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The Gas Company's Position.

The question as to whether the Gas Company will have to go out of business at the end of this month, rests entirely on the immediate decision of the Government. For the past six years (the war period and after) the Gas Company has paid no dividends, and for the past three years has maintained the gas supply to the City under extraordinary difficulties at a very serious loss, principally owing to the lack of good coal in sufficient quantities. The Gas Company has placed the position fully before the City Commissioners. They, whilst admitting the desirability of maintaining the supply of gas to the City, and expressing a desire to give all possible assistance in this direction, had no power to guarantee the Company's bonds, or to take over and operate the Gas Works as a Municipal enterprise. The present financial stringency under which the Gas Company is suffering has been brought about in no small degree by the fact that for many years past the Company has been paying a heavy tax on its raw material—COAL, which tax has gone into the treasury of the City Council. Since the fire of 1912 the Gas Company has paid in coal duties more than sufficient to liquidate its present liabilities. Repeated efforts had been made to have this coal tax removed or reduced but without avail.

To understand the difficulties under which the Gas Company was operating we may state the following figures:

The Manufacturing expenses for 1916 amounted to \$60,542.05
The Manufacturing expenses for 1919-1920 amounted to 116,287.82
An increase in manufacturing expenses of 55,745.00

Much the greater part of this increase was caused by the extra cost of coal and oil, and also by the inferior quality of the coal received.

It has become impossible for the Shareholders or the management to carry on under the same conditions as prevailing for the past three years, and it is only because of the fact that good local coal is really available, if the Government carries out its im-

ed intentions, that the Company is encouraged to try and continue the gas supply to the City.

To liquidate its liabilities and to provide for the Company's present and future operations, a bond issue of \$100,000 is imperative, and, to secure the successful and rapid flotation of the bonds the Government has been requested to guarantee same, both by the City Council and by the Gas Company. A largely signed petition from the Gas Consumers of St. John's has also been sent to the Government, urging that the Gas Company be given all help required in the circumstances. There is a well established precedent for such a Government guarantee, because in recent years the stocks or bonds of the Newfoundland Woollen Mills, the Harbor Grace Dry Dock, the Bell Island Transportation Co., etc., have been so guaranteed.

The Gas Company has been serving St. John's for the past 76 years, and is a utility of much greater public interest than any of the above mentioned industries. The failure of the gas supply in St. John's would be little short of a disaster, and nothing should be left undone to secure the continuance of its operations.

Up to the Government.

We understand that the Government has assured the Gas Company of a supply of coal from the Government coal areas, and, that work is now proceeding at South Branch, and that coal may be available from this source during October. The South Branch coal is said to be of a friable nature, and runs to slack if exposed to the weather. On the other hand, the coal at the St. George's Coal Fields, especially that of the "Jukes Seam" is a good gas coal. The Government had entered into an agreement with the St. George's Coal Company to take over their areas, build a branch line of railway from Cartville to the mines, and proceed getting out coal this year. Some hitch has occurred in the negotiations, and the proposed development is not being proceeded with at the present time. Nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of the immediate development of this source of coal supply, and it is up to the Government to put the matter through without delay.

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North Sydney Favors Railway Improvement.

Reid Company Need More Adequate Terminals.

There is a strong probability now that the long-needed reconstruction improvement and enlargement of the C.N.R. terminal at North Sydney may be undertaken in the immediate future, through the influence of the Newfoundland Government. The railway situation in Newfoundland is quite serious. The railway is not paying, and through lack of funds and falling off of business during the war the road in a good many places has got into disrepair. There is not enough rolling stock, and much of what is on hand is not in good condition. This condition of affairs has caused the Newfoundland Government to appoint a Royal Commission to make a thorough enquiry, which is now in progress, the first recommendations just having been made.

The question of adequate terminal facilities at North Sydney for the Reid steamers has come up as an important one in connection with the Newfoundland railway service. The representative, T. A. Hall, now in Ottawa negotiating with the Canadian Government for the rebuilding of the terminal here and the removal of inconveniences that have largely contributed to causing congestion here. There is a good reason to believe that the representations of the Newfoundland Government will be effective in securing the immediate undertaking of this long neglected work, which should have been done long ago.

The Newfoundland Government, which is progressive and enterprising, has entered in earnest upon a policy of improving the railway and steamship service. A comprehensive scheme of improvement, involving the expenditure of a large sum, both by the Reid Newfoundland Company directly and by the Government by way of assistance to the company will be based upon the reports of the Royal Commission, and in the meantime various improvements will be started without delay, and it is likely

that the Newfoundland Government will be able to stir up the Canadian Government railway department to prompt action in regard to improvement of the North Sydney terminal.

