

In the field of electric lighting, in which a majority of the members of the association are more particularly interested, a reasonably satisfactory condition of affairs exists. That industry is on a fairly solid basis, at least, in so far as a distribution of current for incandescent and power purposes is concerned, as rendered evident by the failure of the much-talked-of illuminant of the future, acetylene gas, to make any inroad into the field of the lighting companies. A large majority of the plants now in operation are equipped with reasonably modern and efficient machinery, and the rates at which current is supplied are, it is safe to say, if taken on the average, the lowest in the world.

We will have before us the report of the Committee on Legislation. From this you will see how far the efforts made since our last meeting have been successful in the direction of securing equitable protection of private investments. It is to be hoped that the work of the association during the convention will be helpful to the members and that they will recognize the value they receive from their attendance here with respect to the papers which have been prepared for the convention. You will see their practical and helpful nature, and I trust you are ready to criticize and discuss the views set forth in the light of your own experience. One thing more I feel should be mentioned, and that is, the appreciation of the efforts of the different companies and individuals in Montreal who have so heartily co-operated for the success of this meeting. The proverbial hospitality of our metropolitan city is known to you all. A pleasing feature at our last convention, was the regular and prompt attendance of members at all sessions and the keen interest taken in the proceedings. This commendable practice will, I trust, be kept up at this our eighth convention, now open for business.

The president then nominated B. H. Reesor, Lindsay; A. B. Smith, Toronto, and C. B. Hunt, London, as a committee to suggest the names of the Standing Committees.

A. A. Wright, of Renfrew, then read his paper on "How to Overcome Some of the Difficulties Encountered by Central Station Men."

HOW TO OVERCOME SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY CENTRAL STATION MEN.

BY A. A. WRIGHT, RENFREW, ONT.

In treating this subject I shall do so from the standpoint of one who has to deal with customers living in a town of moderate size, and not from that of the owner of a plant in a large and populous city, because the circumstances would be, in many respects, quite different, and the requirements, as well as the mode of arranging the service, would be altogether different. I shall take it for granted that the central station is equipped with an arc and incandescent plant, that the proprietor not only does commercial lighting, but supplies light to the corporation as well.

1st. Let us take up arc lighting on the street. This brings us at once into contact with the corporate fathers, many of whom know nothing of arc lighting, except that it is not only necessary, but their special duty, to appear wise in order that they may look well after the interests of the town.

And now let me make my first suggestion, and that is, that you leave municipal politics entirely alone. If you have an inordinate craving after politics, which you have not the power to restrain, let your light shine before the throne of the Legislative Assembly or in the chamber of the House of Commons, but restrain yourself from meddling with municipal politics, lest you make to yourself enemies who will be sure to avenge themselves, sooner or later, in crippling your lighting contracts with the corporation. I do not wish you to infer from this that you should not exercise your franchise when the day for voting comes around, but on the contrary, let it be known that you and your employees always vote for the progressive and enterprising men of the town, and as every aspiring alderman will want your assistance, you if you do not make too much noise, will generally manage when he is elected to get his. Be careful not to make political enemies but to have as many of the town authorities with you as you possibly can. In most towns the contracts for street lighting are made annually, and not as in cities, for a term of years. See to it then, that your contract is so arranged that it shall terminate on the 1st of March. You can do this by informing the proper authorities that your books are so arranged that

your Electric Light year begins on that date. Then see that the following harmless looking saving clause is inserted near the closing part of the contract. "And it is further agreed that either party may terminate this lease at the end of its term by giving the other thirty days' notice in writing prior thereto, and in default of such notice this agreement shall continue in force after the termination thereof, for one year, and upon the same terms and conditions as are herein expressed, and in like manner thereafter, unless such notice is given at least thirty days before the corresponding date in each succeeding year, a like renewal and extension of this lease from year to year shall be considered as made and executed by and between, the parties hereto." Furthermore have your payments fall due quarterly and on the 1st of March, June, September, and December. You know that in Ontario at least, our municipal elections are held at the beginning of the year, and as most of the aldermen will be aspiring to re-election, and would like to have your assistance to re-elect them, they will quite naturally forget, as the term of their holding office is drawing to a close, to give notice of the desirability of terminating that contract, and you almost invariably escape that threatened danger from the outgoing council. Then the new council does not assemble till the last of January and as very little business is done at the first meeting and many of the members are new ones. Electric Lighting is not thought of till your quarterly account is presented in March, when it will be too late to give the required notice, and so your contract runs on in this manner from year to year, renewing itself without any trouble whatever. Another difficulty, which you are almost sure to encounter, is the height of the poles on which your lights are placed on the streets. Some will want 50 ft. poles some 75 ft. and some even higher than either of these. When your contract is made be sure and have the clause worded in this way. "That the hangers from which the lamps are suspended shall be—feet from the natural level of the surface of the ground at the foot of the pole," and not, that the lamp shall be so many feet high, as you will notice that this makes an important difference in your favor. It is well to have it so arranged that you need not run your arc plant on moonlight nights, not merely on account of the direct saving that there is in this, but it sometimes is very convenient, if there are accidents, in giving you an opportunity to make needed repairs.

And now as to your commercial lights. Have your contracts made with your customers on a yearly basis, with same renewing clause that there is in your contract with the town, but with this difference, that the payments in this case be made to you weekly, and then see to it that you make your collections in this way, for a man will frequently pay you a small sum weekly, when he would not pay the same amount if paid quarterly. It may not be amiss to mention that in all these contracts, when stating the candle power of the lamps you are to furnish, that you should be sure and employ the words "nominal candle" power, as it may save you, under certain circumstances no small amount of trouble also.

And next, as to your incandescent service. This will, of course, be largely, if not entirely, a commercial service. You will have all manner of people to deal with and you may expect, in many cases, to have your patience sorely tried.

Then to begin at the beginning. Never under any circumstances do free wiring. By that I mean that you should never undertake to wire a house for nothing, in order that you might thus get a customer for your current. Of course you should do all primary work as low as possible, but not at a loss. If your power is at all limited, or if you run by steam, you will find, in my opinion, that you will make more by running your lights on the meter system than you will by giving a flat rate unless you get an exceptionally good price for them.

I understand that in many places it is customary to take the readings of your meters quarterly, as it thus saves a good deal of time in taking the readings, making out the accounts collecting them, etc. In this, as in other things, the old adage holds good that "Short accounts make long friends," and by no means should you allow your accounts to pass more than one month without being rendered, and if possible, collected. It might not be so bad, in the short nights of midsummer, if quarterly collections were adopted, but in the end it will amply repay you to take your readings on the first day of each month, and make your collections on the 2nd.