

THE FAITH OF PROGRESS

(Continued from Page Three)

The economy of the municipality's proposal was not to be overlooked either. It was reported the present annual cost of street lighting and heating the town hall was \$836. "There seems to be no reason to doubt that under municipal ownership this expense would be greatly reduced if not completely covered by the profits of the rentals of the incandescent lights while the service would be greatly improved."

The Champion exhorted its readers to be progressive and support the by-law. "This is no time for a penny wise-pound foolish policy. The opportunity to put Milton among the most progressive towns of the province and to reduce the rate of taxation at the same time should not be rejected. Vote for the by-law."

Whether it was the editorial admonition or the mood of the times, the \$8,000 by-law was carried by the "freeholders of Milton" with 119 supporting the by-law and 61 opposing it. That was in January, 1905.

It was not until May, however, that the council instructed its committee to "make all arrangements with the light company to take over the light plant on June 1st next; also to arrange for power from Mr. Stewart until the new plant is installed and that the electrician continue in the service of the corporation."

With that done, the town set about its plans for the new municipal plant. A site 12 feet wide was to be purchased adjoining the town hall for \$100 but the wisdom of the members shone through and instead they agreed in mid-June to increase that to the balance of the property for the sum of \$275. The property was to be partly used for a power house with the balance to be levelled up as it was still low along the creek bank.

K. L. Aitken of Toronto was engaged to prepare the necessary plans and in early June 1905 he was authorized



to call for tenders for all the machinery as well as the power house.

Meanwhile the finance committee of council was receiving their tenders for the \$8,000 debentures bearing interest at 4 per cent. O'Hara and Co. was successful with their bid of \$7,820 for the issue.

In October it was found necessary to pass a by-law appointing the electrician and his assistant as well as setting out their duties.

Electrician Ruby Ellis was appointed with the responsibility of operating the night service and he was to be paid \$50 monthly. Mr. Ellis was also responsible for the plant, its repairs, the installation of all services and the collection of the monthly accounts. On his shift he was to furnish power from dusk to midnight.

Assistant electrician Richard Maurel earned \$40 a month and his shift provided power from 5 a.m. until daylight. He was not to put in more than 10 hours daily, but if emergency demanded it he was to receive 20 cents an hour for his time over the 10 hours.

Milton's population of 1,405 was paying taxes on a 20 mill rate and the removal of platforms from school rooms was causing some consternation in the early 1900's. Milton teamsters had agreed to raise their charges for a team and a man from \$3.50 to \$4 a day and dwellings in the community were in demand. Chief Constable Bradley was paid the handsome sum of \$50 yearly for his services and the town bell was being rung regularly, although for a while not quite so long in deference to a very ill woman who lived near the town hall.

It was in this background the council set out its rules for those receiving electricity from the town. Citizens were required to "take due care to prevent waste of light and switch off all lamps when not in use" according to town by-law 368 passed November 6, 1905.

Citizens were also reminded the power could be shut off for repairs, in the case of unavoidable accident, or non-payment of the bill.

Rates set out for the popular 16 candle power lights were 40 cents per light per month for up to two lights; 30 cents for up to five lights; 27 cents for up to eight lights; 25 cents for up to 12 lights and all over 12 were to be charged at 12 cents per 1,000 watts. Meter users were required to pay 20 cents a month for the use of a meter.

In late November, with the electrician hired, the rules set out and construction underway on the power house, The Champion reported: "The electric power house is nearing completion and promises to be a handsome building. It will be ready for occupation by about Christmas".

The prediction didn't quite hold true but on January 11, 1906, the same newspaper was able to report: "Milton's municipal electric light plant was operated Saturday evening for the first time from the new power house with new equipment. There is a tremendous improvement in the lighting, which was always dim and unsteady under the old arrangement. There were too many lights for the limited power. Now the lights are brilliant and steady and there is plenty of power to spare for extra lights."

It was with a sense of pride that the Miltonian of the day could read that news. His community was one of the progressive centres that was meeting the increasing demands for power with an increased potential. The economy of the measure would also appeal to him as he realized the provision of heating the town hall located handily nearby.

