

Local Officials Strengthening Urged

Texas Municipal League President Jamie Clements last week urged the Texas Constitutional Revision Commission to favor strengthening the constitutional status of local governments. In a letter to Commission Chairman Robert W. Calvert, Temple Mayor Clements noted Texas' long and successful tradition of municipal home rule.

Clements stated: "It is generally accepted that local government, because of its closeness to the people, is uniquely well qualified to respond to the special needs of our state's urban residents. Our system of municipal home rule has consistently benefitted all of the people in the 60 years since its adoption, and city of-

ficials throughout Texas feel very strongly that the principle of local self-government must be retained in any proposed rewrite of the constitution."

Clements said that the Board of Directors of the Texas Municipal League recently submitted a formal policy statement to the Constitutional Revision Commission. The League's statement suggests more than 20 specific changes in the present constitution; however, Clements summarized the cities' priority recommendations to include:

(1) The adoption of a constitutional provision allowing the Texas Legislature to establish limitations on municipal indebtedness. City taxpayers are now

forced to pay more than \$30 million annually in unnecessary municipal bond interest charges as a result of the outmoded municipal debt limitations built into Texas' present constitution.

(2) The adoption of a constitutional provision limiting the circumstances under which the Texas Legislature may impose new responsibilities on local governments without simultaneously providing financial resources to pay the cost of those burdens. The state has resisted attempts by the federal government to establish new obligations for state government without providing federal funds to support their cost; cities likewise believe that the state should assume the cost of new programs it requires local governments to undertake.

(3) The adoption of a constitutional provision allowing home rule cities to levy any taxes not prohibited by general law or local home rule charters. This proviso would simply put the responsi-

bility for controlling local taxes back in the hands of the local citizens.


(4) Amendment of the "home rule" section in Article 11 of the constitution to permit municipalities of 1500 or greater population to adopt home rule charters. This authority is presently limited to cities of 5000 or greater. Lowering the minimum population standard would extend the advantages of home rule status to citizens presently denied the opportunity to decide what kind of local government they wish to have.

(5) The adoption of a provision which reserves to local governments all powers not delegated by the constitution of the state. This proviso would parallel the purpose of the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which provides that "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited to it by the states, are reserved to the states respectively."

Other changes recommended in

the Texas Municipal League's policy statement are designed to consolidate and simplify several present constitutional provisions on related subjects, to delete provisions of no further practical value since their adoption in 1876, and to unshackle local governments from constitutional restrictions which might better be written into the general statutes of the state.

Clements observed that the Texas Municipal League was among the first of the statewide organizations to endorse constitutional revision in 1972, and restated the pledge of city officials to work with the Commission and with the Texas Legislature in developing a proposed constitution to meet the needs of all people and all levels of government in Texas. "We are gifted with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Clements concluded, "and we must make the best of a chance which may not again materialize for another hundred years."



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Engineering Students Help Solve Real World Problems

Undergraduate students in engineering are being given exposure to the real world of engineering practices through a program offered by the Mechanics and Materials Research Center.

The center, a division of the Texas Engineering Experiment Station, offers research projects to qualified undergraduate students that make use of their engineering skills in solving real problems.

One such project, a research grant from Bell Helicopter Company, is utilizing the interdisciplinary talents of three undergraduate students to test the design and effectiveness of a new rotor bearing.

Funded with \$3,400 from Bell, the project will subject the new bearing, called an "elastomeric bearing" by the company, to more than 1,000 hours of use testing by the student team to determine the optimal shape for the bearing,

proper thickness of rubber insulation between the bearing parts and the best type of elastomeric material for use in the bearing.

The project is being undertaken by Charles Gallaway, a senior aerospace engineering student from Wharton; Earl Edris, senior student in civil engineering from Mt. Gretna, Penn.; and Richard Chaney, a senior electrical engineering student from Kingsville.

The elastomeric bearing, according to project advisor Dr. L. Dale Webb, Civil Engineering Department, is a new type of rotor bearing that oscillates rather than rolls like the traditional ball bearing.

"The bearing consists of two metal cylinders joined together with an elastic material," he explained. "The theory behind the bearing is that the elastic material will eliminate the need for extreme lubrication now found in

current rotor bearings."

Gallaway will oversee the project, being responsible for overall stress testing of the bearing. He will subject the bearing to axial loading, radial loading and torsion loading. He will perform a service-life test that will place the bearing in torsional oscillation, or twisting, while at the same time superimposing a radial load of approximately 1,000 pounds in conjunction with an oscillating load of about 200 pounds.

"This will simulate the worst possible loading the bearing will see," Dr. Webb explained. "The test will be run for at least 1,000 continuous hours, although we expect the bearing will be good for thousands of hours more."

Chaney, according to Dr. Webb, will be responsible for data acquisition and manipulation of test data, and Edris will be concerned with data interpretation and reduction.

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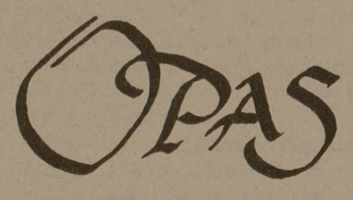
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