

# RESEARCH BUREAU'S RESEARCHES HALTED

**Appellate Court Refuses to Gratify  
Dr. Allen's Curiosity About  
the Health Board.**

**RECORDS MUST BE GUARDED**

**Since Those Concerning Private Af-  
fairs Might Be Used for Sinister  
or Unworthy Purposes.**

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court handed down a decision yesterday upholding the appeal of the Department of Health from a lower court order granting Dr. William H. Allen of the Bureau of Municipal Research permission to examine its records.

The Appellate Division commends the Health Department for protecting its records from inspection. Dr. Allen sued as a taxpayer. The Appellate Division holds that public policy is opposed to giving taxpayers the right to inspect the private records of a department of the character of the Department of Health.

The Appellate Division holds that Dr. Allen as a taxpayer offered no reason for his desire to see the records and failed to show that he had any interest, legitimate or otherwise, in them. Dr. Allen has said that his purpose was to learn what means the Department of Health employed last Summer to prevent the spread of typhoid fever in the city.

The Appellate Division denies that the Bureau of Municipal Research has any peculiar rights to delve into the records of the department, saying:

"It is true that there is a reference in the papers to a body or organization known as the Bureau of Municipal Research, but no explanation is given as to the object of that body or its composition. The petitioner's brief said much about the general purpose of this bureau and its achievements and of the amount of money it has expended in seeking to better municipal conditions, but these statements are unsupported by anything in the moving papers, and they are not considered on the appeal.

"The bald proposition, as the respondent has elected to present it, is that any taxpayer, without showing any interest or reason, is entitled upon demand to examine any and every record of the Department of Health, and, of course, to make such use as he may see fit of the information there obtained.

"The gratification of mere curiosity or of some speculative purpose," will not suffice, the Appellate Division says, to obtain permission to examine the departmental records, and adds:

"In consequence of the nature of its duties, it becomes the repository of the records concerning the most intimate affairs of the individuals resident within the limits of the municipality, and among these records are doubtless to be found many matters of no real public interest, but which might, if disclosed to whomsoever sought to examine them, be used for sinister or unworthy purposes.

"The Legislature appreciates the evil that might arise from indiscriminate publicity of the records of the Department of Health, and left it to the department to determine what safeguards should protect the privacy of its records."