CONFERENCE OF PORT SANITARY AUTHORITIES.

ADDRESS

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THE HISTORY OF THE PORT SANITARY AUTHORITY OF MANCHESTER.

I PROPOSE, this morning, to give you a brief description of the history of the Port Sanitary Authority of Manchester.

I think it best to introduce my subject by briefly pointing out the chief points of interest within the port, in order that you may the better appreciate the extent of the work which the authority has to undertake.

On the 1st day of January, 1894; the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury, under the Customs Consolidation Act of 1875, constituted the Port of Manchester in the following terms:—

“The Port shall commence at the eastern termination of the Port of Liverpool, that is to say, at an imaginary straight line across the River Mersey from Dungeon Point on the Lancashire shore to Ince Ferry on the Cheshire shore, and shall include the River Mersey above the said line, and the River Irwell, so far as the same are navigable, and the River Weaver to Frodshem Bridge, and shall include the Manchester Ship Canal from the entrance thereof at Eastham, in the County of Cheshire (where it touches the Port of Liverpool), to Hunts Back, in the City and Parish of Manchester, with all channels, havens, creeks, cuts, and docks within the limits aforesaid.”

The district map of Manchester shows that the port, as thus defined, may be considered as consisting of two great divisions, viz.:—

(1) The estuary of the Mersey above the limit of the Port of Liverpool.

(2) The Ship Canal proper with all the various docks, &c., throughout its whole length.

On the Mersey there are two towns of importance, viz., Widnes and Warrington.

At Widnes there are two docks capable of dealing with small coasting vessels, flats, &c. Last year 584 coasters, with a tonnage of 37,355 were dealt with there.

At Widnes also the Sankey and St. Helens Canal enters the Mersey. I need scarcely point out that all canal boats entering this canal must do so from the Port of Manchester.

At Warrington the amount of coasting traffic is but small. Last year it was represented by thirty vessels, with a tonnage of 1,465. There is, however, a considerable amount of barge traffic which reaches the town, either by the Mersey itself, or passes into the Mersey at this point through the Walton Lock, as shown on the map. Just inside this lock there is an open space where it has been proposed to build docks capable of accommodating vessels of large tonnage. It is more than likely that such docks will yet be constructed in the near future.

Let me now direct your attention to the ship canal proper. Commencing from the eastern end the first point of importance is Ellesmere Port. Here last year forty-one vessels from foreign lands with a tonnage of 29,548, and 357 coasters with a tonnage of 51,548 were dealt with. At this point also the Shropshire Union Canal enters the ship canal. Along this canal large quantities of materials are conveyed to the pottery district from Ellesmere Port as well as Liverpool.

Now the importance of this lies in the fact that infection may be carried from Ellesmere Port to the potteries in one or other of two ways. These are, that the canal boat may receive an infected cargo and thus carry disease to the point of discharge, or the people on the canal boat may be infected by the people on the ship from which their cargo has been received, and may in turn communicate the disease to the Riparian population.

Not a few instances are on record of such dissemination.

The next point of importance is Runcorn. Last year 147 vessels with

a tonnage of 72,147 were dealt with from foreign lands, whilst 1,394 coasters with a tonnage of 135,152 were discharged. Here two great inland canal systems join the ship canal. These are the Bridgewater Canal and the River Weaver Navigation.

The amount of barge traffic dealt with at Runcorn is immense. Canal boats in large numbers pass out of the ship canal into the Mersey and thence to Liverpool, Widnes, Warrington, etc. On the other hand these boats come in large numbers from the places mentioned and the canals in connection with them, and pass into the Bridgewater and Weaver Canals at Runcorn.

Next let me point out to you Partington. Here a large and increasing coal trade is dealt with. This coal is brought here by the system of the Cheshire Lines Committee, which is composed of the Midland, Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire, and the Great Northern Railways.

Finally you have the great docks at Manchester. I shall not describe them to you as they are well known to the majority as one of the greatest feats of modern engineering.

