

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.

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PLANNING VERSUS CONFUSION

In the technique of **getting** money to provide for expenditures, Toronto, as a city, is extremely efficient. In the arrangements for the **repayment** of borrowed principal Toronto is beyond criticism—the city's debts are never refunded, and millions of debt have been bought in by the sinking fund before due.

But in the control of proposed expenditures on improvements and for current services, in spite of the improved form of estimates and the advancement of the date of passing the estimates, the city is lamentably weak. The latest presentation of the annually recurring budget drama is sufficient to convince any thinking citizen that money, probably amounting to millions in a decade, is being squandered through lack of proper planning. If some one stole a few thousands of dollars from the City Treasury there would be a protest which could be heard from "Dan to Beersheba," but conditions which may cause the loss of hundreds of thousands are allowed to go on because of the lack of a dramatic appeal to our imagination. If Toronto is to continue to be the home of industry and business; if it is to continue to be a city of homes, something will have to be done quickly and thoroughly to put the conduct of the city's business on a higher plane of policy forming and administrative efficiency.

I.—CONFUSION IN RESTRICTIONS.

When a man buys or builds a house in a restricted district, he does so because he receives certain protection which he desires. He naturally presumes that, living as he does in a British country, his rights will not be lightly interfered with and that he will have a voice if any changes in the restrictions are to be made in his vicinity. In Toronto restrictions may be lifted in a district and permits for construction may be issued without the consent of a majority of those who have made investments in the district. This destroys confidence in the fair dealing of the city authorities, discourages investments in residences, and tends to strengthen artificially the trend to multiple-apartment dwellings. Every large city needs apartment houses, but is it necessary in Toronto to destroy existing residential districts to supply apartment house facilities? Is not the sane procedure to establish zones for apartment houses, detached and semi-detached residences, stores and various types of industry? The city has not become so crystallized as yet that this cannot be done. Other cities are doing it successfully. Why should not the heavily burdened citizens of Toronto have similar protection? Such a system would obviate the necessity of long sessions of the City Council to determine particular issues and would cut down the costs to occupants by rendering it unnecessary for promoters of apartment houses, etc., to employ suitable solicitors to secure permits which would and should be theirs as a matter of routine.

II.—CONFUSION IN PLANNING IMPROVEMENTS.

In Toronto we have not had and have not now any key plan showing desirable and possible improvements within the city and the suburban area. With the exception of the Harbour Board and the division of the Assessment Department which, under the Statutes, exercises control of highway and roadway planning in regard to registered plans in a five-mile strip surrounding the city proper, we have had nothing approaching City Planning. The result is that improvements such as street widenings, street extensions, viaducts and subways are put through largely as individual and isolated undertakings without due weight being given to relative importance and the needs of the city as a whole as outlined in a city plan. Neither has there been any real sustained financial policy as to improvements ten years in advance. The result of these two factors is that much money may be wasted in

- (a) Making an improvement at a time when another improvement might be more necessary.
- (b) Making an improvement which might not fit into a general plan based on city needs without considerable alterations or additions.
- (c) The piling up of unmade but necessary improvements so that a large programme would have to be put through at once necessitating large bond issues, which might have been taken care of more advantageously to the city and with less risk of straining the city's credit if construction were spread over a term of years according to well-considered financial and physical plans.

Is it not about time that a city of 549,429 souls, with an assessment of \$727,440,676 on real property, should not have:

1. A physical plan of the city showing desirable improvements based on the work of an Advisory City Planning Committee and not revisable, save with the consent of the Committee, except by the Provincial Legislature or some authority appointed by it for the whole province.
2. A financial plan for improvements ten years in advance and modifiable from year to year by the City Council by, say, a two-thirds majority.

III.—CONFUSION IN SALARY AND WAGES CONTROL.

Over 50 cents of every dollar spent by the City of Toronto on ordinary services, including education, goes to salaries and wages. This means that the citizens of Toronto, in their capacity of taxpayers, are employers of labour to the extent of over \$14,700,000 per year. This sum does not include salaries and wages paid by public utilities. The employees of the City and Board of Education number possibly 9,000, although there does not seem to be any official document in which the total is given. This estimated total does not contain the numerous employees in the separate administrative public utilities. The Bureau does not know whether \$14,700,000 in salaries and wages is too much or too little. It does not know whether 9,000 employees is too large or too small a number. Neither does any one else. The Bureau maintains that such a huge salary and wage bill and such an army of civic employees demands, in the interests of the taxpayers, the most careful consideration and administration by Council.

Until the following questions can be answered definitely by "yes," there can be little doubt that there is considerable waste in dollars and in effort in connection with the personnel of the civic service:

1. Are all appointments on merit?
2. Are all increases on merit, and are increases made after consideration of the whole field to ensure equality of treatment for all employees?
3. Are all promotions made on merit, and is it as easy to secure promotion in one department as another?
4. Are the employees of all departments paid equal compensation for equivalent work, allowing for length of time in the service and relative efficiency of the employees?
5. Is there adequate machinery in existence for standardizing and keeping standardized salaries and wages in departments and as between departments, and for establishing maxima and minima for each class, grade and position?
6. Are there adequate facilities for exchange of employees between departments, either in case of emergency or in order to reward for outstanding service?
7. Are personnel schedules submitted with the estimates, showing the total to be spent in salaries and wages, the number and amount of increases with reasons therefor, the number of promotions and demotions with amount involved, the number of employees at each rate of pay, with comparative figures for previous years, but without any reference to persons in the documents submitted?
8. Do the estimates control the salary and wage bill for the year, with the exception of the leeway which must be given to department heads throughout the year under the general supervision of the Board of Control and City Council?

IV.—CONFUSION IN POLICY FORMING.

Real economy in administration is absolutely impossible without effective planning of expenditures, capital and current. It has been shown that in capital expenditures there has been no adequate planning, whether physical or financial. The same thing is true concerning planning current expenditures through the annual budget. The budget provides for debt charges on expenditures from borrowed funds. As these borrowed funds were for improvements not constructed in conformity to a city plan and not financed on a programme outlined ten years in advance with annual reconsideration and modification, calling them uncontrollable does not remove them from the category of expenditures which should be planned. The debt charges to be paid for out of taxation and incidental revenue other than taxation amounted to about 23.5% of the total in the 1925 estimate. Thus 23.5% of the total general current budget is not only unplanned so far as the existing City Council is concerned, but was inadequately planned by many preceding City Councils. This fact by itself is sufficient reason for the establishment of a system of municipal government which would give us greater continuity in policy forming. The time to control capital expenditures is before they have become uncontrollable and have been enbalm'd in the tax rate. The only conceivable way in which this can be brought about is by stability in policy forming and a system which will not put a premium on considering improvements one year at a time with the thought by each recurring City Council, "Sufficient unto the (year) is the evil thereof."

But planning current expenditures is little, if any, better. The form of the estimates is greatly improved. The time of passing the estimates has been greatly advanced. These improvements have undoubtedly effected very considerable savings; but the methods of controlling the huge salary and wage bill and the amount spent in purchases, are still wholly inadequate, and it can hardly be denied, in the light of recent occurrences, that conditions will remain practically as they are until

- (a) The City Council is reduced in numbers.
- (b) The members of Council are elected for overlapping terms of two or three years.
- (c) The Ward System is abolished or greatly modified.
- (d) The administrative departments are reduced in number, and
- (e) Executive administration is centralized under a small administrative board made up of permanent departmental heads or under a City Manager appointed by and responsible to City Council.

How much longer will the citizens and taxpayers of Toronto put up with a system that obviously does not give them the best results for the money expended.