

WHY CENTRAL STATION MEN SHOULD ORGANIZE.

Editor CANADIAN ELECTRICAL NEWS.

SIR, In your January number you publish an extract from a letter written by the manager of a company in an eastern Ontario town, to the manager of a company in a western Ontario town, and you derive from the remarks therein expressed, arguments why central station men should become members of the Canadian Electrical Association. In endorsing your remarks may I be permitted to carry the arguments a step further than editorial discretion prescribed as your limit? You describe the municipalities as the principal gainers by the want of organization among central station men, but it strikes me that the position is very different, and I am sure that a little careful reflection will convince anyone that it is the manufacturing companies who gain more much more than any one else by this want of combination and cordial co-operation, and who require to be watched much more than do the municipalities who are generally very mild offenders.

At the present moment the manufacturing companies maintain very curious relation with respect to the operating companies. They not only manufacture machines, which, of course, is their proper business, but they promote companies to do lighting business, then, as consulting engineers, they advise these companies as to what to purchase, and how to operate; and they endeavour to foster a kind of parent and offspring relationship with the view of opening and keeping a market for their own goods. Any attempt at independence of action on the part of the offspring is deprecated by the parent company, as tending to introduce an undesirable competition, and the manufacturing company also endeavors to guard its offspring against the bad men in the open market who would want to sell their goods by trying to constitute its agents the only means of communication between the operating company and the electrical world outside. These agents go around with their pack of goods, and while the customer is purchasing lamps, etc., they give him little scraps of news as to new apparatus, new installations, etc. A very large proportion of the smaller central station men seek for no better information on electrical matters than is dribbled out to them through the interested channel of a manufacturing company. They are satisfied to receive all their news, and any pointers they may require from the very man who is most interested in keeping them in the dark about the merits of any other apparatus than that which he himself sells.

Now, let any intelligent person consider for one moment what is inevitably the result of this. The central station man is interested in hearing of new or improved lamps, motors, etc., that have been brought out and by the use of which he can reduce his expenses, or extend his business. Is an agent likely to tell a customer of an improved type, made by a rival manufacturing company? Is he in the least likely to say that some rival sells a better lamp than he does himself? Is he not far more likely to religiously avoid mentioning any such thing? Can he be expected to recommend to, or bring to the notice of any customer, any piece of apparatus but that which he sells himself? Plainly, the purchaser, by not making independent enquiries, frequently fails to hear of something really to his advantage, because it is none of the agent's business to tell him.

A little reflection will show central station men how little they regard their own interests when they allow themselves to be kept in leading strings by the manufacturing companies, instead of combining to study central station practice for themselves. A manager should keep his eyes wide open to see things, to do the very best possible with what he has got, and to promptly seize ahold of anything new that affords a means of reducing his expenses or extending his business. Now, any new labor-saving or more efficient piece of apparatus is patented and owned by only one company, and although it may be really the most valuable improve-

ment in the world, no other company is going to recommend its use if it will interfere with their own sales. On the whole, the central station man who expects a manufacturing company to give him really disinterested advice as to new or improved apparatus, is likely to be as badly left as he deserves to be. The enterprising man will hunt these things out for himself, by co-operating with his neighbors, to their mutual advantage. To illustrate: The storage battery has been proven to be of great value as a central station auxiliary. Has any Canadian manufacturing company ever recommended the installation of batteries? I do not think so. BECAUSE NO CANADIAN MANUFACTURING COMPANY MAKES A BATTERY THAT IS ANY GOOD. To recommend it would be to hurt their own business, which is to sell dynamos.

Again, plenty central stations using single phase alternating machinery, could work up a considerable day power business if they could get a good single phase alternating current motor. There is such a motor available, but I shall be very greatly surprised to hear that the agent of any of the Canadian manufacturing companies has mentioned the fact to any of their customers. Why? BECAUSE THEY DO NOT MAKE IT THEMSELVES, BUT HAVE DIFFERENT MACHINERY TO SELL, and it doesn't suit their business to post their customers too well on any good points in their rival's goods. A manufacturing company, if consulted, is going to advise the use of its own apparatus every time; and the demand for new and improved types must come from the central station man, who should use the most efficient, no matter who makes it, and find out for himself what is the latest and best.

As to operating central stations. Is there any manager who thinks he knows all about it? If so, why can't he let some other manager have the benefit of his knowledge? Perhaps he can get a few valuable hints in return. By all means let there be an organized body of central station men working together for their mutual good—telling each other what their experiences have been, and tackling their problems for themselves, instead of allowing themselves to be exploited by the manufacturing companies, who, in the words of a recent sufferer, have "hitherto had a pic-nic." Apologizing for this long letter, I remain,

Yours truly,

GEO. WHITE FRASER.

W. Kennedy, of Hobart, Ont., proposes shortly to put an electric light plant in his mill.

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