



BMR ^{In} Review

ANNUAL REPORT & PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The 1982 Annual Report is now available. Included in this year's report is an action plan which outlines the future directions of the Bureau.

The plan is aimed at making the Bureau more vital than ever. The changes are not radical departures from the Bureau's traditional role. However, they represent important changes in emphasis and policy - adaptations to a changing environment.

- * For more than 60 years the Bureau has been recognized as an authority on municipal issues. The Bureau will continue to provide objective, nonpartisan analyses of issues which will strengthen this position. The work selected, however, will become more topical, and at times more controversial.
- * The Bureau will take a more national focus. We will now begin to broaden our information base to include areas outside Ontario.

- * The Bureau will effectively communicate the results of its work to policymakers and the public.
- * The Bureau will undertake shorter studies which are issue oriented as well as the indepth ones which are the basis of our work now. This will provide more timely information on municipal issues on a continuing basis.
- * The Bureau will begin to monitor trends at the municipal level, including areas such as municipal taxation. The aim is to provide information on an ongoing basis which will enable people both inside and outside government to more effectively deal with current issues.
- * The diversity of Bureau funding will be maintained and strengthened. It will also be supplemented by funding to undertake specific projects on particular areas of interest at the municipal level.

DAVID CROMBIE: FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE ON MUNICIPAL ISSUES

The following is an edited transcript of the speech which the Honourable David Crombie, M.P., made at the Bureau's Annual Luncheon in June 1982.

Mr. Crombie looks at the organization of both the federal and local governments and draws some conclusions about the accountability of politicians at each level. The presentation also assesses some of the policies which the City of Toronto has been pursuing over the last 15 years.

I was asked if I would talk to you today about my perspective on Toronto and how it may or may not have changed since I went into federal politics three and a half years ago. That is a very difficult thing for me to do.

The main problem in looking at Toronto through federal eyes is that there is almost no coherent relationship between municipal government and federal government. Almost none. What I have to say is an attempt to create some literature to show that there is a relationship between municipal government and federal government.

BUREAU OF MUNICIPAL RESEARCH

I think I might start off by saying this. A junior alderman in Ward 5 has more influence over the course of legislation and the making of law at the municipal level than any senior member of parliament does over the course of legislation and the making of law at the federal level. That is not normally admitted because there is a kind of magic and mystery about parliament. The organization of government at the municipal level has been an issue for so long and will continue to be an issue as long as we have municipal governments. However, there is always the sense that somehow parliament, because it has been an institution for so long, functions better. I would like to suggest to you today that it is indeed parliament, parliamentary institutions, parliamentary processes that can learn much more from how municipal governments operate than the other way around.

One of the great enduring definitions of parliament was given by John Stuart Mill in the 19th century. He said that "parliament properly functioning is the nation's committee of grievances and its congress of opinions". I think that anybody who has had any working relationship or simply visited Ottawa or Queen's Park would have difficulty fitting that definition to the reality of how it actually functions.

There are three things which municipal governments have done much better than parliamentary systems. I want to look at those, primarily because, when something is working well, you tend to forget or not look closely at why it works well. I am going to conclude at the end by pointing out that there are changes which have been proposed for municipal government that I would suggest should proceed only with caution if they result in the kind of difficulty that now exists at the parliamentary level.

The parliamentary system has been hurt considerably by three things; first of all, by the structure and process of government itself; secondly, by the political party system; and, thirdly, by the growth of executive power. Those three things have nullified the role of parliament as an instrument of opinions and grievances and as a body for

legislation. Now I dwell on it perhaps more than you would because that is where I work. But I do not think we should take lightly the difficulties the parliamentary system now finds itself in. Let me just deal with each one of those very briefly.

I remember sitting in a committee meeting about two years ago and the bell in the House of Commons rang for a vote. We had a number of people before the Constitutional Committee from across the country and indeed from two other countries, who were waiting to give testimony to the committee on their views. The bell rang and everybody left. We were gone for two days because people raised points of privilege and points of order. The cost to the people who had come, the sense of coherence of the arguments, the logical development of points of view, were all lost.

