

AN ABSTRACT OF  
A REPORT ON A PROPOSAL  
for  
A REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING IN DANBURY, CONNECTICUT

A THESIS  
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by  
Jane McKenney  
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On October 23, 1958, the Selectmen of the Town of Danbury appointed a Commission of fifteen persons to study the possibility of Representative Town Meeting for the Town of Danbury. If the appointed group decided that R.T.M. would be more desirable than the present town meeting form of government, they were to propose a Charter for R.T.M. to the voters of Danbury within a year's time. This was the action taken by the Commission after many months of study. Although the Commission has kept records of its work, an inclusive summary of progress is not available.

The basis upon which the Commission chose to favor the R.T.M. form of government was limited to an investigation of towns in Connecticut that had similar problems of growth and expansion. The Commission concluded that the Representative Town Meeting, while it may not be the final or only solution to the problems of local government, it is a step that other communities have taken with some degree of success, and one that would improve the unwieldy situation in Danbury.

Danbury's town meetings date as far back as 1684, when the first settlers of the "Borough", as the town was then called, recognized the need for law and order in the community, and assembled to establish the governmental procedures. The desire for man to have a voice in directing himself, to be recognized as an individual, and to

maintain and foster his rights, is deeply ingrained in the heritage of our citizens, even though, not, at all times, exercise their rights. There can be no question of the inspiration of the philosophy behind the institution of the town meeting. For many years it satisfactorily provided the vehicle through which the problems of the community were solved.

Today, however, there is a total population of 42,500 persons in the Town of Danbury. It is the last town of its size to retain the old town meeting. There are approximately 20,000 eligible voters. The town meeting continues to function as it did when the Charter of 1889 was adopted; at that time there were less than 9,000 voters. The Town Planning Commission has predicted that by 1975, Danbury's population figure will be 64,000. This suggests a voting body of at least 30,000. It is difficult to visualize the continued use of the town meeting with such vast numbers of people.

The present R.T.M. Commission in Danbury feels that an elected representative group interested in the whole community, would recognize and appreciate the various problems of town and city government, and see them from all angles.

If the Charter Commission succeeds in its work, and the plan is accepted by the voters, it means that the Town of Danbury will have a representative group, elected by the voters as its administrative body.