The power house, too, was well and truly built and still stands in its converted form, serving as a service station on the east side of the town hall. The connecting steam pipes have long since been forgotten but the historical link between the two buildings still exists.

ceiving power in a combination with Milton, Georgetown, Acton and Rockwood from Guelph. The price quoted for such power was \$37.50 per horse power in Milton.

The group pursued its questions on the proposal and wondered if consideration would be given to supplying the power via Brampton instead of Guelph. Mr. Yates agreed to look into this and citizens felt the quotation could be reduced by this route.

In June of 1912 the same Board of Trade convened again and received the expected quotation over the Brampton route "at the very satisfactory rate of \$30.50 per horse power".

With this the Board appointed a special committee of the mayor, the reeve and Messrs. D. S. Robertson, J. F. Little and J. Irving to contact local manufacturers to determine how many horse power each would undertake to use.

Apparently the committee's efforts proved satisfactory as they charted the course and in September 1912, at a special meeting of council, a by-law was passed to take a vote on whether the ratepayers were in favour of obtaining a supply of electric power from the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario.

By October 17, 1912, The Champion was able to report the successful vote. It was carried by a majority of 185 with only four electors marking their ballot against the town's move into the provincial system. "Plainly the electors realize that a defeat for the by-law would mean putting an end to the progress which the town has been making latterly. Without power Milton's advantages of situation, water supply, fire protection, railway connections and shipping facilities would not make her the manufacturing centre which it is hoped she will become. It is announced that the Hydro-Electric Commission will rush the work of wiring etc. so that we shall have the power very soon. The supporters of the by-law are jubilant."

Action was quick. At a council meeting in early November 1912, council agreed to the tenders for the equipment for the distribution station. The tenders included \$3,650 for transformers and \$2,060 for switching and protection equipment. The lights on Main St. were to be staggered with two lights on each pole from McGibbon's Hotel to Commercial St. The poles were to be placed under the supervision of the streets and walks committee, and all work was done by contract as far as possible.

In the meantime a by-law was to be prepared to raise the debentures to meet the cost of the project and the fire and light committee was to visit Brampton "for the purpose of getting information re Hydro matters".

Arrangements were completed to distribute the Hydro-Electric power from the P. L. Robertson factory and The Champion of January 23, 1913 was urging the town fathers to sell the town's electric light plant, possession to be given when the Hydro Electric is turned on. "It will bring a higher price as a going concern than as a dead one, and if held and left idle it will deteriorate", the newspaper warned.

There was talk of the power house, just seven years old, being used as a fire hall.

By February 27, 1913, the transformers had arrived and P. L. Robertson was saying he expected the power to be turned on for use of the screw factory within 10 days. The arrangements for the lighting of the town would not, however, be completed quite so soon.

On March 13, 1913, the power was turned on "and since then the streets have been splendidly lighted. The house services are good, but not yet at their best as they will be when certain adjustments have been made. P. L. Robertson Co. Ltd., has the extra power so long badly needed. It is hoped that the town will soon secure new industries. The Willmott buildings, vacated some time ago by the Edwards Motor Co., are vacant and manufacturers have been looking at them."

It was on this optimistic note that Ontario Hydro came to Milton. Citizens looked on the new power supply as a life line for the progress of their community. Disappearing were the days of the tallow candle and the coal oil lantern as the incandescent bulb and the hydro-driven motor began to assume new dimensions in the changing order.

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

THE arrival of the new power, with the increased brightness of the bulbs and the greater potential of the electric motor was evidenced in a number

of ways.

Administration of the hydro operations rested with the municipal council as its light and police committee continued in the role of administration. By March of 1913 John Sewell was employed as a lineman by the town at the rate of \$75 a month and lamps were being erected on the south east side of Main St., so that both sides would soon be lighted.

The increased hydro available was also welcomed by the shareholders of the still-young P. L. Robertson Co. The newspaper of the day reported that the annual shareholders' meeting, attended by about 40, was "enthusiastic and greatly pleased with their inspection of the plant, particularly with the recent addition of the Hydro-Electric power, which has already resulted in a greatly increased output." A neighbor-



ing newspaper reported, perhaps enviously, that the factory was using 375 h.p. of current "a factor ensuring the success of the Hydro-Electric connection to Milton".

The 1913 population of 1,959 was also eyeing the debentures necessary for the Hydro. The issue of \$20,000 was being advertised but "on account of the scarcity of money and the high rates of interest it is not to be expected that the amount realized will be as large as it should be".

