COMMUNICATIONS

THE ELECTRIC LIGHT PROPOSITION

A vote for the bond issue is a vote to keep your lighting plant. That you have good street lighting, as cheap light in your homes as the people in neighboring towns have, and 24-hour service and the satisfaction that you own your own utilities, that you have not sold yourself to a comporation for all time.

A vote against the bond issue means that the lighting plant will be sold and that means that over $4,500 yearly will be paid from the tax levy for the poor street lighting we have now, and as the village grows your street lighting bill will grow in proportion. This sum alone will pay the proposed bond issue and interest in five years, and then you would have your plant and franchise left.

If the light plant is sold it means a higher water rate or a deficit that must be paid out of the general fund, and, remember. the general fund means from the tax levy.

It is a fact that our water plant takes three tons of coal to pump water every day in the year, or 1,095 tons yearly. We are paying $2.45 a ton for coal in our bins, or $2,672.75. It will not cost less than $3,000, and not more than $3,720 for labor and superintendent's salary, or a total of $5,-672.75.

We collected for water in 1912 $7,215.37; over $2,000 came from the C., B. & Q. R. R. They have just finished a new well, and as soon as a pump is installed, will stop taking water from us, except a little that is used in the depot, so the income for 1914 will be about $2,000 less, or $5,-215.75, a net loss of $457 just in operation.

You can see that we will have to raise our water rates or make up a large deficit from the general fund, despite the fact that you have been told that the water made money and the light lost money.

It is a certainty that if we attempted to pump water with current purchased from the purchaser of our plant that the underwriters would raise our insurance, because of the uncertainty of constant service, as the current would be brought from some distant plant, and the danger from natural causes, such as sleet storms, is so great that it becomes a certainty, and the additional rate would cost every policy holder more than the tax that it would take to pay the bond issue, if the bonds were paid from the general tax levy. We do not expect to take a dollar from the general fund to pay for these bonds or the interest, as we know that this new equipment will pay for itself long before the bonds mature.

A short time ago a large number of people received through the mails a booklet entitled "Two Hundred Reasons Why Municipal Ownership Is a Failure."

Bellefontaine, Ohio, was one of the cities given where municipal ownership was a failure. I know that this city had two oil engines that furnished power for their electric plant. I telegraphed the mayor, asking if the oil engines were the cause of their failure to make money out of their public utilities. He answered that after seven years' use they were still a great financial success. He sent me their 1912 report of their water and light departments, and this report shows that the electric plant's total receipts were $18,731.98, disbursements, $13,987.77, leaving a balance in the treasury January 1, 1913, of $4,744.21. The items of disbursement show $2,500 paid into the sinking fund, and $2,-085.42 for extension work, so that the total expense of operation and maintenance is only $9,399.70.

And that is not all. They furnished FREE CURRENT for street lighting and public buildings, that if it had been charged for at 8 cents a K. W. H. would have brought the plant a credit of $15,331, or the plant would, in fact, have made $24,720.62 above the cost of operation and maintenance for the year 1912.

The water plant showed a profit of $12,500, and the public service companies say that it is a municipal failure.

I wish we had a little of the same kind of failure and from the same cause—an oil engine.

Don't forget to vote—and vote right.

Polls open all day, Saturday, Oct. 18, 1913.

ANSON BACKUS,
Village President.

Chicago, Ill., Oct. 9, 1913.
Editor Downers Grove Reporter,
Downers Grove, Ill.
Dear Sir:

Relative to our electric light plant: I have addressed the following communication to the Public Service Company of Northern Illinois, also the Western United Gas & Electric Company.

My object in doing this is in order that we may hear both sides of the question which is before us at the present time.

I think all our citizens will admit that the electric plant as at present operated is not only a losing proposition, but is a detriment to our town, and there appears to be a doubt in the minds of a number of residents as to just what is the best thing to do—rehabilitate or sell. It is a question which is entitled to our serious consideration; hence the reason for getting all the information possible.

On receipt of reply from the two above mentioned concerns, I will forward same to you for publication.

Yours very truly,
L. C. MAHONEY.

Downers Grove, Ill., Oct. 8, 1913.
Public Service Co. of Northern Ill.,
Chicago, Ill.
Western United Gas & Electric Co.,
Aurora, Ill.
Gentlemen:

The question of rehabilitating our electric light plant is now under consideration by our citizens, and the Village Board has called an election for Saturday, Oct. 18, for the purpose of approving or rejecting a bond issue.