I remember talking to someone and saying, "wouldn't it be interesting if we could have the deputy ministers sit in the House of Commons, offering their advice when asked by all of the representatives of the people of Canada. At the same time, we could have a committee made up of the deputy ministers and the elected representatives. People who wished to speak to a matter could come before that body and make their views known". And the member, it was a person from the Speaker's Office, said, "well that would be fantastic". I said, "I just described to you how the municipal system in the City of Toronto functions".

Now we all know its imperfections - that you speak is one thing, that they hear is another. But if you take the municipal system and put it in Ottawa, that is exactly what you would find. You would find the deputy ministers - first of all we would find out their names and know who they are. They would be there and they could hear what people have to say. We would have re-established two rights that municipalities enjoy - people have the right to be heard and the right to be represented. Those two rights are always unclear in the parliamentary system. The bureaucratic organization of the federal system is such that people follow paper. In the municipal system,

paper follows people. Municipalities have committee meetings on a predictable basis every second week, in the morning or in the afternoon.

People who are affected by legislation can get that information from the clerk's office. They can phone up, ask to be a deputation, can be heard and then the matter is dealt with in some fashion. None of that occurs at the federal level because there is nothing predictable about it. Committees do not meet on a regular basis so people do not know when they are going to meet. Committees only meet when it is decided that the bureaucracy would like to have them meet so that the Minister can get his legislation through. And so, having no sense of predictability, people's sense of having the right to be heard and the right to be represented is effectively taken away with the parliamentary institution.

Do not underestimate the value of the procedure we have at the municipal level. Think of the budget that came forward November 12. I will try my best to be non-partisan about the budget. But think of the process. If we said, at the municipal level, here is a good process by which we will make the budget. First of all, we will not tell anybody anything about it until we announce it. There will not be any public discussion. People who are affected by it will not be able to come to a public body. And then, once we have delivered it, of course, it will become law and we will explain to people what happened after. Now that is how we do the federal budget. There is a more complicated process privately but that is the public process. When we talk about the organization of government, when we talk about the differences in the two levels, the thing that struck me most was the lack of coherence, lack of predictability, the inability of ordinary people to have access to the federal government - either the right to be heard themselves or the right to be represented in parliament or in committees in any predictable fashion.

Secondly, the party system. Some of you remember very well Charles Caccia when he was an alderman. He is now, of course, the Minister of Labour and one

of my responsibilities is being the labour critic for the Conservative Party. Mr. Caccia brought through his first piece of legislation - Bill C-78. Bill C-78 dealt with benefits for workers over the age of 55 in areas of chronic unemployment and where there were no opportunities either to learn skills or to find alternate employment. The Bill proposed that Unemployment Insurance benefits continue until they reach retirement in certain designated areas. A very thoughtful, good piece of legislation. There were certain imperfections, however. Both Caccia and I instinctively, coming from our municipal backgrounds, tried to take the piece of legislation and, from differing perspectives, make a better piece of legislation. He got up after the committee meeting, went into the third reading, and he thanked me for helping him out, I got up and thanked him for being so thoughtful and we both got hell from our parties for being so friendly.

There is a sense of the party system which you should not lose - it is not an unmixed blessing. There are two definitions of political parties that I remember very well and they have come recently to make more sense to me. There is a definition by Alexander Pope in the 18th century who said that "a political party was an elegant incognito devised to save man the vexation of thinking". And secondly, one from a Canadian, Frank Underhill, who was the chairman of the History Department at the University of Toronto for so many years. Professor Underhill once said that, in Canada at any rate, "political parties are groups of people who take money from the rich and votes from the poor under the pretext of protecting one from the other". Both of those definitions have a high degree of cynicism about them but I think they are worth bearing in mind when we look at the functioning of the party system.

