

who have the ear and the pocket of the public will insist on going ahead. The interest, therefore, of the situation centres not so much upon the wisdom of a great company of civic fathers, in venturing an indeterminate hazard, but in the amount of business which municipal electricity is likely to make for those branches of industry concerned in the manufacture of supplies for transmission and distribution lines, and of machinery for use in manufactures.

The Hon. Adam Beck pledges his reputation that the scheme for which he is the enthusiastic sponsor will save to the city of Toronto \$500,000 a year. Throughout the Niagara Peninsula there is to be a correspondingly large saving in cost of power and a consequent expansion of manufacturing through greater facility for competition, with factories in the United States and other parts of the country.

In so far as the proposition is one for obtaining cheap power it must command the sympathy of every local citizen. Waiving the question of the accuracy of the original estimates, the effort to obtain cheap power is commendable. It is not a question of friendship for existing companies. They are well able to take care of themselves. There is no need to dread a declining demand for power because it is cheap. The cheaper it is sold, the greater will be the demand.

Business men, like Mr. P. W. Ellis, are enthusiastic for Government-controlled electricity. Though their high reputations would not meet any deficit which the public treasury might incur, their experience and standing have undoubtedly given to the public mind a certain confidence in the feasibility of their proposals; so that if the by-law carries, an honest effort to make it work to the public advantage may be expected.

If—and the size of the “if” is an enormously important factor in the case—the event realizes the expectations of the power enthusiasts, or even the major part of them—a contingency which the history of prophecies unfilled does not seem to predicate—nobody will be more delighted than “The Canadian Engineer.” For there must be a great expansion of industry in Ontario, and the whole complexion of commercial enterprise in the area served by an unsurpassed concatenation of water-falls will be changed out of knowledge.

THE TIME TO BUILD SHIPS.

The Dominion Government is being urged to grant a bounty of \$6 per gross ton to builders of steel ships in Canada. The mercantile interests of Nova Scotia laid the case before the Tariff Commission, and at Mr. Fielding's request have set forth afresh their arguments through the mayors and presidents of the Boards of Trade of Halifax and Dartmouth. Recently a strong deputation of Toronto shipbuilders urged the same case upon Mr. Fielding and other Ministers. The Nova Scotians have reduced their argument to pamphlet form, and, like wise men, have circulated it widely. The case for a bounty is about as strong as any case for a bounty can be. The Halifax deliverance does not state it with maximum force, and leaves it unnecessarily to the imagination to predicate the effects of a wise encouragement of steel shipbuilding. Facts about other countries are enumerated usefully; but the application of them to Canada might have been more cogently set forth.

There are ways and ways of granting Government help to the shipping industry. In Canada it is possible

to call a bounty a bounty. In Great Britain the sacred shibboleths of free trade must be respected, though art and learning, laws and commerce fail. So help to shipmasters is given in the form of payment for carrying mails, and for a call upon the services of fast vessels in time of war. Already John Bull pays over \$5,000,000 a year in subventions to steamship lines. Next year the Cunard Company will put its two 25-knot vessels on the Liverpool-New York passenger service, and for them will draw nearly \$15,000 a week additional from the taxpayer. Without its great receipts from the public exchequer the Cunard Company would not be much of a commercial proposition, for its dividends for over eight years have averaged only 2 per cent. The P. and O. Company receives about \$1,750,000 a year from the Government for its services in Eastern waters.

Of course, the mail service is valuable; but in comparison with what the Government pays common carriers on land for transporting letters and newspapers, the shipping companies receive fabulous amounts.

The decadence of Canadian shipbuilding is one of the deplorable features of our history. We were once the fourth shipbuilding nation in the world. We are the eleventh. To be the fourth was to be eminent: to be seven lower down the list is to be insignificant. The change in the construction of vessels from a maximum of 2,000 tons to anything above 20,000 tons inevitably meant the decline of the Nova Scotian yards, and it is not pertinent to enquire whether by employing cleverer methods, they could have been saved from the worst declension. It was not possible on our Atlantic coast to develop the construction of iron ships simultaneously with the shrinkage of wooden building. Almost any skilful man can soon learn to build a lugger with good timber and a sharp adze; but it takes capital, organization, scientific training to produce iron vessels.

To the general proposition that it is desirable to establish extensively iron shipbuilding in Canada, there can be no objection. The work to be accomplished would not mean any reversal of the decrees of nature. It would only be in line with that trend of things which has become known as the National Policy. Mr. Fielding has said that legislative fostering of a tin plate industry could only be accomplished at a cost, which in the interests of the consumer of tin generally, would make the game not worth the candle. The same cannot be said fundamentally of steel shipbuilding in a country which has some of the finest waterways in the world among its possessions, and which formerly was more highly distinguished among those who defied the dangers of the deep.

The Great Lakes tonnage of 1904 was: Canadian, \$7,975,487, and the United States, \$7,400,613. The advantage of Canada is more apparent than real, and does not represent the extent to which each country is exploiting its natural openings for this class of trade. The shipbuilders complain that though British-made ships are imported for lake traffic as free of duty as those which come to Halifax or Montreal; they have to pay heavy duty on materials for use in the yards, which makes it impossible to compete with the British builder. The “Midland Prince,” launched at Collingwood recently, is the largest vessel construct-