SEALERS, NOTICE!

The Third Annual F. P. U. Sealers Mass Meeting will be held in the C. L. B. Armoury on **THURSDAY** Evening next, at 8 p.m. The building will contain 5000 persons, and all Sealers will therefore be welcome. A number of the citizens of St. John's will also be admitted, and they may secure tickets on application to Mr. Grimes, M. H. A., The C. L. B. Band will be in attendance and will supply band music. The chair will be occupied by Mr. W. B. Jennings, M.H.A. The Speakers will be Messrs. Coaker, Morine, Kent, Lloyd, Cowan and Dwyer.

Characterises Charter As Creation of Monopoly

Mr. G. F. Grimes, M. H. A., Opposes the Granting of Sweeping Powers to a Conception Bay Electric Company.

At the House of Assembly on Monday the question of the transfer of the Conception Bay Electric Company's rights to the United Town's Electric Company was up for discussion. Mr. George Grimes, M.H.A., Port de Grave, raised objection to the granting of exclusive rights to the water powers and contended that the Company should not be exempted from taxation. The transfer, he declared, would create a monopoly, which was far from desirable.

The Act of Incorporation of the Conception Electric Company, which now seeks permission to transfer its rights thereunder to the United Town's Electric Company, was passed in 1913 and confers wide powers.

Powers of Company.

"The Conception Bay Electric Company," says the Act (Sec. 10), "shall "have all licenses, rights and privileges necessary for the proper and "efficient use of electricity to light the "aforesaid towns and streets and "buildings thereof, and to heat the "buildings in said towns, within the "radius to be defined as aforesaid; "and also all licenses, rights and privileges necessary for the proper and "efficient use of electric or other power to operate cars in the said streets "and highways in the manner successfully in use elsewhere, including the "right to open said streets and highways for the purpose of inserting and "maintaining tramway tracks, and to "insert and maintain poles for supporting the wires conveying electric "or other power, but no such poles "shall be less than twenty feet in "height above the ground; provided it "shall be the duty of the said Company at its own expense to keep the "portions of the said tramway, between the rails traversed by the "track of the said tramway, between "the rails thereof, and for two feet on "each side of its track, in a state of "repair equal to other parts of the "said street."

Purpose of Incorporation.

18. "For the purpose of carrying on "all works in the aforesaid towns and "country necessary for (a) lighting "the towns, streets and buildings "thereof; (b) heating the buildings "thereof; (c) producing and supplying "electricity for power therein; (d) "the constructing and operating of "tramways therein:

"(1) The Company is hereby granted the exclusive right and franchise "for a period of fifty years from the "date of the passing of this Act (a) To "construct, instal, and operate a plant "for lighting with electric light the "streets and buildings; (b) To construct, instal, and operate a plant to "heat by electricity the buildings; (c) "To construct, instal and operate a "plant to generate and supply electricity for power purposes; (d) To "construct, instal and operate electrical or other power tramways or "street railways; (e) To all such "rights, franchise and privileges as "may be necessary, to construct, "instal and operate electrical "or other power tramways or "street railways; (f) To all such "rights, franchises and privileges as may be necessary for the efficient and convenient attainment of "the objects in this section set forth "and in particular the right to lay "tracks, erect poles, and stretch wires "between said poles, upon public "lands, and upon existing and unbuilt "roads in, to and from the towns of "Brigus, Cupids, Clarke's Beach, Port "de Grave, Bay Roberts, Spaniard's "Bay, and the villages and country "within the radius to be defined as "aforesaid;

(2) "Subject to the approval of the "Governor in Council, the right to acquire and develop a suitable water-"power in, adjacent to, or within the "radius to be defined as aforesaid, and "the right to use the waters of any "brook or brooks, with tributaries "and lakes within or adjacent to same;

(3) "Provided that the Government, "or other body having charge of the "aforesaid towns may, after the lapse "of thirty years from the date of this "Charter, purchase the said railway "and other rights of the said Company, as a going concern, upon giving to the Company twelve months "notice of their intention to do so."

Exemptions.

20. "All plant, machinery, rolling "stock, implements, apparatus, tools, "utensils and materials necessary for "the original construction of the said "lighting, heating, power, and tramway systems and extensions thereof "shall be admitted into the Colony "free of duty.

21. "The Company shall be exempted from all rates, taxes and assessments for the period of fifty years "from the date of the passage of this "Act.

Limitation of Rights.

