

A B S T R A C T

This thesis is a study of particular aspects of public health in Queensland from 1859 to 1914. Its aim is to establish some of the problems facing a new, rapidly expanding colony, in a huge country covering widely differing climatic zones from temperate to tropical. It also seeks to explain attempts made to overcome those problems. To simplify the presentation, the thesis is divided into two sections.

Section I deals with the problems. The first three chapters are concerned with the enormous environmental difficulties which arose out of imperfect methods of human waste disposal, attempts to control noxious trades, and some examples of gigantic drainage nuisances. The rest of this section is devoted to a detailed analysis of particular diseases which presented Queenslanders with considerable difficulties from 1859-1914. These six chapters deal with typhoid fever, diphtheria, cholera, leprosy, smallpox, and bubonic plague.

Section II outlines the methods used to provide solutions to Queensland's health problems. Individual chapters are devoted to the early struggle for health legislation, the first reasonably effective Queensland health act, and the much more comprehensive and useful measures passed in the early twentieth century.

The short conclusion draws together the recurring themes of the thesis, such as the gradual realization of the need for government involvement in the protection of the public health, the growing tendency towards centralization, and personal liberty as a casualty of the protection of the common good.

N.B. In this thesis sic is not used to confirm quoted words.

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P R E F A C E

Although books and learned articles on all manner of medical problems abound, there are relatively few histories of public health or social histories of medicine. So much so, that in one of the most recently published works of this kind, the author has found no studies more recent than 1970, while most of his suggestions for further reading were produced in the 1960's or much earlier.¹ These facts, and the personal feeling that a study of an expanding public health movement in Queensland is very worthwhile for its own sake, were sufficient justification for me to choose this topic for investigation.

The choice of the area for study was made partly for fortuitous reasons - I was living and studying in Queensland. But it was also made because of a conviction that D.B. Waterson's 1968 observation - "Queensland history has not yet attracted the attention it deserve/s/",² - still obtains ten years later.³

The time span for this thesis was chosen because of my own interest in and curiosity about the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is a period when increasing medical knowledge coincided with a wider concept of social obligation, making it practicable for earnest reformers to match their philanthropy with the possibility of real success. I have chosen to end my thesis at 1914 for several reasons. The outbreak of the first world war either curtailed or halted a great deal of normal activity in Queensland, as the country geared itself to the war effort; the three year period between the passing of the last great Amending Act and 1914 allows me to take some cognisance of the success of that Act; and most importantly, to that date the Commonwealth, which was to assume more

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1. F.F. Cartwright, A Social History of Medicine (London, 1977) pp.189-95.
 2. D.B. Waterson, Squatter, Selector, and Storekeeper (Sydney, 1968), p.1.
 3. Of course a number of works have been published in the meantime, especially on notable political figures. For some of the latest see for example, Bruce Knox, The Queensland Years of Robert Herbert, Premier; Letters and Papers (St. Lucia, 1977), and D. Murphy and Roger Joyce, Queensland Political Portraits 1859-1952 (St. Lucia, 1978).

and more responsibility for public health matters throughout the whole of Australia, had as yet made only tentative moves in that direction. Queensland health authorities were still very much in control of Queensland affairs.

This thesis does not pretend to be a comprehensive history of the whole of public health activities in Queensland, during the years under review. I have not included some areas which would normally fall within the ambit of public health, partly because of a lack of material, but most of all for reasons of space. I have not made a study of hospitals, insanity, or the public water supply, and although I have attempted a detailed analysis of some of the diseases which loomed large in Queensland for various reasons, I have not included some of great importance - tuberculosis and miner's phthisis, the venereal diseases, lead poisoning, ophthalmia or cancer. All of these areas are of interest and thoroughly deserve investigation, but it seems to me that each is weighty enough to deserve a special and separate treatment.

The organization of this work has depended very much on the kind of material which recurred again and again, as I researched in libraries and in archival collections. For this reason I have chosen to divide my thesis into two parts. The first section deals with the problems besetting Queensland. A detailed study of the environment, and those gigantic nuisances which seemed to contemporaries to present overwhelming barriers to the provision of health and happiness, are included in this section. The materials available on these particular problems - the disposal of human waste, noxious trades and some aspects of drainage - are so vast, that the one chapter I first envisaged has expanded into three.

I then looked at those diseases which assumed immense proportions for Queenslanders, either because they were killing or debilitating a large number of men, women and children, or because they were startling exotic scourges which prodded governments into passing health legislation, or forced local authorities to undertake huge, unprecedented cleansing operations. Typhoid and diphtheria fall into the first category. Cholera, leprosy, bubonic plague and smallpox all caused a flurry of governmental activity at the central and local level.

In the second part of this thesis, I have attempted to outline the methods used to provide solutions to these problems. Very often, the legislation of the nineteenth century initiated as many difficulties as it resolved. Indeed the various acts passed during the whole period had many flaws, and promoted intense bitterness. But a start had been made, and a basis provided, on which future Queenslanders could build. The important thing was that public and government awareness had grown to the point where increasingly, comprehensive public health legislation was looked for and produced.

Quite apart from the usefulness of tracing the development of these aspects of public health in Queensland, this study has been profitable, for me at least, because certain continuing trends have become clearly discernible as the thesis developed. They apply not only to a history of public health, but to many other aspects of life in early Queensland. The first is the great reliance placed on British experience, and the tendency to transfer English legislation to the Queensland statute book, often with little or no revision.

Yet, in spite of this dependence on overseas knowledge and practice, Queenslanders displayed another unchangeable but contradictory characteristic - concern and praise for the native-born, a resentment of the immigrant, and a conviction that imported specialists would not understand local conditions and local needs. Linked to this fear of the unknown, and very much a part of some aspects of the history of public health in the state, was the xenophobia of Queenslanders where coloured races were concerned.

Another constantly recurring theme is the Queensland - and Australian - habit of looking to the central government for aid, especially financial assistance. This inclination is hardly surprising, given the vastness of the country, the harshness of the climate, and its relatively small population. But, when this grasping after central government shekels is accompanied by a distinct dislike for that government's interference in local affairs, the lines are set for battle. Similar resentment was indicated time and time again during debates on health legislation, when government plans for the betterment of all Queenslanders clashed with the dearly-held right of the liberty of the individual. Powerful industrial and commercial concerns often used this exalted principle to defend their own vested interests.

A further stumbling-block to the popular acceptance of health legislation, was the deep-seated resentment of the general public towards the compulsory clauses in these measures, which aroused great suspicion. Very gradually Queenslanders began to look to government for that protection which they imagined health legislation could afford; accepting, often with great reluctance, the restrictions which such measures inevitably bring. They resisted, with even more vehemence, the considerably increased taxes which the preservation of their own health forced upon them.

On the other hand, governments were very slow to recognize that they had to relax laissez-faire attitudes in order to defend the weak or incapable, and to provide for all, the equality of opportunity to acquire and keep that vague and intangible quality, good health.

Generally, Queensland governments lagged behind the public health reformers in the colony, who, especially in the interests of the infant native-born, urged legislation upon them. In a modern society, the enactment of laws relating to the public health is essential, to set goals, and even to place reasonable limitations on public aspirations for the common good. But in Queensland, only fear of an approaching exotic disease, and vigorously expressed public opinion, finally moved a reluctant executive to legislative action. Even then, ministers continued to resist those inroads on the public purse, which would have resulted from the setting up of a proper department of public health.

When the first tentative steps had been taken, Queensland governments still had a number of hard lessons to learn. Ministers had to realize that although frontier societies need to encourage industry and development of all kinds, this expansion must not take place at the expense of the people's health. "Health is certainly more valuable than money, because it is by health that money is procured. National health means national wealth".⁴ Similarly, they needed to recognise that in a rapidly expanding society, there are certain tasks which only governments are in a position to undertake. In the early years, governments alone had access to the expertise and equipment needed to provide the proper sanitary arrangements, paved roads, and adequate drainage which are basic requirements for clean

4. T.G. Ellery, Health Legislation (Adelaide, 1902), p.1.

cities and healthy people. In turn, these huge capital works required the outlay of large amounts of money which only governments could command.

Therein lay one of the largest problems for late nineteenth and early twentieth century Queensland governments. Overshadowing everything, checking progress, preventing the passing of health bills, and inhibiting the complete implementation of successful legislation, was a chronic lack of funds. Drought, floods, bank failures, inexperienced treasurers, and reluctant taxpayers, all combined to restrict the amount of government finance which could be made available to expedite public health measures. But the sympathetic researcher must surely conclude that, although much remained to be done at the close of 1914, under the prevailing circumstances, much had already been achieved.

