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Bureaus of Municipal Research

The necessity of bureaus of municipal information for the larger cities of Canada was brought home recently to a civic organization which had met to study the problem, with the object of its mitigation of the unemployed of the city in question. Those who took part in the discussion had but a vague idea of the number of the "out of works," and none of their classification, and the president seeing the futility of continuing a discussion with practically no data to work upon, left the problem to a committee. Had there been a central municipal bureau, the desired information would have been on hand to have enabled the society to start at once the good work of alleviating the consequences of unemployment. As it is the appointed committee will have to do much investing before it is in a position to present a workable report, and this takes time. In the meantime the unemployed difficulty in that particular city is increasing.

This, of course, is only one phase of the constructive work now being done in those cities where bureaus of municipal research are in existence. With such bureaus doing their work properly it is well nigh impossible for civic maladministration to be carried very far, the limelight of research would soon be focussed, not only on the weakness of itself but on the source. The business of a bureau of research is to find out the facts of the organization, methods and results of all the different departments of a city, compare them to those of other cities, and present the results to the citizens, and facts speak louder than words to citizens who want to know how their city is administered. This does not mean that municipal research is a spy system, nor even a critical system. It certainly finds out

things, but the knowledge acquired is always at the disposal of civic officers, who have thus an opportunity to remedy any defect there might be in their respective departments, and further, every good and conscientious officer knows that his work will be appreciated by those who employ him—the public. There is no doubt that much of the so-called maladministration of civic government in Canada is due to conditions brought about by lack of the proper knowledge.

A still further use for these bureaus is the collecting of every kind of data affecting the city life and tabulating the same in such a way as those who run may read—health, employment, finance, education, etc. It is probable that this side of Toronto's Bureau of Municipal Research—the only one in the Dominion—has more than paid for itself in awakening the citizens to the wonders of their city and as the best publicity agency the city could have. This bureau is the outcome of a survey that was made by a representative from the N. Y. Bureau of Municipal Research at the invitation of the City which so opened the eyes of the citizens to the possibilities of municipal research for the betterment of Toronto that the Bureau was established, with a good man as its working head. Its value to the sociological student is incalculable. It works harmoniously with every municipal department and every civic organization. Its smooth working coincides with the spirit of civic progress, so much so that Toronto has come to look upon its Bureau of Municipal Research as the clearing house of its doubts and hopes, and it seems to us that such a bureau might profitably be established in every Canadian City above 50,000 inhabitants.