

Cost and Operation of a Municipal Lighting Plant.

With reference to voting \$20,000 bonds for the purpose of installing an Electric Light plant for the city of McCook, whether or not it would be possible to build a lighting plant suitable for the city of McCook for this amount of money.

The writer has spent the last eleven years at installing and operating Electric Light and Power plants, and in my opinion and after figuring on it for some time, I find that \$45,000 would be the least amount that could be expended for a proposition of this kind, that would any way near fill the requirements for the city of McCook.

There would be some little advantage in installing an Electric Lighting plant in connection with a Water Works system, but the amount saved over a separate installation would not exceed \$3,000, as the only apparatus that could be used jointly would be the boilers. Some people seem to have advanced the theory that an Electric Lighting plant can be built in connection with a Water Works system for one-half the price, and that the apparatus used for running the dynamo will also pump the water. This, however, is not the case, as it requires altogether different apparatus. One is a pump and the other is an engine. This, however, is a very small end of the installation.

For example to show something regarding the cost of building and maintaining Electric Lighting plants, the extensions and improvements to the McCook Electric Light plant, since the present company took hold of it, alone amounts to considerably over \$20,000; whereas the city is trying to vote bonds for \$20,000 to build an entire light system.

One cause of a great many municipal plants being started is, that some one, claiming to be an electrical engineer, but really having little practical knowledge, has given the municipality an estimate, making it very low, trying to show the people how cheaply a system of this kind can be built; but afterwards proved to be much more or even double what they expected, causing the people to feel that they had been buncoed,—and they probably were, by the party who was trying to feather his own nest at their expense.

Now that the lighting plant has been built at a very much greater cost than the first estimates called for, we find that the maintenance is along the same lines, the municipality wanting a plant that can be much more cheaply operated than can a plant belonging to a private individual or corporation. This, however, is seriously in error, as the municipalities cannot buy coal, oil and other materials nor labor to run the plant, any less than a private corporation, provided they get as good material and experienced and capable men.

In the first place the operation of an Electric Light plant requires extensive engineering and technical education and experience, and it would be impossible to obtain a suitable manager or superintendent for the \$1,000 per year authorized by law. Capable men in these lines can demand, and are receiving, much larger salaries than this amount, as corporations are continually on the lookout for this class of men and are picking them up as fast as they are developed.

With reference to the Mayor and the City Council looking after the interests of a municipally-owned plant, it is hardly probable that they will feel like neglecting their own duties to attend to those of the city. In case they should try to perform both duties; they certainly will neglect one or the other, and I believe that I am safe in saying that they will look after their own business first. For that reason the city's business must be neglected. On the other hand it is really asking a great deal of a Mayor and City Council to perform all these duties for the mere glory there may be in it. McCook is certainly in no position to pay the Mayor and City Council salaries to look after this class of business. Neither is the City Clerk in a position to devote his time to keeping these books and making collections.

I have had occasion at different times to inspect municipally-owned plants and have found that they are very loosely operated. I have had occasion to take charge of a municipal plant, and only did so after a considerable length of time of "chewing the rag" as to what the salary would be. However, the city finally consented to pay the salary I asked. This lighting plant, by the way, was losing about \$300 per month, and if I placed it on a paying basis inside of a year, I was to have \$25.00 extra per month. At the end of nine months I had the plant paying expenses, but at that time I was replaced by a man at \$60 per month,—and eight months later the plant was sold to a private company. The reason for this was that the city could not make it pay, and it is today operated by a private company. This is another case of cheap help operating a proposition that requires experience and technical education. This is one of a great many cases of municipal failures.

The people certainly need not think that the rates could really be any cheaper under a municipally-owned plant than they are with the present company. We will suppose that they might be a little cheaper, for the reasons that a municipal plant never figures on making any profit, and do not even establish a sinking fund for the purpose of extensions and repairs. These small savings are generally more than eaten up in poor, extravagant or dishonest management. The plant is maintained by taxes, and after it has been in operation for some time it is necessary to make some repairs and extensions. In order to do so we must again vote bonds for this purpose, and levy a heavy tax to keep up the interest. Probably, however, the legal limit of bonded indebtedness has been reached, so the plant must worry along without increase, betterment or even necessary repairs, goes to rack and ruin, and is finally sold or leased to a private company.

Figure your extra taxes over and above what they are under the private plant and see how much cheaper your lights are. You probably will find that your light bill itself might be a few cents less, but on the other hand your tax receipt shows that you are paying one-third to one-half more than you did under private ownership. On the other hand you own a piece of property and do not care about using electric lights. Your neighbor across the street does not own property but uses electric lights. You are paying the taxes for the purpose of saving him a few cents on his light bill. He is getting the benefit, and you are paying the extra taxes for the sake of living in town. The property-owner and heavy tax-payers are the people who get the blunt end of municipal ownership; but even the non-tax-payers derive no real benefit, but a disadvantage in the long run.

