

City Hall Site Group Sidesteps Question

The City Hall Sites Committee yesterday sidestepped the question of where Ottawa shall build a new city hall and voted to pass it along to City Council for debate and decision at a special meeting Monday night.

The committee was expected to make a recommendation on one or other of the Confederation Park, Green Island and Pine Hill sites. Informants said that at the closed meeting the committee couldn't make up its mind.

The body consists of Board of Control, and Aldermen Doherty, Nickson, Hamilton and Morin.

The committee based its decision on a memorandum from Mayor Whitton setting out positions taken at a meeting last week between a group of city officials and Prime Minister St. Laurent, Immigration Minister Pickersgill, Public Works Minister Winter, George McNeil and Jean Richard, Liberal members of Parliament for Ottawa West and Ottawa East respectively, and Alan Hay, general manager of the Federal District Commission.

The discussion covered many of the factors in the dispute over the Ottawa civic administration building question—the dispute has revolved through City Council at intervals since the old city hall burned in 1931.

Three Sites.

However, it was largely concerned with three sites: the city-owned lands in Confederation Park, consisting of the site of the old city hall, just west of the police station, and the sites of the station itself and the registry office; Green Island at the mouth of the Rideau river; and Pine Hill, the city-owned block of Rockcliffe Park enclosed by the FDC Driveway, Princess Avenue and Leger Road.

The following points emerged during the conference, the mayor's report said:

1. Prime Minister St. Laurent told the city delegation that, in his judgment and, he believed, "that of the Cabinet and the majority of the Houses of Parliament", it would be a cause of "lessening enthusiasm" in plans for the city's development if Ottawa were to erect a city hall on the Confederation Park property.

2. However, the Dominion would not likely go forward with any "arbitrary action, in litigation nor expropriation" if the city should decide to build there.

3. The Government preferred that the police station and registry office be removed from Confederation Park, but would be prepared to negotiate an arrangement whereby the ownership of the Confederation Park lands remained in the city's hands, and the city undertake to erect no new building there. It was indicated that the main purpose of the offer to exchange Green Island for the Confederation Park lands was to maintain the latter as an open space under the National Capital Plan.

4. It was indicated that there was no other suitable site for a city hall "in the same central area, either west of Elgin street or on Carleton Square".

5. On the other hand in the area was marked out for other public works, such as the National Art Gallery on Carleton Square, also "Dominion authorities objected to any further congestion of buildings and traffic in the area."

Experimental Farm Out.

6. "It was made clear" that no Experimental Farm property would be made available for any use other than by the Federal Agriculture Department. (There were suggestions during the meeting that an

Experimental Farm site be used, either off Carleton avenue or the Prescott Highway.)

7. It was indicated that the Government would consider exchanging Green Island should the city wish to build a city hall there — for city-owned properties other than those on Confederation Park, presumably in conjunction with an agreement by the city not to build on the latter. The city had compiled a list of property it owned which the FDC wanted; the total of this was approximately equal to the assessed value of Green Island.

8. Reports by Planning Director L. W. Pillar and Building Inspector C. M. Taylor that there would be extra and heavy costs involved in building on Green Island; it would be necessary to build a retaining wall at the west end and to raise the level of it from five to eight feet; other technical reports indicated that water and electrical services could be supplied more easily to the Pine Hill site than to Green Island; sewer costs would be about the same to each.

Mayor's Preference.

9. That the mayor's personal preference was the Pine Hill site as constituting "the most magnificent promontory outside of Parliament Hill", its use also would leave Green Island to be developed as a park area for congested Lower Town. However, her recommendation to the committee was that it choose between Pine Hill and Green Island.

City officials attending the conference were, Mayor Whitton, the four councillors, Aldermen Wilbert, Hamilton, dean of City Council, City Solicitor Gordon C. Medcalf and Mr. Taylor.

Approve

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2. Institution of the "No Standing" regulation — which, in effect, means "no stopping" over extensive parts of such streets as Rideau, Bank, Sparks, St. Patrick, Somerset, Wellington, Laurier, Albert, Kent, Queen and Slater.

3. Both the peak-hour parking extension and the "No Standing" restriction would apply in the same way the present peak-hour parking restriction applies—from Monday to Friday. Mr. Rankin's recommendation contemplates no change in regulations for Saturday and Sunday parking.

Generally speaking, the scheme would set up the restriction on only one side of each of these streets at a time; that is, there would be "No Standing" during morning and evening flow hours on each street on the flow side, while parking would be permitted on the opposite side.

This is not the case, however, on three streets, Rideau, between Mackenzie and Charlotte; St. Patrick, from Dalhousie to the St. Patrick Street Bridge; and Elgin, between Laurier and Argyle; in each case the "No Standing" restriction would be applied to both sides of the street.

It was because of this restriction, as it applied to Rideau street, that the recommendation met its toughest battle in the committee, a battle which ended in the dissent of Alderman St. Germain.

The alderman's position was this: that Rideau street traffic emptied into a bottleneck at Cummings Bridge and that it was therefore not much use speeding it up between Centre town and the bridge; and that because of the restriction, the business of certain Rideau street merchants would be damaged badly.

Says Business Benefits.

Mr. Rankin, on hand to defend his plan, said he had seen similar plans put into effect in other cities; and that the usual