

Public Service Steam Heat Challenged

Legality of a million-dollar steam heating program of the Public Service Company of Colorado was under scrutiny Wednesday.

The laying of a new steam main in connection with the program already had begun when it was discovered that the service, apparently was authorized only by a franchise which expired in 1919.

The new line connects the company's Lacombe plant at West

Thirteenth avenue and Zuni street with a downtown distribution system now being fed by the old steam plant at Nineteenth and Delgany streets. The route of the new line is along West Thirteenth avenue and Mariposa and Stout streets.

Steam supplied through the system is used to heat downtown office buildings. The new supply will be "bleeder" steam already used in production of electricity.

City Attorney J. Glenn Donaldson

said Wednesday, after a discussion with William A. Bryans III, attorney for the company, that city council would be asked to pass an ordinance granting authority for the line.

Donaldson said it was hoped the supreme court, by the time the ordinance is prepared, will have decided a suit contesting the right of the council to set tramway rates. That decision is expected to determine whether the rate-making

power rests with the people or the council.

The earlier franchise first was granted in 1879 to the old Denver City Steam Heating company, since absorbed by the Public Service company. That franchise, after one extension, expired in 1919. The city clerk's records show no further franchise authorizing steam heating service.

Bryans said Wednesday the service has operated at a loss for

many years, but that it has been continued since many buildings, relying on the service, have been built without basements, boilers or flues.

The question of legality arose out of inquiries into city records by representatives of local coal interests. Expansion of steam service is expected to make it advantageous for some buildings to close down their own steam plants with a resultant decrease in the need for coal.