

CITY SHOULD OWN GAS PLANT

Members of the City Council interviewed on the Question of Municipal Ownership.

WHY COUNCIL HAS NOT PURCHASED

Aldermen Willing to Pledge Themselves to Move in the Matter.

Re-Elected.

The World publishes this morning interviews with the members of the City Council on the topic of municipal ownership of the gas plant.

In the interviews the following questions were put to the aldermen:

1. What is your position on the question of the city purchasing the gas plant?

2. Why has the Council not purchased the plant in the past, since the question, being submitted to a vote of the people, was favored?

3. Would you be willing to go before the people on a pledge to resign at the end of six months if you had failed to use your best efforts to purchase the gas plant for the city that time?

For the most part the aldermen come out strongly for municipal ownership, and are willing to take a pledge to resign if they do not make a move for its accomplishment within six months after re-election.

Alderman Hubbard.

Ald. Hubbard: I am favorable to the purchase of the gas plant, if it can be secured on reasonable terms. I attribute the failure of the Council to purchase the plant in the past to the provisions of the Connec Act, which obliges the municipality to submit to arbitration the moment a plan is made, and refused to have the act repealed, without success. I am willing to go before the electors with a pledge to resign at the end of six months, provided I have not used my best efforts to secure the purchase of the plant, but to be the judge of my conduct.

Alderman Lamb.

Ald. Lamb: I am strongly in favor of the city purchasing the gas plant, and operating the same plant, if the price of the same plant is satisfactory, that is, when it comes to be purchased, we have actual value of a working plant for the money. But the city has to pay two prices: one for the plant itself, and another for the gas.

Alderman Woods.

Ald. Woods: In this electrical age I prefer electricity for lighting, heat and power, and I am in favor of the city purchasing the gas plant, and operating the same plant, if the price of the same plant is satisfactory, that is, when it comes to be purchased, we have actual value of a working plant for the money. But the city has to pay two prices: one for the plant itself, and another for the gas.

Alderman Spence.

Ald. Spence: There has been no change in my views on the gas plant, and I am in favor of the city purchasing the gas plant, and operating the same plant, if the price of the same plant is satisfactory, that is, when it comes to be purchased, we have actual value of a working plant for the money. But the city has to pay two prices: one for the plant itself, and another for the gas.

Alderman Burns.

Ald. Burns: All public franchises, such as gas, electric light, water and street railways, should be controlled by the municipality. Telephone and telegraph lines are a general service and should be controlled by the general government. All profits derived from such franchises should be devoted to reducing the cost of such service to the public. The Council has failed in the past to purchase the gas plant, because the question of arrangement of details was submitted to the Board of Control, which body was to see the Gas Company and secure a price, and this has not been done. I am in favor of the city purchasing the gas plant, and operating the same plant, if the price of the same plant is satisfactory, that is, when it comes to be purchased, we have actual value of a working plant for the money. But the city has to pay two prices: one for the plant itself, and another for the gas.

Alderman Richardson.

Ald. Richardson: I think the City of Toronto should purchase the gas plant, at all hazards, as soon as possible. I have always been in favor of such action.

Alderman Dunn.

Ald. Dunn: I am in favor of the city acquiring the gas plant at the earliest date possible. It is my candid opinion that the delay of the Council in dealing with the gas plant purchasing question has been due to a desire of the members to have the subject before the electors at the 1903 election as a campaign matter. I would be willing to go before the electors on a pledge to resign at the end of six months if I failed to use my best efforts in that time to have the city secure the purchase of the gas plant.

Alderman Stewart.

Ald. Stewart: My views for some time have been in favor of the city owning all its franchises. I have seen nothing of late to cause me to change my position. I am not in favor of paying for the gas plant, the price at which the stock is quoted on the market to-day. I understand a great quantity of the mains are rotten and need to be replaced. It will cost a vast sum of money to renew it. I would favor, however, taking the plant over by arbitration. Since I have been in the Council the sentiment has been expressed to acquire the plant by paying what the owners wanted for it. This is the reason the purchase has not been made in the past. I prefer

to have the price of gas reduced. We should have 60 cent gas. I would be willing to go before the electors on a pledge to resign within six months if I failed to use my best efforts to have the city purchase the gas plant.