In order that all possible information (for and against Municipal Ownership) may be secured, I am taking the liberty of asking you the following questions, and if you find it consistent would appreciate an early reply.

In the event you were granted a franchise for operating (not to exceed twenty years) in our village.

(1) Would you furnish twenty-four-hour service?

(2) What would you charge to pump approximately 60,000,000 gallons of water per year?

(3) What charge would you make for lighting our streets all night and every night (our present system consists of sixteen 200-candle power and 121 32-candle power lamps)?

(4) What price would you be willing to pay for our system of lines (poles, lines, etc.) meaning everything outside the power house?

(5) Would you be willing to renew street and consumers' lamps free of charge?

(6) How low a price would you be willing to make to consumers for light?

Our consumers now own their electric light meters.

(7) Would you purchase them with the idea of having them under your control?

(8) Would you be agreeable to a readjustment of rates every five years, such readjustment to be effected by a committee of three? Village to appoint one, your company one and such two to choose the third?

Yours very truly,
(Signed) L. C. MAHONEY.

Aurora, Ill., Oct. 15, 1913.
Village of Downers Grove
Mr. L. C. Mahoney, Trustee, Village of Downers Grove,
Downers Grove, Ill.
Dear Sir:

We have your letter of October 8th in which you request an expression from us on the question of an electric light franchise in your Village.

As you know we have made propositions at different times to the authorities at Downers Grove with a view to furnishing current there, and we now wish to repeat that in the event a franchise was granted to us, we would be willing to pay not less than $20,000 for it, which would include your present distributing system. We would be willing to accept a twenty year franchise, under which we could operate, and sell current for 10c net per kilowatt, or we are willing to offer a rate of 13c net per kilowatt, and furnish street lights free, under an arrangement similar to the one we have with the Village of Glen Ellyn.

We will be pleased to go into the matter more fully with you at your convenience.

Yours very truly,
R. N. STROHN, Vice President,
Western United Gas and Electric Company.

Chicago, Oct. 9, 1913.
Mr. L. C. Mahoney,
Downers Grove, Ill.
Dear Sir:

Replying to your letter of recent date, we desire to answer your questions as follows:

In the event that we would acquire the Municipal distribution system and a license from the Village of Downers Grove to do business in the Village, we would in answer to your question

(1) Furnish 24-hour service.

(2) We would furnish the energy for pumping the Village water, and this energy based on a pumpage of 60,000,000 gallons per year should not exceed $1,800.00.

(3) We would furnish 16 200-candle power lamps and 120 32-candle power lamps, burning from dusk until dawn all night and every night for $3,600.00 per year.

(4) We would pay for the distribution lines of the Village and all of the other property owned by the Village and used by it in distributing electrical energy outside of the station walls, the sum of $12,500.00.

(5) We would renew street lamps free and furnish all consumers free renewals of carbon and filament lamps, and we would also furnish tungsten lamps of the 40-watt size and larger on a renewal basis, at less than their cost to us.

(6) We would furnish commercial lighting on a maximum demand rate of 14½c per kilowatt hour for the first 30 hours' use of the customers' maximum demand, and 8c per kilowatt hour for the remaining hours use, less a discount of 1c per kilowatt for prompt payment, making a net rate of 13½c for the first 30 hours use of the maximum and 7c for the balance.

(7) We would purchase electric light meters in good condition and owned by the consumers, at 15 per cent less than cost of new meters to us.

(8) We could not agree to readjustment of rates to be effected by a committee of three. Inasmuch as the question of rates for the future will be one which will be controlled by the Public Service Commission, we could not and the Village could not legally or effectively agree to deprive the Commission of one of its principal powers, namely the determination and fixing of just and reasonable rates.

Yours very truly,
CHARLES A. MUNROE,
Vice President.

In connection with the proposed bond issue by the Village of Downers Grove for the rehabilitation of its electric light plant, a few suggestions and figures are herewith presented for the respectful and careful consideration by all of the voters and citizens of Downers Grove.

1st. It is proposed to spend the proceeds of $18,000.00 of bonds inside the walls of the station, leaving no funds with which to rehabilitate the distribution system. It is a well known fact that this distribution system is in an unsafe condition and that it would cost $10,000.00 to put this system in a safe, operating condition. Series street lighting circuits are operated at a high voltage and in case these wires are down and people come in contact with them it means that a serious injury will result, and possibly death. There is no question but what the village would be legally liable for such damage, which might amount to $10,000 in a single case.

