

## Letters to the Editor

### Mr. Dick Answers Mr. Newton

Sir,—Owing to absence from Ottawa, the attack on my pamphlet, "Briquetting of Lignite," was brought to my notice only a few days ago. Were it not for the expenditure on this plant that is being undertaken by the Dominion, Manitoba and Saskatchewan Governments, I would not consider it necessary to refute Mr. Newton's erroneous statements and deductions.

Mr. Newton states that he is not a "coal-chemist" nor a "mining engineer" but that he speaks as a "member of the public, who has looked a good deal into the fuel situation for the last few months from a commonsense point of view," and that he has burned lignite through the whole of one winter.

Most people consider that lack of technical knowledge respecting a purely technical subject disqualifies a man from discussing such subject. Mr. Newton, however, does not share that opinion. Mr. Newton seems to think that the best man to settle a disputed point is one who does not know anything about it because he is not biased either way.

Before discussing the erroneous statements and deductions in Mr. Newton's letter, I desire to correct his misunderstanding of the position of the Commission of Conservation, particularly as a knowledge of certain basic facts will demonstrate that he had absolutely no ground for many of his gratuitous assumptions.

Over a year ago, the Research Council requested the Mines Branch of the Department of Mines to investigate the carbonized lignite briquetting process and to supply cost data respecting same. The report was prepared for the Mines Branch by Mr. B. F. Haanel, who, I understand, was assisted by an expert fuel engineer. The Mines Branch transmitted a copy of this report to the Research Council.

Later, Mr. R. A. Ross, on behalf of the Research Council, requested the Commission of Conservation to report on the "market" possibilities of carbonized lignite. I was instructed to prepare this report and a copy of same was transmitted to the Research Council. On page 13 there is an estimate of cost, of fixed charges, etc., for a 30,000-ton plant, based, I understand, upon data contained in the report made by Mr. B. F. Haanel to the Mines Branch.

The Commission of Conservation is in no wise responsible for any statements respecting the costs of construction or operating the lignite briquetting plant, nor has the Commission reported on the practicability or efficiency of such plant.

The Commission of Conservation did not recommend that \$400,000, or any other sum, be expended on a briquetting plant, nor that such plant be constructed, and the Commission was not asked to make any recommendation. Any recommendations of this nature were, I understand, made by the Research Council.

The selection of the site for the briquetting plant and its construction and operation, and the selection of the process are entirely in the hands of the Research Council, and the Commission of Conservation has no responsibility in connection therewith and has not been consulted in any way respecting same. All basic data, respecting the fore-

going, contained in my report were received from the Research Council.

Mr. Newton states that on page 13 of my report the cost of United States anthracite in Winnipeg is given as \$9.50 to \$10 per ton, and that on page 17 the same report shows the cost as \$11.25 per ton, and that no dates are given as to what year these figures apply.

These statements are made in this form although it is clearly stated that prices on page 13 are for the two years, 1916 and 1917, and are "f.o.b. cars," whereas the prices on page 17 are for coal "delivered" and are, of course, prices prevailing at date of writing the report, which, as shown on page 3, was prior to October 24th, 1917. Why does Mr. Newton ignore this difference?

Mr. Newton objects to the freight tariff figures and quotes the higher tariff in force to-day. What he omits to state is that the tariff he quotes only went into effect one month ago. Is it fair criticism to quote a tariff that was not in effect till five months after my report was written?

With regard to the B.t.u. value of the Souris coal, nothing that Mr. Newton can say will increase it. The analyses are given on pages 20 to 23 and can be consulted by anyone desiring accurate information respecting same.

Respecting the ash content of the coal from the larger operating mines, I refer your readers to the analyses referred to above. These samples include the so-called black-jack, seams of clay, etc., referred to by Mr. Newton.

Respecting detailed costs for carbonizing, briquetting, etc., and data respecting the proposed plant, I refer Mr. Newton to Mr. R. A. Ross, from whom these figures were obtained. No allowance for the by-products was made in my report, as it was the purpose to err rather on the safe side than otherwise.

To take up all Mr. Newton's statements and treat them seriatim would require more space than would be justified, but I think enough data have been cited above to demonstrate that Mr. Newton should acquire at least a superficial knowledge of the subject he discusses before rushing into print.

In concluding this communication, I desire to voice a protest against the language used by Mr. Newton respecting a brother engineer. Under any circumstances the use of such epithets as "inconsistent, inaccurate, too vague to be of any service and misleading," "most extraordinary proposition I ever came across," etc., is inexcusable. It is doubly so when based upon an ignorance of basic facts that could easily have been ascertained had Mr. Newton cared to make the attempt, and when made by a man who states that he is not a "coal chemist" nor a "mining engineer."

WM. J. DICK, M.Sc.

Ottawa, Ont., May 11th, 1918.

### Engineering Ethics and Salaries

Sir,—The writer was pleased to see in your issue of the 9th inst., a letter from Mr. Goldman criticising the code of ethics laid down by the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers, for it is certainly a glaring fact that the consulting engineers are the only ones provided for in the present code, whereas it is patent to all engineers that a code of ethics is very necessary for the guidance of the engineer-employees, perhaps more so than for the consulting engineers, even though it might not be accepted as a guide by a large number of employed engineers who are not members of the society.