councillor. He must be drawn into ever widening contact with the people of the area.

Once elected, the Communist alderman or councillor will find many progressive trends within the Council and amongst the people. He will also discover progressive members who can be won to the Party and to the anti-fascist cause. Indeed, there is extremely wide scope for progressive activity. If, on the other hand, he should encounter narrowness and resistance to progressive campaigns, he will know that his greatest strength is in the mass support by which he was elected. He will return constantly to that source.

PART 2.

HISTORY OF THE COUNCILS.

IN VICTORIA, the first municipal authority was established by the Corporation Act of 1843, which established the corporations of Melbourne and Geelong. Outside of these towns, road or bridge making were practically the only functions required of local authority. These tasks were performed by a Colonial Roads and Bridges Committee.

After the gold rush of 1851-54 there was such a concentration of people in certain areas that a need of local authority was felt. In 1855 the first Local Government Act was passed. This Act, modified in 1874, and with several minor amendments since, remains in force to-day.

MUNICIPAL STRUCTURE.

There are four types of municipalities—cities, towns, boroughs and shires. The only real difference between them is the respective wealth of the municipality. A rating value of £20,000 determines a city; £10,000 a town; an area of not less than 9 square miles with a rateable property of £300, a population of 500, may be proclaimed a borough; while a larger defined area of less than the above valuations proclaimed a shire. In the case of shires, the divided areas are termed ridings. There are 34 cities, 5 towns, 20 boroughs, and 138 shires. In cities, towns and boroughs, the presiding officer is called a Mayor; in shires, a President.
Municipal councils are elected by ratepayers. The members sit either for the council as a whole, or for a ward (i.e., part of the municipality). Wards are divided on basis of equal number of electors. Under the Local Government Act the Council itself can decide the distribution of the wards. In these cases, the Mayor is elected from the Council after each election. Custom determines that the Mayor shall hold office only 12 months, and that each ward takes turn in electing Mayor, generally the councillor in the middle of his term.

Councillors are elected every 3 years. There are 3 councillors for each ward, so that only one-third of the councillors come out each year. This practice is also followed in councils elected as a whole.

COUNCIL MEETINGS.

Council meetings are presided over by the Mayor, or in the case of a Shire, by the President. He has a deliberative vote, and in the event of a tie in voting, the casting vote. The Council must meet regularly, but it can itself decide the time and place of the meeting. It can meet in the afternoon if it so desires, and need not necessarily meet in the municipal chambers.

A majority of councillors constitutes a quorum.

Council business is defined under the Local Government Act under four headings:—

1. Superintending the work of officers of the council.
2. Enquiry into work of contractors or employees.
3. Enquiry into state or progress of works.
4. Directing all activities carried out under the Act.

All Council meetings are open to the public unless the council thinks it necessary to exclude "strangers." It does this by motion termed "going into committee."

Councillors are free to vote on all questions, save those in which they have a pecuniary interest. This should be noted and watched. No Councillor can vote for the giving of a contract to a company in which he is a shareholder. There is an exception. If a company has more than 20 shareholders and the councillor's vote is deemed necessary in the "public interest," the Governor-in-Council can request him to vote. (Governor-in-Council is virtually the State Cabinet with the Governor presiding.)
Motions passed by the Council can be rescinded just as in the usual standing orders of public bodies, by the giving of notice of motion. If, however, a motion is rescinded at a meeting subsequent to the carrying of motion, and there are not as many councillors present at the second meeting as at the first, the majority must be enough to be a majority of the whole council. Thus, if on June 1st, a motion is carried by 8 to 1, and at the meeting where the recission is considered there are only 8 of 12 councillors present, there must be 7 to 1 in favour of the recission.

STANDING COMMITTEES.

Councils model their work on Parliaments. Councillors, however, relatively do more executive work than parliamentarians. Councillors are all on standing committees; building, parks, public works, finance, etc. A council meeting takes place weekly. One night is open debate. The next night is "Committee Night." On this night, it discusses the committee reports. These committees deal with their respective fields. In "Open Night" there are degrees of fierce debates. The councillors, however do not sit as "Parties" as in Parliament. Councillors sit around a table. A Labor councillor may be sandwiched in between two Liberal councillors; no parties are recognised. Committee reports are discussed in open council.

PRESS AND THE PUBLIC

Every meeting of a council is open to both the press and the public and accommodation must be provided. The press must be provided with a copy of the business paper and must be given access to correspondence and reports, unless the council decides by resolution to withhold same on the grounds that litigation is threatened or pending. A person may be removed by order of the chairman if he interrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting.

