

CONFERENCE ON ELECTRIC COSTS

A conference to discuss the report of H. E. M. Kenist, of the department of the interior, Ottawa, in regard to the cost of manufacturing electricity in this city from steam, was held on Saturday afternoon in the office of Mayor Schofield. Besides the mayor, others present were the city commissioners, Hon. W. E. Foster, C. O. Foss, of the N. B. Electric Power Commission, and K. H. Smith, of the N. S. Power Commission. Before the conference closed, L. R. Ross, president of the N. B. Power Company, was called in for consultation. There are so many different phases to the report that it is expected that several meetings will have to be held before any definite conclusion is arrived at.

The report, which is most comprehensive and voluminous, showed that power station operations of the company in 1920 totalled \$228,910, which is 2.8 cents per k. w. h. or \$39 per horse power year. Compared with this, hydro-electric power is expected to cost, according to the amount used, from 1 to 1.5 cents per k. w. h. plus \$38,000 the first year to maintain a steam standby plant. This plant would have to be maintained for use in case of emergency. In Calgary, a city about the same size as St. John, hydro-electric costs 46 cents per k. w. h. or \$23 per horse power year. At Toronto it costs \$18 per h. p. year and at Windsor \$88 per h. p. year.

The New Brunswick Power Company now generates approximately 6,000 horse power a year, which is the full capacity of its plant, at a cost of \$228,910. The hydro-electric development will furnish from 10,000 to 11,000 horse power at an annual cost of about \$180,000, being interest, sinking fund on the capital expenditure and maintenance. It is estimated that if the city distributed this power it would cost \$600,000 for a distribution system, which would mean an annual charge of approximately \$30,000 for interest and sinking fund, which would wipe out the difference between the cost of steam and hydro power.

Small power users, thus taking full advantage of the existing distribution system and giving a security of a steam standby for the lighting system.

"A supply direct by the power commission or the city to the larger power users. This would involve only a simple and comparatively inexpensive distribution and the cost of power could be a minimum instead of its having to carry heavy charges detailed above."

His worship pointed out that, so far as they had gone, the foregoing plan looked to be the most feasible one.

Separate Circuits.

Another paragraph of interest in the report was the following: "It appears quite possible that some satisfactory arrangement might be made with the company on the basis of its separating its lighting and power circuits, maintaining the steam standby for the lighting only and charging it to lighting only, and supply power to all motor users at the cost price of the hydro-electric supply plus a fixed and agreed percentage for the use of its circuits and the maintenance thereof and for administration and general purposes."

In conclusion, the report contains the following summary: "The common stock of the company has not been taken into account in any of the calculations or conclusions. The company gave every possible assistance to facilitate the investigation. The total cost of power production in 1920, including capital charges, administration and office expenses, was 2.8 cents per k. w. h. generated, or \$39 per horse power year. The average cost delivered to consumers was 5.8 cents per k. w. h. sold. The average price received, including the street railway, was 61 cents, excluding the street railway, 8.55 cents. The cost of maintaining the steam standby plant only would be approximately \$68,000 per annum. The cost of hydro-electric would be 1.364 cents, plus the cost of the steam standby plant, .522 cents, total of 1.886 cents. Under the present conditions, the only possible saving due to the purchase by the company of hydro-electric power will be the cost of operating the power station, since all other costs will remain practically the same. It follows that each ten per cent reduction in the maximum price for hydro-electric power, i.e., 1.884 cents, would, if allowed pro rata to the consumer, only

give a reduction of 1.6 per cent on the present average charge.

Benefit From Cheaper Power.

"The greatest benefit to the city as a whole will come from lower power rates rather than from lower lighting rates. If the maximum is to be gained from the new source of power the question of the division of the lighting and power circuits should be very carefully considered. The company's existing circuits will not be able to carry a large increase of power (motor) load without large additional expenditure. The suggested method of securing the greatest benefit: By supply entirely through the company, by supply through the company and partly by the city or the power commission. Attention is called to the possibilities that would be created by the supply of cheap power as shown by comparisons with other cities possessing it. The peak load of the power company in 1920 was 4,760 horse power. The private power plants in St. John and district use an additional amount of power of approximately 12,000 horse power. This is some indication of the large field available for cheap power. Mayor Schofield pointed out that one consideration that was not taken into account in the report would be the conservation of coal by the use of hydro-electric power. This saving would be quite an item.

