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## ENCLOSURE 3, IN No. 178

## Investigation of Pollution of Black and St. Clair Rivers by Oil Wastes

A letter from Hon. Alex. J. Groesbeck, Governor of Michigan, was received by Dr. R. M. Olin, Commissioner of the Michigan Department of Health, together with certain memoranda from Assistant Secretary of State, Hon. Wm. Phillips, and from the British Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, Hon. H. G. Chilton.

This memoranda called attention to the fact that a nuisance alleged to be caused to residents on the Canadian shore by the discharge of oily wastes into the Black River at Port Huron and thence into the St. Clair River had not been abated and relief was asked in the matter.

On October 3, 1922, an investigation was made by a representative of the Michigan Department of Health to see what oily refuse was being discharged into the Black River. It was found at that time that oily refuse was being discharged by the Detroit Edison Company (formerly the Port Huron Gas and Electric Company). The superintendent of this plant, Mr. G. A. Harmel, was interviewed and told that provision would have to be made to keep these objectionable wastes from the Black River. There was at this plant a clarifying system which had been installed to accomplish this purpose but was not being used. Mr. Harmel agreed to repair this system and put it into operation at once. Mr. Tom Waters, a local deputy of the Bureau of Conservation, accompanied the writer on this investigation and he agreed to make frequent inspections of the river and notify the writer as to the conditions of the river from time to time.

On December 14, 1922, a letter was sent to Mr. Waters making inquiry concerning conditions and a copy of the reply to that letter is attached to this report. Mr. Waters died during the past year. No complaints of bad conditions in the river have been received from any one by this Department since this investigation was made until the letter from the Governor was received in September of this year with memoranda referred to attached. In the letter from the Governor request was made that the matter be gone over again. Acting on instructions given by Dr. E. D. Rich, Director of the Bureau of Engineering, the writer made another investigation on September 12-13, 1923.

This investigation included the inspection of the Black and St. Clair Rivers at different points, the inspection of various city sewer outlets and that of the Gas Plant as well as interviews with several people of Port Huron, including city officials and bridge tenders. The inspection resulted in finding no appreciable amount of oily refuse being discharged into the Black River except from the Detroit Edison Company's gas plant. The oily refuse from this plant made a clearly defined path in the Black River until it reached the St. Clair River. Some accumulations of oily refuse were seen at points below this plant formed by obstructions along the Black River.

A trip was made to Sarnia on the ferry to see if any of this oily refuse was reaching the Canadian shore and inspection was also made of the Canadian shore itself at a few points. There was a fair current in the Black River going out into the St. Clair River and the wind was from a westerly direction (a direction favourable to carry floating substances toward the Canadian shore). It was interesting to note, however, that at no point beyond a distance of about 200 feet from the mouth of the Black River and the American shore could any trace of oil be distinguished in the St. Clair River. Observations were made both going to and coming from Sarnia on the ferry. No oily refuse of the nature of that discharged by the Detroit Edison Company was seen upon the Canadian shore. Some oil was seen on the St. Clair River near the Imperial Oil Company's refinery near Sarnia in Canada but was of a different character.

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After discovering that oily refuse was being discharged by the Detroit Edison Company at Port Huron, Mr. Daniel Hayes, district manager of the company, was interviewed and informed that the pollution of the Black River by oily wastes must be corrected. Mr. Hayes assured the writer that absolutely every effort would be made to do this. Attached to this report is a copy of the letter of Mr. Hayes to that effect. Mr. Hayes was also informed that some one would probably watch the plant. Mr. Worcester, city engineer of Port Huron, has been asked to make frequent observations of the river. Mr. Geo. A. Harmel, superintendent of the gas plant, was also seen and told that discharge of these wastes must stop. He also assured the writer that it would be done. It is believed that every effort will be made by this firm to correct conditions as the officials appear to understand the seriousness of the complaints that have been made against them by the Canadian residents.

It is recommended, that a letter be sent to the United States Secretary of State at Washington suggesting that an investigation of the complaints be made by a committee consisting of the Sanitary Engineer of the Province of Ontario, a representative of the International Joint Commission, and some one from this Department representing the State of Michigan, in order to ascertain the source of trouble or possible sources of trouble to Canadian residents. It is also suggested that this committee meet and go over the situation together, visiting both the Canadian and American shores during the investigation.

Investigation made by

ERNEST F. BADGER,

Michigan Department of Health.

No. 179.

From the Dominion Marine Association to External Affairs

DOMINION MARINE ASSOCIATION,

Kingston, Ont., October 19, 1923.

Sir JOSEPH POPE, K.C.M.G.,

Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs,

Ottawa, Ontario.

Sir,—I have the honour to refer to your letter of the 6th instant, with reference to the diversion of water from the Great Lakes at Chicago, and to inform you that at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Dominion Marine Association held in Toronto on the 17th instant the matter was further considered and the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

That the Dominion Marine Association protests in the most emphatic terms against any compromise with the Sanitary District of Chicago in its demand for diversion of water from the Great Lakes in excess of the 4,167 cubic feet per second authorized by the United States Secretary of War in 1912, and urges upon the Canadian Government the need of more active measures than have been apparent to date, with a view to securing from the United States Government enforcement of the existing order of the Federal authorities."

I was directed to communicate this resolution to the proper departments of the Government of Canada, and I am, accordingly, addressing letters containing copies to the Rt. Honourable the Prime Minister and to the Honourable the Ministers of Public Works, Railways and Canals, and Marine.

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