MAYOR OR PRESIDENT AND DEPUTIES

Each city, town or borough has a mayor and each Shire Council a president. The mayor or president is elected by members each year after the council elections. If an election is not held as required, the Governor may
appoint a mayor or president. The mayor or president's office commences on the day of his election. The mayor or president must preside at every meeting at which he is present. He must give effect to any duty imposed on him by the Act, and to any resolution of the Council. He may carry on the regular services of the area, direct the servants of the council, suspend servants, pay wages and salaries, and authorise works not exceeding £10 unless the council fixes a higher amount. A deputy mayor or president may be elected for a year or for a shorter period, and while the mayor is absent or ill has all the powers and duties of the mayor.

The mayor or president fills a most important role. In effect, he is responsible for the administration of the council.

ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES.

Members of a council are not paid — their work is strictly honorary. Members may, however, be paid the cost of travelling to and from council meetings and certain other travelling expenses.

In addition to the foregoing, the mayor or president may be voted an allowance to meet the expenses of his office. This allowance is almost invariably made and varies in different councils. No accounting of the expenditure of this allowance is required. Further, the question of the allowance must be determined prior to the election of Mayor or President.

POLLS.

Councils are, or may be required to take polls for a number of purposes, such as alterations to areas, loans, altered representation, etc. A poll may also be taken on any matter within the council's powers, but if the council is not compelled by law to take a poll on a matter, and such poll does take place, it need not abide by the decision of the poll.

COUNCIL OFFICIALS.

As distinct from Parliament, council executive officials are "permanent". These vary according to municipality. Generally they consist of Town Clerk, Rate
Collector, Surveyor, Building Inspector, and Health Inspector. They do not sit as an executive. Each, however, functions on a council sub-committee. As such they are influential, and to a large extent “run” the council. This particularly applies to the Town Clerk. He is the “legal expert”, he knows the custom of council, he knows the Local Government Act. It is he who “runs” the Mayor. For years a Collingwood Town Clerk bossed the Mayors. When, in 1936, the council decided to allow “Till the Day I Die” to be played, he refused to allow the hall to be let. He called in the police. The hall was kept closed. He got away with this.

FINANCE.

Council finance is divided into: (1) Revenue; (2) Loans.

Revenue is defined under 4 headings: (1) Rates, (2) Tolls, (3) Parliamentary Grants, (4) Income other than Loans. All moneys thus received are placed in a municipal fund. This is used to pay expenses. All land within the municipal boundary, save government land, municipal land, schools, churches, and charity institutions, is rated. Rates, however, are limited. On nett value, the maximum is 3/- in the £1, the minimum is 6d. The Council fixes the rate. If it does not reach 3/-, the council may levy what is termed an “extra rate” for a specially defined purpose and for a special time. Special rates for specified areas can be fixed, providing permission is gained from the Governor-in-Council.

Councils can borrow for either permanent works and undertakings, or to liquidate old debts of the municipality. This is termed borrowing on the credit of the municipality. This is limited to a total of 10 times the average revenue for 3 years. If, for example, the revenue averages £20,000 yearly, the limits of the council’s borrowing are set at a total of £200,000. Extended powers are, however, provided for. By mortgage or by issue of debentures, the Council can borrow up to 5 times on “the security of its revenue.” This can be challenged. Twenty persons by depositing £20 can demand a poll on this extended borrowing. The Council can arrange temporary overdrafts to the extent of their deposit receipts. Box
Hill could loan money to Camberwell to construct a road leading through Camberwell to Box Hill. Councillors are personally responsible for all excess borrowing.

The Supreme Court can appoint a receiver if the council fails to meet its financial obligations. Any ratepayer can be present at the auditing of council accounts.

POWERS.

The Federal Government concerns itself with national questions, such as defence, finance, overseas trade; the State Government concerns itself with administrative labor questions, social services, development, and so on. The Municipal Government is concerned mainly with the supervision of buildings, roads, parks and public health. These are important questions. Further, the municipality is concerned with the administration of state and national questions. In the days of unemployment, the sustenance act was largely administered by the municipalities. Today, such activities connected with the war effort—drives for scrap and waste paper, loans, Red Cross, are wholly or in part directed by the council. It is through the council (indirectly) that Justices of the Peace are appointed. Most councillors automatically became J.P's. As such, they sit on the bench and largely operate the State. This, too, gives a connection with the police apparatus.

Councils in regulating buildings, have much power. A Council can determine a "factory" or "residential" area, and can hinder the development of an industry.

BY-LAWS.

