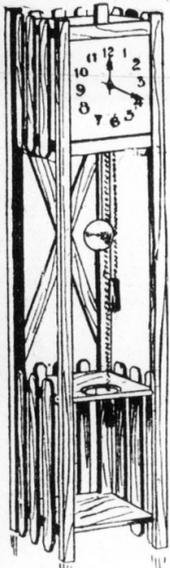


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THE HAMILTON TIMES

TUESDAY, FEB. 16, 1909.

THOSE POWER PRICES.

When the aldermen digest those answers to the questions furnished by Engineer Sothman they may conclude that the successive "stepping down" of the estimated cost of the power line has a rather ugly look, and that there has been a very great effort made to cheapen the work so as to prevent frightening this city off by the enormous cost. Of course if the line has been scrapped so as to make the original cost small we have to look to the future. At first the city's share of the cost was placed at over \$300,000. Then the estimates got at it again, and pared it down to \$115,000! But Hamilton must be tempted to come in, if at all possible, so a new effort was made (in the face of lawsuits over the manner of the building of the line without private right of way and fencing) and now we are told that it has been whittled down to \$23,000!

Keep at it! By and by the Commission may offer us a bonus to enter! But let us not become too joyful. Engineer Sothman expects to realize great things in saving line and transmission losses, etc. Well, don't crowd him too much. Let us suppose that he will reach his most sanguine expectations (of course he and the Commission take no risks—the ratepayers have to bear it all), and let us see how it will work out. He computes that the yearly charges for the delivery of 1,000 horse-power, including line loss, sinking fund, interest, etc., will be \$8,523, or \$8.52 per horse-power. The price at the Falls is to be added to that—\$9 to \$10.40 a horse-power. Let us take the very lowest price he hopes to attain, \$9. That makes \$17.52 per horse-power.

But there is that little joker of the peak load, which Mr. Sothman seems to have missed. Under that system of measurement Hamilton may be required to pay for the 1,000 horse-power when it uses for all but 20 minutes in a month only, say, 500 horse-power. Even at Sothman's guessed price, that would make our 500 horse-power cost the city \$17,523, or \$35.04 per horse-power.

Then there is another condition to be kept in mind—perhaps a not unreasonable condition from the point of view of those who sell power, but none the less

one that is of great moment to the purchaser. We must take and use, or at least pay for, 75 per cent. of the power contracted for.

If we only use 100 horse-power at or for any time we must pay for 750 horse-power! Suppose we use 500 horse-power, see what the result will be in the price. It will make the actual cost per horse-power \$26.28. And the condition leading to that price is a very probable one, and one that might be still further aggravated by the peak load.

Under the Cataract contract the city has an option to take power at 1-2 cent per watt hour by meter, the price to be at least 75 cents a month or \$9 per horse-power per annum. Don't blame Sothman! He has done the best he could—all any man should be expected to do—to help out the Hydro advocates. But are they pleased with his achievement? What says the Mayor? What says the clique of aldermen and their friends who are trying to use the Hydro scheme to knock the local electric industry and destroy its investment?

A QUESTION OF SURPLUS.

For some time the "ownership" organs have been announcing that the Manitoba Government telephone system has earned a large profit on the first year's operations. Now, Hon. Mr. Roblin has stated this profit amounts to a quarter of a million dollars. This is certainly a tidy sum, even although it was produced by increasing rates instead of "cutting them in two," as promised. But does this surplus profit exist? The fact that Mr. Roblin has said it does, unfortunately will not settle the matter; and quite apart from his earned reputation for veracity in matters political, there would seem to be reason for requiring more than his assertion before accepting the statement as true. The Winnipeg Free Press puts it very reasonably when it says: "If it is a true assertion, then Mr. Roblin's Government must have on hand that tidy sum of a quarter of a million dollars. The telephone business is a cash business. Rates have to be paid in advance. Mr. Roblin's assertion means that the cash receipts for the year were \$250,000 in excess of all the costs of maintenance and operation, the fixed interest charges, the necessary provision for deterioration, and all other

outlays which a private company would provide for it." And it continues:

If the surplus whose existence Mr. Roblin asserts so loudly is not a fictitious surplus, a cooked surplus, a mere bookkeeping surplus, a mythical sum which has only an illusory existence as the product of juggling with figures, then it exists in the shape of hard cash. And if it thus is not a thimble-rig surplus, a feat of legerdemain and prestidigitation with figures, the question arises, what is going to be done with it?