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

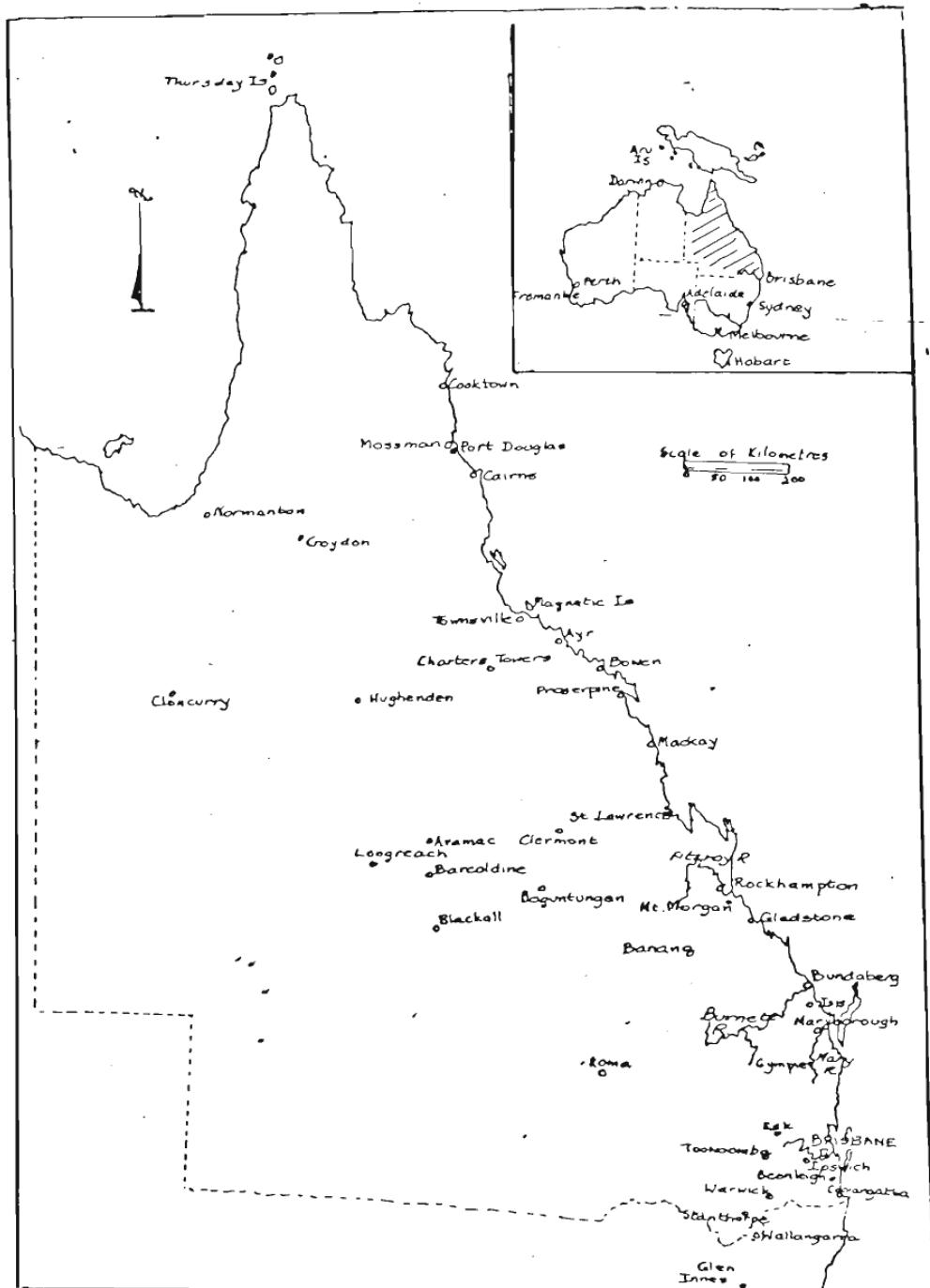
It is a long time since I started to do the research work for this thesis, and many of the libraries in which I worked are no doubt thankful that I no longer haunt their doors. Nevertheless, I must give very grateful thanks to the staffs of the Queensland Archives, the Queensland Parliamentary Library, the Oxley Library and the La Trobe Section of the Public Library of Victoria, all of whom not only allowed me to use their excellent collections for months on end, but in some cases, put up with my tape-recorder and typewriter as well.

I have also had the privilege of working - though for much shorter periods - in the Australian National University Library, the Australian National Library, Canberra, the Mitchell Library in Sydney, and the Australian Medical Association Libraries in Brisbane and Melbourne.

For the whole period I have spent writing this thesis, I have laboured under the extreme difficulty of living at a considerable distance from the University of Queensland, and from my supervisor, Dr. Ross Johnston. I wish to thank Dr. Johnston sincerely for his help given over this difficult period.

I also wish to thank those people in Bendigo who have been of special assistance to me. Unfortunately, none of my colleagues at the Bendigo College of Advanced Education has studied in this field, and I have felt very isolated and frustrated at times as a result. Nevertheless, some patient friends have read my thesis for me. Others have proffered helpful advice on my style and presentation.

My very special thanks must go to my head of department, R. Robert Clark, who generously read some of my work, and has given me special consideration during the second semester of 1978. My gratitude is also extended to Jean Lyons, who has taken a special interest, and to Roy Quinlan, who has proof-read my thesis for me. It remains to thank my typists, Judith Mitchell and Lorraine Harris, who have laboured over my drafts for long hours, and especially my Mother, without whose help and encouragement I could not have carried on.



No. 1. Location of Queensland's
Main Sanitary Problems.

From the very beginning of Queensland's separate existence from New South Wales, sanitary conditions in Brisbane and other populous parts of the colony were so shocking, that any observer, who was even mildly interested in the preservation of the public health, was alarmed. This concern gained strength from an increased interest in the state of cities and towns in Great Britain which began to manifest itself in the late 1830's. It was quickly communicated to the colonies, "when it was impossible to avoid investigation of urgent urban problems",¹ many of which directly concerned health matters.² The form that concern would take was dictated by the general acceptance of the "miasmatic" theory of the transmission of communicable disease which prevailed amongst western medical authorities during the first half of the nineteenth century, and even later.

This theory suggests that the atmosphere over closely-packed communities is vitiated by the "mere action of the lungs of the inhabitants",³ and made infinitely worse by the gases given off by large amounts of animal and vegetable refuse in the process of decay.⁴ It was upheld as official doctrine in Britain by Dr. John Simon, who dominated the English public health service from 1855 to 1876,⁵ and by Dr. T. Southwood Smith, another important health reformer. The view was also supported by the Central Board of Health and the Privy

1. A. Briggs, Victorian Cities (Pelican Books, 1968), p.12, and R. Lambert, Sir John Simon 1816-1904 (London, 1963), pp.59-60. See also W. Ashworth, The Genesis of Modern British Town Planning (London, 1954), pp.60-74.
2. For a discussion of some very early local attempts to protect the public health in Britain see E.P. Hennock, "Urban Sanitary Reform a Generation before Chadwick?", Economic History Review, N.S., Vol.10, 1957-58, p.113.
3. W.M. Frazer, A History of English Public Health 1834-1939 (London, 1950), p.38. This was the view of Dr. W.H. Duncan, an early public health reformer in Liverpool. M.W. Flinn suggests that Duncan was one of the most distinguished authorities on urban disease in his period. M.W. Flinn (ed.), Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Gt. Britain by Edwin Chadwick 1842 (Edinburgh, 1965), p.32.
4. Frazer, p.38.
5. Lambert, pp.53-4.