The party system and political parties are supposed to do three things. First of all, a political party is supposed to be a vehicle for the discussion of policy, for the opening up of ideas, for the investigation of ideas, for the selling of ideas. Secondly, it is supposed to provide a vehicle for accountability in the long run. One of the

arguments originally for party politics at the municipal level is that it would allow long run accountability from an institution that is in business long term. And thirdly, political parties were to be a vehicle as a communication function between the governed and the government. Now all three of those functions have suffered badly in the last number of years. No one is evilly trying to make a problem but indeed when it comes to the parties as a communication function, the very increase in the development of media technology has changed that function. It does not have to be done verbally any longer. The business of accountability is also torn considerably by the general level of knowledge and education as well as the expansion of media facilities. The organization of the political party has increasingly functioned not as a vehicle of accountability, not as a vehicle for the discussion and dissemination of ideas and not as a vehicle for communication, but indeed to become a barrier between the governed and the government. At the municipal level, to use the example, the accountability of a politician to his or her constituents, is clear and direct. But the accountability of a federal politician between the government and the governed is much more complicated, not really by the existence, but in fact the system which the party system has become. Party discipline is essential if you are going to have long-term accountability. Anybody who suggests that at the municipal level we should adopt the traditional party system is offering an invitation to a kind of government that no longer understands accountability or open debate.

Thirdly, executive power. Federal laws in this country are made by discussions between high level senior civil servants, high level workers in the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council office, and some small number of senior Cabinet Ministers. All the rest of the system operates to legitimize the decisions made at that level. There were 3,580 orders-in-council in the last two years. Orders-in-council, of course, are laws which are made without having to go through parliament. Orders-in-council have increased, and they are not insignificant laws. The cancelling

of 25 percent of the rail capacity in the country, VIA Rail, whether it was a good idea or a bad idea, in whole or in part, was not done by parliament. It was done by an order-in-council. The Emergency Planning Act which so scandalized a number of civil liberty associations in terms of the planning of pacification camps in peace time was done by order-in-council. The exclusion of the imperial system, therefore making metric mandatory, was done by order-in-council.

The growth of executive power has changed the ability of parliament to deal with and continue to become the congress of opinions and the committee of grievances. If I would compare the municipal and federal systems, the municipal system serves in a free, open and predictable fashion, the people it is supposed to serve. The municipal system does an outstanding job in comparison certainly with the federal system, in my view.

One of the questions I was also asked to deal with was whether or not I would change some policies if I were coming back as mayor of Toronto. Let me say that there were certain issues in the last fifteen years that were well addressed, well developed and well done. I know that most of you spend your day, and indeed many of you make your daily bread, working within the city and you know too often more of its lumps than other people see when they come to see the city. What I see is fifteen years or twenty years ago there was a re-emphasis, for example, on the importance of neighbourhoods. Many people regarded that as a kind of motherhood issue that was not terribly important, not significant to the real world. I want to tell you that if I had to re-emphasize one policy more than another, it would be that one.

I have had the opportunity to spend a lot of time in other cities, not only in this country but in the United States and other parts of the world. One of the distinguishing characteristics of this city is the care it takes with its neighbourhoods. The recognition that neighbourhoods are more than bricks and mortar. They are spiritual and emotional places. They are places where the young personality

is developed on the sidewalk. They become places of comfort for the old, places for the lonely. Neighbourhoods are places for the expression of cultural variety. They are places which are perhaps going to be more important to us as we enter what some people have called the age of frugality. I think I would probably emphasize the significance and importance of neighbourhoods more and more as we move into the next twenty years than any other policy. It was a good, understandable policy to people ten or fifteen years ago and it still is.

Downtown development - I would give it about an 83. It was really well done. I think people did a really good job with that. There is a pride of public space in Toronto that you miss in most other cities. People, when they build, as well as when they do the plans, have a sense of pride about it and you can see it. This is particularly true when you compare it to other cities. Downtown development meant that it was not only a place for working, and not only a place for playing, but it became a place for living. We are now so used to it in Toronto, we have forgotten what other cities see when they come here and look at the downtown.