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GREEK GIFT TO BRITAIN.

London, April 11.—The Greek White Cross Society, which was organized to provide marriage gifts to daughters and sisters of Greek soldiers who gave their lives for their country, has signalled in a notable way its appreciation of the British soldiers who died while serving with the Salonika Army during the war.

Through M. Spiros Matsoukas, its founder and president, the society placed in the hands of the British Ambassador at Athens a sum representing 21,612 12s 10d, with a request that it should be distributed in marriage gifts to the daughters of British soldiers who died on the Macedonian front. The gift has now been transferred by the Treasury to the Royal Patriotic Fund Corporation has decided to distribute it in sums of £22 to daughters married their father's death.

The passengers, under quarantine on Partridge Island, were all well according to reports received last night. A service was conducted yesterday by a Rutherfordian priest for the Roman Catholics amongst the passengers. The priest is one of the passengers under quarantine on the island. He is unable to speak English and he conducted the service in his own language.

Big Havana Bank Fails

(Canadian Press Despatch.)

Havana, April 10.—The Banco Nacional de Cuba suspended payment yesterday. The doors remained closed, the bank taking advantage of the liquidation law recently adopted by congress.

The institution has been in difficulties since the drop in sugar prices which caused the recent financial crisis in Cuba. It was formerly fiscal agent for the government and according to reports in usually well informed circles, owes the national treasury about 20,000,000 pesos.

AWARDS \$30,000 FOR FOOT.

Jury Gives Boy \$25,000 and Father \$5,000 for Auto Injury.

A jury before Supreme Court Justice Finch awarded \$25,000 to Vincent Albano, six years old, of 500 West Forty-first street, New York, and \$5,000 to his father, yesterday, in a suit against the J. F. Tapley Company, book publishers of 381 West Thirty-seventh street. The boy was sitting on the curb near his house one night last August when the defendant company's automobile started after the driver had left it and ran over the boy's foot, cutting it off at the ankle. The testimony showed that the chauffeur left the power on and the machine ran into a brick wall 500 feet away and stopped. The boy was in a hospital for eight months. The defense was that the truck was started by children.

On Saturday evening members of the Star theatre staff gathered at the home of the manager, A. B. Farmer, in honor of Mrs. Harry McDonald, who had been forced on account of ill health to resign her position as pianist of the Star, which she had held for several years. During the evening a cut glass vase was presented to Mrs. McDonald on behalf of the staff of the theatre. S. U. Buchanan, the well known local tenor, sang many delightful selections.

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Now, it is said in Sheffield that "there is always gold for steel," meaning that Sheffield people are always ready to invest their money in the basic industry of the city.

In the same way, because of the magnitude of the Fraser enterprise and its importance to the Maritime Provinces, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia money should have as large an investment interest in the Company as possible.

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Electric Lighting Costs.

The report says in part that the investigation indicates but little prospective advantage to the user of electric light. It has been shown that if hydro-electric power is simply supplied in bulk to the power company at even a very low price there would be under the present conditions but little benefit to any consumer, either of light or power. It has also been shown that the greatest benefit to the city as a whole will accrue from cheap power rather than cheap light. It appears impossible to secure both, Mr. Kenist's report indicates, if the present light and power undertaking is to be maintained. If it is not maintained there would be no steam standby for security of the lighting service. If competition put the present company's electrical department out of business the company would certainly be unable to continue the street railway and gas departments, since these are now being operated at a considerable loss. The whole position, therefore, is clearly one in which it is not possible for every one to benefit and the best solution, the report says, would appear to be a just compromise based on the maximum advantage to the city as a whole.

Another section of the report advocates, among others, the following course that might be pursued: "A supply to the company for distribution on its system to lighting and

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