

PRENDERGAST HEARS DIRECT CURRENT PLEA

***Gets Promise of Edison Company
to Supply It Wherever New
Investment Is Not Involved.***

Robert B. Thomas, counsel for the Structural Steel Board of Trade, Inc., appeared before Chairman Prendergast of the Public Service Commission yesterday in support of the complaint of the board that the New York Edison Company had refused to furnish direct current to contractors for temporary use during the construction of buildings.

The Edison Company, after a study of the situation in its territory, determined to supply alternating current to all consumers except those who had installed direct current equipment in buildings. This situation remains. Mr. Thomas said that the cost of the direct current equipment used by contractors was in some cases in excess of \$50,000. He protested against any situation that would mean the scrapping of it.

He asserted that the company had encouraged builders to provide themselves with this costly equipment and thought the company should pay for it if a change in the method of furnishing current had destroyed its value. It was explained that alternating current was rapidly taking the place of direct current throughout the country, because it was cheaper to install and to operate. This direct current equipment, Mr. Thomas said, had cost steel contractors at least \$2,000,000. It was suggested that it would only be fair if the company continued to supply direct current to those contractors who wanted it until their equipment was worn out, which might occur in ten years.

William L. Ransom, counsel for the company, said that its president, Matthew S. Sloan, would not consent to the investment of any money in the company's plant that would only serve a temporary purpose. At a hearing before the commission on May 27, last, representatives of building firms which are members of the Steel Board of Trade, said that Mr. Sloan was dictatorial and responsible for innovations that were troublesome.

Chairman Prendergast won a promise from Mr. Ransom that the company would supply direct current to building contractors whenever it was possible without further investment on the company's part. If the company and the contractors cannot reach an amicable agreement the latter were told that they could file a formal complaint with the commission and that hearings would be held so that the case might be fully inquired into.