

will further ask what confidence can be placed in municipal bodies who, having the assent of the ratepayers to a certain contract, suddenly make another which render the ratepayers liable for something entirely different. What confidence will the money men in England, who have shewn a willingness to embark their capital in Canadian enterprises, think of the proceeding of the Power Commission—of its constitution—of its immunity from attack? What will they think of a community which, in pursuit of some possible gain, shows such disregard of the commonest rule of good faith in dealing with the rights and properties lawfully created and lawfully existing. The alarm has already been sounded and it may be that some of those who go to London borrowing will come away sorrowing.

As has been stated two of our judges have declared that these contracts are absolutely void. But now there arises another most important question. Can this legislature—can any legislature—step in to impose upon a municipality an obligation which not only it had never accepted, but which is at variance with one it had accepted? In other words, can the legislature, by any Act of theirs, force upon a municipality a contract—any contract, it matters not what—which the ratepayers had not agreed to. To the municipalities is given the power to say what obligations they will assume and what they will reject, but if the legislature can, in such a case as this, compel the municipality to assume an obligation without consent of the ratepayers—when the legislature has enacted that such consent is an absolutely necessity for the validity of the obligation—then the power of the ratepayers to exercise their constitutional rights in the matter of local taxation is taken away. It seems almost absurd to suppose that such a proposal is even contemplated by the legislature of this province; but there is popular clamour fomented by irresponsible newspaper writers and other interests, political and otherwise, that would be served by so doing. We have seen, moreover, enough of the readiness with which private rights have been interfered with by legislative action to feel any certainty that for the purpose of carrying out this particular scheme even the undoubted rights of any municipality may not be sacrificed. It