Council,⁶ which, between them, held the responsibility for the health of the people of Britain from the passing of the first English Public Health Act in 1848, until the end of Privy Council control in 1871.⁷

In Queensland, as late as the 1880's, report after report of local health authorities officially linked "the presence of offensive matter" with "fever cases in that locality".⁸ Colonial newspapers, which were credited with being "a power in the land.... on special occasions... leading and educating the public",⁹ reported and commented fully and freely on miasmatic dangers. Frequently their own warnings were reinforced with colourful articles from overseas journals which emphasised the correlation between smells and stagnant water, disease and death.¹⁰ The reliance of officials, medical men, and propagandists in all British possessions on the efficacy of overseas experience, ensured that the early history of public health in Queensland would be

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- 6. Frazer, pp.15 and 39-40, and F.F. Cartwright, pp.109-110. This was in spite of the work of Drs. John Snow and William Budd on the dissemination of cholera through contaminated drinking water in 1849 - confirmed by Snow in 1853-4 - and the announcement of Louis Pasteur's Germ Theory in April 1864. The potential importance of Pasteur's theory was well publicised in England in August 1864, following Dr. Thomas S. Wells' address to the annual meeting of the British Medical Association. See C.D. Haagensen and Wyndham E.B. Lloyd, A Hundred Years of Medicine (New York, 1943), p.213, and Cartwright, pp.138-140.
 - 7. The General Board of Health presided from 1848 to 1858, when the Public Health Act of that year transferred health responsibilities to the Privy Council. The Council in turn relegated these powers to the Local Government Board in 1871.
 - 8. See for example, The Brisbane Courier, 15 Feb 1883; Minutes of Local Board of Health, Brisbane, Report of Dr. Joseph Bancroft.
 - 9. W.B. Kimberly, Bendigo and Vicinity (Ballarat, 1895), p.211, Charles Dilke, Problems of Greater Britain (London, 1890), p.155, and R.B. Walker, The Newspaper Press in New South Wales, 1803-1920 (Sydney, 1976), p.63. Throughout this thesis, it is asserted that the press played an important role in propagating ideas and encouraging effective action in the public health field. This influence should not be overstated however, for as yet no real estimate of this assumed power to form opinion and promote activity has been made. "The plain fact is that no one in Australia has even started on the problem of Press power". Henry Mayer, The Press in Australia (Melbourne, 1968), p.17.
 - 10. See for example, The Brisbane Courier, 3 Jan 1883, for a very long piece from The Boston Herald of late 1882, from which this short, lurid, typical extract is taken.
Disorder loves marshes,... riots on the banks of sunken streams and works its burning and shivering damage most malignantly where normal mutual relations between soil and vegetable matter and stagnant or moving water have been unsettled.

the story of attempts - often unsuccessful - to contain environmental pollution, to try to prevent "bad air" from spreading disease and suffering in the promised land of the new colony.

This concern had not always been evident at Moreton Bay. It was hardly to be expected that attention to town planning, draining of swamps, general drainage and sewerage, and other measures to promote a high standard of public health for contemporary and future inhabitants would be primary considerations in a settlement which began its life as a dumping ground for incorrigible felons - an outpost place of secondary punishment, conveniently distant from Sydney.¹¹ The very impetus for settling on the Brisbane River practically precluded it from any rapid improvement, since the then Secretary of State, Earl Bathurst, was convinced that convicts must be wholly deprived of "those comforts and advantages which seem to be inseparably connected with the Progress of Colonization".¹²

But it was not long before glowing reports of future prospects began to reach Britain from Moreton Bay.¹³ The possibility of great profits to be gained from grazing with its allied industries through the opening up and settling of the hinterland, rapidly altered the official mind as to the fitness of the area for general colonization. In fact, according to Gordon Greenwood and John Laverty, although "the origins of Brisbane are penal,... from its first beginnings it was conceived as a nucleus for a future society of free men".¹⁴

The early settlers of Brisbane were faced with two major problems as far as the environment and its effect on the inhabitants was concerned. One was the physical nature of the situation. This could be remedied by using ingenuity, good planning and engineering ability. But these remedies could only be successfully applied if the other much more difficult problems were solved. All Queenslanders, including those in positions of power, had to be educated and persuaded to accept

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- 11. Earl Bathurst to Sir Thomas Brisbane, 30 May 1823, Historical Records of Australia, Series I, Vol XI, pp.83-6.
 - 12. Earl Bathurst to Sir Thomas Brisbane, 9 Sep 1822, Despatch No.8, in Ibid., Vol X, pp.791-2.
 - 13. Especially in the reports of explorers, in particular Allan Cunningham.
 - 14. G. Greenwood and J. Laverty, Brisbane 1859-1959 (Brisbane, 1959), p.25.

the need for restrictions, and the expenditure of a considerable amount of money and time, in the interests of that vague and intangible entity - their own health and well-being.¹⁵ All people inevitably face the problem of what to do with human wastes, piles of offal and other offensive matter caused by the production of food for human consumption, and how to deal with the spillage and pollution which result from even the most meagre amount of industry essential for corporate existence. Any collection of people must also face the unfortunate human failing, that man will always seek to rid himself of his own filth, even to the detriment of his neighbour, with the least inconvenience and cost to himself. In nineteenth century towns and villages, with little or no scavenging and sewerage arrangements, convenient backyards, vacant allotments, easily accessible but infrequently visited public places, and above all, local streams and rivers, lent themselves as dumps for all sorts of filth and garbage. These reprehensible activities were, and are, likely to take place in any populous area in any country. They are much more liable to occur in frontier communities like the infant colony of Queensland, where growth of population and spread of settlement far exceeded the provision of sanitary services.

One of the first of the natural features to be seriously affected was the Brisbane River and its tributaries. Well before separation, private citizens and the military authorities had experimented with one quick, easy method of refuse disposal. They simply discharged nightsoil, sweepings of yards and streets, and other filth on to the banks of the river, which, to explorer Oxley's admiring eyes, had presented "so many superior situations that... a permanent Settlement would be... advantageously formed on /it/".¹⁶ That settlement would be ephemeral, warned the Moreton Bay Courier whose editor fully accepted the miasmatic theory, as the smell from the river bank grew "overpowering" and "sufficient to engender disease".¹⁷

The river was subject to other forms of contamination which were the result of schemes propounded by a not unaware Brisbane City Council, backed by the Moreton Bay Courier, in an effort to preserve the purity

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- 15. According to W.M. Frazer, this is the most difficult step along the path to a proper public health system. Frazer, p.3.
 - 16. John Oxley's Report (Enclosure), Despatch No. 5, 1824, Historical Records of Australia, Series I, Vol XI, 223.
 - 17. Moreton Bay Courier, 20 Oct 1847.

of the atmosphere over the newly proclaimed capital.¹⁸ Both parties' concern was not always confined to an altruistic interest in the public health. The Moreton Bay Courier, for example, drew the council's attention to the nuisance caused by the practice of depositing rubbish in a creek running parallel to one of the main thoroughfares, Adelaide Street, with consequent danger to life in the very centre of the town.¹⁹ The paper also referred at frequent intervals to the problem of Frog's Hollow drainage, and the circuitous creek which connected this swampy, unsavoury, germ-ridden area with the Brisbane River. A similar winding stream on the southern side of the river, made infinitely worse by the foul outpourings from a butchering establishment on its banks,²⁰ needed prompt attention. Both creeks were subject to tidal movement, which greatly aggravated the unpleasantness and danger from what were virtually open sewers.

The council's proposed solution for the Frog's Hollow creek problem, which met with Moreton Bay Courier approval, was to divert the offending stream underground by means of a barrel drain.²¹ This would do away with the nuisance, but would also shorten the route to the river. The primary interest of the authorities and the press on this occasion was to rid the central city of muddy offensive watercourses which meandered in and out of town allotments, and greatly lowered the value of surrounding property.²² The incentive to remove these "so-called 'creeks'" was provided by monetary considerations, not by any deep concern over the possible threat to health, and in this, Brisbane was no different from other cities world-wide. For "the attainment of a sanitary end without definite sanitary intention", was by no means a new experience.

18. The city was incorporated as a municipality on 6 September 1859. But from 3 November 1856, when definite news of separation was received, the elders and citizens of Brisbane had hoped that "Old Fogeyism" and "Red Tape" would soon depart from Moreton Bay, and that settlers would be free to preserve their own heritage. Ibid., 8 Nov 1856.
19. Ibid., 14 Aug 1861.
20. This was Baynes' slaughter yards. See Within, p.86, for other references to these butchering works.
21. Moreton Bay Courier, 22 Oct 1861; Minutes of the Brisbane City Council, 21 Oct 1861. The Courier pointed out that similar action would be equally effective on the south side. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 14 Mar 1861; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 13 Mar 1861.

The history of drainage and the filling-in of swamp areas as sanitary measures for the upbuilding of cities is the history of every village, town or large city which has been accidentally or intentionally rendered healthful by devices centering on the economics of carrying on the world's business 'as usual'.
23.

The health argument was certainly included by alderman T.B. Stephens in his speech calling for council action to clean up streams in South Brisbane. But as this was an area in which Stephens and his family were financially involved,²⁴ it must be supposed that his chief motive, like that of the ancients, was not really "sanitary but economic, concerning the livelihood and creature comforts of the inhabitants",²⁵ particularly his own.

