

The St. John Standard

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ST. JOHN, N. B., WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 1922.

PUBLICLY OWNED VS PRIVATELY OWNED ELECTRIC UTILITIES.

On the opposite page we print a synopsis of the report of Messrs. Murray and Flood, the engineers engaged to investigate the economic working of publicly owned and controlled electric utilities as compared with those which are privately owned and regulated.

In the Niagara district of Canada the Government-owned electric utilities furnish power at an actual average cost of 9.25 mills per k.w.h. generated.

The Times asserts that this report was prepared "with the object of showing that public ownership is a failure." Now what earthly reason would two American engineers employ to investigate the economic working of public and private utilities for the information of American interests found to exist in this country?

Whatsoever may have been the high salaries paid for executives, or whatever may have been the profits or dividends accruing in the conduct of the business affairs of the companies, it is manifestly plain that in industry of these, the price of power to the consumer has been less.

The revenue per dollar of salary paid employees of electric light and power plants is almost 25 per cent greater in Quebec than in Ontario, and the revenue per employee earned by private electric companies in Ontario is 15 per cent greater than that earned from the government-owned utilities, whereas the revenue per employee earned in the Province of Quebec is 42 per cent greater than that for the government-owned and operated properties of Ontario.

Public business is usually everybody's business—or nobody's business very often—and is more or less synonymous with general inefficiency. The "public be damned" is generally the keynote of the administration of public utilities, particularly in a country like this where politics and political pull count for a great deal more than merit or efficiency.

The Hon. D. W. Mosher, although Minister of Agriculture, is apparently so fond of the sheep industry. In bringing a bill which will undo all that the existing Act was designed to do, and has to quite a large extent done, he is putting the hands of the clock of progress backward at the behest of a section of the community which values a dog so little that it will not contribute the small sum of \$1 for the privilege of keeping him, and values a sheep at nothing at all.

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structing works on the Musquash was not even contemplated at that time, or it was, the Premier was remarkably absent about it, while he made no secret of the other two rivers. Why was the change made? Can The Telegraph or The Times or anyone else tell us that? The Musquash had been condemned as an impracticable site by several engineers of eminence.

The Foster Government is busily preaching economy, and practicing it too, sometimes, for it has caused \$30 to be cut of each member's allowance for postage, telegraphing, etc. Yet such is the inconsistency of this economical government that it is contemplating, if it has not even already authorized, the construction of a power transmission line from Fairville to Moncton, the cost of which will be about half a million dollars! What is this line going to transmit?

WHAT OTHERS SAY

The Issue At Genoa. (London Daily Chronicle).

The real conflict at Genoa will not be in these wastes of arid logic, but between two very simple alternatives. On the one hand, you will have what may be called (without offence to M. Poincare) the Germanic or Bismarckian ideas of diplomacy which aim at the establishment of a hegemony or supremacy in Europe, fortified with armaments and alliances.

If Laurier Were Alive. (Mall and Empire).

The Globe would have the public believe that Mr. Fielding's reciprocity agreement with Mr. Taft in 1911 had the coal approval of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. It points out that in 1891 Sir Wilfrid went much farther than the agreement twenty years later went for in that year he came out in favour of reciprocity with the United States.

There was no particular need for The Times to describe some of its remarks yesterday afternoon as "another Red Herring." Any reader could see for himself that it was a "fishy" story at a glance.

The Times is in favor of public ownership of the Musquash hydro-electric power—what there is going to be of it—because a report upon an investigation comparing publicly or privately owned electric plants, prepared by two of the foremost engineers in America, declares that a more efficient service is obtained from private than from municipally operated plants, if (the report) is immediately prepared "with the object of showing public ownership to be a failure."

When Premier Foster brought in his bill to create the Hydro-Electric Commission, and develop the water powers of the Province, the only streams that were under contemplation for development in this vicinity were the Lepreau and the Magalloway, as to which satisfactory statistics were available. The idea of constructing works on the Musquash was not even contemplated at that time, or it was, the Premier was remarkably absent about it, while he made no secret of the other two rivers.

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Benny's Note Book BY LEE PAPE. I waked in the parlor after supper last night and was standing on the table but a little while and my hand touched the carmel in it, me thinking, G. O. boy. And I thawt, I wonder who they belong to, I wonder if they belong to anybody?

And I ate one and it was so good I quick at another one, and I keep on that way till nothing was left but the paper bag, me thinking, G. O. boy, what was that with nothing in it? And I quick stuck it in my pocket just as my sister Gladdis came out of the dining room and started to walk around the parlor like somebody looking for something, saying, Now were did I put that, I was sure I put it on this table, Benny, did you see anything of a bag of carmel?

A hole bag of them? I sed, and she sed, No, not a hole bag, but wats that got to do with it, did you see it or dident you? And I sed, Wat kind was they, vaniller? Not wanting to admit I took them until I was sure, and Gladdis sed, No, chookit, O wats the diffrunts wats kind, a pervin mite think the hole house was strewn with bags of candy to heer you tawk, you either saw it or you dident, did you or dident you?

