

The Canadian Engineer

Established 1893

A Weekly Paper for Civil Engineers and Contractors

Terms of Subscription, postpaid to any address:

One Year	Six Months	Three Months	Single Copies
\$3.00	\$1.75	\$1.00	10c.

Published every Thursday by

The Monetary Times Printing Co. of Canada, Limited

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HYDRO UNIFORM RATE ASSOCIATION

MUNICIPALITIES in Ontario have been circularized by an organization called the Ontario Hydro Power Uniform Rate Association and asked to approve of an outline of suggested legislation for securing a uniform rate for hydro-electric power for all municipalities throughout that province. The executive offices of the association are in Goderich, and the president and secretary-treasurer are residents of that city. Their proposal is that a uniform rate of \$18.50 per horse-power per annum be fixed for the sale of power to any municipality in the province, and that the present rates be adjusted by increasing or decreasing them annually by one-fifth of the difference between the present rate and \$18.50, so that a complete adjustment may be effected within five years.

The association also asks the provincial government to take over the hydro-electric system from the municipalities and to make it a provincial institution. They urge the appointment of a permanent provincial hydro-electric commission of three members to administer the system along the lines of a general policy to be laid down by the provincial government, and they suggest that the chairman should be a man of financial ability, that one of the other commissioners should take special interest in the development and engineering features of the work, and that the third commissioner should be specially fitted to look after the general needs of the people and the municipalities.

It is not likely that the Ontario Hydro Power Uniform Rate Association will succeed in persuading the majority of municipalities in the Hydro union to endorse such a radical program. Aside from all question of equity in the proposal to force citizens of Niagara Falls and nearby communities to pay for transmission lines to Goderich or other distant municipalities, there is an economic side of the

problem that should receive the serious consideration of all municipalities before they thoughtlessly approve the association's proposals. If an electro-chemical industry, for instance, be persuaded to locate in Goderich and take, say, 10,000 h.p. at the same price at which it could buy power in or near Niagara Falls, the delivery of that 10,000 h.p. in Goderich might require the generation of 12,000 h.p., more or less, at Niagara Falls, on account of the line loss between Niagara Falls and Goderich. If the industry were to locate at or near Niagara Falls, practically no more than 10,000 h.p. would have to be generated to supply that industry with 10,000 h.p. The location of the industry at Goderich would, therefore, mean a constant loss of possibly 2,000 h.p. which might otherwise be sold to some other manufacturer who would help to build up the province along other lines.

The policy of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario ever since its inception has been to prevent waste of water power and to secure the maximum of efficiency in hydro-electric development in Ontario. It is inconceivable that the commission would tolerate an economic loss such as that above described any more than it would construct an inefficient water power plant that would not make the best economic use of the available water.

It might be possible that on account of a favorable labor market, superior transportation facilities or advantageous supplies of raw materials, the electro-chemical industry above quoted might desire to locate in Goderich regardless of the distance from the source of power supply. That being the case, the industry should be willing to pay the proper price for its power,—a price which would include its portion of the cost of transmitting that power to its doors.

The flat rate of \$18.50 which is now suggested could not be maintained for many years. Outlying districts, if able to secure power so cheaply, would demand many new transmission lines of great length, and the flat rate would constantly increase or else the balance sheet would suffer. In time the flat rate would reach a point that would be unnecessarily prohibitive in the more populous districts of the province, merely because distant municipalities had been served with cheap power,—municipalities that will probably never order "Hydro" power if they are required to pay the real cost of its transmission.

The proposal to place the "Hydro" under the direct control of the province instead of the municipalities is largely a political question and can best be discussed by the daily newspapers and by the members of the provincial parliament, but from an engineering viewpoint it would seem very unfortunate if the "Hydro" power developments are to be made the foot-ball of professional politicians.

The above-mentioned circular states that the "outline of suggested provincial legislation has been approved of by the officers and board of directors of this Association (the Ontario Hydro Power Uniform Rate Association), and also by the Legislative Section of the U.F.O., who are now busily engaged in placing the matter before the various Clubs of their Association, and we have good hopes for a final success."

Letter to the Editor

BIG DEMAND FOR ENGINEERS

Sir,—Referring to the letter in your last week's issue on "Big Demand for Engineers," the gist of which seems to be that 800 engineering students in the University of Toronto will give a supply far beyond the demand.

The future development of Canada and the United States will require an ever-increasing number of engineers, and, of course, many who graduate in engineering are en-