

Probe Of Blackout Told Sloppy Practice In Ont.

By ARCH MacKENZIE
WASHINGTON (CP)—A congressional inquiry into the power blackout last month began with a suggestion of "very sloppy practice" on the Ontario Hydro Electric Power Commission.

The criticism, from Republican James Harvey of Michigan was answered by members of the United States Federal Power Commission. Commissioner Charles Ross granted that initial failure occurred in Ontario Hydro's Sir Adam Beck No. 2 plant in the Niagara generating complex.

But the primary cause for the failure extending through the U.S. northeast eventually affecting 30,000,000 Canadians and Americans for up to 14 hours, was a lack of electrical reserves in New York State to off set the Canadian break, Ross said.

Joseph Swidler, retiring commission chairman, called for more North American and national co-ordination and integration of power systems. He also called for congressional action to give the FPC greater supervisory authority over 3,600 large and small U.S. power utilities which get 90 per cent of their power from privately owned generating firms.

The congressional inquiry is being conducted by a subcommittee of the House of Representatives interstate and foreign commerce committee.

TERMED VULNERABLE
Congressman Harvey suggested first that since the Canada-U.S. power complex at Niagara is described as the largest in North America, it is vulnerable to sabotage. Swidler said it isn't pinpointed as much as that and that the elimination of connections with other systems wouldn't improve the situation.

Harvey noted the initial break in Canada came when a safety-valve relay cut off power in one of five lines feeding north to the Toronto area.

The extra load thrown on them tripped out circuit-breakers on another four lines and the Beck-generated power, with nowhere else to go, surged across the U.S. border into New York State.

The FPC report of Dec. 6 said the Ontario Hydro relay had last been set in 1963. The transmission load had increased since without any new adjustment.

"It just seems to me that someone here has failed to anticipate events," Harvey said.

GUARDED SHORTS
Swidler said Ontario Hydro originally set the relay to guard against short circuits on the line farther north—not to protect against too heavy an electrical burden on the spot. The circumstances seemed to

indicate Ontario Hydro was not prepared for what happened and was vulnerable to a lightning hit, sabotage or a plane crash, Harvey said.

Swidler said the Canada-U.S. tieup had reacted in November as planned and the primary reason for the collapse of other systems was lack of sufficient reserve power in New York State.

Ontario Hydro's latest information to him, said Swidler, is that the Adam Beck relays now protect a shorter span of transmission line against short circuits and can meet a higher burden of electrical current before snapping off the connection.

Quints Home To Be Museum

NORTH BAY, Ont. (CP)—The former home of the Dionne quintuplets at Corbeil may be developed as a district museum, Deane Harris, a Callander, Ont., business man said here.

Mr. Harris said an interested group has taken an option on the property, recently offered for sale at \$38,000.

He said the group is investigating the qualifications needed to obtain federal and provincial grants available for historic purposes.

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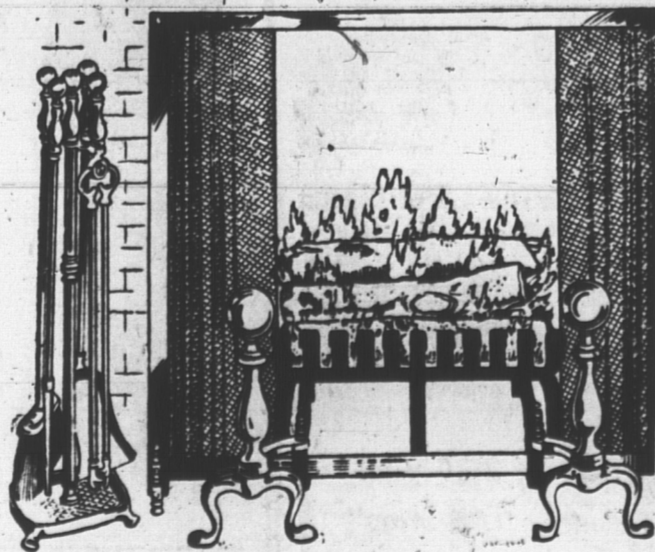
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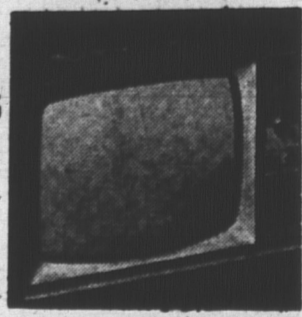
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