

SUBJECT:

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CHICAGO AND CALUMET HARBORS.

ILLINOIS AND CALUMET RIVERS.

ILLINOIS AND MISSISSIPPI CANAL.

United States Engineer Office,

1637 Indiana Avenue, P. O. Drawer 132.

CHICAGO, ILL., August 28, 1899.

Hon. L. F. McGann,

Commissioner of Public Works

Chicago, Ill.

Sir:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of ~~August~~ ^{August} 26, 1899, ending with the remark,—"Any plan that you have to offer consistent with the health and best interests of the City will receive the careful consideration of the City Government &c., &c."

Surely the Commissioner of Public Works will see that I can not again ^{propose} ~~propose~~ anything looking to an agreement with the City Officials when agreements with the War Department have nearly uniformly been held as nothing by them.

I have only to say, without in any sense desiring to be ^{considered} ~~offensive~~ by the statement of plain facts:

1st. The matter of dumping grounds, and dumping in navigable waters, is placed by Congress entirely in the hands of the Secretary of War, and

2nd. That these dumping grounds have been allowed to be selected by the City Authorities, and afterwards established and legalized by the Secretary of War by a formal proclamation and publication. They should not be changed without authority of the Secretary of War, nor without proper representations to the controlling authority.

3rd. That the City without any reference to the controlling auth-

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ority has undertaken to establish new dumping grounds and to break and destroy an agreement by which action contracts as follows are either made inoperative or made more onerous and costly in execution:

Chicago Harbor.....	\$100,000.00
Calumet River.....	60,000.00
Calumet Outer Harbor.....	350,000.00
Chicago River.....	126,000.00
	<u>\$636,000.00</u>

all of which are now in course of execution but practically suspended.

This action could be justified only on the plea of emergency to save life, or preserve health, otherwise such an agreement can not be broken until the conditions stated arise: (1st.)The Lake Front Park dumping ground be made available as a substitute; or (2nd)an increased pollution of the water supply become apparent as shown by the health record. Neither of these conditions have arisen. There was a marked and continuous and progressive decrease in foul water diseases during the operation of this agreement, and the Lake Park matter is still as it was in 1897.

4th. The Commissioner will surely see that either the stand taken by the Commissioner of Health that these dumpings are harmful for an indefinite period is wholly or absolutely wrong, or else the City of Chicago is about to perpetrate a colossal crime by dumping all this deadly stuff into the water supply of Cities of the Mississippi Valley. Wither this material is speedily oxidized and burned up in the waters of Lake Michigan if put there in proper quantities and in live water,

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of the only argument justifying the drainage canal, that the water will be purified in from three to seven days, or before arriving at the St. Louis water intakes is absolutely wrong.

I submit to you that this City will not be allowed by the courts of this land to apply one rule to itself and a totally opposite rule to its neighbors.

I believe that the Commissioner of Health in 1897 argued (as published last week in his reply to my first "ebullition") scientifically and correctly in favor of the alongshore dump; I believe today that 99 out of every 100 sanitary engineers and physicians will agree with that argument, and say that if there must be dumping in the lake (and this City has no power to stop it without the action of Congress), then the alongshore dumping ground, and as close inshore as practicable is the best possible solution. The material will be stirred up and submitted to oxidizing influences at every light breeze; it will be placed most distant from the intakes; the deposit may be most closely watched; and the water intakes will not be subject to pollution from every point of the compass, the effect produced by the application of this hasty order.

It is undoubtedly true that organic matter in various stages of decomposition is found on the bottom of Lake Michigan 12 miles out. It has been found in the deepest sea dredgings ever attempted. It will be found wherever there is life, and in probably all water of the world, except possibly the Dead Sea, but that harmful germs or bacteria in deposits from Chicago River or elsewhere will live forever in these dumpings, or that these dumpings can forever or for any length of time

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when deposited in the waters of Lake Michigan sustain such harmful germs, I deny. For the purposes of the Drainage Works all Chicago will side with me in denying it.

I have to repeat that I have little I can suggest. I can not make a useful agreement that can not be enforced in the Courts. I would very much like to get some binding decision as to what this City can do, and then make the Government contracts based on the exercise of the utmost extent of City authority, with a graded rebate to the United States if any less penalty for doing work here is enforced by the City against the contractors and the Government. The public work should be allowed to be done and the Federal Officials desire to do it, if at all, without injury to your water supply. The Government should be allowed to do what you do yourselves, no more no less. We are enforcers and not violators of the law local and national. One rule can not apply to you, another to the United States, and a third to the water users of the Cities of the Mississippi Valley, - and these rules be subject to change without warning to all interested parties on sudden gleams of wisdom every two or three months, that may illumine the brain of the head of the Health Department.

I may possibly be allowed to suggest that the City Government refer this matter to experts in sanitation, to examine into the nature of these dumpings, and to recommend the best, safest, and most practicable dumping grounds; so that the commercial interests may obtain the greatest possible advantage from the money placed in my hands to be expended for their benefit, while at the same time the water supply may

not be unnecessarily exposed to pollution. It is evident to my mind that different disposition might well be made of filthy dredgings and of clean material, and in my contracts I have attempted to provide for such special disposition of Chicago River filth if required by the City authorities. I do not put any stress on the "stirring up" idea of the Commissioner of Health, as the material alongshore in shoal water is stirred up, turned about, and threshed over by every little breeze, much more completely, thoroughly and extensively than can be done by a million dump scows depositing anything.

The smells are peculiar to certain localities and are naturally objected to, but can not be easily remedied otherwise than by ventilation. Citizens will complain of smells, as some very prominent ones have complained of and demanded the removal from Chicago Harbor of fog horns, and other noisy ^{but absolutely necessary} aids to navigation, because they disturbed their morning naps, but most citizens appreciate the situation. ^{and do not ask up their personal comfort against public safety or public good.} I have also to ask which of the water cribs are lawful structures, i.e. built in navigable waters of the United States by authority of the Secretary of War, as required by law? I have not found a record of any authority for the Chicago Avenue, Lake View, 14th Street or 68th Street structures. This question of violation of law has been brought into the case by the City authorities and it is interesting to determine who are guilty of such violations.

I also respectfully request a copy of the official order stopping all dumping in the Lake, as it mainly relates to and affects public works in my charge.

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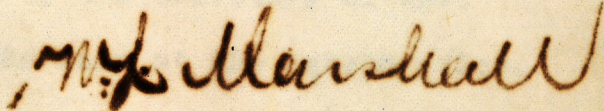
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There is also another suggestion I will throw out. There will be some 3,000,000 cubic yards of dredging in the outer basin, and some 2,000,000 cu.yds. at the outer harbor at the mouth of the Calumet on works now authorized. If a bulkhead 1000 feet distant from the shore line were constructed from Park Row to 50th Street, this material now in sight would fill 250 acres of the enclosed area to a height of 12 feet above the present bottom of the Lake or well above the water level. If placed in such circumstances in a few years, and at not great expense a magnificent stretch of public park would be available to the south side. Even without the bulkhead, the alongshore dumping will reduce the depths of water to be filled in, and make this scheme more attainable hereafter. The Government dredgings alone are now annually sufficient to make or reclaim 50 to 75 acres from the shallows of Lake Michigan. Sufficient of such material to fill the Lake Front Park to the water level has already been wasted. Of course the expense of placing will be greater than that of open lake dumping, and can not be borne by the United States.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,



Major, Corps of Engineers.