Modern conveniences were also receiving some attention and M. E. Nixon was advertising electric vacuum cleaners for rent.

The town still had its old power plant and G. J. Mickler, auditor of the H.E.P.C., proposed that it be turned over to the Commission and in the event it was sold, proceeds would be applied to the town's debt. The council agreed to consider that later.

New accounting was being introduced too. The June 19, 1913 issue of The Champion told about the new arrangement of including all the Hydro accounts in a separate book by the town treasurer. It hinted that special town commissioners might be appointed to take charge of the Hydro and maintenance costs to relieve council of the work.

The system was having its difficulties too. A five hour power break in June of 1913 was attributed to defective insulators.

By September things were rather cool at the town hall. The heat supplied from the steam generating plant was no

longer available with the new hydro system, and the clerk was keeping himself as warm as possible with a coal oil stove. As the fall days grew cooler into October, however, the town hall committee decided to move the boiler from the steam plant into the town hall to heat the building.

A welcome Christmas present, however, was announced in the December 25 issue of the Canadian Champion in the form of reductions in the price of power. November and December accounts were to benefit from the reduction.

By the end of the year the period of transition was complete. In the elections of that year the first Light Commissioners, as they were called, were elected by acclamation. Named were E. F. Earl, W. B. Clements and Dr. R. K. Anderson.

The stage was set for the new independent authority that was to administer the hydro system locally for the next half century at least. It was an inauspicious start. The Champion does not even record the inaugural meeting of the group and council minutes make no mention of the election other than in the formal election-calling by-law.

THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATION of the Milton Hydro Electric Commission was not an arduous task. In its early days much of the difficulty was involved in the collection of accounts and how far the new power should be extended beyond the town limits.

Early in its life the local Commission approved a contract with the Boyd Brick Co., a new firm that was being

established outside the town. It was a typical action for the time as more and more industry looked to the hydro network for its power. It was also necessary to ask council to pass a by-law so the commission could appoint an inspector of wiring.

John Sewell, who had joined the local staff as electrician was advised in December 1914 that unless he moved to Milton by the following April he would lose his position. This apparently did not meet with Mr. Sewell's plans because in February the Commission had seven applications for an electrician and Thomas Book was engaged. By this time there were 235 customers of the local commission.

To maintain the standards in the wiring that was to carry this new power, the Commission ruled all work not done by the Town Electrician must be done only after obtaining a 25 cent permit and paying \$1 for an inspection.

In July 1915 the engine, boiler, generator, pump, etc. from the old steam generating plant were sold to the Milton Textile Co. for \$1,000.

By December 1915 Commissioners leased a store on Main St. from W. B. Clements for one year at the rate of \$15 per month. It was known as the old post office. The power house was leased to Mr. Ager at \$15 per month and then they leased the old post office to the Department of Militia, just where their office ended up is something of a riddle after these transactions.

On October 31, 1923, R. W. Phillips of Mount Forest was engaged as electrician. Bob Phillips was to continue in that position until retirement in 1954 when he was feted at a local dinner for his long service.

In the intervening years the list of consumers was increasing as the demands for hydro expanded residentially,

Continued on Page Six

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Milton Hydro-Electric Commission
on the completion of 50 years
outstanding service to the community.



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1914



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SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY

1964



PICTURE OF OFFICE OF MR. O. L. HADLEY, MANAGER, MILTON HYDRO COMMISSION



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THE CHANGING ORDER

IT WAS IN that same year — 1906 — with a spanking new municipal power house in Milton that the demands for additional supplies of power were charting a new and different course in the province. An act was passed under which the permanent Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario was established with the famed Sir Adam Beck as chairman.

The Commission began its activities by building transmission lines from Niagara Falls to 13 municipalities in southwestern Ontario and began delivering power in 1910 to Berlin (now Kitchener). Toronto got its first power from the Commission in 1911.

From its inception Ontario Hydro was based on co-operation with the municipalities and so it was that in May of 1912 Mr. Yates, representing the Commission, attended a meeting of the Milton Board of Trade.

It was a well attended meeting including several manufacturers who were not members of the group. Mr. Yates gave the particulars of the proposed arrangement for re-