

BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

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

137 WELLINGTON ST. W.
TELEPHONE EL. 1904



TORONTO
CANADA

White Paper No. 253

November 27th, 1940

Again on January First

those on the Civic Voters' Lists, numbering about 350,000 names, or allowing for duplication, probably, say, 300,000 individuals are entitled to go to the polls to select

50 DIRECTORS

of the Municipal Corporation which provides essential services for 650,000 citizens.

Toronto is also a Large Corporation Financially

These directors will have the supervision of current expenditure of \$35 million and of the persons who make these expenditures. Besides they will have the direction of the expenditure of an unknown amount on debenture account. Capital authorization affecting general taxation between 1930 and 1940, both inclusive, amounted to at least \$4 million per year.

These capital expenditures are later reflected in the current budget where they are listed among so-called uncontrollable expenditures. As a matter of fact, with the exception of expenditures for disasters, etc., there is no such thing as an uncontrollable expenditure. All expenditures with the exceptions noted, are controllable by some person or persons, at some time to some extent. The word "uncontrollable" is used largely as an excuse for not controlling expenditures. The time to control so-called uncontrollable expenditures is before they are made. And the time to begin controlling those who exercise control throughout the year is before they are elected or even nominated. The word "uncontrollable" should, for psychological reasons if no other, be expunged from the civic dictionary. It is out of place except in dictator states.

The vote on January 1st last in point of numbers was hardly worthy of a liberty-loving city. The "what's the use" cry is not a valid excuse for non-voting. It might be in Germany if one dared to use it. The 1940 vote was the lowest civic vote cast in three years, notwithstanding that there were two questions as to money by-laws involving an expenditure of \$11,200,000 (and possibly of over \$15,000,000), and two important questions of policy in addition to the selection of members of three representative bodies.

The voters of Toronto are not, or at least need not be, helpless. On January 1st, 1940, there were 350,372 names on the voters' lists. There is an unknown amount of duplication, but probably at least 300,000 persons had the right to vote. Of this number 125,533 individuals actually voted—less than 42% of the possible.

The number of citizens who own their own homes is 56,989. With the vote of husbands or wives of property-owners, as the case may be, the home-owners control a possible vote of, say, 85,000. There are many other property-owners with votes in Toronto. The total number of properties owned by voters is, say, 127,500. Excluding home-owners,

the amount of duplication caused by persons owning more than one property is not known, and therefore the net voting strength of property-owners other than home-owners is unknown. It is, however, undoubtedly very considerable and probably exceeds 120,000.* Of course the family vote of this class and the vote of non-property-owners influenced by property-owners are also unknown.

The number of civic employees, including those of the Board of Education, Separate School Board, Transportation Commission, Toronto Hydro and the Harbour Board is, say, about 13,500 to 14,000. A large number of these own their own homes and are property-owners. The extent and direction of the influence on the total vote of civic employees is often guessed but is unknown.

Is it not, therefore, probable that those who have a direct physical stake in the city might control the civic elections if they exerted their full influence in choosing and voting for candidates representing their views and in impressing these views on voters not owning property? Is it not possible that those not having direct financial stakes in the community see, or may be shown, the true interest of all classes in the efficiency and economy of municipal operation? Why not start selecting candidates and inducing voters to vote?

*The number of people entitled to vote on money by-laws excluding intra-ward but not inter-ward duplication is 120,244.

We are engaged in a War which is rapidly becoming 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 expenditure on municipal services unnecessarily tends to accentuate the "boom" in employment in war time and to diminish the possibility of grappling effectively with after-the-war dislocation.

For over a quarter of a century the Bureau of Municipal Research has maintained a watch tower in the interests of citizens and taxpayers. Its services have been limited by the extent of the financial and moral support given to it. Its services were never more needed. Each citizen may think that alone he or she cannot do much. Why not try what can be done through co-operative effort?