

# 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

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TORONTO,  
CANADA

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## To Vote Or Not To Vote?

"That is the question"

But in fact this question has already been answered in the negative by about 75% of the potential City Voters. If this question slithers into their minds, it at once flits out again.

### WHY?

Because they do not think, on the basis of their experience, that the results of civic elections, and the quality of civic organization resulting, justify the effort involved in voting.

Some years ago a study was made in Chicago of non-voting, and the following causes in the degree expressed were found by research among individuals:—

Physical Difficulties .....	25.4%
Legal and Administrative Obstacles ...	12.6%
Disbelief in Voting .....	17.7%
Indifference .....	44.3%
	<u>100.0%</u>

The Municipal World, St. Thomas, Ont., in its November 1943 issue, lists 8 causes. The titles of the paragraphs in the list are:—

1. Tax Barometer "Fair"— why bother?
2. The Main Ends Have Been Achieved.
3. **Councils Restricted Powers\***.
4. Municipal Board Keeps Watch and All Is Well.
5. Rise of the Department (of Municipal Affairs).
5. Division of Responsibility (Between Province and Municipality).
7. National Government Has the Spotlight.
8. The Local Press (Speaks for the People. A Trusted Guardian).

The article concludes with the paragraph quoted at top of next page —

\* Bold face is Bureau's.

## TO VOTE OR NOT TO VOTE?

"That the press has consistently urged electors to get out and vote is to its credit, but the results indicate that in this respect its appeal has been largely in vain. Probably if more consideration was given to an analysis of the real issues, if any, at stake in any election and in the selling of those issues to the electorate, the electors would come out of their own accord — for we believe it true that the degree of electoral participation in an election varies according to the electors' conception of the importance of the issues at stake."

There have been many numerical or quantitative studies of voting, but there have been few as to WHY many potential voters do not vote. Neither have there been many studies as to why potential voters do NOT take part in nominations. These are the real questions at issue and until they are answered and concrete steps taken accordingly, the fight against the neutral and indifferent attitude of many citizens cannot make progress.

There are two parts in exercising the franchise.

1. Assuring one's self that suitable candidates will be on the ballots.
2. Marking the ballots.

Simply choosing between candidates whom others have selected or have selected themselves may be, and frequently is, a particularly futile operation.

Why is it so often hard to get satisfactory candidates to run for office? There are many reasons. Among those most frequently mentioned are these:—

1. The time and energy consumed in Council meetings is tremendous.
2. Annual elections rule out many men and women.
3. The short term is insufficient to prove worth; in fact, a decision which in one year's time might be unpopular, in three years might be thoroughly approved.
4. It is not yet good politics for City Council to decide civic policies on the basis of what the people need — but on what certain sections of the city or pressure groups want.

Meanwhile, until the people wake up, nothing can be done.

It may be too late this year to influence the selection of candidates. It is not too late to ask candidates questions like the following:—

1. Should the main lines of the civic budget, which you may be elected to manage, be an issue in civic elections?
2. Should percentage increases in salaries be made effective throughout the year or only at budget-making time?
3. Should the 1943 Council have sought to bind the 1944 Council by granting a percentage salary increase in 1943?

## Extract from Letter

"In as much as what we need is **not so much more voters, but voters who are intelligent, informed and determined**, I see no advantage in compulsory voting. You can force a horse to the water but you cannot force him to drink, so, you can force a voter to the polls, but you cannot compel him to vote intelligently or even to mark his ballot.

"The cancellation of the franchise means that the very non-voters that we want to reach are placed outside our reach when deprived of the franchise. The gist of the matter is that the only way we can cure non-voting is to remove its causes.

"**Education through the high schools or otherwise is constructive. But, unless voting can be made more interesting to the new generation than to the present and former generations, who have had unsatisfactory experience with the franchise**, I do not think that the end we have in view will be attained. It seems to me that the first thing to do is to find out from those who do not vote, why they don't vote. The second step would be to remove these causes."

From "The Financial Post," December 4, 1943.

"The one year term for aldermen or councillors in my judgment is the worst enemy of the voter wherever it exists. It tends to undermine the independence of elected representatives through uncertainty of tenure of office and operates against the consideration of public policies on more than a yearly basis — which often means no action at all. It prevents long-term planning and limits the number of possible good candidates by increasing the personal investment of time, energy and mental discomfort and by diminishing the opportunity for real public service.

"The other drawback to the public-spirited voter is the prevalence of sectional or 'ward' politics, which is fostered by the ward system, with its emphasis on local or personal issues and its inequality of representation. **The best way to get out the vote is to make public service appear attractive and worth while to hard-working men and women.**"

(Reproduced for Information of Members)

## BUREAU'S OPEN LETTER

TO HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR, CONTROLLERS AND ALDERMEN:

22nd October, 1943.

Gentlemen:

The Bureau of Municipal Research is not opposed to merited increases in salaries and wages, but protests, as it has done before, against the proposal to make a general flat percentage increase in civic salaries under a certain limit toward the end of a year, instead of at the budget-making time. There may be, and no doubt are, inequalities, but these could be ironed out on their own merits after careful

study. Would such an increase go through if Members of Council had overlapping three-year terms and only one-third came up for election each year? Would it go through if it were made an issue in Civic elections?

**Council may have the legal right to make increases not provided in the estimates, but has no moral right to bind next year's and all succeeding Councils to an added expenditure which may amount, directly or indirectly, to an amount equivalent to one mill on the general assessment.**

It is also doubtful whether taxpayers, many of whom have fixed or "frozen" incomes, should in equity be compelled to increase the salaries and wages of their civic employees, at least until a substantial minimum income is established for all citizens.

Yours respectfully,

(Signed) T. G. ROGERS,  
President.

(Signed) H. L. BRITTAIN,  
Managing Director.

#### WHY NOT?

1. A two-year overlapping term for Aldermen and Controllers.
2. The publication twice each month by the City of an impersonal survey of the happenings since last issue.
3. The publication of draft estimates for next year at the first of month preceding the election, so that civic business may be made an issue in civic elections.