

TOWN'S INDUSTRIAL COMMISSIONER

Ken Rowe's product is Mississauga

By LINDA REED

Ken Rowe, industrial commissioner, is the man who's selling Mississauga to the world.

His attitude appears to be: open your eyes capitalist giants because Missie is waiting for you.

When he took on the job in 1967 he was hesitant about what to do with a brand new town.

Instead of turning to other municipalities for advice Mr. Rowe looked for his own way to unfurl the assests of Mississauga.

So he sat down in his

Confederation Square office for nearly 60 days and cogitated about the town. He decided Mississauga's 111 square miles were so unusual he needed a brand new way to tell everybody about the area.

Reasoning that the majority of industry comes from Toronto, it seemed logical to sock his Mississauga promotions via radio to executives commuting to work.

Then he got in touch with his pal Wally Crouter of CFRB and asked him what he thought of boosting a town over the radio.

Crouter thought it was a lousy idea.

"It's never been done before," he objected.

Four years later Mr. Rowe is constantly assailed with "oh yes, Ken Rowe! I've heard of you on the radio" when he attends businessmen's luncheons.

He learned early in his stint as commissioner to take advantage of everything he could to boost Mississauga.

Most residents have experienced slight ridicule when they give the name of their home town outside of the Metro Toronto area.

READY REPLY

The usual response to "I'm from Mississauga" is nearly always "Missi.....what" But our commissioner is always ready for the people who guffaw at his home town.

He usually tells them about Mississauga and then replies with a slow smile, "I don't know where you're from but we've been talking about Mississauga for five minutes."

Two years ago Mr. Rowe threw an openhouse on behalf of Mississauga at the Waldorf Astoria, in New York City. A selected list of industrialists were invited and he was accompanied by representatives from town council.

As he watches UNIVAC Chrysler, Kraft Controlled Data and Canadian Tire hustle their wares into town in 1971

his chest is entitled to swell a little.

Shrugging modestly, Mr. Rowe said Mississauga was fortunate to have progressive politicians who provided a budget for promotional work. Some towns don't have an industrial commissioner. The town of Brampton hired one two weeks ago.

Mr. Rowe doesn't believe in bombarding the public with literature about Mississauga. Instead, he is advertising with international magazines and movies of the town which are distributed to international banks. It must pay off because Mr. Rowe said he was talking with German industrialists about opening a plant here.

But he stresses that one of the greatest assests is Mississauga's populace.

A CHALLENGE

"I should have 130,000 public relations people working for me here," he exclaimed referring to residents.

Mr. Rowe, who has been called a "salesman" finds the job immensely challenging. He makes some of his contacts by having a good relationship with industrial real estate folks.

He says that industrialists are often discouraged from settling in Canada's largest town because Toronto Township was considered a dormitory.

Realtors are still orientated to selling houses rather than industry here, he explained.

Mr. Rowe, who is married with three children of his own, is anxious to develop industry which will enable youths to work in the town where they were raised.

But there are a few headaches to the job, as Mr. Rowe will casually mention.

Since he's the industrial commissioner it's his job to get new industry and to know the aspirations and aims of present tenants.

Sometimes people call him at night to complain of irritating industrial noises and shrill: "if I can't get to sleep I don't see why you should." Others speak out against the town's willingness to accept foreign industries here.

Mr. Rowe gets quite vehement about the latter and wants to know who Mississauga thinks it is to keep out industry.

"We need foreign industry or we won't survive."

BACKGROUND

Mississauga's traveling ambassador, as he dubs himself, was born and educated in Ottawa. His father, a blacksmith operated a riding stable within the city limits.

Although his career as a chemist in a paint company in Montral, the U.S. and Ottawa didn't seem to point toward the position of an industrial commissioner he said it was an excellent background.

Mississaugans* should include a visit to Mr. Rowe's office when they tour municipal buildings. One area is devoted to miniature replicas of products made, packaged or sold in the town.

One conversation piece on the wall is an old paint tin lid which symbolizes a mistake made in his career in the paint industry.

"I keep it there to remind me that I can make mistakes when I get thinking that I'm a pretty smart guy."

Paul
Frog
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Rowe,
Ken