What Mr. Roblin's assertion means, unless he is deliberately deceiving the public, is that this surplus whose existence he asserts, is the sort of a surplus which a private company could distribute to its shareholders as a clear profit. That is to say, Mr. Roblin announces that his Government has realized \$250,000 of clear profit on the first year of operation of Government telephones; that everything has been provided for, and there is \$250,000 to the good. This \$250,000 must, then, be like the profit shown in the annual report of a bank, or a financial company, or other business, out of which the dividend is paid to the shareholders.

Assuming, then, that Roblin has this \$250,000 of profit made out of the operation of the telephone system our contemporary naturally infers that it came out of the telephone users and should not be thrown into the general consolidated revenue. On this point Mr. Roblin is clearly on record. We have his public statements:

"The rate to be charged will simply be sufficient to pay interest on the bonds and the cost of maintenance." He said further: "No profit should be permitted on a utility of this kind to a private citizen or a corporation." And further: "The telephone is a public utility, a public necessity, and therefore should be secured to every citizen within the country at cost. It [telephone service] should be given without the profit or advantage of a corporation. In other words, it should be given to the people at actual cost. A telephone proposition is simply a business proposition. What private corporations can do with profit and great financial gain for their stockholders, a Government, honestly run, can do for the people equally well. Give a profit and advantage to the user of the service, in reduction of prices; that is, in a word the policy of the Conservative party in this Province."

If Roblin really has a surplus—a bona fide net profit, and not a mere produce of "smart" bookkeeping—that surplus belongs to the people who uses the telephones and whom he deceived by his promises of lower rates under the system of Government ownership, promises which have not been kept, but which have been followed only by increases in rates. The Free Press very naturally looks for the Manitoba Government to refund this amount pro rata to the over-charged telephone users. And why should Roblin not refund it—if it indeed exists?

EDITORIAL NOTES.

Last year the United States produced copper to the amount of 1,344,000,000 pounds, of which 77,000,000 pounds were exported and 570,000,000 pounds were consumed at home.

Hereafter in Sweden every inhabitant over 24 years of age will be entitled to vote. That seems to be broadening the franchise so as to leave but few grumblers shut out of voting.

The monopoly organ affects to regard Engineer Sothman's answers to the Mayor's questions re power "as terse and clear as could be desired." Wonder do the Mayor and aldermen so regard them?

The Toronto license reduction by-law has passed the Council without a division, and forty bars will go out of business on May 1. Hamilton Council did not think our people could stand the drought.

As yet the public have been given no excuse for the desire to knife Engineer Barrow but the wish of the committee to give his position to another man at a much higher salary, requiring from him much less service.

Some remarks are being made upon the fact that the United States bill for taking the census of next year although disregards the principles of the civil service laws, and makes the positions a mere matter of spoils favoritism. An army of officials will be required.

The Ontario Legislature opens today. All the old tires and swallow-tails in Toronto have been taken out of stock, and milliners have been working overtime for the occasion. There appears to be little of special interest in the

Government's legislative programme, aside from the revision of the statutes and law reform.

The wisdom of regulating moving picture exhibitions in the interest of safety receives a striking illustration in that Mexican holocaust in which between two and three hundred persons perished in a theatre fire, the result of the celluloid film catching fire.

The Hydro Electric engineer's idea that Hamilton should try to keep down the excessive cost of the Commission's power by requiring the workmen at the Beach to work 12-hour shifts does not look encouraging. What worse could the hated "corporations" ask of labor?

The investigations of the Railway Commission since 1903 into 270 fatalities at level crossings show that nearly 95 per cent. of them have been due to the carelessness or recklessness of the victims rather than to the unprotected and dangerous character of the crossings.