In this instance action was taken quite quickly, when compared with the delays and frustrations which yet lay in the future.²⁶ The fact that the proposed drains would not only improve surrounding properties, but would also greatly facilitate the passage of polluted fluids to the Brisbane River, seems to have worried no one. But, given the enormity of the Frog's Hollow problem to the Brisbane authorities, and the fear of the general public that "malarial" fevers would emanate from the ever-pervading effluvium which hung over the area, this haste to channel at least some of the offensive water away from the area, is understandable.²⁷

The Brisbane River and other coastal rivers in the colony on which small but bustling townships and ports had been founded,²⁸ continued to

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- 23. Fielding H. Garrison, Contributions to the History of Medicine (New York, 1966), p.393.
 - 24. Moreton Bay Courier, 14 Mar 1861; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 13 Mar 1861.
 - 25. Garrison, p.393.
 - 26. Moreton Bay Courier, 17 Sep 1861; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 16 Sep 1861, and Ibid., 6 Nov 1861; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 5 Nov 1861.
 - 27. The Frog's Hollow nuisance was not removed by this early attempt, and the area continued to present awful problems for many years. See for example The Brisbane Courier, 20 May 1873, for a description of the area, and the diphtheria, typhoid and dysentery which broke out there, given by a council deputation to the Colonial Secretary, 19 May 1873.
 - 28. A detailed essay on each of the important coastal streams cannot be given here. Instances of extreme pollution occurred from time to time in the Mary, Burnett and Fitzroy Rivers, as inhabitants struggled with drainage, scavenging and human waste disposal problems.

present difficulties to all authorities concerned with the public health, for the whole period under review in this thesis. Yet transplanted Britons everywhere had been especially aware of the consequences of river pollution, after the London experience of "The Great Stink" during the exceptionally dry summer of 1858. The stench was so bad that it "excited more comment even than the contemporary Indian Mutiny, and occupied more prominent space in the newspapers".²⁹ Members of parliament, who were forced from committee rooms and the library, were vociferous in condemnation of the vast nuisance which they believed threatened their lives. They were joined in protest by the citizens of London, who, loud with alarm, claimed that the River Thames had become "the main sewer for the whole of London, and had been converted into a most abominable ditch".³⁰

The unseasonable drought, the general introduction of the water closet,³¹ and a vastly increased population,³² which itself triggered a whole host of problems in housing, sanitation, and town planning, had

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- 29. Philip Howard, London's River (London, 1975), p.222. This was in spite of the tremendous interest in the gory details of the Mutiny and the terrible vengeance demanded and wreaked by Britain, which was fully recorded for avid readers by the English and Australian press. See Byron Farwell, Queen Victoria's Little Wars (London, 1974), pp.84-133, and the overseas section of the Moreton Bay Courier.
 - 30. Comment in the Lords by the Earl of Hardwicke, quoted in Howard, p.222. See also Gustave Dore' and Blanchard Jerrold, London (Newton Abbot, 1972, Facsimile of 1872 edition), pp.28, 41 and 51, and M.C. Buer, Health, Wealth, and Population in the Early Days of the Industrial Revolution (London, 1968), pp.107-8. Buer suggests that from about 1849 the windows of parliament could never be opened.
 - 31. Alexander Cumming first patented A Water Closet upon a New Construction in the mid 1770's. Joseph Bramah improved it in 1778, and by the 1880's water closets as they exist today had come into use. The refuse from London closets which proliferated from the beginning of the nineteenth century, whether serviced by brick drains or cesspools, inevitably ended in the Thames. Elizabeth Burton, The Early Victorians at Home (Newton Abbot, 1973), pp.112-13, Howard, pp.222-23, E.R. Pike, Human Documents of the Age of the Forsytes (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp.34 and 191, and Mark Girouard, The Victorian Country House (London, 1973), p.15.
 - 32. For an explanation of the phenomenon of eighteenth and nineteenth century population increases see G.M. Trevelyan, History of England (London, 1973), pp.711-12, Cartwright, pp.131-34, and T. McKeown and R.G. Brown, "Medical evidence related to English population changes in the eighteenth century", Population Studies, Vol.9, No.2, November 1955.

combined to cause the London situation. The object lesson presented to the newly separated colony of Queensland was very apt. The colony was subject to frequent, devastating droughts. There was an urgent necessity for Queensland to engineer her own population explosion as rapidly as possible to ensure a viable state with an expanding economy - an early aim which officials considered was well on the way to achievement by 1866, through natural increase and, especially, through the encouragement of immigration.³³ But there was one factor contributing to the 1858 Thames problem which some Queenslanders were determined to avoid, and the colony's first Central Board of Health, appointed in 1865,³⁴ clearly expressed that determination in their report of that same year.

The question that first occupied the attention of the Board was that of sewerage; and, after a careful consideration of that subject in all its relations, present and future, they came unanimously to the conclusion that it would be highly injudicious to convert the tidal rivers of the Colony into main sewers, seeing that in England... the splendid rivers there are now regarded as monster nuisances, in consequence of the adoption of that system of drainage; and, instead of being promoters of health, by conveying sea breezes pure and fresh from the ocean to the towns and cities situated on their banks, they contaminate them with pestilential vapors, which, in their course diffuse disease and death all around. 35

The rejection of the water carriage system - sewage disposal by dilution - which shifts the problem "from the individual to the community",³⁶ did not completely preserve the purity of the Brisbane River. Many people living on or near its banks solved their nightsoil disposal problem either by throwing excrement into the stream,³⁷ by

- 33. There had been impressive gains in the colony's population from 1860 onwards. "Fourth Annual Report on Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1864), 887-893, and Queensland Parliamentary Debates, III (1866), 293.
- 34. For details of the appointment see Within, pp. 296-98.
- 35. "Board of Health Report", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1865), 1313. However, in 1864 the Brisbane City Council had proposed a competition to find a system of sewerage for the city. Only one professional man responded, but in October 1864, councillor George Edmonstone called for a permanent sewerage system to be determined by the council without delay. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Jan 1864, and Ibid., 25 Oct 1864.
- 36. Garrison, p.423.
- 37. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Jul 1883. Report of Brisbane City Council inspector after a house to house inspection of the Kangaroo Point area.

defying local authority regulations with the installation of forbidden water closets which eventually emptied into the river,³⁸ or even worse, by simply constructing closets over the river itself, with nauseating results.³⁹

Nor were private citizens the only offenders. Much to the annoyance and frustration of the Brisbane City Council and its inspectors, the government took advantage of the proximity of some public buildings to the Brisbane River to construct water closets, which were defended, because they were efficient and because their removal would involve considerable expense.⁴⁰ The council itself contributed to the fouling of the stream, once it inaugurated the system of dumping the contents of Brisbane closets at sea, or on the islands in Moreton Bay.⁴¹

The main long term result of the central board decision of 1865 was to delay the provision of a proper sewerage scheme for even the central city area of Brisbane until 1923, when labour and material costs had risen astronomically in comparison with those obtaining in the 1800's.⁴² In the short term, the board's resolution created tremendous problems for central and local governments which had to decide on the actual systems to be used, and to try to devise foolproof regulations to ensure their success. It increased the difficulties of individual householders,⁴³ who, despite the inventions of the ingenious

38. In particular the Stombuco closets, named for their inventor. Ibid., 31 Jul 1883. This was in defiance of Bye-Law No.34 of the Municipality of Brisbane, confirmed 4 Jul 1883. Copy attached to in-letter no.3684, Q.S.A. (Queensland State Archives) COL/A 365. See also Municipality of Brisbane Bye-Law No.5, Clause 6.
39. Reports of the Brisbane City Council sanitary inspectors in The Brisbane Courier, 3 Jul, 31 Jul, and 25 Sep 1883.
40. As early as 1864, several government buildings were serviced by water closets. Ibid., 28 Nov 1864; letter to editor from Charles Beauchamp, Contractor.
41. For details see Within, pp.38 ff.
42. F.J. Brewer and R. Dunn, Sixty-six Years of Municipal Government (Brisbane, 1925), pp.142-43, and John Laverty, "The History of Municipal Government in Brisbane, 1859-1925", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Queensland, 1968, p.376. There was no possibility of a sewerage scheme for Brisbane suburbs at this stage.
43. F.G. Connolly, "The Sanitary Question", in The Boomerang, 15 Jun 1889.

and the scientific,⁴⁴ the instructions of medical men and boards, and the often clumsy and careless ministrations of contractors, failed to cope with pestilential germ-centres in their own back-yards. For the whole community, the result was a monster evil - the manure depot. Neither governments, councils, nor various boards of health were able to administer or control this depot in a proper manner.⁴⁵

The idea of returning human wastes to the soil through burial - the principle underlying the need for a manure depot - is an ancient one, as the sanitary laws delivered by Moses to the Israelites will reveal.⁴⁶ The misapplication of the principle had posed grave threats to health throughout the ages.⁴⁷ But by the middle of the eighteenth century, revolutionary advances in agriculture had revealed that all kinds of manure are valuable.⁴⁸ Confident, economy-conscious Queenslanders determined to follow the lead of that great British public health reformer, Edwin Chadwick,⁴⁹ in whose view the channelling of human wastes into river systems not only exacerbated the evils of pollution,⁵⁰ but also "seemed like pouring away liquid gold".⁵¹

