

uniform accounts in private enterprises. Thus, I recently visited the headquarters of a great private corporation operating a large number of electric light, street railway, and associated plants in different parts of the country. These plants were operated under as many diverse conditions and circumstances as attend the management of the cities here represented, but their accounts were all standardized and summaries of the transactions and conditions were sent to that central office every month."

The object of this Committee is to suggest a system of Uniform Municipal Accounting for general adoption throughout the Dominion. It should be clear and rational, adapted to the conditions of our country, easy to establish, and as far as circumstances permit in harmony with the system prevailing in the United States.

The labor and perplexities of the committee have been vastly reduced by the fact that in the United States a sound system has already been planted, chiefly through over a decade of effort by the National Municipal League and the Washington Census Bureau. A sketch of the movement there was given in a paper by Dr. Morley Wickett, editor of *Municipal Government in Canada*, at our 1908 Convention. "In England", he states, "uniformity is largely enjoyed through the Local Government Board which was established in 1871; the Board has powers of audit and gives detailed analyses of the financial returns for over 34,000 local authorities of various kinds in England and Wales.

"In the United States the movement for uniformity may be dated roughly from the inauguration of the policy of public examiners, a species of State Auditor, with wide powers. This occurred in Minnesota in 1878, and in Massachusetts in 1879. In 1892 Wyoming followed, as did also the Dakotas, Ohio, and, later on, New York. In 1898, largely through the efforts of Dr. M. R. Maltbie, then editor of "Municipal Affairs", Congress passed a law authorizing the Commissioner of Labor to compile an abstract of statistics of cities with a population of over 30,000—the first attempt of its kind on this Continent. Meanwhile the National Municipal League, spurred on by such men as John R. Commons, E. R. Clow and Prof. L. S. Rowe, began its study of the problem in 1896, and appointed shortly after a special committee of ten to work out a municipal programme. In 1901 it named a special committee on "Uniform Municipal Accounting" with Dr. Edward M. Hartwell, Secretary of the Boston Statistics Department as Chairman. Public attention was in this way forcibly drawn to the subject, as also by the success achieved by the States in which accounting reform is carried out. Wyoming, for example, had cut down the cost of county government within a few years by nearly 25 per cent.; by its improved system of accounting, Chicago had decreased its annual expenditure by over \$70,000, increased its revenue directly by \$600,000 and indirectly by over \$300,000 additional.

"Writers on municipal problems, whose small number in this country is a matter of regret, began to call attention instantly to the unreliability and imperfection of municipal reports. Thus where per capita figures were published, the estimate of population was found often to vary with such authority. Similarly with regard to tax rates, etc. Chicago, for example, had a tax rate of 83.65 per \$1,000 as against Boston's 13.60. But the Chicago rate did not include a park tax of 9 to 11.50. In Chicago, it failed to explain that realty was assessed at only 10 to 11 per cent. of its selling value, while in Boston it was assessed at 90 per cent. Other examples might be multiplied, were the point not obvious; figures must be reliable, complete and comparable.

"A further stimulus to the movement for uniform accounting came from the example set by great commercial bodies. Systems of Uniform reports were worked out by the Interstate Commerce Commission, by numerous great corporations with their multitude of branches, by the New England Water Works Association, the Street Railway Accountants Association of America (1899), the National Electric Light Association (1901), the American Gas Light Association (1902) and by a long list of other bodies having to do with electricity, gas, water, street railways, public and civil engineering, etc."

In Canada the existing deficiencies have been deplored by several observers. As early as 1882, Mr. Archibald Blue raised the question in a practical manner in the Province of Ontario and succeeded in establishing the present system there of annual statistical reports by municipalities to the Government, which however does not enforce any special bookkeeping nor penalties. At the 1908 Convention of the Union of Canadian Municipalities in Montreal, the Secretary placed the subject on the program for discussion in the hope of establishing a movement for its practical introduction. It was reviewed by Dr. Wickett and by Mr. Henry James Ross, public and municipal accountant of Montreal, the discussion being brought to a head by a motion of the Secretary as follows:—"That the Union of Canadian Municipalities is strongly in favor of uniform municipal accounting for the various classes of municipalities of the Dominion, and recommends that the various Provincial Governments be petitioned to introduce a uniform system of accounting by similar legislation; and the Executive Committee is instructed to establish a sub-committee to prepare such a system of suggestions and to take such measures as they may find feasible for furthering the end in view."

In consequence a special committee was appointed by the Executive consisting of the President, J. J. Ward, Controller of Toronto; the Honorary Secretary, W. D. Lighthall, K. C.; Messrs. H. J. Ross, S. Morley Wickett, Ph. D., J. F. C. Menlove, (Pres. of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities), Ex-Mayor J. A. Ellis, (City Treasurer of Ottawa), and George S. Wilson, Assistant-Secretary. The committee have met and corresponded as fully as their distances and avocations would permit and have notified and consulted with various Provincial Governments and municipal officials, the Ontario Railway and Municipal Board, the Manitoba Municipal Commissioner, the Saskatchewan Municipal Commissioner, the Dominion Census Bureau, the National Municipal League, the League of American Municipalities, the United States Census Bureau and many other officials and bodies.

The intention is that this shall result in more complete and better classified information being obtained, the classification not to be by departments or officials as at present but by service performed with a view to showing the net cost of such service. The committee aims to have the various provincial governments agree to require each municipality to furnish the same returns to the provincial statistician and thus establish a uniform system of municipal bookkeeping and statistics throughout Canada.

The great majority of our municipalities already possess the material for the desired information; all that is required is a simple regrouping of accounts. Those whose bookkeeping system is at present of the non-descript class will be doing nothing more than their citizens and their civic responsibilities call for in improving their accounting. The committee has accord-