Last year the amount of shipping inwards to the Manchester Docks was as follows:—

Foreign 798 with a tonnage of 794,917,
And coastwise 1,737 with a tonnage of 405,500.

It may be of interest to give the total tonnage dealt with in the whole of the port since the port was opened:—

Year.						Tons.
1894	...	...	...	...	...	925,659
1895	...	...	...	...	...	1,358,875
1896	...	...	...	...	...	1,826,237
1897	...	...	...	...	...	2,065,815
1898	...	...	...	...	...	2,595,585
1899	...	...	...	...	...	2,778,108
1900	...	...	...	...	...	3,060,516
1901	...	...	...	...	...	2,944,393
1902, six months ending June 30th	...	...	...	...	...	1,590,363

Manchester now holds the sixth position amongst the Ports of the United Kingdom.

I may conclude this part of my address by stating that the Ship Canal has a collecting and distributing area of 10,000 square miles, with a population of 10,500,000. The Riparian population amounts to 1,045,643.

I need hardly point out that whilst the protection of the Port Sanitary

Authority is most experienced by the Riparian population, it cannot be otherwise than beneficial to the community at large.

I shall now give you a brief outline of the negotiations which resulted in the formation of the present Port Sanitary Authority.

In October, 1895, a Conference, which was attended by Dr. Barry, L.G.B. Inspector, and Representatives of several Riparian Authorities, was held in Manchester. The Conference came to a general conclusion that a Port Sanitary Authority was essential. No agreement could be arrived at, however, as to the amount of representation and contribution which would be equitable for the various authorities.

However, Dr. Barry prepared a Draft Order suggesting a basis of agreement. This Order was discussed at a Conference held in Manchester in March, 1896. So great a diversity of opinion was exhibited as to what constituted a just assessment of representation and contribution that it was clear that, unless some temporary arrangement could be arrived at, much valuable time would be lost before an authority could be constituted.

Accordingly the representatives of Manchester, Salford and Stretford requested the Local Government Board to frame a temporary Provisional Order empowering these authorities to take upon themselves the formation of a port sanitary authority and apportioning what, in the opinion of the Local Government Board, was a satisfactory basis of representation and contribution. In accordance with this request the Local Government Board in September, 1896, issued a temporary Provisional Order constituting these authorities the port sanitary authority for the whole of the port, and assessing the representation and contribution as four-ninths Manchester, four-ninths Salford, and one-ninth Stretford. This Order should have expired in March, 1899, but in consequence of protracted negotiations it did not do so until the end of 1901.

The first meeting of the temporary authority took place in the Manchester Town Hall on the 19th January, 1897. At this meeting representatives of the three authorities were duly appointed, viz., four for Manchester, four for Salford, and one for Stretford.

The authority, as thus constituted, with its staff of clerk, part time medical officer, and one inspector, existed down to the end of 1901.

I may briefly summarise the state of affairs, after the issue of the temporary Order, as follows :—

- (1) The authorities of Manchester, Salford, and Stretford voluntarily undertook to provide a temporary sanitary authority, and to contribute the whole of the expense in connection with the same.

- (2) Their authority extended over, and their expenses were incurred in connection with, the whole of the Customs Port of Manchester.
- (3) They reserved to themselves the right to raise, at any time, the question of representation and contribution on the part of any or all of the other riparian authorities.

During the existence of the temporary authority negotiations were in progress with the various riparian authorities for some more equitable arrangement. It was found, however, impossible to arrive at a unanimous opinion as to what was the best course of action. Accordingly the existing authority requested the Local Government Board to issue a permanent Order combining the whole of the riparian authorities, and assessing the representation and contribution on the part of the various authorities on what might seem to the Local Government Board fair and reasonable terms. In compliance with this request, the Local Government Board issued the present Order and, after the usual inquiry held in Manchester, the Order was opposed in the House of Commons, and again in the House of Lords, but was then passed with only slight alteration.