I believe that the people of McCook will look at this from a business standpoint and after thorough examination and consideration, will do what they can in their power to defeat municipal ownership.

Very respectfully yours,

A. R. SCOTT.

To the Voters of the City of McCook.

Inasmuch as the principal spokesman of the Citizens party has seen fit, in a scurrilous article in our city papers, to attack the Republican party, and especially the candidate for Mayor, and deliberately sought by falsehood and calumny, to destroy my character, and influence the voters, I deem it necessary to make a reply.

The Reverend Carman says in his article, that Mayor Fahnestock ordered the houses of infamy closed, and that he was offered a bribe of \$300 if he would let them run, and that he promptly refused such bribe; and he furthermore states that Fahnestock could not be bought, which we fully believe, as Mr. Fahnestock is both a man and a gentleman; but the reverend gentleman would have you believe, that I had either been bribed, or could be bribed, for the sake of getting the office of Mayor of the city of McCook.

While we admit that the houses of infamy were ordered closed, it is an open secret, and a deplorable fact, that such houses are now, and have been, almost continuously running, ever since that order was issued, and we believe that there are more such places now than ever before in the history of our city, even if not quite as public as formerly, and I believe that the Reverend gentleman is fully aware of the fact, but asks you to believe that no such places exist at the present time, in the city of McCook, but would start up at once, if the Republican ticket is elected.

I will state right here, that I did not seek the office of Mayor of our city, but was solicited by a large majority of our business men, and a goodly number of our best citizens, to accept the nomination, and it does not look reasonable that such men would want a bribe-taker, or such a villainous man for Mayor, as Mr. Carman would have you think that I am; and if the reverend gentleman will let his memory run backward, only one short year, he will remember how he, in the presence of several of our prominent citizens, importuned me to accept the nomination for Mayor, and on my refusal to accept the nomination for that office, he insisted on my running for councilman, and he approached me at least twice on the same question. But now he would have you believe that I am one of the worst men in the city, simply because I am on the ticket that he does not support. I would call his attention to the quotation, that "Consistency is a jewel," and I might add that few there be that possess it.

It seems to me that if the reverend gentleman would look at home, he might find many ways in which he could conduct himself with more propriety and decorum, and perhaps would be able to do more good in his profession.

Any minister of the gospel that mixes too much in politics, is very apt to lower himself in the estimation of the people, and thereby lose his power for good, which he might otherwise have, or if he does mix in politics at all, it is better to confine himself to the truth, and not seek to injure or defame the character of others, but keep a close watch on his own morals.

Respectfully submitted,

J. H. STEPHENS.

MOVEMENTS OF THE PEOPLE.

Mrs. J. C. MOORE is improving from an attack of pneumonia.

Mrs. H. D. STEWART visited Alma relatives, part of last week.

Mrs. STEPHEN FINN departed, last night for Illinois on a visit.

GUY, son of S. D. Hughes, is laid up with an attack of diphtheria.

J. R. PENCE was north of Bartley, Tuesday, serving legal papers.

Mrs. E. W. PEACOCK is visiting the homefolks in Danbury, this week.

C. E. ABBOTT of Fremont was a brief city visitor, fore part of the week.

Mrs. WILLIAM WASHBURN is here from Alliance, visiting the homefolks.

Mrs. J. S. CHAMBERS is ill with diphtheria and the home under quarantine.

PETE BERRYMAN operates the cash register in a tonsorial palace in Wilsonville.

FRED SCHREFFER went up to Wauneta, Friday morning, to make his home there.

F. N. LOWE, traveling solicitor for Omaha World-Herald, spent part of the week here.

Mrs. E. W. SOVERNS went down to Republican City, last week, on a visit to her parents.

Mrs. FLOYD BERRY is enjoying a visit from her mother Mrs. G. H. Mer-shon of Wilcox, Neb.

MR. AND MRS. J. P. CROUSE were brief guests of Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Ennis in Alma, last week.

JOHN F. JONES' family joined him in Wauneta, this week. He is miller for the Wauneta Roller mill.

MISS VIRGINIA BOWLEY had the pleasure of a visit, Saturday-Sunday, from her sister Miss who is teaching in Alma.

Mrs. F. W. BOSWORTH will make her sister Mrs. H. M. Tyler a visit in Orleans and then join her husband at the new home in Denver.

LESTER LITTEL, county sup't of Hitchcock county, was in the city, Wednesday, discussing the coming Junior Normal with Principal Thomas.

