

"With eight years' experience, I would advise all towns to hire their light, which is by far the cheapest."

The question of economy and efficiency are interdependent. The managing committee of a municipal plant lacks the motive to effort, the incentive to economical operation and to close personal attention that a man finds in his own private business. Would you risk an investment in any industry under the management of a committee of a municipal council? If not, then why risk under such management an investment of funds which you must help to supply and in the expenditure of which you have therefore a personal interest at stake?

As to the claims regarding corruption.

The opportunities for corruption in connection with contracts between municipal corporations and private companies for the supply of light are very limited; moreover the prices paid for street lighting in Ontario are not near high enough to sustain a corruption fund.

In municipal ownership, on the other hand, there is a great temptation to crookedness. Mr. Francisco quotes an article from the *Forum* that of the members of a typical city council one-third will vote as they think, regardless of advantages, the votes of another third are merchandise pure and simple, and the remaining third are debatable men. This characterization may be somewhat severe; let us hope it is, but there are usually some men in a council who are not above accepting a bribe, and these always endeavor to get themselves appointed on committees having in charge the management of public works. The opportunities for dishonesty are apparent. Besides this there is invariably some preference shown in appointments to office. Mr. Francisco quotes an interview with an official of the Chicago municipal plant in which this gentleman complains that men in his department were turned off without cause to make room for favorites, and that there was "no possible way to get on the service without a political pull."

There are other additional arguments against municipal ownership of lighting plants. The function of a government is to regulate and control and to encourage enterprise on the part of its citizens by extending a protecting hand over the industries they establish. When a number of citizens band together, therefore, to carry on a business which is at best an uncertain one, one in which their works and plant are liable to serious injury from various causes, and in which they are not free to trade where and with whom they choose, but are restricted to localities—a business which confers a benefit to the community and which is already more or less subject to municipal and legislative control, then it is obviously unjust for the municipality to establish and operate a plant in opposition to that of the private company. If a municipal corporation decide to enter into a field of commercial enterprise in which some of its citizens are already engaged, it is only simple justice that it shall offer to take over their works and plant at a fair and equitable price.

Again, the wisdom of a municipality engaging in a commercial enterprise may be questioned; indeed it is a grave question whether the corporation has the moral right to risk the money of its citizens in an undertaking which is attended with such hazards, and in which the advantages to be gained are in any event small and uncertain.

Many cities and towns have been persuaded by incomplete reports and alluring estimates to undertake

the experiment, but it still remains to be proven that a municipal plant can supply a cheaper light than a private company. In towns which are not large enough to make the business remunerative, the installation of a plant by the corporation may be justified, because street lighting is a public necessity, but where private plants already exist that are able and willing to supply the municipality at a fair price, the outlay cannot be regarded otherwise than as an unnecessary expenditure and a waste of public money.

## Electric Flashes.

THE Seaforth, Ont., Electric Light, Heat and Power Company has been incorporated, with a capital stock of \$25,000.

THE Peterboro' and Ashburnham Street Railway Co. have re-elected T. E. Bradburn president, and F. Nicholls vice-president.

THE Galt, Ont., Gas Light Co. have purchased a 1,000-light incandescent lighting plant, and it will be in position some time this month.

A SYNDICATE of capitalists are proposing to build an electric railway from Hamilton, through Waterdown, to Schaw Station, on the C.V.R.

PART of the scheme of the company that is projecting the Hamilton and Guelph electric railway is to build a spur from Little's inn to Burlington.

A PARRSBORO', N.S., company will apply in the winter for a charter to put in and run an electric plant for light and power purposes in that town. Its capital is \$10,000.

THE Bell Telephone Co. are about to extend their line between Winchester, Inkerman and South Mountain to several points in Russell county and through Metcalfe into Ottawa.

CAPT DICKSON, till recently a director and secretary of the Galt & Preston Street Railway, is bringing an action against the company for \$3,000, which he claims as salary, and for services rendered.

THE electric railway is again talked of. A few days ago F. W. Colclough met some of the chief shareholders of the Winnipeg company and submitted facts and figures, and so the matter stands.—*Selkirk Record*.

SAMUEL BRAZIER, a commercial traveller, was jerked off the front platform of a Montreal street car on which he was standing and fell in front of the trailer, the wheels of which passed over his body. He was fatally injured.

THE Durham, Ont., *Review* calls attention to the advantages that village affords for the establishment of an electric light and power station, there being ample water power at Aberdeen, Glenrodden and Hayward's Falls near by.

NEGOTIATIONS are practically completed for the transfer of the Toronto and Scarboro' Electric Railway to the Toronto Street Railway Co. The transfer will be brought about by an exchange of stock, the Toronto company giving four of their shares for every five of the Scarboro'.

SAULT STE. MARIE has sold its power canal to an American syndicate for \$260,000, about the same amount as it cost. The new owners are now about to spend half a million dollars in putting in a new electric light plant for street lighting, in improvements in the water system, etc., etc.

THE Ottawa Electric Co., formed by the amalgamation of the Ottawa Electric Light Co., the Chaudiere Electric Light & Power Co., Ltd., and the Standard Electric Co., Ltd., of Ottawa, last month issued \$320,000 first mortgage bonds, at 5 per cent., principal to be payable October 1st, 1904.

THE case of Lavoie v. The Ottawa Electric Street Railway Company has been settled between the parties, the defendants agreeing to pay \$750. The action was for damages sustained by young Lavoie, a boy of about eight years of age, by having his two feet cut off by one of the company's cars.

THE Montreal Street Railway Company have declared another half-yearly dividend of 4 per cent., a surplus of \$37,000 being carried forward to credit account. The number of miles run during the year increased over 29 per cent., and the number of trips over 30 per cent., and the total number of transfers granted increased nearly 25½ per cent.