Council has wide powers of enacting by-laws or regulations. These are defined as follows:

- Regulating of water supply.
- Conducting of public meetings of ratepayers.
- Protection of municipal property and the regulation of all meetings and gatherings held therein.
- Prevention and extinguishing of fires.
- Removal of buildings and the fixing of compensating payment to owners of such buildings.
- Establishment and regulation of markets.
Suppression of public nuisances.
Regulation of sewerage and drainage.
Regulation of lighting.
Control of parks and public gardens.
Preservation of public decency.
Protection of public health.
Fixing of gratuities (i.e., pensions) on worthy employees or their relatives.
Prohibition of quarrying (if quarry opened after 1911).
Regulation of traffic and processions.
Regulation of fencing.
Regulations and prohibiting of writing, painting or advertising on footpaths, roads, or municipal property.
Prohibiting or regulation of cattle grazing.
Regulating or prohibiting traffic, destructive to roads or property, and obnoxious noises arising from same.
Regulating of merry-go-rounds, shooting galleries, and other such forms of entertainment.
Fixing terms and conditions of cabmen’s shelters and conveniences.
Destruction of rats and vermin.
General good of municipality.

After by-laws are enacted, copies of such by-laws are placed in the council office for inspection. They are then published.

Councils are empowered to make by-laws in cooperation with neighbouring councils. By-laws or regulations can be either limited in time or operative until rescinded. In the event of a new municipality being formed from a portion of the old municipality, all the old by-laws remain until repealed. By-laws can be repealed either by council or by Governor-in-Council.

CONTROL OVER HAWKERS.

Besides the power to enact the above by-laws, Councils have wide supervisory powers over domestic matters. It has special powers over hawkers or street traders. It can regulate the space to be used, the hours of trading, fix the charges, the stands, the allocation of same, and in the event of the use of barrows, the type to be used
and the charges for such stands. It has the power to see that the conditions of the Factories Act are observed by such traders, and that they are prohibited from using children as assistants.

HOUSING.

A council can play a big part in housing schemes and supervising the housing conditions of the people. It has power not only to define the residential and industrial areas within its borders, but it can also define the type of industry. It can pull down or remove buildings through by-laws. It can fix its own building regulations. These, of course, vary in each municipality. A building inspector generally supervises this work.

Council can also embark on housing schemes. It can purchase land, borrow money, and build houses, providing the value of each does not exceed £950. It can sell or let such houses under usual conditions, and has power to make allowances for "hardship."

It can provide public baths, reclaim land, embark on underground sewerage, or remove obstacles to drainage. It can remove noxious trade from the locality and arrange for compensation to the owner. It can carry out improvements for private owners, and arrange contracts for repayment on terms.

In the sphere of town planning and housing, the scope of the work of local councils, although limited in effectiveness by the lack of overall planning for regions, is nevertheless important. The local council is responsible for the presence or absence of a town plan. It can zone the area into residential and industrial sites, compulsorily demolish and replan congested or sub-standard areas, set land aside for recreational purposes, and compulsorily acquire land for communal uses. It controls the layout and width of streets, and the size of building allotments. If these powers are used, not with the purpose of squeezing the utmost profit out of a given area of land, but with the emphasis on the needs of the community, we should have towns of quite a different character in the State. In their recent book "We Must Go On," Barnett, Burt and Heath show with sordid effectiveness the results of using our land without a com-
munity plan. "One of the fundamental needs in the rebuilding and development of our towns," they state, "is the provision of adequate areas of open space for recreational purposes. In every municipality there should be one acre of public open space for outdoor recreation provided for every 100 of population. Greater Melbourne municipalities have less than one-sixth of this amount." In the developing outer municipalities this standard can still be provided. In the inner suburbs the position can be improved by the reclamation of over-crowded and sub-standard areas.

It would be difficult to find one municipal housing scheme in the whole State of Victoria. Yet all local councils, including those of Melbourne and Geelong, have power to build houses, both for their own employees and for other "eligible persons." An "eligible person" is one who does not own a dwelling house and whose income is not more than £400 a year. The houses may be leased or bought on terms. The cost must not exceed £850 for weatherboard, and £950 for brick or stone, including land. These powers were given to councils about 25 years ago when building costs were lower than they are
now, and it may be necessary to raise these cost limits if councils are to undertake post-war building. Rents shall take into account interest and depreciation, but even on this basis, could be fixed much lower than those prevailing for privately-owned houses, as the rate of interest looked for would not be so high and the repayment of capital costs unnecessary.