F. A. PENNELL returned, Monday night, from spending a few days in Omaha, visiting his daughter, Leah, who is attending school there.

MR. AND MRS. C. B. SAWYER departed, yesterday morning, for the northwest, to be absent several weeks, visiting and looking after some real estate matters.

Mrs. ROSE BAYLESS has purchased a lot on Manhattan street, now one of the coming residence streets, and contemplates erecting a modern cottage thereon.

W. B. WHITTAKER and family are occupying the Haley residence, lately vacated by Conductor Willets and family. He expects to buy or build soon, however.

Mrs. ANNA MURPHY accompanied her sister Mrs. Morris Cliggett on her return to Kansas City, Mo., and is spending some time visiting in the city on the Kaw.

R. A. GREEN was over from Cedar Bluffs, Kansas, Sunday. Mrs. Green accompanied him over to the Bluffs, Monday, and is assisting in settling a home for the family over there.

H. C. MASON, sup't of agents, Fremont, Neb., of the Elkhorn Life and Accident Insurance Co. of Norfolk, was in the city, Tuesday, establishing an agency here, with Fred Hamilton as local agent.

MR. AND MRS. J. A. KUNS are now residents of Beaver City, south of which he owns a farm upon which he will build a dwelling at once. They spent the past winter in McCook.

Mrs. MARGARETTA HEINLEIN, who has been visiting in Kreglingen, Wertenberg, Germany, and vicinity, for past six months, writes that she started for home, last Saturday, and will be home soon.

W. S. COLLETT of Trenton, who was with the McCook National Bank for a few months after its opening for business, has moved to Crete, where he has bought a controlling interest in the State Bank.

FRANK FREELOVE, has been suffering from blood poisoning in the left hand, resulting from a slight scratch. The once ugly wound is now healing and in all probability the hand will be well in a few days.—Oakdale (Calif.) Leader.

COLONEL C. A. READY, barrister, of the Hayes Center Republican, who divides with Judge Orr the dignity and honor of carrying around in his vest pocket the political province of Hayes, sojourned in these urban precincts early in the week.

CHAS. S. EASTON of the Furnas County Land Company returned Monday evening from a trip over the eastern part of the state and while away closed a \$48,000 land deal, a part of which was 1,640 acres of the Doyle ranch north of McCook.—Cambridge Clarion.

J. M. SHIVELY, deputy commissioner of public lands and buildings, was in the city, Saturday, on his way to Hayes county to attend a sale of school lands for the state. Shively is a candidate for commissioner, a natural desire which his acquaintance with the office well equips him for.

Apples \$1.25 per box. White House Grocery. Ask Scott about it. Fone 30.

Reduced Rates

Appreciating the patronage we have received since commencing business, we have decided TO REDUCE THE RATES ON GAS MAY 1st, providing the number of customers reach 200 by that date. We have also decided to continue the \$5 rate for service connections until APRIL 15th. DO NOT MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY, but place orders at once so that we may rush the work and have the 200 ready by May 1st. Remember the time is short and it takes time to do the work.

The Gas Company is a home institution. Its stockholders are your neighbors, business associates and friends, and we can assure you good service and fair treatment, and that the rates will be reduced as fast as the business will justify. Do your part and we will do ours. Place orders today.

THE MCCOOK GAS CO.

Mrs. Pratt Granted Divorce.

District Judge Stewart, yesterday afternoon, granted to Mabel Pratt a decree of divorce from Herbert Joseph Pratt, a practicing dentist of McCook. The plaintiff informed the court that she was married to the defendant at Atlanta, Ga., five years ago, and that they moved to McCook, two years ago. She is of English birth, but has lived most of her life in this country. She asserted that defendant had been guilty of cruel treatment toward her, the same consisting of scolding and swearing at her and of coldness, indifference and lack of sympathy. His treatment became such that she could live with him no longer, and she left him last August, coming to Lincoln.—Lincoln Journal, March 27th.

A Unique Affair.

The entertainment presented by the "humble little sisters of the Mission Study class" in the Methodist church, Friday last, was one of the cleverest and most unique lately given by local talent. The audience was fair. The Chinese ladies were decidedly pretty and quaint in their costumes. Several numbers of the all-star program were heartily enjoyed. Tea drinking and eating a la chinoise were engrossing diversions in which some skill and more amusement were provided by skillful manipulation of the chop-sticks. The class cleared \$20 for Mission work in China.

Men's Mass Meeting.

All voters are invited to attend a men's meeting, Sunday next, at 3 p. m., at the Baptist church, to discuss the moral issues of the city election. E. S. Howell will preside and speeches will be made by H. E. Culbertson, J. D. Young, G. B. Hawkes, E. Burton and I. S. Wade of Indiana, a noted reform orator. All men are welcome.