2. When the proceeds of these bonds have been expended in the station, the village will not then have sufficient capacity to furnish energy to industries which we are anxious to have locate in this town, and unless such industries can purchase power in such amounts as they require they will locate their plants in other towns served by public service companies.

3. Continuous electric service is a necessity in a community the size of Downers Grove. Extension of the service should be made for all consumers who desire service. A well run electric light plant is an absolute necessity in every town of this size at the present time.

4. If the Village of Downers Grove can receive $12,500 for its property used in distributing electricity outside of the station walls, and it would cost $10,000 to rebuild its system, whoever would purchase the system and agree to rehabilitate the same would have an investment in the village of $22,500. This would yield a revenue in taxes of 1½ per cent, or $337.50. The interest on the $12,500 at 5 per cent would amount to $625, making a revenue of $962.50 per year.

5. In case the village decides to issue $18,000 of bonds bearing 5 per cent interest, the interest on these bonds would amount to $900, and the depreciation on the property purchased with the proceeds of these bonds would amount to $1,800 per year, at 10 per cent per annum, which would make the interest and depreciation on the new money to be put in the plant $2,700 per year. Adding to this amount the amount which the village would have as income in case they sold the distribution system, namely, $962.50, would make the sum of $3,662.50.

Assuming that the city would have to pay $3,600 for street lighting and $1,800 for pumping water, this would amount to $5,400 per year. The city now charges itself $2,400 per year for street lighting, leaving a balance of $3,000 to be paid.

This balance would be met by the $3,662.50, thus the city would be ahead $662.50 per year by disposing of its distribution system and purchasing its street lights and energy for pumping water from some public utility company.

These figures are based upon the assumption that the city is breaking even on the operation of its electric light plant and pumping the village water. We know that this is not so. If the proper charges were made for depreciation on the property belonging to the village's electric light plant, the operation of the plant would show a loss of considerably more than $1,000 per year.

6. Internal combustion oil engines have been used for a number of years, and one of the largest installations in this part of the country is at Lebanon, Ind., where 720 kilowatts of oil engines are installed. The electric light company at this point is at this time displacing these engines, and installing in their place steam driven units.

7. The electric light plant and distribution system in Downers Grove cannot be put in proper shape with the proceeds of the bonds, and it would seem to be a very unwise procedure to put $18,000 in good money after bad and then have no money left with which to rebuild the distribution lines.

It is a serious question as to whether the officers of the village could not be held criminally liable for allowing the distribution system to remain in an unsafe condition.

Years ago it was necessary for villages to build their own electric light plants in order not to be plundered by avaricious corporations, who would charge what they pleased for the energy and do as they pleased in the community.

A public service commission will have power on January 1, 1914, to regulate the conduct and rates of public service companies all over the state of Illinois. Since this progressive legislation has removed these reasons for a municipal plant, what good reason is there for embarking upon a venture of this kind with the credit of the village, when the chance for profit is so doubtful, and the chance for loss almost certain?

If the distribution lines are sold the consumers will receive 24-hour service, pay for their current at less rates than they are now paying, and in addition to this, the consumers will receive free lamp renewals, and will be paid for their meters at a slight reduction under what new meters would cost.

(Continued from last week.)

The city of Menasha some years ago was foolish enough to grant a very generous franchise to an electric railroad and power corporation, and the city has since had some very expensive lawsuits on their hands over disputes on the franchise, but the city has won all the decisions to date, and has recently ordered another 225 H. P. engine to meet the fast-growing demand for current. Among other things there, we learned that 18 gallons of fuel oil runs their 225 H. P. engine one hour, which makes cheap power, with oil at 4 cents per gallon.

We learned at Menasha that Appleton, Wis., nearby, had a few years ago given a franchise to a public service corporation and now when they wanted to buy it back were forced to give $400,000, although they only got back $50,000 worth of tangible property, which shows that the special privilege was worth $350,000.

Our village board expects, if the voters let us rehabilitate the plant, to give 24-hour service, and after the installation of the same will, as we can, reduce the rate so as to do as well, or better than our neighboring towns.