There are not lacking indications that the Toronto World is somewhat jealous of Mr. J. A. Macdonald's oratorical performance in Chicago. In view of the World's editorial treatment of the Globe man's efforts and its appreciation by the Chicagoans, it would not be astonishing if Mr. W. F. Maclean took a few oratory really means.

Observe that when Sothman's answers to Mayor McLaren's questions are handled by the Ontario Power Company organ the figures, tabulated, reach its readers with the statement: "These are the outside figures." Where in Sothman's own statement does that assurance come in? Why did the organ insert it?

Sothman's idea of keeping the cost of Hydro power down by requiring only two men to operate the Beach station, and making them work 12 hours each daily, is just a little too much after his plan of allowing only \$1,800 a year for labor for the city's lighting system to make many people accept it with confidence.

The Monetary Times, which is not in the pay of the Ontario Power Company, is not so cocksure as is the Herald that the Hydro people's "expectation" of being able to supply power

within the year will be realized. It sees many obstacles cropping up and it says: "It has taken the Commission about five years to turn the first sod of its transmission line, and, at the same rate, it may require half a century to drive the last spike."

The Herald has now taken to protesting that its anti-Hamilton course in the power matter is not dictated by a price per line. Is that protest necessary? Is such the method adopted by persuasive interests in need of an advocate "on the inside"? Alas! ex Mayor Stewart, could you shed no light on such matters?

Even the Cataract contract flat rate option, no risks, at \$16, is \$152 below the Hydro's latest "most favorable" estimate. And it involves no liability for line and other investments and the chances of its having to pay double that if results require. What do you think of it, you aldermen, who are supposed to have some regard for the interests of the ratepayers?

The despicable organ of the power monopoly, after dragging Mr. McFarlane's name into the discussion of the pumps by making it his duty to deny words put into his mouth, now urges the aldermen to persecute him for rebuking its falsehood! What a manly (!) and altogether admirable (!) sheet it is! How the author of such an attack must hate to be alone with his conscience!

When the by-laws were passed it was thought that Hamilton's share of the transmission line from Niagara Falls would be \$115,000. * * * Mr. Sothman says that Hamilton's share will not be more than \$23,000.—Hamilton Herald.

Those are not Mr. Sothman's words; but let that pass. The former statement of cost was by the same "estimators"—so was the one making it several times as great that was published by the Commission when it contemplated a real transmission line. But the latest guesswork is not for the line first projected. It may, however, be useful to decoy some people into favoring the scheme.

One thing that is not without significance, and which must surely have struck the aldermen and ratepayers in reading the recent power price estimates furnished by Engineer Sothman, is that while the great "saving" in

cost of the line has gone on, the resulting figure of price of actual cost of power to us has gone up! Were the original estimates, or guesses, merely the lure to "rope us in"? Or is it a fact that there has been no real "saving" in capital cost, but merely a cheapening of the work as to immediate outlay? At any rate the latest estimates make the earlier ones look absurd. And we have reason to doubt that even they must be materially increased to cover the actual cost of power delivered.

OUR EXCHANGES

An Artist (Toronto News.)

He is indeed an artist who can draw \$100,000 a year.

Nonsense! (Toronto Star.)

Jack the Huggler is doing business in Hamilton. We should have thought he would have had better taste.

A Queer Notion. (Toronto Telegram.)

Ontario wants "rural police," the only constabulary of that nature at present in the province being the Hamilton "force."

Labor Agitators. (Toronto Globe.)

It is said that American labor agitators are seeking to injure Canadian business. But Canadian workmen are scarcely innocent enough to be used for any such purpose.

What Will Barnard Do? (Goderich Signal.)

The "independence" of the News is illustrated by its course in reference to the forged Borden telegram. The Vancouver Sunset, a paper of decidedly conservative leanings, declares that Mr. Barnard, the member for Victoria, "holds his seat as the fruit of one of the dirtiest campaign tricks ever worked in Canada," and suggests that if he wishes to be considered an honorable man he will resign.

Inspector-General Hoad will return to Australia shortly by way of Canada and the United States. While in Canada he hopes to study the military questions he has been discussing with the Imperial general staff and the home authorities.

In the course of a hearing in the Divisional Court Chief Justice Meredith at Toronto sharply criticised the "sweet box" system.