"The Eternal City."

Dr. A. E. Turner, president of Hastings college, will deliver a lecture on "The Eternal City," with 50 illustrations, in the Methodist church, April 13th, under auspices of the Delta Alpha society. Let everyone plan to attend, as it will be one of the most instructive and interesting lectures ever given in our city.

Godfrey & Co. are operating a feed mill. See them for feed of all kinds at right prices.

Successful Painting

can be done by using Lincoln A. P. Paint, and at less cost owing to its spreading capacity. A. McMILLEN, Druggist.

Experience With Municipal Ownership.

PUBLIC SERVICE has been investigating the operation of municipal plants, and compiled a list of ninety towns in which such plants, during the past year, have been pronounced unsatisfactory, and many of them abandoned, leased or sold to private parties. The following are a few samples with brief summary of their troubles, which illustrate the disadvantages of municipal ownership and operation of public utilities.

ALEXANDRIA, VA., Electric plant: Service unsatisfactory and plant sold to the Alexandria Electric Co. for a fraction of its cost.

BLANCHESTER, O. Population 1788. Electric plant cost \$34,000. Patrons complain of unsatisfactory service and high rates, and citizens have urged sale of plant. The Blanchester Star-Republican said: "In our opinion the council could save the taxpayers money, wipe out most of our debt and give better light service if they would sell the plant to a private corporation."

EAST GRAND FORKS, MINN. Population 2489. Electric plant, cost \$30,000. Began operation in 1902; lost money steadily, showing monthly deficits, and there was talk of abandonment. Plant burned March 25, 1907. Citizens held mass meeting and decided almost unanimously not to re-build but make contract with private company in Grand Forks, N.D.

GALENA, ILL., Electric plant. Sold March 6, 1906, to private parties. Mayor and Council unanimous and action met with public approval. Service bad. Plant made no profits. Politics seriously hampered management of plant.

HARVARD, ILL., Electric plant. Are lamps exceed \$150 each per year. Plant sold in January, 1907, to private parties.

HERINGTON, KANS., Water and Electric plant. Now in the hands of private company. The Sun in discussing a proposed bond issue to build new plants said: "Public ownership in Herington has been a dismal failure in the past and many people are afraid to try it again on that account."

HIAWATHA, KANS., Water works. Official reports show plant worth \$100,000 with income \$3,600 and claiming net revenue \$800—but interest alone would greatly exceed the total income.

KANSAS CITY, MO., Water works. \$3,100,000 bonds for original plant; \$1,100,000 additional bonds for improvements and extensions; \$1,000,000 now wanted; \$1,038,040 raised by taxation for water works in eight years; annual tax now about \$150,000. Meter rate consumers 25c, flat rate consumers based on 28c, per one thousand gallons. Water bad; management worse; due largely to interference of politics.

LAKEWOOD, O. Population 3355. Electric plant cost about \$60,000. People twice voted down \$25,000 bonds for improvements. Service poor. Are lamps cost village \$129.56 each per year. Sold March 21, 1907, to private parties.

MOHAWK, N. Y. Electric and Water Works in conjunction. During six years of operation smallest annual deficit \$3,000. Are lights cost tax payers \$100 each. In 1905, operation turned over to private company.

WEST NEWTON, PA. Population 2469. Electric plant, cost \$25,000, sold July 5th, 1907, to private parties who promise to make necessary increase and improvement of the plant.

WASHINGTON, IND., Electric plant. Service unsatisfactory and plant lost money. City Treasurer Hastings said: "Under present conditions the light plant will not pay its running expenses and its obligations under any management," and recommended a receiver appointed by a court to receive proper service and get out of difficulties. CITY, OWING TO BOND DEBT LIMITATIONS, IS UNABLE TO FINANCE REHABILITATION.

A Letter of Interest.

OFFICE OF WEBER GAS ENGINE COMPANY

Kansas City, Mo., March 17, 1908. MR. G. E. THOMPSON, President Water Consumers' League, McCook, Nebraska.

DEAR SIR:

For your information, we furnish the following guaranty with all of our producers and gas engines: that they will develop their full horse power at all times, and the fuel consumed will not exceed one and one-half pounds of anthracite coal per horse-power per hour.

The cost of your pumping, for fuel only, based on pumping 1,440,000 gallons per twenty-four hours, pumping against a pressure of 125 pounds would be less than three-fourths of one cent per 1,000 gallons; this based on the price of fuel at \$10.00 per ton which is a high estimate for fuel. As to electric current, including attendance of first class character, you should furnish your current to the switchboard at less than one cent per Kw. per hour.

Yours truly,
WEBER GAS ENGINE COMPANY,
Atwood Benton, Civil Engineer.