Among the recommendations in the first report of the Royal Commission are that all passes on the Newfoundland Railway be abolished and that a terminus for south coast traffic be built at Argentia. The terminus will also be used as a winter shipping port for the Anglo-Nfld. Development Company and the Alexander Bay Pulp Company. The company will ship 2000 carloads of paper from December to May that has hitherto been stored each winter at Grand Falls, thus tying up a large amount of money, as well as causing congestion at Grand Falls. The work of building the three miles of railroad will start immediately and the terminal pier or breastwork will be ready for shipping by January.

Accompanied by members of the Government and officials of the Anglo-Nfld. Development Co., the Royal Commission will visit Argentia to-morrow, when preliminary plans for construction of the new terminal will be decided upon.

The railroad commission recommended an increase in passenger and freight rates and it is probable an increase of one per cent. per mile will be added to first class railway fares. Through this increase, abolition of passes and the traffic to be secured from the Pulp Company it is expected to increase the revenue of the railway by \$150,000 per year and make the road self-supporting. Six new locomotives, 100 box cars and a new rotary plow are being procured. The rebuilding of the terminal at Port aux Basques is being rushed.

The Government has resumed the work of boring for coal at the Grand Lake area, under the direction of Prof. Dowling, and good hopes are held of the discovery of an extensive deposit in the immediate future.—North Sydney Herald, Sept. 16.

The late Jas. P. Howley, in his report on the Jukes Seam, said in his booklet on "The Coal Deposits of Newfoundland," that "This seam is so situated that it can be stripped of its cover, which is comparatively light, and for a long time it could be mined by quarrying or open cast, as it is termed. Much of it lies above the Parachiois River, and all the coal it contained down to that level can be easily won, and that fifty men could get out 100 tons per day at small cost."

Thus, the Gas Company can be assured of ample supplies of good coal, if the Government carries out the assurances which it has given the Company in this regard, and, with plenty of coal, there is no doubt but that the Gas Company will be well able to meet both interest and re-payment of bonds. So that it would appear that the whole matter really rests with the Government. If it is sincere in its intentions of supplying the coal, there should be no hesitation in its guaranteeing the Gas Company's bonds. The responsibility now rests with the Government as to whether the Gas Company is able to carry on or otherwise.

As to the security which the Gas Company has to offer, we understand that there are 16 1/2 miles of mains and nine miles of service pipes, supplying 945 customers. The greater part of these pipes has been laid down from 1892 to 1915, and would cost to-day \$120,000 to replace. The total paid-up capital of the Company is only \$150,000 and it would probably take close \$400,000 to replace mains and Gas Works at the present time. There are a very large number of essential industries using gas in St. John's, and the loss and inconvenience would be extremely great if the Company is compelled to shut down.

Let the City Commissioners, the Board of Trade, and the Gas consumers get together and take such steps as shall assure the continuance of the gas supply to the city, and thus prevent serious loss.

During the recent session of the Legislature a grant for \$500,000 was passed for the purchase and development of local coal deposits. Surely the time is opportune for such development, and our energetic Acting Prime Minister should see that the necessary arrangements are made without further delay.

Coal from outside sources is not available. Sydney coal is quite unsuitable. Hereafter the Gas Company, we are informed, obtained its supplies of gas coal from Pennsylvania and Virginia, U.S.A., but after 1916 this market became more and more difficult, and for the past year and at the present time it is almost impossible to get good gas coal, and only at ruinous prices. Recent advices from New York state that the gas coal situation was very desperate in the States, and that it was practically unobtainable for export. Gas

coal, obtainable in 1913 at \$3.15 per ton f.o.b. Philadelphia, has been recently quoted at \$21.00 to \$23.00 f.o.b. Hampton Roads, the latter being one of the cheapest shipping ports in the U.S.

St. George's coal is low in sulphur, and is a good average gas coal, and is also suitable for ordinary domestic use. It is very superior to Sydney coal, does not clinker, and is well adapted for bunkering steamers. A set of furnace bars would last very much longer with this local coal than if Cape Breton coal was used.

School Boots for romping boys and girls. Ten per cent. off regular prices at SMALL-WOOD'S Big Shoe Sale.—sept.17

Annual Vegetable Sale.

The Ladies of St. Joseph's Parish intend holding the annual vegetable sale in the Parish Hall, Plymouth Road, on October 6th and 7th. This vegetable sale has always attracted a large gathering of purchasers, and this year promises to be no exception.



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We have in stock a few very nice three and five-piece PARLOR SUITES at \$95.00 and \$85.00 per suite. See them.

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