

TORONTO'S NEED OF REFORM

INTRODUCTION

THE REFORMS proposed by my recent report having been generally accepted, and the Council having authorized a committee to study and report on the same, the following are being presented as a basis for discussion and action. It is hoped that they will be of some use to the Council and the public.

The increased influx of new blood into the Council is a welcome sign. The absence of so many from municipal service is probably due to the fact that the realization that the Alderman who does anything really has to do so on his own. There is no effective co-operation. For any proposition advanced the individual must stand sponsor. The winds of criticism blow strong, and the Alderman who is on the trail. Even the city's executive is a divided body and there is little unity or responsibility.

Moreover under our system of annual election any reform measure which is not completed within the year must be thrashed out again with the incoming Council, so that again the tax on individual effort is heavy. The objection to a longer term than one year can be met by deciding important issues by referendum. In addition we have inherited the practice of burdening aldermanic committees with a mass of petty decisions which fritter away time and energy.

As a result many recede; or there is a minimum of accomplishment until the flood comes and the dam breaks. In Toronto the dam is beginning to break. The per capita rate charge in Toronto in 1911 was \$4.51, in 1915, \$8.66. The per capita tax in 1911 was \$14.71, in 1915, \$24.84.

Attention may be drawn to an unfortunate weakness—with few exceptions—is a national shortcoming. It is that our people are not confronted with the facts. The European practice of a municipal statistician might well be taken to heart by Toronto and other Canadian cities. As it is our main statistical information is not presented in well-digested form readily serviceable to the press and intelligible to the public. The scramble of municipal candidates for facts and figures from various civic officials just before election would be amusing if it were not tragic.

It may not be inopportune to express regret that in their courses through the country the Governor-General, Lieutenant-Governors and our other leaders do not commend municipal service to our men of affairs. Municipal work in Canada today offers such splendid scope for honorable achievement; while its ideals of efficiency commendably fashion and fix the standard for the larger arenas of Province and Dominion.

Whatever be the broader aspect Toronto with its many opportunities needs a sound constructive policy, for finance and local improvements; for transportation, for charity organization and relief work and for publicity. To this end the willingness and varied ability within the council offer possibilities for successful results provided there is practical and determined co-operation.