- 44. Two important contributions to householders' comfort were Scott's Patent Air Closet, and Dr. Hugh Bell's elaborate Dry Earth Closet. The Queensland Times, 2 Nov 1889, and Dr. Hugh Bell, The Dry Earth Closet System, after Nature (Brisbane, 1881).
- 45. The Brisbane situation will be discussed here, but as the burial system was chosen as the method of disposal in Queensland, all cities and towns in the colony were faced with similar problems.
- 46. The Bible, Deuteronomy, XIII, 13.
- 47. See for example, Jacme D'Agramont's Catalan plague tract of 24 April 1384, which describes the state of manure heaps and the method of excrement discharge within the walled towns of his own era. Quoted in C.E.A. Winslow, The Conquest of Epidemic Disease (New York, 1967), p.112.
- 48. Buer, p.110.
- 49. Chadwick, a lawyer and supreme public servant, was foremost in the early public health movement in Britain. Apparently without sympathy for medical science or doctors, though he used the evidence of the most eminent medical men in his reports, Chadwick was vitally concerned to reduce the ill health of the masses which had proved ruinously expensive to the country's economy. The influence of his thinking in British overseas colonies was very great indeed. For details of Chadwick's life, personality, glaring faults, and remarkable achievements, see the introduction to Flinn's work, S.E. Finer, The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick (London, 1952), R.A. Lewis, Edwin Chadwick and The Public Health Movement 1832-1854 (London, 1952), and B.W. Richardson, The Health of Nations Vols I & II (London, 1965).
- 50. Edwin Chadwick to Lord Francis Egerton, 1 Oct 1845, quoted in Finer, p.223.
- 51. Flinn, p.60. See also A. Briggs (ed.), The Nineteenth Century (London, 1971), p.129.

The raw colonists and the ebullient Chadwick based their plans on two different schemes, both emanating from Edinburgh in Scotland. The methods proposed were diametrically different,⁵² but both schemes seemed to offer a way of ridding the rapidly growing cities and towns of human wastes, at the same time harnessing the horrible and offensive matter to improve the nature of farmers' fields.⁵³ Even before the appearance of the Central Board of Health's report, The Brisbane Courier, as the colony's watch-dog on public health affairs and the economy, was proposing that the council should establish a manure depot to "serve not merely as a receptacle for the accumulated filth of the city", but also to lessen the cost of carrying out the necessary sanitary regulations by the sale of "nightsoil manure".⁵⁴

The Brisbane Courier continued to advocate this line very strongly for at least a decade. It frequently printed very long articles on the subject,⁵⁵ and commented in editorials at equal length on the theme of "the rainfall to the river, the sewerage to the land",⁵⁶ in the face of the Colonial Secretary's attempt to push a sewerage and drainage bill through the Legislative Assembly.⁵⁷ It is very likely that the necessity to provide proper and effective drainage for the colony's cities and towns was a more urgent consideration than the sewerage question itself,⁵⁸ but in any case the legislation was dropped, largely

- 52. Chadwick's ideas involved an adaptation of the water carriage system which he had observed in the Scottish capital. Flinn, p.60. The Queensland Central Board of Health rejected this method, but were impressed by the city's collection of solid refuse using the dry earth system, which appeared to be both effective and capable of producing a profit. "Board of Health Report, Appendix B. The Cleansing Operations of Edinburgh by Henry D. Littlejohn, M.D., Officer of Health", Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, (1865), 1316-17.
- 53. Phenomenal productivity was claimed for the farms in the vicinity of Edinburgh. See Ibid., and Flinn, pp.47 and 60.
- 54. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Oct 1864; editorial.
- 55. See for example, Ibid., 9 Feb 1866. This is a very long piece "Communicated by M.A. on 7 February 1866".
- 56. Ibid., 13 Feb 1866; sub editorial, and 6 Mar 1866; main editorial. On the other hand, some city councillors, notably J.W. Thompson, were agitating for a sewerage scheme.
- 57. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1866), 349. Robert Ramsay Mackenzie was Colonial Secretary at this time.
- 58. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, III (1866), 462.

because of the uncertain economic climate,⁵⁹ and the government's proposal to extract half the cost of the scheme from local councils, before the projects were commenced.⁶⁰ To add to the difficulties, government ministers were very far from unanimity on the question of sewage disposal. The Colonial Secretary was apparently only half convinced by the economical agricultural possibilities of "nightsoil manure". Certainly he was still puzzled as to whether "the sewerage matter should be conveyed to the sea... or whether some deodorizing process could be adopted,"⁶¹ while his colleague, the Secretary for Public Lands openly favoured a straightforward water carriage system.⁶²

Then in January 1867, when the government seemed to have accepted a select committee's recommendation that a site for a nightsoil depot be provided,⁶³ yet another problem arose. The Surveyor-General was quite unable to point out a suitable piece of vacant land.

As the Government did not possess any land suitable for the purpose contemplated, it was submitted whether the construction of a shoot at the end of Boundary Street with a pipe from the water main to keep it clean, might not meet the case. The Secretary for Lands believes that that arrangement would dispose of the sewerage in the cheapest and most efficient manner, whilst it would at the same time be available for filling punts with such portions of soil as the Council might find it profitable to convey to more distant localities. ⁶⁴

In 1874, after several minor reservations had been gazetted,⁶⁵ the government plumped officially for the dry earth closet system for the capital, and set aside what it considered to be an appropriately-sized, reasonably-situated reserve for the city's refuse on

- 59. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, III (1866), 463.
- 60. Ibid. See also The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jun 1866; letter to editor from J.W.T. J.W. Thompson was highly critical of the bill because of these demands on already financially embarrassed local bodies, though he favoured a sewerage scheme.
- 61. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, III (1866), 463. Some form of deodorization was essential if the waste matter was to be used for manuring purposes.
- 62. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Mar 1867.
- 63. Ibid., 8 Jan 1867.
- 64. Ibid., 12 Mar 1867. This is part of a letter from the Department of Lands to the Colonial Secretary which was printed in full.
- 65. For example, York's Hollow, an area adjoining Victoria Park, and a small piece of land on Breakfast Creek were reserved as manure depots.

Enoggera Creek, Kelvin Grove.⁶⁶ About the same time, a further reserve of twenty acres on Breakfast Creek was chosen to accept nightsoil, and to provide earth for deodorising purposes.⁶⁷ This move reflected the influence of the long despatch extolling the virtues of this system forwarded to Queensland by the Secretary of State for Colonies, the Earl of Kimberley,⁶⁸ and the pressure exerted by the Central Board of Health appointed after the passing of Queensland's first Public Health Act in 1872,⁶⁹ which overrode the considerable colonial medical advocacy for a sewerage farm arrangement on Chadwickian lines.⁷⁰

In the meantime, correspondents to the Courier frequently drew attention to the serious dangers posed by the lack of a proper removal system;⁷¹ the Brisbane City Council and the Secretary for Public Lands engaged in a series of vituperative letters, as each side denied responsibility for the existence of serious and disgusting nuisances in the city;⁷² a temporary depot was established in a portion of Bowen Park, where experiments in the deodorizing and burial of nightsoil were undertaken;⁷³ other small, unsatisfactory reserves were set aside by the government as manure depots,⁷⁴ though at the same time the government and council went pussyfoot about the business of securing adequate areas

66. Queensland Government Gazette, XV (1874), 1151-2. On 27 June 1874, twenty-five acres were gazetted, but the area was reduced to twenty-two acres on 7 November 1874 because of an error in the deeds. Ibid., XVI (1874), 2139.
67. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Jul 1874.
68. "The Dry Earth System", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1871-72), 813-826. This despatch gave a detailed definition of the system, and examples of its use in selected areas in Britain, and in India. It included details of costs and profits, and arguments for and against the system.
69. Within, p.311. For the central board's championship of the earth closet system see "Instructions issued by the Central Board for the Guidance of Local Boards of Health", Queensland Government Gazette, XIV (1873), 826-27.
70. The Brisbane Courier, 8 May 1871; Report of the inaugural meeting of the Queensland Medical Society.
71. See for example, Ibid., 31 Jan 1868; letter to editor from Prevention, and Ibid., 30 Jun 1868; letter to editor from Verb. Sap.
72. Ibid., 20 Mar 1868 for instance. Excerpts or complete copies of these letters appeared in the Courier from time to time.
73. Ibid., 24 Nov 1868 and 8 Dec 1868.
74. See for example Queensland Government Gazette, X (1869), 247, and Mayor of Brisbane to Colonial Secretary, 27 Sep 1870, Q.S.A. COL/A 148, in-letter no.2682 of 1870 and attachments.

to solve the growing problem.⁷⁵ The urgency of that problem was evidenced by the increasing numbers of Queenslanders who fell victim to "fevers", whose origin, according to the Central Board of Health, was clearly traceable to preventable causes.⁷⁶ Robert Ramsay Mackenzie made another unsuccessful attempt to enact a sewerage and drainage bill,⁷⁷ while Brisbane citizens conducted frustrating excursions in the search for an official dumping ground for their muck, as this typical letter to the Brisbane press reveals. A Brisbane ratepayer of five years' standing had

never been able to ascertain where the manure and rubbish depot was. /Could/ you inform me as to its locality, or if any such place had been appointed?.... The urgent necessity that exists for such a depot must commend itself to everyone except aldermen.... The labours of the inspector of nuisances would be considerably lightened, to say nothing of the sanitary advantages of the improvement which would follow.