How many peeces was in the bag? I sed, O, 9453, sed Gladdis mad. Wich jest then pop came in and Gladdis sed, Father, will you make Benny tell me wats my candy list I want to go up in my room and read and I cant read without candy.

Wats this, wats all this, Benny? sed pop, and I sed, How did I know it was her candy, I asked whos it was and nobody sed it was anybody and I didnt want to stand there and see it get stale, so I ate it, there was only 5 peeces, holey smoley.

THE LAUGH LINE. Golf not only improves your general health, but enables you to understand the jokes in the comic weeklies. The reason why some people don't talk more is that they can't think of anything further to say about themselves.—Boston Transcript.

Good Things to Know. The Dodge City Journal has learned that a ton of diamonds is now worth 60 million dollars, and warns its readers that if they pay any more than that they are getting stung.—Kansas City Star.

And She Was Tired of It. Mrs. Harris—"And how is your husband keeping?" Mrs. Binks—"E ain't keeping, 'e's on strike—and I'm doing the keeping!"—Answers.

Revelations in Either Case. If a man gets shot, the papers reveal his past. If he gets half shot, he does it.—Washington Post.

With Money so Cheap in Some of the Old World Countries, the Average European Will Not Find It Hard to Agree with Laga in Declaring "He who steals my purse steals trash."—Scranton Republican.

Causing Bluntness of Speech. The force of example is shown by the fact that when a razor loses its temper it is apt to make the user lose his also.—Boston Transcript.

When a woman tells her husband she will be ready in a minute, he picks out a minute about half an hour away.—Boston Transcript.

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COAL. Hard and Soft, Best Quality. Also Dry Wood. The Colwell Fuel Co., Ltd. Phone West 17 or 90. Wholesale and Retail. S. KERR, Principal.

ELECTRIC Government Privately Owned Synopsis of the Report Flood for the New York, U With Privately and the United

Government ownership and operation of electric light and power utilities, as exemplified by the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, is not a success, from the viewpoint of either service or cost, as compared with privately-owned and publicly-regulated electric light and power companies in the United States and Canada.

This in effect is the outstanding conclusion in a report made to the National Electric Light Association by the engineering firm of Murray and Flood of New York City, and just released for publication by that Association. They compare a mass of contributory evidence gathered first-hand by the engineering firm in an exhaustive investigation begun on August 12, 1921, and covering the period up to February 10, 1922, when the report was presented.

The printed report contains more than 225 pages of printed matter and charts. In it the engineers trace the development of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario since its inception. They compare its growth and operation with the growth and operation of electric power utilities in the Province of Quebec and in sections of the United States, and give comparative and pertinent statistics on the bonded debt, revenue, operating expenses, taxes, wages, etc., of municipally-owned and privately-owned Canadian electric utilities.

The engineering firm making the report is comprised of Mr. W. B. Murray, who conducted the Super-Power Survey on the Atlantic Seaboard between Boston and Washington for the United States Government, and who in addition is conversant with Canadian conditions, having acted as consulting engineering capacity for municipal and provincial bodies, and Mr. Henry Flood, Jr., formerly Engineer-Secretary of the United States Government Super-Power Survey Organization.

Object of investigation. The investigation was made for the purpose of obtaining complete economic data from which to draw a comparison between governmentally-owned and privately-owned utilities. This merely led to a consideration of the political and economic structure of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, which operates the largest government-owned system in existence, and to a comparison between that system and others privately-owned and operated, but subject to public regulation both in the United States and Canada.

In the report Mr. Murray is careful to state that it is not intended to dish the glory of the achievement of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, which he says, has replaced certain unregulated private utilities whose operation was far inferior to it. The principal problem was to determine whether there was anything in the Ontario plan to commend it for application in the United States.

In summarizing the results of the investigation the report asserts that no system of electric service such as that operated by the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario is applicable in the United States, for the reason that it is subversive of American policy and custom, and in addition is inefficient, expensive and wasteful. It shows that the service rendered by privately-owned utilities under public regulation is cheaper and better than that rendered by governmentally-owned utilities, and that even in Ontario, which has what is generally looked upon as the most successful example of government-owned utilities, private capital and enterprise have contributed more to the upbuilding of civic, industrial and commercial life than has the government-owned project.

Conclusions. In the summary of conclusions at the front of the report appears the following: "After careful analysis of the governmentally-owned, controlled and operated electric utility structure as represented in the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, I am of the opinion, firstly, that the principles of its application can find no place in the United States; secondly, that to attempt the substitution of its principles of control and operation within the States would be to strike a blow at economic structures, the present existence of which are not only far better equipped to protect the public interests in their constructive activities with the public service commissions of the States regulating their rates, but it would also be to strike an equal blow at the shareholders of the electric utilities owned by the public; and, thirdly, that the Hydro-Electric Power Commission was being only to the fact that a public service commission in the order of those operating in the States was not in existence."