

# LONDON GAS BILL OPPOSED BY CITY

By a vote of 23 to 20, the Private Bills Committee of the Legislature reported "in principle" yesterday morning the City of London Gas Bill, by which the price of gas to the consumers in that city is set at \$1.25 a thousand feet.

W. F. Nickle, Kingston, when the discussion was over, moved that the bill be sent to a special committee for consideration, as, he said, he thought members present were not able at that moment to arrive at a judicious opinion as to the merits of the bill, and if they voted, some of them, under these conditions, might, for that reason, vote for an injustice.

Charles McCrea, Sudbury, moved an amendment that the bill be reported, but before the vote could be put Hon. Walter Rollo, Minister of Labor, made an impassioned appeal for the defeat of the bill. It fell on deaf ears, and when the vote was taken the bill was reported.

### Called It "a Day."

J. W. Curry, Southeast Toronto, who was acting as Chairman, said that the vote only reported the bill "in principle," and that the clauses had yet to be taken up one by one. The committee decided that a day's work had been done, however, and adjourned forthwith.

### Can Increase Stock.

An agreement was made between the city of London and the Gas Company in 1906, it came out in discussion before the committee yesterday, and this agreement came before the Legislature at the time and in the statutes the gas price was fixed at 90 cents a thousand feet. The bill of yesterday sets the price at \$1.25 per thousand feet, with provisions further of increasing the stock from its present total of \$256,000 to \$400,000 and gives the company 10 per cent. on its investment. The company also has the right to increase its capital stock ultimately to one million dollars. Mr. McCrea explained yesterday that when the price of \$1.25 paid more than the operating cost and the dividend of 10 per cent., then the excess was to be paid into a fund which, when it amounted to five cents a thousand for gas consumed, would be returned to the consumers.

### London's Objections.

Objections to the bill were voiced yesterday before the committee by City Solicitor Meredith, Mayor Wilson and Ald. Ashplant of London. The objections chiefly were that an agreement entered into between the city and the company was being set aside; that this bill increased the capital stock of the company to \$400,000, and that the new rates were being based upon peak prices, and prices were now declining. They objected also to the 10 per cent. dividend, holding that 6 per cent. was a more reasonable figure. Mr. Meredith was skeptical about the return of the five cents per thousand mentioned by Mr. McCrea. "You say you are going to give us a rebate of five cents. When? Not in your lifetime nor in mine," he told Mr. McCrea.

### Cost of Production.

A year ago, when a temporary agreement was arrived at between the city and the company that gas was to sell at \$1.15, an auditor was engaged to determine the cost of producing the gas. He found this cost as \$1.18 a thousand. Mr. Ashplant said he did not question the auditor's report, but he questioned the interpretation put upon it.

Just before the vote was put Hon. Walter Rollo had a set-to with the Chairman, as Mr. Rollo apparently felt he was being debarred from speaking. "If I am not to be allowed to speak I'll say what I want to say on the floor of the House," he declared. Getting a hearing he maintained that coal and labor were the big items in cost of production for the company, and the price of both these things was coming down. The 90-cent rate might be too low, but \$1.25 was too much.