To finance such housing schemes, the council is empowered under the Act to borrow up to £100,000 in excess of ten times the average annual income of the municipality for the three preceding years (which is the limit placed on borrowing for all other purposes) and may, if necessary, increase rates by 6d. in the £1 above the ordinary limit of 3/- in the £1. Land may be bought or compulsorily acquired for municipal housing schemes.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC.

Councils have wide power on traffic. It can take over private land by compulsory purchase for the purpose of improving the municipality. By aid of the Governor-in-Council, it can divert a road and give the owner the old road or cash for compensation. It must substitute new fences where old ones have been removed. It can widen roads. It can, in the case of a shire, allow the making of private roads.
It can close roads or bridges unsafe for traffic. This can be upset by Governor-in-Council. It can proceed against persons who damage roads by the use of heavy vehicles. It can determine the weight to pass over a bridge; it can impound stray cattle, and determine vehicle parks. It can plant trees or erect monuments and remove same if it desires. It can also force private individuals to remove obstacles or trees that effect the public roads. When estates are being sub-divided, its approval must be secured for new streets.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

Municipalities are given greater powers over improvements in people's way of life. A council can start either kindergartens, creches, or community centres. It has power to provide free dental treatment for children up to 6 years of age, and to give financial assistance to established centres which are not run for private profit. A few municipalities have already made use of these powers, but many more could use them with advantage, and where aid exists, it needs to be greatly extended.

It has power to contribute for the upkeep and care of hospitals for indigent people only. It can, however, contribute to Public Hospitals. It has no power to set up a general or intermediate hospital of its own.

Councils may also aid bush nursing centres and give financial assistance to schools in the area, including the provision of scholarships to secondary schools.

It can run child welfare centres. The Government pays half the salary of sisters employed. It has power to provide preventive medicines, such as immunisation against diphtheria.

Councils are collectively responsible for the T.B. sanatorium at Greenvale, and the Infectious Diseases Hospital.

Councils have no power over the health of school children. This is done here by the Education Department. The Municipal Health Office is responsible for housing conditions, nuisances, cleanliness, noxious trades, etc.; council has no power to establish clinics for antenatal care or for midwives.
COMMUNITY CENTRES.

Councils have played a limited part in providing recreational facilities, but their powers in this direction are extensive, and include the power to build and maintain baths, libraries, museums, gymnasiums and gardens, and to grant assistance to non-council recreational facilities which are not run for private profit. These represent the complete powers for community centres. In its second report, the Commonwealth Housing Commission urges State assistance in the provision of facilities for communal development, but emphasises that "the motive force and the responsibility for organisation must rest with the people of the locality concerned."

BUSH FIRE PREVENTION.

Local councils can also play a part in fire prevention, by providing supplies of water for use in the case of fire, and financially assisting bodies formed for preventing and extinguishing fires.

PUBLIC UTILITIES.

Municipal enterprises possibly include the manufacture and supply of ice in areas where it can be established that reasonable supplies do not exist, the installation of septic tank systems, the ownership and control of markets and such public utilities as gas and electricity. The council may also assist the State railways to extend lines in areas where the council is of the opinion that reasonable travelling facilities do not exist.

AUSTRALIAN PREFERENCE.

Council can contract for the supply of goods to itself. In its purchases, it shall give preference to Australian-made goods, and in the event of such goods not being available, it shall attempt to purchase goods made in the United Kingdom. It has also the power to pay wages to employees of defaulting contractors.
CONCLUSION.

An examination of the foregoing pages should be enough to convince anyone of the wide scope of municipal work. A stressing of its importance is unnecessary.

It should now be clear that municipal work covers those things which go to make up our daily life; these things, little in themselves, yet affecting us so acutely that they assume a level of great importance. A smelly tip, a bad drain, not only forces itself on us, but also on those who live near us. Our next door neighbour may be reactionary. He may think that workers' wages are too high, that high wages may mean national disaster. Nevertheless, on the matter of the tip or the drain he will heartily agree with us. And maybe it will open the way for him to agree with us on other questions.

Dozens of incidents can be quoted where people of the most varying political outlooks have come solidly together on local questions. Communists should not lose the opportunity to get together with these people.

It is not enough to study this pamphlet. It covers much too broad a field to be applied piecemeal to any specific municipality. It serves only as a guide. Communists can use it only as a basis of approach. There must be no cut and dried approach; no preconceived plans of what the people should want. Rather, the history and tradition of the municipality should be studied; a careful stock taken of its public organisations; its charity and council standing committees; the calibre and character of the permanent officers. With these factors taken into consideration, an examination of the real existing problems linked with a study of this book should produce a line of march for Communists which will lead to successful work in local politics, and pave the way for bigger successes elsewhere.