Alderman Bell.

Ald. Bell: If we can get the gas plant at a reasonable price I favor purchasing it. I think a fair price would be what the stock is quoted at. The reason I see it why the Council has not bought the plant in the past is that the Board of Control has not been able to agree with the company on the purchasing price. I would be willing to go before the people on a pledge to resign at the end of six months if I had not at the end of that time used my best efforts to acquire the gas plant for the city.

Alderman Sheppard.

Ald. Sheppard: I am in favor of the purchase of the gas plant at a fair price. I favor the acquisition of all public franchises by the municipality. My position is perfectly clear on this point. What do you consider a fair price? Well, not only what it would cost to duplicate the present plant of the company, but what it would cost to build a new plant of the same capacity. Let the company be treated fairly, but it must be treated fairly. I would be willing to go before the electors on a pledge to resign at the end of six months if I had not used my best efforts to acquire the gas plant at a fair price within that time.

Mayor Howland.

Defending his attitude in connection with the purchase of the gas plant, the mayor said in the face of the fact that it has been endorsed twice by the vote of the people, the Mayor said: "It was not a vote of the qualified ratepayers, but a miscellaneous vote obtained by an intrusion of the voters. There is no proof anywhere that gas can be made for 50c a thousand feet. The Mayor said that the first step would be to place before the qualified ratepayers some definite idea of the price to be paid. They are the people who will have to pay it. It is simply an attempt to propose to lay the company at the price of the gas, and the next question would be the raising of the money to carry out the purchase. Out to business men, I am willing to go before the electors with a pledge to resign at the end of six months, provided I have not used my best efforts to secure the purchase of the plant, but to be the judge of my conduct."

Controller Crane.

"I think I'll make a start now that the elections are coming on, and make a grand hurrah about public ownership," remarked Controller Crane, in connection with the gas plant question. "I have been thinking of it for a long time, hasn't it?"

"Well, what do you think about it, Mr. Crane?"

"Do you not think that the city should own the gas plant?"

"It all depends on certain conditions. If the gas plant should be owned by a commission of independent citizens, I am in favor of public ownership, but if it is managed by the City Council, well, I will always oppose it. That way, this city has always made a failure of anything ever touched. You can say from me that I am in favor of the city owning the gas plant, but I am not in favor of the city running them."

Alderman Crane.

Ald. Crane went at length into the question of municipal ownership in Glasgow, and he said the reason that Glasgow was successful was that there was proper management, and such a thing could not be obtained here. He laughed scornfully when asked if he would resign his seat in Council if the city should not purchase the gas plant within six months after he was elected.

Alderman Curry.

Ald. Curry said he was prepared to go into municipal ownership of the gas plant on anything else as soon as the City Council should show that it is capable of managing a big corporation in a business way. He expressed wish of the people at the polls in favor of buying the gas plant, but he said he would not do so until he was satisfied that the city was capable of managing it.

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could be bought 100 per cent. less than to-day inside of twelve months. On the fact that numerous cities and small towns even, are getting electric light cheaper than we are getting gas to-day, I base my argument. I give these facts for the reason that the company of electric light plants told me that if he could get into Toronto and sell electric light, he would not only cut power charges in two, but would give light at a price less than 60c gas. Gas is no solution of the coal famine at the present prices. Half the people who voted the purchase of the gas plant have not gas in their houses, and could not afford to have the gas put in for use as fuel, and it would resign any time he thought his constituents were tired of his record in Council.

Alderman Ward.

Ald. Ward put the responsibility of ignoring the wishes of the people upon the Board of Control. He respected the thro meaning of the two votes which had been taken on the gas question, but he said that all he could do was to support a resolution to negotiate towards the purchase of the Gas Company, and that after the resolution had been passed, as it was by a large majority of aldermen, he, like the other members of the majority, were at the mercy of the Board of Control. "I have done all I could with the matter, and am prepared to resign and go to the people again whenever necessary if I am to be summarily judged at the end of six months. I think it would pay the city to buy the gas plant, even at present prices, as fuel, and it would resign any time he thought his constituents were tired of his record in Council."

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