

New Brunswick Power Co. Investigation.

Under the provisions of an act passed by the New Brunswick Legislature at its last session, the Lieutenant Governor in council appointed a commission to investigate the New Brunswick Power Co.'s affairs. The commissioners, G. W. Currier, Henry Holgate and Prof. A. S. Ritchie, commenced their sittings in St. John, June 28. The act authorizes them to examine so far as they shall deem necessary all records of the company and its predecessors, and subsidiaries, to ascertain the original cost of plant, the amount realized from the sale of stocks and bonds and the earnings and expenditures—in fact, they have power to review everything done by any of the companies since their formation, and to trace what has been done with the capital subscribed, the proceeds of the sales of bonds, and the earnings of the several companies. The commissioners are also especially directed to enquire into the matters and affairs of the New Brunswick Investment Co., alleged to have been formed for the purpose of working out the purchase and transfer of the St. John Ry. Co. to the N. B. Power Co., so far as the same are pertinent to the enquiry; to enquire into the cost of the water privileges, etc., acquired by the N.B.P. Co. from the New Brunswick Hydro-Electric Co. or other company or persons; to enquire into the cost of street paving and maintenance and the removal of snow on streets occupied by the car tracks, and generally the use of the city property and franchise for uses connected with the power company's operations; to examine and analyse all legislation affecting the company or its predecessors, together with letters, orders-in-council, etc.; and to prepare and recommend for enactment such new legislation, or amendments to existing legislation, as in their opinion will ensure to the city of St. John adequate public utility service in street railway traffic, electric light and power and gas supply for heat and light at fair and reasonable rates; provide for a proper measure of control of streets and franchises by the city; define clearly the respective rights of the city and the power company, and conserve all legitimate rights, interests and franchises of the power company, as well as those of the city of St. John.

In order to carry out the investigation, the commissioners have power to appoint accountants, engineers or other qualified persons to make any enquiry and report on such matters as may be referred to them; to hear any evidence that may be offered and to call any witnesses. A penalty of not less than \$50 or more than \$500 may be enforced for disobeying the commissioners' orders to produce books, etc., and witnesses are liable to the same penalties for disobedience as in the case of proceedings before the supreme court. The costs are to be divided between the city and the company, and the commissioners' report is to be submitted to the government in sufficient time to be acted upon at the legislature's next session.

The act provides that notwithstanding any other provision of any act, the commissioners may, during the course of the investigation, whenever it shall appear to them advisable or justifiable and necessary for the temporary financial relief of the company, adjust and allow rates of fare for transportation, and rates for heating, lighting or power, which rates shall become operative seven days after the first publication of the order in the city's papers, and these rates will remain

in operation until altered by the commissioners or the legislature.

The commissioners may for the purposes of the investigation, adopt in whole or in part the evidence taken before the N.B. Board of Public Utilities in respect of the company's application to fix a rate for gas; the reports of W. F. Sloan and J. W. Waterman (the company's engineers), reports of the directors, and audits of the affairs of any of the companies.

W. C. Whiting, Boston, Mass., and W. B. Bennett, Wisconsin, Wis., have been investigating the company's plant on behalf of the city; and H. Loring, Boston, Mass., is watching the interests of United States holders of the company's securities.

The investigation is likely to last some considerable time.

Eliminating Jitneys in Vancouver B.C.

Under the powers conferred by the British Columbia Legislature last session, carrying out the suggestions in Adam Short's report following his investigation into transportation matters in the territory in which the British Columbia Electric Ry. operates, the Vancouver City Council on June 21 passed a bylaw amending the old bylaw as to motor cars, covering the operation of jitneys. The new bylaw repeals a number of sections and subsections of bylaw 952 as amended by bylaw 1218, and enacts in their place sections classifying motor vehicles, and fixing the fees to be charged as licenses for certain classes, and prohibiting the operation of others on and after July 1.

