

Citizen Control of the Citizen's Business

TORONTO'S CITIZENS CAN CONTROL TORONTO'S AFFAIRS ONLY THROUGH FREQUENT, PROMPT, ACCURATE AND PERTINENT INFORMATION WITH REGARD TO TORONTO'S BUSINESS.

ISSUED BY THE

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OPEN LETTER

To the Citizens of Toronto:

Power of taxation places municipal corporations in unique position.

Because it has the power of taxation, a city corporation may do with apparent impunity many things which would prove ruinous to a private business, which is not in a position to make any charges it may see fit for its services and has not the legal right to recoup deficits or losses by forced levies on its patrons.

Centralized responsibility usual in private corporations.

The Board of a private corporation usually has one chief executive officer who advises the corporation on general policies, carries out policies when once decided on by the Board, and is the administrative head of the staff which carries on the business of the corporation. This type of organization secures a large measure of continuity of policy, centers executive responsibility in one head who cannot disclaim responsibility, and makes possible co-ordination of staff in order most effectively and economically to produce the services required by the Board. If the essence of democratic control is to get done most effectively and economically what

the people who pay the salary and expense bills, directly or indirectly, want done, then the organization above described is democratic.

Cumbersome municipal organization possible only on account of power to tax.

A few municipalities are similarly organized, but most apparently still believe that democratic control consists in electing as many representatives as possible and dividing the administrative work among as many executive departments as possible. The extremely cumbersome and unbusinesslike organizations built on this theory continue to run only on account of the power of taxation. No municipality so organized, if it had to finance itself by the sale of services in open competition, could avoid bankruptcy.

Toronto's administrative could be further simplified to advantage.

While Toronto is not an extreme example of decentralization in government, it belongs distinctly to the decentralized type. It has 24 Aldermen elected in eight wards of very unequal population. It has four Controllers and a Mayor elected at large. That is, it has a civic parliament of 29, for the most part based on representation of artificial districts, at least some of which are wards only because they are so denominated and not because there is any community of interest within their borders. From the executive standpoint the city has fifteen or sixteen departments, of which nine are operating departments. Within a year there have been two excellent opportunities to reduce the number by amalgamating certain operating departments. If these had been seized, not only would the co-ordination of work have been facilitated, but great advances would automatically have been made toward centralized accounting and purchasing. But the amalgamations were not affected and the overhead remained as heretofore. The taxpayer suffers, but he does not know it or suffers in silence. Does anyone really believe for a moment that Toronto would not be more democratically, efficiently and economically governed if it had a city council of 5, 7 or 8, if its executive departments were reduced from fifteen to ten, and if its chief operating departments were co-ordinated under one manager?

Could there not be greater co-ordination of the City and "outside" Boards?

Even if this were done, there would still be four important independent or semi-independent Boards and Commissions spending in the aggregate on current account a sum at least equal to, if not larger than that spent by the city itself. The administration of these could not, of course, without great changes in existing conditions, be co-ordinated directly with that of the city, but could not some co-ordination be effected through co-operative city planning, price getting and control of personnel?

Why adopt new and expensive policies without thorough survey of Civic Service?

Would not a thorough study of the civic service bring out the extent to which co-ordination and amalgamation might be possible? Is such a study not indispensable before the introduction of any pension scheme? Should it not be considered in conjunction with the comparatively recent report on civic pensions made by department heads and the actuarial study made in connection therewith? Should not the citizens and taxpayers be thoroughly informed as to the estimated cost to them previous to the adoption of a pension scheme, or to the payment of any money into any fund required by such scheme? Without such studies, and without such full publicity as to details of the scheme, its actuarial basis and its approximate cost, **previous to action**, has the City Council any right, after restricted or even untrammelled public debate, to commit the citizens for all time to a policy which involves an annual expenditure, the estimated amount of which is possibly known to some, but unknown to most citizens?

Respectfully submitted,

BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH,

JOHN MACDONALD, President

HORACE L. BRITTAIN, Managing Director.

P.S.—Have you written to your representatives in Council, stating what you think of a proposal to adopt a new policy which would saddle on the taxpayer an annual expenditure of an amount unknown to them without previous thorough detailed study of the civic service, without the fullest use of the existing study of civic pensions, without the fullest publicity, and **before submission to the citizens**, who, directly or indirectly, will have to pay the bills?

The Toronto Bureau of Municipal Research derives its financial support from voluntary contributions of public-spirited citizens. As provided in its charter it receives no government or municipal grants. It has no axe to grind other than effective citizenship. It has no strings on it save its attachment to the interests of Toronto. As an independant citizen agency it uses the following method of promoting its claims:—

Studying the facts;

Analyzing the facts;

Reporting the facts in clear and simple language;

Making constructive suggestions based on facts.

This work is not spectacular, but is fundamental. The degree of success attained depends upon the amount and vigour of citizen co-operation.