

Electricity Inspection Act

the effect of the wartime order on the statutory time limits: for example, was the running of the statutory time merely suspended while the order was in force, or was the effect that the statutory period was to recommence on revocation of the order?

It appears that some difficulties still exist and that many meters due under the time schedule for verification in 1949 were not verified, and some due for verification in 1950 may not be verified in 1950. This bill will provide clear authority for extensions by the governor in council in necessary cases and for enforcement of the act where further extensions appear to be unwarranted.

In addition to the need for extending the six-year inspection period by reason of the wartime meter inspection order, the Ontario Hydro Electric Power Commission is undertaking the conversion of all 25-cycle power to 60-cycle power in southern Ontario. This program, it is expected, will cover the next ten to fifteen years. The problem facing the department is the six-year seal period of meters in so far as it affects meters of any contractor who may be scheduled for conversion immediately after the six-year period is reached. For example, meters sealed in 1944 are due to be resealed in 1950, and it is possible some of these will be included in the conversion schedule for 1951. In this event, under the existing legislation, the contractor would be required to present these meters in 1950 and again in 1951 after conversion, or present new meters if such are installed. There are some 400,000 meters affected by conversion. While it is extremely unlikely that this number would be in the position mentioned, with a minimum inspection fee of 60 cents per meter plus cost of removal, repair, etc., large utilities could be faced with sizeable expenditures which, on the ground of good sense, should not be incurred.

In a good many cases the contractors involved have extended every co-operation to the department with respect to their overdue meters, and to require verification in the succeeding year would, it is felt, be an undue hardship.

It might also be pointed out that power is vested in the governor in council under the Weights and Measures Act, which is another inspection service administered by the department, to fix the periods in which inspections may be made.

Third, this bill provides for the elimination of adhesive stamps, which are fixed to certificates of inspection at the present time as evidence of payment of fees for the inspection. The Electricity Inspection Act was originally administered by the old department of inland revenue, and it was

[Mr. Howe.]

apparently the practice in that department that any document evidencing payment of funds to the crown should be receipted by stamps. There was the further feature that this practice did provide some measure of control of funds received by inspectors from companies where inspection work was undertaken.

Present-day practices have eliminated the necessity of this type of control. When meters are inspected in any utility, lists of these are entered on a document known as a "field note", which gives details of the work done and the fees due. When the work is completed, a copy of the field note is left with the contractor; the original copy together with a receipt for contractor's copy and the amount of fees due is returned to the district office of electricity and gas in the area. A bill is then rendered against the utility for the fees indicated in the field notes. When payment is made to the district office, a certificate is sent to the utility with the necessary value of cancelled adhesive stamps thereon. Even in the case of the smallest contractors, where the fees may be paid upon completion of the inspection, the stamped certificate is not issued except by the district office upon receipt of the field notes and the fees collected.

Stamps are in themselves not negotiable for postal or excise purposes, and the printing for the stamps required by the three inspection services—gas, electricity and weights and measures—costs between \$1,200 and \$1,500 a year. It is felt that by including an appropriately worded receipt in the certificate, the stamps can be eliminated.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and the house went into committee thereon, Mr. Dion in the chair.

Sections 1 and 2 agreed to.

On section 3—*Re-verification of meters.*

Mr. Fulton: May I ask the minister a question arising out of the statement he made? Is there any program in effect for getting back to the six-year period of inspection, apart from the difficulty created by the Ontario Hydro Electric Power Commission conversion? Or is it the intention merely to let the normal six years expire and then insist on the six-year verification from then on? Is any effort being made to catch up on the disruption caused by the war and to insist on the six-year period from there on?

Mr. Howe: A very serious effort has been made to catch up. I am told that there will be very few meters not inspected within the six-year period at the end of 1950. There may be a few. But the difficulty is that the