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Some contemporary observers asserted that the Brisbane City Council had already proclaimed its unfitness to undertake its traditional task, the management of the capital's sanitary affairs. The council had insisted on the erection of earth closets with regular periodic removal,⁷⁹ before a stoutly-fenced, adequately-staffed, properly-regulated manure depot was provided. In response to council's demands, many Brisbane families had adopted a travesty of the earth closet in which neither thoroughly dried earth nor decently constructed closets were used.⁸⁰ And the Brisbane corporation had further demonstrated its ineptitude by seeking government approval for a manure

- 75. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Jan 1870.
- 76. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 22 Sep 1873, Q.S.A. COL/A 185, in-letter no.1661 of 1873.
- 77. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1868-69), 189.
- 78. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Jul 1868; letter to editor from A Ratepayer.
- 79. Bye-Law No.12 of the Municipality of Brisbane. See also The Brisbane Courier, 19 Jan 1869. The failure of the council to enforce this by-law led to a "very large accumulation of nightsoil in the centre of the city". Ibid., 11 Oct 1870; Report of the Brisbane City Council General Inspector. The by-law had no legal force as late as 1872. Ibid., 9 Apr 1872; Report of the Brisbane City Council General Inspector.
- 80. Ibid., 23 May 1873; letter to editor from A Correspondent. However, C. Tiffin had patented a simply operated, "portable, self-acting earth closet", and by June 1869, this was being manufactured by J.W. Carey of William Street. Ibid., 29 Jun 1869. Following this, Carey became an active public health "reformer".

depot in the "manifestly unsuitable" York's Hollow,⁸¹ an area close to the densely populated Fortitude Valley. The hillside siting of the depot which resulted in nightsoil being washed down creeks into the Valley, eventually led to a massive outcry from residents and their parliamentary representatives,⁸² prompting T.B. Stephens, Minister for Lands, to question seriously the commonsense of the city fathers, and their ability to calculate accumulating miasmatic dangers to the public health.⁸³

But the choice also underlines the desperation of a city council under constant attack for allowing the soil of Brisbane to become "permeated with noxious matter", for encouraging "an impure local atmosphere of great virulence", and the collection of "masses of filth which remain and putrify",⁸⁴ to "cause the high infant mortality rate";⁸⁵ a council accused of turning the capital of the colony into a "reproach ... as an abode of filth, abominable smells, and foul and fatal effluvia of all kinds";⁸⁶ a council which was the butt of severe castigation from all sides,⁸⁷ but which was offered few if any practical suggestions or financial contributions, from either governmental or central health authorities, and was at wits' end to be rid of the city's stinking refuse. Well before 1874, as a partial solution to its problems, the council had begun dumping rubbish illegally on the banks of the not-yet-gazetted, out-of-the-way Enoggera Creek. Naturally this incursion greatly annoyed and distressed those who had taken up residence in this semi-rural area,⁸⁸ and one landowner testily requested the Colonial Secretary for "a means of legally abating these nuisances".⁸⁹

These complaints increased steadily throughout the 1870's

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- 81. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Jan 1869, and Queensland Government Gazette, X (1869), 247.
 - 82. The Brisbane Courier, 10 Apr 1874; Report of deputation of parliamentarians and citizens to the Secretary for Public Lands.
 - 83. Ibid.
 - 84. Ibid., 22 Oct 1872; main editorial.
 - 85. Ibid., 8 Nov 1872; main editorial.
 - 86. Ibid., 31 Jul 1873; letter to editor from Dr. K.I. O'Doherty.
 - 87. Ibid., 12 Sep 1874; main editorial.
 - 88. Ibid., 22 Oct 1873; letter to editor from Oxygen.
 - 89. A.O. Herbert to Colonial Secretary, 20 Aug 1868, Q.S.A. COL/A 110, in-letter no.2603 of 1868.

although the chosen earth closet system was receiving "a more thorough trial in Brisbane than in any other of our colonial cities", and was eventually expected to become, "in a sanitary point of view, a great blessing to the city".⁹⁰ To the anger and disgust of the Brisbane City Council, the Brisbane Local Board of Health was charged with the main responsibility for this work,⁹¹ though at Brisbane City Council expense.⁹² Through diligent scrutiny of newspaper columns, the modern researcher may discover that the local board tried, rather unsuccessfully, to compel householders to construct proper earth closets.⁹³ It called for tenders from nightmen for the emptying of those closets by contract,⁹⁴ decided on a periodical inspection of both nightmen's premises and private backyards to try to ensure cleanliness of operation,⁹⁵ and intimated to the Brisbane City Council that a special rate would have to be imposed.⁹⁶ The board fenced the new manure depot,⁹⁷ built sturdy sheds to store the deodorising dried earth,⁹⁸ and persuaded the government to form a road to the depot once fencing was completed.⁹⁹ It employed a number of men to dig trenches and cover the nightsoil in them daily,¹⁰⁰ and when operations were well underway, with the demand for deodorized nightsoil manure growing rapidly,¹⁰¹ the board felt justified in employing an extra hand to prepare the stuff for sale, and in doubling

- 90. "Progress Report of the Central Board of Health", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1877), 1146.
- 91. Ibid. For details of the appointment of the local board under the Health Act of 1872 see Within, pp.315-18.
- 92. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Nov 1874. The city solicitor was convinced that payment of board expenses incurred on the new manure depot could not be successfully resisted by the Brisbane body. This opinion is printed in full in this Courier.
- 93. Ibid., 29 Jan 1874; main editorial, and Ibid., 12 Aug 1874.
- 94. Ibid., 2 Sep 1874.
- 95. Ibid., 11 Mar 1874.
- 96. Ibid., 2 Sep 1874.
- 97. Ibid., 20 Jul 1874.
- 98. Ibid., 5 Feb 1874.
- 99. Ibid., 10 Jan 1874.
- 100. Ibid., 22 Sep 1874.
- 101. Sugar plantation owners were shortly to become enthusiastic over this type of manure. Ibid., 2 Nov 1882; Minutes of Brisbane Local Board of Health, discussion led by Dr. Bancroft.

its secretary's salary from £50 to £100 per annum.¹⁰²

In 1876, the Central Board of Health revealed that it too, in the absence of official local health board reports, had learnt

through the medium of the papers, that they are doing their best to overcome prejudice and causing earth closets to be substituted for other types of accommodation.... To the local board of the city, as at present constituted, too much praise cannot be accorded.... With limited funds at their command, they are fighting their way for the preservation of the health and lives of the citizens. ¹⁰³

One year later, the central board considered that Brisbane's one remaining "large problem", which did negate all health authority efforts to a considerable extent, was the lack of "an efficient arterial drainage".¹⁰⁴ But the board was "happy to say" that the capital which had "become little better than an Augean stable" under the aegis of the city council, had vastly improved sanitary conditions, thanks to the work of "an active and zealous local board... carrying out the measures we suggested."¹⁰⁵

Pugh's Queensland Almanac was inclined to agree. Although the colony, and especially Brisbane, was not as healthy as it might have been, sanitary affairs had begun to show a "great improvement" because

- 102. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Mar 1876. During February 1876, thirteen tons of deodorized nightsoil were sold at £1 per ton. The estimated revenue from nightsoil for that year was £1,823.2.0. Ibid., 20 Nov 1875.
- 103. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 6 Mar 1876, Q.S.A. COL/A 219, in-letter no.575 of 1876.
- 104. "Progress Report of the Central Board of Health", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1877), 1146. See also Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XVIII (1875), 469-482 and 598-600, and Ibid., XIX (1875), 655-666, for a discussion of the insanitary state of Brisbane caused by improper drainage, the urgent necessity for government action, criticism of the "patchwork" nature of the Brisbane drainage bill, and the jealousy of other colonial cities and towns over the amount proposed to be spent on Brisbane drainage. In spite of opposition, the bill was passed. See Queensland Government Gazette, II (1875), 1451. The Courier was highly critical of the Act. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Jun 1875; main editorial. But John Laverty suggests that by the end of 1879, improvements made possible under the Act were considerable. Laverty, p.226.
- 105. "Progress Report of the Central Board of Health", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1877), 1146. Yet within two years the central board was attacking the local board very vigorously. In 1877 the board was large, which may have been somewhat detrimental to its smooth working. It had seven members from the council, but significantly it contained no less than three outstanding individualistic medical men, Drs. Joseph Bancroft, John Thomson, and Richard Rendle.