Motor vehicles are divided into seven classes, of which two are prohibited, viz.: Class A, which includes all motor vehicles inviting passengers to travel by them over any particular route or within any zone, "as a means of local transportation similar to that ordinarily afforded by the operation of street railways." Class B includes motor vehicles accepting passengers for transportation at the terminus of any route traversed by it, and all other motor vehicles not covered by class A, C, D, E, F or G.

The other five classes for which licenses are required to be taken out to permit their operation after July 1, are:—Class C, including taxicabs or touring cars having no specified route, and hired only from a fixed stand on a public street or from a garage for a minimum fare of 25c in the city or partly in the city, and not more than two miles without, or for a minimum fare of 50c if the distance outside the city exceeds 2 miles. Class D includes sight-seeing cars not used in the carrier business, charging fares of 25c and 50c, as in class C. Class E includes motor vehicles used by hotels for the transportation of guests to and from trains and steamboats. Class F includes motor vehicles used exclusively for ambulances, hearses, or for the transportation of pall bearers at funerals. Class G includes motor vehicles used exclusively for carrying passengers between Woodward's Landing and Vancouver post office by a route specified in the bylaw. The license fee for each of these classes is \$30, with the exception of class D, the sight-seeing cars, for which \$50 is fixed.

The portion of the old bylaw as to license fee which is struck out is contained in schedule A of bylaw 952, as amended by bylaw 1218. It provided that "Every automobile or taxicab up to seven passengers, for every vehicle, \$30 per annum. Over seven passengers, per vehicle, \$50 per annum."

Notwithstanding the bylaw, which came into effect July 1, the jitney men continued their operations, the tie up of the street railway offering an excuse. Outside jitney men rushed in to the city, and a rate of 10c was generally charged, which was subsequently reduced. It was reported July 5 that over 400 jitneys were being operated during the strike.

Application was made to Justice Morrison in chambers, by the jitney men's league for an injunction to stay the coming in operation of the bylaw, which was granted. The council was advised by its legal department July 12 that the judge's action was ultra vires, and acting on this advice, the city's license inspector was directed to prosecute any drivers operating in contravention of the bylaw. The men were at once warned, and it is reported that a considerable number ceased operations.

Public Control of Public Utilities in Quebec.

The Quebec Telegraph says:—"The extent to which the Province of Quebec is honeycombed by public utility corporations of every description is fully revealed in the Quebec Public Utilities Commission's eighth annual report, which has just been issued. This commission—composed of F. W. Hibbard, President; Sir George Garneau and F. C. Laberge, commissioners, with Jos. Ahern, Secretary,—has the regulation and supervision of all the public utilities operating on Provincial charters.

"The Quebec Government, in establishing this central governmental authority, has recognized the fact that all companies operating public utilities have an especially close relationship to the public, which imposes in return for special privileges, special obligations, a point upon which special stress has been laid, within recent years, in all progressive communities.

"Owing to the close relation of the public utility to the community generally, a strong current of opinion is noticeable in favor of public ownership of public utilities. In instituting public control of public utilities through an efficient government commission, the Quebec Government has anticipated this movement for public ownership. Public control, as it thus exists, in the Province of Quebec, while less radical and drastic than public ownership, has nevertheless conferred many of the benefits of the more extreme system, since, while ensuring justice to the private companies operating the utilities, it has insisted ever on the rights of the public to adequate service. In its adjustment of all disputes, the commission has met with a singular success in satisfactorily settling all differences, and providing for the continuance of the necessary service. The Quebec Public Utilities Commission is, in fact, an outstanding example of the possibility of combining private enterprise with successful public control."

Women Conductors at Kingston.—The Kingston, Portsmouth & Cataract Electric Ry., at Kingston, Ont., has 11 female conductors, no males being employed. Some of them have been working over 6 months. They are paid \$2.25 a day, and the management has experienced no difficulties in employing them, and states that their work has proved most satisfactory. No male conductors were discharged, but as vacancies occurred women were employed.