

Warden Hinton reports

On study tour in Europe

After a three week government study tour in Europe, Halton's warden Bert Hinton, county clerk Garfield Brown and Burlington deputy-reeve Frank Rogers arrived back at Milton on Sept. 29, just in time for the release of the Plunkett report. Regional government was a subject of their particular concern in England, the Netherlands, Germany and Scandinavia and they approached the newly-invented report with keen interest.

Referring to the Goldenberg report which reduced 13 Toronto municipalities to six, warden Hinton said this week that while in the U. S. and Europe he discovered Toronto is highly respected throughout these other countries for the far-seeing change. He feels strongly that Halton, too, "will have something that is the respect of the whole world."

Greater London just recently faced such similar amalgamation (when Acton, England, council was abolished in favor of Ealing, for instance) and the program is working well. Mr. Hinton saw there that although "small details" were bothersome at first, "parochial" reactions will be forgotten.

This success in England enhanced his interest in Tom Plunkett's report. Although Mr. Hinton feels it must be studied most thoroughly, he thinks the report is an excellent one.

"It would be a real break for the taxpayer. It might not reduce the budget but you'd get far more for your dollar."

At the meeting Sept. 29, of officials of Halton and Peel his reaction had been "we should be able to get two good councils out of this group of excellent men here tonight." To consolidate many small boards seems to him a good idea.

His recommendations: the change would have to be implemented by the provincial government which after due consideration of the reactions and ensuing reports would make it mandatory; the councils must be elected directly by the people.

The three men from Halton were sent as county representatives to the Ontario Municipal Association government study tour in conjunction with the British council, which has a courses department and study tour section. The county contributed a part of the cost.

Eighty men — all Canadians — undertook the tight schedule which covered a maximum of ground and topics.

There was scope for special interest and warden Hinton sought out welfare programs.

The series of official receptions for the group began with one at Ontario House September 7; discussions and tours of specific projects began at once and there was little time for sightseeing or visiting relatives.

The Greater London Council — the county council for all London — showed the government structure there. Just recently the number of councils was cut, and this is where the Canadians learned amalgamation works.

"Not that everybody agreed at the start," added Mr. Hinton.

He went with one group to visit the borough of Hamersmith which has about the same population as the proposed Mississauga county. No employees lost their jobs because of amalgamation there.

All the elected people serve without pay in England.

Even the boroughs are on the two-party system, as are local governments in the U.S., Germany and Sweden where he has visited. "I think it's undesirable myself," commented Mr. Hinton.

Alton planned subdivision was toured, and the completely new town of Harlow, planned to relieve the congestion and post-war housing shortage of London. He was particularly impressed by the paths which take pedestrians safely under or over the streets.

September 13 they divided into six, and the warden went to inspect the county and city of Bristol, the county of Gloucestershire and the county town, Gloucester, for three days.

Bristol is the most advanced area in Britain for the comprehensive system of education—and there is much opposition there due to tradition. Streaming is highly contentious.

Here again they noticed what the Plunkett report recommends for the north—a two-tier government with the county council elected separately and having the real power, the boroughs electing their own council for particular needs.

Monday the 19th the group divided in two, one section off to Hamburg and Stockholm, the other to the Netherlands and Denmark.

Mr. Hinton was in the first half, who were introduced at once to local government and the role of central government. They visited a suburban municipality outside Hamburg.

Planning has produced roads like the spoke of a wheel, with railways, subways, satellite towns and green belts. Mr. Hinton toured subsidized housing for the aged here, as he had done in England.

After an inspection by field glasses of the east-west German line with its barren swath of land and pillboxes, the group flew to Stockholm September 22.

The role of central government in relation to local authority came first here again. Housing was a particular problem, with most of the property in the city owned by the government. Cost of homes is prohibitive. There are many huge apartments that didn't appeal to Canadian owners of private homes. The cost of living is high.

Problem of amalgamation is confounded by the fact Stockholm is the great centre of population.

The men were impressed by Skansen museum, Uppsala, the university town, Dag Hammarskjöld's grave in the family plot, Stockholm harbor and Sigtuna, Sweden's oldest town. They were shown several pyramids where it's believed the Vikings used to meet—but no one has ever excavated to prove the tale.

Tuesday, September 27 the group flew back to London, and warden Hinton put back on his head the bowler he'd bought two weeks before. (The umbrella, he carried he took with him from home.)

There was a group review, and all the tour members will hand in reports to be consolidated. Perhaps recommendations for the Ontario Municipal Association will come from it.

Social occasions independently were few, but warden Hinton managed to meet uncles and aunts for the first time. He discovered one, from Loughton, who is 89 and has been a council member and justice of the peace for over 30 years. He has never received any pay.

Dave Hubbert, manager of the Bank of Nova Scotia branch in London, took the Halton group to a wonderful dinner at the famed Savoy Hotel. Mr. Hubbert, a Campbellville native, started his banking career in this district. Another former Ontario banker, Mr. Freeman, was with them.

Halton's name and fame spread with gifts of pens, little pins and county brochures.

Of tourist spots they saw few, but they attended a performance of Henry IV Part Two at Stratford, went through Christchurch college and took a couple of short bus tours. One weekend Mr. Hinton flew to Paris while Mr. Brown visited in Scotland and Mr. Rogers in England.

Mr. Hinton's conclusion on welfare services is "in a way we're more advanced. They suggest here we have too many in our homes but I think in our country we have all they have, and a lot more." He noticed apartments for senior citizens there and favors this for our local municipalities.

Much information and literature is being mailed later to the travellers. Then they will have facts at their fingertips; already they have a valuable background of experience and understanding which stands them in particularly good stead just as the Plunkett discussions get underway.

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WARDEN H. H. HINTON

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Only two trees with a total value of \$8.20 were purchased through the town of Milton's fall tree sales program.

Under the provisions of a local by-law, the town pays half the cost of purchasing and planting trees, subject to some specifications. Seven different types of trees were offered for sale.

The sale has been held twice each year for the past five years. The by-law governing the sale is now out-dated and if a similar program is to be continued, a new by-law will have to be passed.

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