of the gratifying tendency of the health boards to "awak/en/ to a sense of their duties in this respect."¹⁰⁶ The Colonial Secretary, Arthur Palmer, was more sparing of praise, observing "that... the Local Board might have done a great deal more to abate the nuisances and stinks in the city than they had done, although no doubt they had done a good deal".¹⁰⁷

A large number of Brisbane residents did not accept even this qualified assessment, and as usual, the capital's press was in the forefront of the attack. By 1874 The Brisbane Courier had begun to change its tune on the sewerage question. The editor had become convinced that although "the earth closet system was one of the best and cheapest ways of promoting cleanliness and preserving health in populous places",¹⁰⁸ in Brisbane's semi-tropical climate it "should only be regarded as a palliative measure",¹⁰⁹ useful until a thorough-going sewerage and drainage system was provided. The Courier strongly censured the Brisbane Local Board of Health's handling of the earth closet system which

had resulted in the liquid refuse being emptied into the gutters, and the nightsoil being hawked through the streets in a disgusting way at night. The system is said to be universally condemned.¹¹⁰

A rapidly drawn-up and quickly accepted Central Board of Health regulation, designed to prevent "the leaking and overflowing of closet pans" through the use of a scoop and sufficiency of dried earth,¹¹¹ suggests that the Courier's observation was correct. Moreover, the editor was sick of "reading", "gaping", "looking serious", "admitting the necessity", and exclaiming that the "Government should really do something... about the threat of infectious diseases arising from a polluted atmosphere". For all the government had done was to

bestow upon /Brisbane/ unhealthy boards of health who don't do anything, and we are really not one step nearer to an effective solution of the difficulty than we were five years ago.¹¹²

106. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1887, p.75.

107. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XVII (1874), 937.

108. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Jan 1874; main editorial.

109. Ibid., 12 Sep 1874; main editorial.

110. Ibid., 27 Sep 1875.

111. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 22 Jan 1875, Q.S.A. COL/A 205, in-letter no.202 of 1875.

See also Queensland Government Gazette, I (1875), 332.

112. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Jan 1875; main editorial.

Not surprisingly, the Brisbane City Council, which had borne the brunt of vicious attacks for its earlier sanitary efforts, also lost no opportunity to criticize the local board. Apparently not content to accept newspaper reports on the management of the manure depot, the council made its own inspections and enquiries to assess the effectiveness of the supervision of employees and the general conduct of the place. It was not satisfied that the nightsoil trenches were covered daily,¹¹³ and asserted that some areas had been left open for from ten to fourteen days. The resultant extremely disagreeable stench was not only causing a nuisance, but in clear vindication of the miasmatic theory, was inducing sickness in the people living nearby.¹¹⁴ To add to the unpleasantness, nightmen had been allowed to tip nightsoil outside the depot area, close to the road.¹¹⁵ A further complaint, in which some government departments joined,¹¹⁶ was that insufficiently dried earth, re-used, undedorized earth, or earth taken from old cemetery reserves,¹¹⁷ was being supplied to Brisbane closets.

The city's ratepayers were no more enamoured of the situation than the council. On 5 July 1875, they held a stormy meeting "anent sanitary reform", at which the protesters became very vocal in their criticism of the Brisbane Local Board of Health. Typically - for ratepayers are never happy to accept increased costs - this was not so much because of the board's mishandling of the earth closet system, but because it offended by "enforcing health regulations and imposing charge/s/" which were "characterised as being arbitrary and vexatious". The citizens rallied to the defence of their aldermanic representatives, passing a resolution "calling on the Council to take sanitary reform into their own hands."¹¹⁸ As for the rest of Queensland, the cities and towns which looked to Brisbane to give a lead on the question, had already labelled the capital's sanitary system as "an admitted failure".¹¹⁹

113. Within, p. 16.

114. The Brisbane Courier, 22 Sep 1874.

115. Ibid., 25 Apr 1874.

116. See for example, Under Colonial Secretary to Colonial Architect, 2 Sep 1875, Q.S.A. WOR/A 106, in-letter No.4402 of 1875.

117. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Jul 1875; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 26 Jul 1875. This complaint was angrily reiterated in 1879 by the Central Board of Health, Ibid., 12 Feb 1879 and 18 Feb 1879.

118. Ibid., 6 Jul 1875. For once, the Courier supported the local board. "Their duty is often a most unpleasant one, and it must often occasion much dissatisfaction. We would encourage them, however, to persevere." Ibid., 7 Jul 1875; editorial.

119. The Queensland Times, (Ipswich) 27 Apr 1876; editorial.

The Central Board of Health, whose regulations progressively mirrored the growing inadequacies of all facets of Brisbane's sanitary system,¹²⁰ had become openly critical of the local board's management by 1879. The unchecked carelessness of nightmen, the "slovenly and half-hearted" attention paid by householders, and the "optional nature" of the earth closet system, which created "an intolerable nuisance and constituted a threat to the health of the citizens", were all the consequence of the apathy of the local board.¹²¹ It was becoming increasingly necessary to urge the municipal council to work with the local board to undertake obviously needed reforms.¹²² A report of the local board's own assistant inspector, filed during the following year, proved that the board had indeed been remiss in enforcing the cleanly working of the sanitary system.¹²³ Dispirited, it decided, with Brisbane City Council approval, to sell its earth closet system plant, to let the whole of the work of tending the earth closets to contractors, and to lease a portion of the manure depot to those contractors.¹²⁴ The council was to be responsible for accepting tenders.¹²⁵

The problems were not resolved at once, despite some evidence of improvement.¹²⁶ "Serious defects connected with the emptying of earth closets", "unnecessary expense /which/ failed to secure the desired sanitary results", "unnecessary annoyance and offence by the frequent visitations of nightmen", caused by an over-generous licensing

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- 120. See for example, Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 19 May 1877, Q.S.A. COL/A 238, in-letter no.2889 of 1877, The Brisbane Courier, 22 Feb 1877, Ibid., 5 Sep 1878, and Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXVIII (1879), 410-411.
 - 121. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Feb 1879; Sub Committee Report of the Central Board of Health on the work of the Local Board of Health with respect to the Earth Closet System.
 - 122. Ibid. The council had already been given some control. The manure depot reserve had been "placed under the control of the Municipal Council in September 1876", but at that time the local board was still in charge of all operations. Queensland Government Gazette, II (1876), 590.
 - 123. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Jan 1880; Report of the Assistant Inspector of the Local Board of Health.
 - 124. Ibid., 13 Apr 1880. The board reserved its right to make recommendations and inspections, and to proceed against detected offenders, Ibid., 2 Dec 1880.
 - 125. Ibid., 29 Jun 1880.
 - 126. "Central Board of Health Report" (written and presented in October 1880), Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1880), 1563, and The Brisbane Courier, 21 Oct 1882; sub editorial.

system, and large numbers of householders who persisted in evading the payment of fees by burying excrement on their own properties,¹²⁷ remained to plague Brisbane for the whole of the 1880's. Indeed, nuisances proliferated and complaints grew more vociferous to reach new heights in 1883.

The first shots for the year were fired by the Booroodabin Divisional Board,¹²⁸ urged on by its ratepayers living in the vicinity of the manure depot. Following on its December 1882 petition to the Brisbane City Council,¹²⁹ the board requested that the Premier and Colonial Secretary, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, receive a deputation whose aim was the removal of the depot "to some more suitable position outside the Division".¹³⁰ The residents of both Booroodabin and Ithaca reinforced the board's action, by presenting a large petition to McIlwraith objecting to "the faeces matter of the city and suburbs", dead animals and other filth, being carted through their streets, to be dumped in their area.¹³¹ The "disgusting odours, which cannot but be productive of infections and contagious diseases", frightened both the petitioners and the Booroodabin and Ithaca Divisional Boards,¹³² especially as many cases "of typhoid fever had broken out near the manure depot, and at least one had a fatal termination". Economic considerations were also included, for there was a danger that the area could be "depopulated and its advancement retarded from such a cause".¹³³

- 127. This particular complaint came from Woolloongabba, but the difficulties and nuisances were rife Brisbane-wide. S. Fraser, Woolloongabba Local Board of Health to Central Board of Health, 10 Jul 1882.
- 128. Clerk, Booroodabin Divisional Board to Sir T. McIlwraith, 6 Mar 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 355, in-letter no.1118 of 1883. Residents living within the Ithaca Divisional Board area, who were also affected by the depot, had approached their board as well.
- 129. Ibid.
- 130. Ibid.
- 131. Petition from Residents and Freeholders of Booroodabin and Ithaca Divisions to Colonial Secretary, no date, (date stamped 14 Mar 1883), Q.S.A. COL/A 355, in-letter no.1239 of 1883. In May 1882, they had petitioned their own boards, and in December had approached the Brisbane City Council. Ibid.
- 132. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Jan 1883; sub editorial.
- 133. Petition to Colonial Secretary, as in f.n.131. A few residents of some eight years' standing blamed Macler's Victoria Tannery for the smells and fever. Petition from Mr. Warner, Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Dod, signed by E. Otto to Colonial Secretary, no date (date stamped 4 Mar 1883), Q.S.A. COL/A 355, in-letter no.1255 of 1883.

