



THE WESTERN UNITED GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY is presenting these two pictures to show its patrons the results of the accident which occurred on the morning of Friday, Oct. 3. The picture to the left shows the ovens which make the gas, together with the coal storage bins and the conveyor carrying the coal up to the bins. This building held about one thousand tons of coal and was built entirely of steel and reinforced concrete, not a stick of wood being used in the building or the inclined conveyor. The picture to the right shows the same ovens and the same building after the accident. The wreck broke all the pipes conveying the gas from the ovens through the apparatus that prepares it for general use, and the broken ends were covered by hundreds of tons of this wreckage. It was necessary to clear all that away and make temporary pipe connections before any gas could be made available for use. The gigantic size of the task is apparent when you look at the picture on the right.

Practically every employe of the plant, the company and the general officers as well, worked untiringly from Friday morning until the following Monday night, and many of them without sleep in order to temporarily repair the plant so that it could again make gas. Meanwhile the company was operating its auxiliary plants at Joliet, LaGrange and Aurora in order to furnish an uninterrupted supply. These plants however are too small to make all the gas now being used. The following editorial copied from the Joliet Herald of the evening of Oct. 3, expresses the situation so far as the Company and its employes were concerned.

The Training of Public Service

"One of the great lessons on the subject of municipal ownership is taught on an occasion like today when the Coal Products plant was attacked by fire and severely damaged. While the firemen and most of the employes were still fighting the flames other crews under almost martial discipline were going on with the routine work in the portions of the plant not yet reached by the fire but threatened every moment.

"And still other gangs were preparing to remove the wreckage as soon as the flames were quenched, and at the same time great derricks borrowed from the steel company were being hauled to the scene to hoist the coal to the ovens in place of the ruined elevator.

"The one idea that pervaded the entire force and plant was that service must not be allowed to lapse if labor and energy could prevent.

"And on the same theory the old plants of the company were in working order in a few minutes after the fire had started and the word was wired to the different sections of the territory to meet the emergency.

"City owned gas works could never have been handled as was the Coal Products plant today. Municipal employes would not work with the same trained instinct.

"The word SERVICE would not mean to them what it meant to the corporation officials and men.

"And if the same energy and resource could be employed by a city, the resource of the emergency plants would be lacking.

"The people will be given some supply of gas by hook or by crook today. A municipal plant scarcely could make good under such a test."

The order was given to continue the gas service and men risked their lives and their healths to carry out the order. The company takes great pride in coming through with such a disaster without an interruption of service, although of necessity it must serve gas not quite up to its usual high standard for about two weeks longer.

The company takes this opportunity of informing its patrons that it is amply able to take care of the gas business and carry out the trust voluntarily assumed by itself and imposed upon it by the public.

It would be unfair not to express appreciation of the unexampled exhibition of loyalty on the part of every employe, and also to acknowledge the debt of gratitude it owes to Mayor Wood and practically every official of the City of Joliet for the promptness with which they met every request for help; and also to Mr. P. F. McManus, General Manager of the E., J. & E. Railroad, and every one of his assistants, who worked so intensely and unceasingly, and to Mr. David R. Mathias, General Superintendent of the Illinois Steel Company plant at Joliet and all his assistants, for the promptness and generosity with which they, one and all, provided every resource at their command. But for these two factors, the splendid loyalty of our men and the vast resources so promptly and generously placed at our disposal by the interests represented by these gentlemen named, together with their assistants, it would not have been possible for the company to pull through with the record which leaves it with a pardonable pride in the genuineness of its friends and the gameness of its employes.

Western United Gas and Electric Company