

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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*“I won't vote in Municipal Elections again
until they get out better candidates”*

—So spoke a citizen of Toronto.

WHO ARE “THEY”?

Some reasons why "they" cannot get out more and better candidates.

1. Few people like to place themselves in a position where they will be subject to mud-slinging, mean innuendoes, public discussion of their private affairs and conduct and misrepresentation of their motives.
2. Few people like to submit their families to the embarrassment involved in having a husband and father or wife and mother being held up to scorn as undesirable citizens.
3. Few people are willing to go through an electoral campaign for office every year, although they might be willing to contribute their services if they were given three years undisturbed to show what service they could render.
4. Few people enjoy taking part in the deliberations of a body, some of whose members may give one hour to wrangling about an appointment over which they have no legal authority and ten minutes to the passing of an item of thousands of dollars over which they have complete control.
5. Few people like to remain in a body in which they have found out that, on account of that body's cumbersome organization, they are practically helpless to get advance steps taken.
6. Few people have moral courage sufficient to look forward with equanimity to the possibility that, if elected to Council, they will be ignored, as far as practical help is concerned, by those who induced them in the first place to run for office.
7. Few people care to face the probability that they will receive more "brickbats" than "bouquets" from the public during their term of office irrespective of the quality of their service.
8. Few people care to take the risk of joining in an undertaking, the public appreciation of which is stated by many to be decreasing.

Some concrete steps which might be taken to meet these reasons.

1. Aldermen might be elected for two or three year terms.
2. The size of Council might be cut down and the Ward System modified or abolished.
3. Citizens might join existing citizen organizations in larger numbers so as to increase the influence and representative character of these organizations.
4. Citizens might make greater use of these existing open forums **throughout the year**, so that they might keep in touch with all members of and prospective candidates for the City Council and other elected bodies.
5. The standing committee system might be abolished and a Finance and Executive Committee established as the only standing committee of Council.
6. An administrative Board, made up of permanent heads of executive departments under a Chairman selected by themselves, might be constituted to take care of the co-ordination of departmental work and the consideration of all details of an administrative nature now handled directly by the Board of Control. This would simply be an enlargement of the present arrangements regarding personnel control.
7. All departments rendering services directly to the people might be co-ordinated in one department under a Commissioner or Director of Public Services.
8. Citizens might punish those who engage in personal abuse by refusing to listen to them.

Why not face the facts, arrive at a diagnosis and adopt whatever remedies are agreed upon?

The City proper and the Board of Education spend on current account about \$33,700,000 a year or about \$54 per individual or \$270 per family of five. In addition, many millions more are spent by Commissions to which the Council has complete or partial power of appointment. Is it the part of wisdom to start doing something now or to wait until action will be imperative, though somewhat belated?

Tax Digest, California Taxpayers' Association
December, 1930

"Chicago's State of Mind"

"Indifference on the part of the people in governmental affairs leads to inefficient, uneconomical and ineffective government. It is the people who must give impetus and guidance to honest government.

"This has been adequately and effectively demonstrated in Chicago. The citizenship of Chicago, according to Dr. Herbert D. Simpson of Northwestern University, is characterized by a low level of political intelligence, it places a low valuation on political honesty and integrity, it is steeped in the chronic indifference that comes with prosperity and it habitually evades its civic obligations. It is not surprising that a government dependent upon such a citizenry has experienced failure.

"The people of all governmental units must guard against the growth of any of these characteristics. Government will not continue to function successfully if the people who support it do not give it their high minded and intelligent guidance. If prosperity is to continue, good government demands consideration of its problems by its citizens.

"We must all be on guard against the state of public mind which has so long prevailed in Chicago."

Chicago's state of mind is of course not that of Toronto. Toronto's background and attitude toward law and law enforcement are quite different; but lethargy in public affairs produces the same results everywhere, *given time and free play.*

Should not every voter assure himself or herself, *before election day*, that there will be names of candidates on the various ballot papers for whom he or she may vote consistently and with satisfaction?

The Toronto Bureau of Municipal Research is an independent, non-partisan citizen organization, for the promotion of informed citizenship and, through it, of efficient municipal government. Its methods are:

1. The ascertaining of the facts regarding municipal government.
2. The study and analysis of these facts.
3. The publication of these facts in clear, concise form, with constructive suggestions based on the facts.