Attention has been called to our lines, that they are in need of rehabilitation, they are not in need of rehabilitation and our poles proved O. K. when we lost but one in the sleet storm of last March, when many telegraph poles went down. Our lines do need extending to meet the increasing demand for current, and since the passage in the last legislature of a certain act this village can legally operate and sell the proceeds of all public utilities, which before, in many instances, were illegal.

I believe the De La Vergne oil engine suits our purposes best. It is a horizontal type of engine, and constructed so as to be easy to get at in case of trouble, which is liable to occur sometimes in anything mechanical. It is a low-pressure engine. It will burn low grades of oil and only recently we were quoted a price which with freight charges added, would be 3.87 cents per gallon f. o. b. Downers Grove.

Just a few days ago Mr. Martin White handed me a letter in answer to one the board members requested him to write, from his brother in Connersville, Ind., reporting on a certain plant there, where they have a Diesel engine, a De La Vergne and a steam engine. He found that the oil engines were one-half as expensive to produce the same results as steam, and of the two oil engines the De La Vergne was preferred, principally because of its low pressure feature.

I believe with the installation of an oil engine plant in this village and with the profits arising therefrom we could go out in the open market and retire some of the bonds.

Supposing we sold our plant for $20,-000 and gave a thirty-year franchise, which, to my thinking would be a bad bargain, indeed. Supposing we had a franchise contract drawn up that suited the every need that the village could anticipate, but just as there is always likely to come up, the village in ten years from now raises a serious point, which the holder of the franchise does not agree with, what final alternative has the village? It can sue, but it becomes mighty expensive when legal trouble is started with a big corporation.

No public service corporation would buy our water plant and system at anything like the real investment in the same; they would sell us current to pump with, or we could still use our present steam plant, in which case the operating cost would be nearly as great as the total cost of operating both the electric and water departments by the proposed new equipment.

In the immediate future we will lose our heaviest customer of water, the Burlington railroad, which last year took about 18,000,000 gallons at a profitable rate. This loss of revenue will be so much less for the operation of the water department.

One thing a good many of our citizens would like to see is ornamental street lights on our main street, in keeping with our place among the neighboring towns of La Grange, Hinsdale, Naperville, etc. This would probably not be carried through should we sell our plant.

Our public service corporation made an estimated cost of about $4,500 annual charge for lighting our streets and public places with the present number of lights. The village, through taxation, now only allows $2,200 for this service, thus making $2,300 extra annual tax that would have to be levied. This one saving alone in a few years would pay for all the proposed new equipment.

Should $20,000 be paid for our franchise, $10,000 of this would pay for the lines (tangible property) that would be turned over to a public service corporation. This would leave $10,000 for the privilege of doing business, which would be a bargain for some one. Let us not rob Peter to pay Paul. At the end of thirty years could the village buy back the line system alone for $20,000? I think not. If we did buy it back there would then be a heavy bond issue.

We must consider that our village is going to grow greatly in the next thirty years, and the growth of uses for electricity will be marvelous. Look back over the last thirty years and see the great strides it has made, and then contemplate the development in the next thirty. Who should get the benefit of this, the taxpayers or a public service corporation? If the village, then, Mr. Voter, I believe it is our duty and privilege to vote for the bond issue this Saturday, October 18.

JASON LITTLEFORD.

How to Test Tea's Purity.

A remarkably simple method of testing the purity of tea for coloring matter is to use an ordinary table knife and a sheet of white paper, upon which a small quantity of the tea to be tested is placed. The tea is then rubbed with the knife. When the leaves have been reduced to a powder the paper is dusted clean with a brush made of common bristles and its surface examined with the naked eye or a microscope. If the tea is artificially colored little spots or streaks of vivid Prussian blue will appear in the fiber of the paper. These stains are so distinct in their coloring that they cannot possibly be confused with any other stain that may be in the paper.

Pebble Industry in Normandy.

The pebble industry is becoming quite important in upper Normandy, France. The cliffs of the Caux region, undermined by subterranean springs and by the waves of the English channel, slip, fall and break. They are formed of a calcareous mass containing flints. These flints fall to the bottom of the sea, where they become flat and take an ovoid shape.

Their color is blue, spotted with brown, yellow or red stripes. They are used to manufacture concrete stone and earthenware, and their dust is even employed to make paint and rice powder imitation.

Over 120,000 tons of pebbles are annually picked up on the Normandy beaches. Most of it is sent abroad.