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EDITORIAL.

Cheap Power for the People.

"From figures which I have been able to secure, I estimate that power can be developed at Niagara Falls for \$8.00 per horse-power. The figure would cover money expended in installation, in maintenance expenses, depreciation and interest on money invested, at, say, 4 to 5 per cent. Against this, steam power costs, on an average, \$28.00 per horse-power. The difference is \$20.00 per horse power, or a saving of \$10,000,000 to the Province."

The above statement, before a general meeting of the Toronto Board of Trade, by Hon. Adam Beck, Member of the Ontario Cabinet, and President of the Niagara Parks Commission and the Municipal Power Commission, conveys a graphic idea of the immense importance to Ontario of the Niagara-power question.

Further words of Mr. Beck's on the same occasion, indicate the absolute necessity of some Government enterprise or control to ensure that the benefits of this enormous natural energy may accrue to the people at large, and not to a few privileged capitalists.

"It cannot be contradicted that at present power is being sold at Niagara for \$12.00 a horse-power. It is to be brought to Toronto by the Electric Development Company, and sold in large units at \$35.00 to consumers. How is it that the cost of transmission is \$23.00 per horse-power? It is an unreasonable figure, and can only be accounted for by the belief that the interests of the three companies—the Electric Development, the Toronto Electric Light, and the Toronto & Niagara—have identical interests behind them, such as Sir Henry Pillatt, Frederick Nicholls, Senator Cox, and others. I cannot accept the statement that these companies are justified in charging \$35.00. I may say to them that it costs only \$5.00 for transmission, instead of \$23.00. But the price you are asked to pay is not what this power costs, but what these companies can get from you.

"Regarding the price of this power to the consumer, I believe the matter might well be left in the hands of our Provincial Legislature. The power companies are our tenants, and as such we should be able to regulate them."

The meaning of these facts—for there is no reason for doubt that they are facts—is of the utmost significance. The greatest handicap of industrial Ontario and Quebec has been high cost of coal, neither Province having any within her own borders. But here, tumbling over the Niagara escarpment alone, to say nothing of all the other waterfalls in the country, is water which Mr. Beck estimates sufficient to supply with cheap electric power 1,500,000 people; and this power, according to the report of the Municipal Power Commission, should be available for manufacturing purposes at \$15 to \$17 per horse-power, for 365 twenty-four hour days a year. Take the outside figure, \$17, and compare it with steam power at \$28—steam power, it is said, in many cases costs much more than \$28—and we still have a difference of \$11.00 per horse-power, which would be a splendid inducement for the investment of foreign capital, and a splendid advantage to Canadian industries in competition with the world; in every way more desirable than tariff increases, which some manufacturers have been clamoring for.

A furore has been raised about the destruction of the scenic beauty at the Falls, and if the whole profit of power development were to go into the pockets of promoters, and the electric energy developed sold at about the price of steam power,

so that no material advantage resulted to the Province, we would be justified in objecting to the perversion of this sublime wonder to the aggrandizement of capitalists. But if the price at which this power is sold may be regulated by the Government, and if the energy may be used to build up industries, lighten labor, cheapen illumination, extend transportation facilities and reduce the cost of them, then the public will have much to gain by a withdrawal of a portion of the water at the Falls. And Mr. Beck assures us that Canada has not been prodigal in letting franchises, and that the Government of Ontario, and, he believed, also the Government of Canada, would never consent to any steps which would deplete the waters of the great cataract. The State of New York has granted power franchises, without demanding a limit to the amount of water that shall be used; but our policy has been more discreet.

While there can be no two opinions as to the advisability of Government intervention to secure cheap power for the public, there is a question as to whether the Government should generate the power, or merely buy it from the companies and distribute it throughout the country. It has been gathered from Mr. Beck's utterances that he favored the latter plan, but it is understood, at date of writing, that the Ontario Municipal Power Commission, which gives in detail the result of the examinations by electrical and hydraulic engineers, contractors and accountants, urges the construction of a power plant and transmission line by the Government, and on its careful estimates was based the conclusion that power for manufacturing purposes could be supplied for \$17.00 per horse-power per year. Following are the calculations of the Commission:

Cost of development, transmission and distribution of 30,000 horse-power, \$6,684,000.