22. "The Company shall, within five "years from the passing of this Act, "proceed with the construction of all "works which may be necessary for "the installation of the lighting of the "streets and buildings of the aforesaid "towns, and shall fully complete said "works and operate the same within "seven years from the passing of this "Act: Provided that if the Company "shall not have proceeded with the "construction of said works and have "the said works completed and in operation in any one of the aforesaid "towns, within the period mentioned "in this section, all rights, powers, "and privileges and advantages granted to the Company by this Act, shall "cease and determine in the town in "which the said works may not yet be "completed at such time, save and except as hereinafter provided."

Should Be Altered.

"I quite agree with the suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition that the Government should avail of the present opportunity (afforded by the suggested amendments to the Charter of the Conception Bay Electric Co. and the United Town's Electrical Co.) to do away with the exclusive monopoly given them by the enactment made last year," said Mr. Grimes.

"The passage of the amendment without any understanding being had to do away with this exclusiveness would be to place a power within the hand of a Company (by the terms under which it is allowed to operate) that is fraught with great danger to the general interest of the people.

"Private monopolies, as a general rule, wherever they exist, whether in the U.S. or Canada, England, or in our own Country, or elsewhere, have been a great evil and there is no reason to think that it would be otherwise with this Electric Company.

"I have always contended that these undertakings should be controlled by the Government as the only effective means of safeguarding the interests of the general public.

For Fifty Years.

"In the charter granted to the Conception Bay Electric Co. we find in the copy of the Act on page 9, Sec. 18, that the Company is granted the exclusive rights and franchise for **a period of fifty years** of carrying on **all works** in the towns of Brigus, Cupids, Clarke's Beach, Port de Grave, Bay Roberts and the villages and country within a radius to be defined, that are necessary for (a) lighting the towns, street and buildings thereof; (b) heating the buildings thereof; (c) producing and supplying electricity for power therein; (d) the constructing and operating of tramways therein.

"Now, Sir, I strongly protest against this outrageous proposition made by these Companies. It would place the people at their mercy, dependent solely upon the Company's will as to how their interests shall be served. We do not know what progress may take place in the space of a few years. These villages may become towns, the towns become cities which will demand all the improvements that go with such progress.

Who Will Grant Them?

"But to whom are the people in such case to look for improvement when it comes to lighting, tramways and the other things covered in the contract? Not to the Government but to a private Corporation which will only make improvements where good returns are assured and no matter how the people may protest they with their large capital, plenty of friends, the influence they may exert upon the governing body, be it a municipal council, county council or the government, may be exercised in such manner as that any request for better service for the people that may be demanded at any time may be replied to in the way Vanderbilt once replied to some legislators in the U.S.: 'The people be damned, I own the railway and I'll operate it as I please.'

Handicap Industries.

"There is an iron mine being worked at North River at the present time that has all the possibilities of developing into a big industry in a very short while. We all want to see our country developed, new mines opened, new factories established—any industry that will build up the Country. Well here is this mine at North River, are we going to place difficulties in the way of the development of that industry? The mining company there may in all probability want to use water power, electric power for light and for other purposes.

"But they can't get it. The United Town's Co. has been given exclusive right to all such power. True the Mining Co. can go to the Electric Co. but the terms of the Company may be such as to make it very difficult to carry on its operations and the evil effect will not only be felt by this North River Mining Co. but by the miners; by all the persons employed —the whole district and the Country as well.

"Then again, take the woollen industry at Hueville. There is every indication that that industry will develop to respectable proportions. They did well last year and will be adding to their plant the coming year. With the increase of business will come the demand for the use of electric power or other power such as that of which the United Town's Co. has received a monopoly.

Possibilities.

"That Hueville Co. and the Mining Co. at North River may find that it would be more to their interest to generate their own electricity, just as Ayre & Sons did here in the city. But will they be able to do this? Not as this Act is now. And that very exclusiveness may put these industries out of business altogether as with a growing competition every element of cost will have to be counted if a business is to pay.

"But not only with the exclusive right to I find, Sir, but also with the forfeiture clauses.

"Mr. Chairman, if I understand the provisions made in Section 22 aright, it means that the Company is not bound to light all the place in the area affected; that if it finds it to its interest to leave out Brigus, Georgestown, the Goulds, Bareneed, Port de Grave, Cupids, North River, any one or two or more of these places it is at liberty to do so.

"And what would the effect of such exceptions be? Not only would these places be without electric light, electric power that may be wanted at any time to light its houses, churches, streets or to run a factory or other industry, but that they would be powerless to instal it, having been shut out from co-operating with the other places, where the Company would be operating and too small of themselves to operate on their own account.

"Such powers as this conferred upon the Company are too great and too dangerous, not only with regard to light, heating and operating tramways but in their exemption from all rates, taxes, and assessments.

"As I said before any of these places where the Company will be operating may grow into cities and find themselves cut off from a revenue from

(Continued on page 4.)

Sealers! Sealers!

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