

BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

Monthly



Letter

137 WELLINGTON STREET WEST, TORONTO

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Citizens of Toronto:

A Co-Ordinator of Departments for Toronto

Over the Thanksgiving weekend there was a considerable flurry at the City Hall. There has been some discussion in the past as to the need of an officer to co-ordinate the civic services. On October 4th, the Committee to report on the proposed amalgamation of the Health and Welfare Departments recommended in an interim report the appointment of a co-ordinating officer for all departments.

On October 10th, the Board of Control, at a late meeting, discussed the creation of this position and, it is said, the name of His Worship the Mayor was suggested for the office. On the morning of October 14th a caucus of the whole council was held to discuss the two proposals. In the afternoon a regular meeting of Council was held.

It is hard to explain - other than for local political reasons - why haste at the last moment was thought so necessary in creating and filling so important a position.

It should be borne in mind that the Director of Services is not to be a City Manager with power to nominate subordinates, without which authority co-ordination would be extremely difficult. The appointment of a Director of Services will not give the City a unified administration although if a man of outstanding ability, tact and persistence is appointed, some money may be saved. It is at best a half-way measure.

Many think that the only way to real departmental co-ordination is the appointment of a City Manager responsible to Council and with power to employ and discharge. They think that only in this way can the manager be held responsible to Council for results in carrying out the policies of Council. But there are several practical objections to this set up which would involve great changes.

In the first place the Board of Control is an elected executive body. The idea is an importation from the State of New York. The maxim "when you want representation, elect; when you want skill, appoint," rules out an elective but executive Board of Control, but does not rule out an executive City Manager appointed by Council. The Board of Control and a City Manager can not exist together.

In the second place it is not in the City's interest to have such departments as Assessment and Finance under a City Manager.

In the third place a City Council elected by wards, would make the life of a real City Manager unbearable. A small Council, elected at large for overlapping terms, would give a City Manager a chance. Otherwise it would be impossible to obtain, or at least to retain, the services of an able man.

If the operating departments, as distinct from the overhead and protective departments, were combined under one Commissioner, Toronto would have most of the advantages of the Council Manager plan without its disadvantages.

The appointment to any permanent civic position of an elected representative shortly after his resignation and before the January election could never be in the real long-time interests of the City. It creates or strengthens bad precedent and lends itself to manipulation for purposes of local politics. These are matters which could well be discussed in the forthcoming civic election both before and by the electors.

This stand of the Bureau is not in any way personal. The ability, energy and public spirit of His Worship Mayor Saunders is widely known. If he were appointed to the position a year after resignation, or at least in 1948 by the new council, there could be no criticism in principle. It would be a shame to lose a good Mayor through his appointment to a permanent position in which real success would be difficult if not impossible to achieve.

The postponement of final action until October 27th is encouraging. It is to be hoped that the postponement will continue until 1948, only slightly more than two months away.

Yours respectfully

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President

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Managing Director

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As of October, 1947
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