The authority now consists of thirteen members, who represent the whole of the riparian authorities, with the exception of Whiston, whose appeal was sustained by the House of Commons.

Of these members Manchester appoints four, Salford four, Stretford one, whilst the other riparian authorities appoint the remaining four in a manner prescribed by the Local Government Board.

The amount of contribution is assessed according to the groups shown in the map.

Gentlemen, I have described to you how the authority has been constituted and what is the extent of its area of jurisdiction.

I shall now direct your attention to the functions it is called upon to perform.

The functions of a port sanitary authority are two-fold.

- (1) It is its duty to prevent the spread of dangerous infectious disease from on board ship to the community at large.
- (2) It is its duty to see that the conditions of life on board ship are such as are in accordance with sanitary principles.

I shall deal with the first division only, illustrating my remarks by referring to the work of the Manchester authority.

In order to deal with this work it is necessary to have—

- (1) Efficient medical inspection of ships. For this purpose the authority have appointed a medical officer to devote his whole time to the work.
- (2) Hospital accommodation for the isolation and treatment of cases of dangerous infectious disease. So far as this is concerned the authority have the use of hospitals at both ends of the port.

By the Cholera, Yellow Fever and Plague Order of 1896, with special reference to the relations between Manchester and Liverpool, it is incumbent on the Liverpool port authority to undertake the inspection of all ships bound to Manchester from a foreign port infected with any of these diseases, in the same way as if the vessel were bound for Liverpool. Should a case be discovered then the Liverpool authority have to isolate the case and take all necessary precautions before allowing the ship to proceed to Manchester. Similarly with smallpox, Liverpool isolates all cases brought to notice and takes the usual precautions.

Arrangements have been made with the Salford Corporation that in the event of a case of any of the diseases mentioned, or any other infectious disease, occurring after the ship has reached Manchester, such case shall be dealt with at the Salford Isolation Hospital.

I may illustrate this point by an example. You all know that cholera is raging in Egypt with an appalling death-rate.

EXTRACT FROM THE "MANCHESTER GUARDIAN."—AUGUST 25TH, 1902.

The Cholera in Egypt.—Cairo, Monday.

"The total number of cases of cholera at present existing in Egypt is 388. In Cairo there were 38 cases yesterday and 27 deaths, and 5 cases at Alexandria. The total number of cases since July 15 is 4,278, of which 3,246 ended fatally and 322 were cured."—*Reuter*.

Now a fairly large number of ships trade between Manchester and Egypt. At Liverpool these boats are inspected, and any case of cholera which might be on board is at once isolated in the Liverpool hospitals, and all necessary precautions taken before the ship is allowed to proceed to Manchester. Should, however, a case occur after the ship reaches Manchester, then the case will be at once isolated at Salford. Few ports, I venture to think, are better off in this respect.

Let me emphasize this most crucial fact, viz., that the port sanitary authority are the only authority who have legal power to deal with such

cases, and insist upon the inspection of ships crews for the purpose of discovering such cases. The importance of such a power is so great that I make no apology in thus referring to it.

- (3) Ready and rapid means of removal of cases of infectious disease from on board ship to Salford.

In regard to this point you must recollect that the port has a very wide area, that the Ship Canal is $35\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length, and that shipping coming from all parts of the world is tied up at widely separate points which are frequently far distant from suitable hospital accommodation.

Under these circumstances the authority recognised that it was necessary to have some connecting link. The solution of this problem was found in the acquisition of a steam launch, which has this year been purchased and is now in use.

The launch is provided with a deck cabin, in which a patient may be placed with a minimum of jolting and discomfort.

Furthermore, such a cabin is particularly easy of cleansing and disinfection, points of the very first importance.

You will, of course, understand that the launch has to play a very important part in the inspection of vessels and barges in the port apart altogether from its use as an ambulance, as it renders all parts of the port within easy reach of the medical officer and inspectors.

I may conclude by stating that the watchwords of the port sanitary authority have been efficiency combined with intelligent economy.