Waterfront development - if there is any one single event that the city should be focussing on in grand terms, it should be a further articulation of waterfront development. It is the place, in my view, where Toronto goes for the next fifteen years. It is the one place that eluded us for a number of years. I remember a plan, I think it was about 1965 that the fifty mile waterfront plan was begun and the report was handed in in 1968. Anybody who spends any time on our waterfront twenty-five miles either side of Toronto knows the tremendous opportunity that there is for that waterfront and the basis for it was established by reports, studies, and planning undertaken twenty years ago, ten years ago and five years ago. The opportunity is outstanding.

Voluntary associations and participatory associations - one of the things that I have always found that Toronto developed well in the sixties and seventies were organizations of people

who took an interest in what was going on. It may not have been very many from time to time, but the people who did take an interest made the place better. Jane Jacobs once called them sidewalk watchers. Every politician, certainly every alderman, knows sidewalk watchers because they call you 2 or 3 times a day explaining what it is you have done wrong in the last couple of hours. Those people who take that time are the people who are exercising the citizenship of this city in a way which benefits this city. Voluntary, participatory associations are the life blood of how a city keeps in touch with itself. Look at a city that has no life to it and you will look at a city that does not have voluntary participatory organizations.

I think finally I might like to mention what I notice most is a continuation of what I consider to be the essential Toronto instincts. First of all, and anybody who has been in public life knows that you get letters about this from people all around the world, this city is known for its cleanliness and its sense of order. It is an attribute and an instinct which pays us great dividends for which we do not have to pay very much. If you look at most cities in the world, the loss of that instinct for cleanliness and sense of order, is a very high price. So it is an instinct that we lose at our peril.

Secondly, this is a city that has a sense of caring between individuals, between neighbourhoods, between sections. That is something that you do notice and it is something that needs to be protected as well.

Variety - we have variety. Ottawa is a nice place, but there is an essential sameness about it. And when I am away for a while and I come back to Toronto, the variety of everything strikes your eye. Anything that contributes to continuation and celebration of differences in this city is to be protected and anything that contributes to making things the same I think we ought to oppose. Variety makes this city go. Whether that is variety in our religious orientation, our ethnic orientation, our food, our colour, our height, whatever it might be, the more we are different, the more we have to be

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tolerant and the freer we are. That is the basic melody in Toronto.

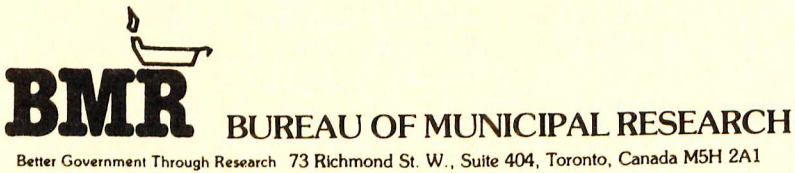
I guess if I had one final thing to say, Toronto has been fortunate. First of all, I think, it has done certain things at the right time. We built the subway in the early 50's, 1953 and 54, when it was affordable. We organized the metro system of government which allows for the general and the particular to exist side by side in 1954. There were judgements made at certain times which allowed this city to not carry things to extremes but always to maintain a balance. We have always been able to balance our change with our stability. That has meant that our growth has always been improvement in the final analysis and not merely expansion. That is why, when I come in from the airport and I come down 427, I see a jewel on the waterfront and it is thanks to generations of Torontonians who understood the place, were willing to put in the effort and who cared very, very much for it.

When I leave my little apartment to walk up toward Parliament at 6:00 o'clock in the morning where I work out, I pass a Presbyterian church. It says on the sign, "what we are is God's gift to us, what we become is our gift to God". I do not think you can say it any better - the relationship between a city and its citizens.

BMR IN REVIEW

BMR in Review is published on a periodic basis. It serves as both a newsletter on Bureau activities and a vehicle to provide information on various issues. If there is an area that you feel should be covered in future editions please contact the Bureau office. Any comments are welcome.

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