Cost of same for 60,000 horse-power, \$9,354,000.

Cost of same for 100,000 horse-power, \$11,909,000.

It was also found by the Commissioners that it would be possible to effect a reduction of at least twenty-five per cent. in house-lighting.

The last contract made by the City of Toronto for arc lamps was at the rate of about \$65.00 per year per lamp. The Commission found that arc lamps could be provided for about \$40 a year.

The Commission also estimated that there would be a saving of \$1,850,000 each year to the municipalities interested.

Whether the Government undertakes development and transmission, or transmission merely, some jealous interests will have to be dealt with, as between nearby and distant points, but if a careful estimate of the cost of transmission be made, and the charge at different points fixed accordingly, there should be no cause for complaint.

One thing we shall expect to be safeguarded is the rights of farmers who may in future desire electricity for lighting, and who knows how long it will be before we want it to run stationary farm machinery? Cheap power to the cities and towns, and to electric railway companies, will mean much indirectly to farmers, but the time will come when it will be directly utilized on the farms, and the Province should see to it that the power is then available to us at rock-bottom prices.

Even the Dominion Government has taken a hand in this question, by formulating a federal policy to guide them in dealing with applications to export electric power. Right to export will only be granted subject to revocation at short notice, there to be no claim against Federal or Provincial Government arising out of such revoca-

tion, and the companies to be subject always to such rules and regulations as the Government sees fit to impose. The revocation of right to export, it is understood, is designed as a means of assuring that whenever power generated at Niagara is needed in Canada, it may be available to Canadians. Meantime, as Hon. Mr. Beck has pointed out, it would be an injustice to prohibit realization of profits by the enterprising capitalists who have invested between \$30,000,000 and \$40,000,000 in power development at Niagara Falls. "The Farmer's Advocate," however, fails to see why a small export duty might not very well be imposed on power, in order that we might derive a revenue from this natural resource.

One fact we should keep in mind. This water-power and all the other waterpowers in the country belong, or should belong, to the people of this country. They represent an asset bound to increase enormously in value as years go by. They are worth retaining control of to cheapen production, to increase the returns from labor in factory and on farm. With cheap power as an inducement, it should no longer be necessary for municipalities to offer manufactories bonuses, exemptions, etc., which, as everyone knows, come out of the taxpayer sooner or later. Our great natural resources, such as waterpower, are a means of making life in this country better worth living. We would have ourselves to blame if we gave away power privileges without taking care that every volt of energy be sold at the lowest possible rate and on fair terms to every prospective user.

Regulation of Express Rates.

A subject that has engaged earnest and frequent attention at annual meetings of horticultural and agricultural associations is the matter of express rates on fruit, vegetables, poultry, stock, and other farm produce. Especially important is it to the fruit and vegetable grower. Owing to its perishable nature, and, in some cases, also the instability of the market, most of the produce has to be forwarded by express, and transportation is about the heaviest toll in its marketing. For instance, the express rate on fruit from the Niagara District to Montreal is 80 cents per 100 pounds, and in periods of low prices the transportation amounts to a considerable proportion of the sales receipts. Not a few cases are on record where consignments have failed to realize express charges and consignee's commission. It is thus apparent how even a slight reduction in this schedule might widen the markets for fruit, and enhance returns to the producer sufficient to increase materially the profits of fruit-growing.

There are, at present, two large express companies participating in this fruit and vegetable trade in Canada, besides which are the American Express Co., operating on the Michigan Central Railroad, and a number of smaller companies operating on local or Provincial railroads. The two large companies referred to are the Canadian and the Dominion Express Companies, intimately related to the Grand Trunk and the Canadian Pacific Railroad Companies, respectively, though both operate on a number of other lines, notably the Canadian Express Company over the Intercolonial Railway, and the Dominion over various electric lines, such as the Hamilton, Grimsby and Beamsville, in the Niagara District. On account of the Canadian and Dominion Companies being virtually owned by or analogous with the principal railway companies over whose lines they operate, and on account, also, of the fact that, with a rare exception, one express company has exclusive privileges on any one railroad, the express business practically amounts to a monopoly, and there would seem to be especially good reasons