

# BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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WITH REGARD TO TORONTO'S BUSINESS.

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## CIVIC DEPARTMENTALIZATION

STORY No. 1

The City of Toronto has sixteen administrative Departments each presided over by a chief, fourteen of them directly responsible to the City Council and Board of Control. All these departments are under the budgetary control of Council and are in competition for the current funds of the corporation.

## CO-ORDINATION OF SERVICE DEPARTMENTS

Five are overhead departments—those of the Assessment Commissioner, the City Auditor, the City Clerk, the City Solicitor and Corporation Counsel and the Commissioner of Finance (also City Treasurer). Six are Service Departments—those of the Abattoir Commissioner, the Works Commissioner, the Property Commissioner, the Street Commissioner, the Building Commissioner and the Parks Commissioner—while one other, that of the City Surveyor, Town Planning Commissioner and Traffic Engineer, though partly an overhead department in theory, is on account of the nature of its work most nearly allied to some of the Service Departments. Four Departments are Protective Departments, i.e., Health, Welfare, Fire and Police, the last administratively under a separate ex-officio Board.

If all the Service Departments, including that of the City Surveyor, were combined under one Commissioner, responsible to Council, and if among the Protective Departments, Health and Welfare were combined in one administrative Department, responsible to Council—

- a. Council would control through nine, rather than sixteen, Departments.
- b. Departmental accounting would be greatly reduced in amount and cost, particularly if machine accounting were introduced, while the work of auditing would be greatly expedited.
- c. The work of departmental purchasing would be reduced and centralized purchasing further promoted.
- d. Staffs could be much more easily co-ordinated, use of personnel made more economical and the salary and wage bill reduced without lowering rates.

No one can truthfully claim to have squeezed all the waste so far as possible out of public expenditure and reduced the tax levy to its lowest possible terms, unless an intensive administrative survey has been made of the civic organization by an independent person or Commission with the whole-hearted co-operation of civic department heads. There will, of course, be great opposition to such a survey, and to any departmental amalgamation which might be recommended; but the arguments raised elsewhere against cutting down the number of departments from 20 to, say, 16 are the same as those used in Toronto against reducing departments from 16 to 9. The same would probably be true if there were 100 departments and it were proposed to reduce them to 90.

There is nothing sacrosanct about a particular departmental organization. Most have just happened or have not been adopted on any logical basis, but simply from reasons of temporary convenience or mistaken analogy. In some cities, the water works is under the Works Department; in others not. In some cities Street Cleaning is under the Works Department; in other under the Health Department; in others independent. Welfare is sometimes a City Department and in others under an independent Board, Commission or Committee. Before the depression it was at least in one case allied to the Health Department.

The real question is simply how can functions be grouped in departments to get the most service for the least money, but as long as departmentalization is based, even in part, on personnel instead of personnel on the best possible departmentalization, money is bound to be wasted.

In peace time, avoidable waste in municipal affairs is indefensible. In war time, it is callous and contemptuous of public interest. Local vested interests should not, particularly in war time, be allowed to stand in the way of the national interest which requires economy and efficiency in local government.

We are engaged in a war which may become a "total" war. All our resources should be used so as to ensure victory with as little economic disturbance as possible after the war. Avoidable public expenditure unnecessarily accentuates the "boom" in employment in war time and diminishes the possibility of grappling effectively with after-the-war conditions of dislocation.