The Brisbane City Council was not entirely unsympathetic with the request for the manure depot's removal, but pointed out that it was already

situated at such a distance from the town as to make its use very expensive... and to remove it still further away would make the removal of the refuse... so expensive that it is feared in many cases people would be unable... to keep their premises in a cleanly condition.... Under the circumstances the Council regret they are unable to comply with the request of your petition.

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The staunchly anti-centralist McIlwraith,¹³⁵ though admitting to the deputation that the depot might be a nuisance, declined to interfere with local government affairs.¹³⁶ He promised only to bring the matter before the Central Board of Health, and, if necessary, to consult his colleagues in government.¹³⁷

In fact he did much more than this, visiting and inspecting the depot himself, and reporting favourably to the board on the "good condition" in which he "was surprised to find the reserve". McIlwraith did not think that the manure depot was either dangerous or overly unpleasant, although the night-carts were "certainly offensive".¹³⁸

Once again the official verdict was not acceptable to the general public, the press, and some interested medical men. Nearby residents insisted that "we must remove the unclean from the people",¹³⁹ because of the "disgusting smells", the regular pollution of the creek with nightsoil,¹⁴⁰ the typhoid fever which was rife in homes in the vicinity

134. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Jan 1883; sub editorial. This included a letter of 17 January 1883 from the Brisbane Town Clerk to the Booroodabin Divisional Board, printed in full.

135. Within, p. 335.

136. McIlwraith declined to act even when the Brisbane council frustrated the efforts of the Education Department to find accommodation for the contents of state school earth closets. Department of Public Instruction to Central Board of Health, 21 Feb 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 358, in-letter no.671 of 1883 and attachments from the Lands and other departments.

137. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Mar 1883. Report of Deputation of Booroodabin and Ithaca Divisional Boards to Colonial Secretary, 8 Mar 1883. The central board meeting was already arranged. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 8 Mar 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 355, in-letter no.1154 of 1883.

138. The Brisbane Courier, 10 Mar 1883; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 9 Mar 1883.

139. Ibid., 22 Feb 1883; letter to editor from Kelvin Grove.

140. Ibid., 12 Mar 1883; letter to editor from George H. Buzacott.

of the depot,¹⁴¹ and the disgusting filth which overflowed and was spread along the road from night-carts.¹⁴² To make matters worse, "these carts perambulate our streets and contaminate the air at a time when we are most susceptible of infection".¹⁴³

The night-cart nuisance did indeed haunt all Brisbane residents "favoured" with their attentions, and it appears that even the central health authority had no constructive suggestions to offer for the eradication of the menace. At the December meeting, Dr. K. Cannan could only confirm the disgust of most Central Board of Health members.

Residents of his neighbourhood were robbed of fully two hours sleep nightly by the horrible noise created in the first place by the ponderous night-carts...and the noisy conduct of the men....He commented strongly on the slovenly manner in which the work was carried out, and feelingly referred to the frightful smells from the uncovered night-cart and the unclean buckets passed to and fro by men under the windows of the bedrooms....He wondered how long this sort of thing was going to last. 144

Hope for amelioration was centred on a new local authority by-law for day time cleansing of closets. This regulation was of course in city council hands,¹⁴⁵ and those hands, according to Brisbane residents, were just as incompetent as they had ever been.¹⁴⁶ Certainly, there was no appreciable improvement in Brisbane's sanitary condition after the by-law had allegedly been put into operation. "TBC" reported as "monstrous, night-carts in twos and threes" in competition for road space with the 10 p.m. Lutwyche omnibus.¹⁴⁷ Even at council meetings, aldermen announced that night-cart offences and earth closet nuisances

- 141. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Mar 1883; letter to editor from James Campbell. Campbell complained again in December, and May 1884. Ibid., 21 Dec 1883, and Ibid., 14 May 1884.
- 142. Ibid., 15 Mar 1883; letter to editor from John Tait.
- 143. Ibid., 23 Apr 1883; letter to editor from Dr. Richard Rendle. As part solution to "the inefficient, nastily done night work", Rendle suggested removal of closet contents by day, a point taken up later by another correspondent. Ibid., 10 May 1883; letter to editor from Disgusted.
- 144. Ibid., 15 Dec 1883; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 14 Dec 1883.
- 145. Ibid., contribution of Brisbane City Council alderman and Central Board of Health member, William Pettigrew.
- 146. Ibid., 19 Dec 1883; letter to editor from E. Parr Smith, Ibid., 24 Dec 1883; letter to editor from Janet O'Connor, Ibid.; letter to editor from An Old Scavenger, Ibid., 25 Dec 1883; letter to editor from Not Astonished, Ibid., 23 Jan 1884; letter to editor from Beta.
- 147. Ibid., 21 Jan 1884; letter to editor from TBC.

reported six weeks previously still remained unresolved, so that, people returning from Church were obliged to cover their noses with their handkerchiefs, the smell was so very bad. 148

In another case, a closet left uncleansed for three weeks, despite several applications for attention, was in such a state that "it was now impossible to make use of it".¹⁴⁹

In spite of the apparently insoluble problems connected with the earth closet system, the majority of Brisbane's aldermen still refused to countenance the idea of a sewerage system which would empty into the river. "Cries of no, no never", greeted alderman Heal's proposal to initiate such a scheme,¹⁵⁰ though members of the Central Board of Health, probably fed up with the personal inconvenience of the night-cart nuisance, convened a special meeting to inspect the "Stombuco" water closet which had been in operation at one Mary Street residence for four years.¹⁵¹ The board was not satisfied that this water closet could eliminate the most serious health consequences, since it was "literally one for 'making your own place clean' and sending the filth to everyone else", and refused to endorse the "Stombuco" as an alternative to the earth closet-manure depot debacle.¹⁵²

Argument and inspections continued as typhoid fever increased its grip on the capital. The slovenly management of the earth closet system was said to have "a good deal to do with the spread of the disease",¹⁵³ and the sanitary situation became the burning question of the day,¹⁵⁴ as candidates for aldermanic honours campaigned on a platform of

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- 148. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Jan 1884; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 28 Jan 1884, complaint of John McMaster.
 - 149. Ibid.
 - 150. Ibid., 29 Jan 1884.
 - 151. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 25 Jan 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 379, in-letter no.640 of 1884. The board had previously inspected this closet in 1880, when its findings were much the same.
 - 152. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Feb 1884; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 8 Feb 1884. See also Ibid., 12 Feb 1884; letter to editor from R.T. Jefferies, the owner of the "Stombuco" closet, for a description and defence of the system, and Ibid., 26 Feb 1884; letter to editor from Hugh Bell, M.D., F.R.C.S., for a stringent attack on it.
 - 153. Ibid., 25 Apr 1884; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 24 Apr 1884, opinion of its Colonial Secretary chairman, Samuel Griffith.
 - 154. Ibid., 22 May 1884; letter to editor from Booroodabin.

"immediate health and sanitation for the city".¹⁵⁵ Newspaper readers continued to complain bitterly of the gross mismanagement of the earth closet system and the manure depot,¹⁵⁶ and a large deputation "of all shades of political opinion" waited on the Colonial Secretary.¹⁵⁷ One of the main complaints was the inadequacy of the soil cover in the trenches, and the consequent "unpleasant oozing of the nightsoil". This was caused by the lack of underground drainage, and it would appear that the need for this was not understood by any of the Brisbane authorities, although cheap, efficient tile drains had been available and freely in use from the 1840's.¹⁵⁸ But once again, the official guardians of the public health, after inspecting the manure depot, found that the "danger was not there", and that the place was "singularly free from any unpleasant smell".¹⁵⁹

- 155. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Feb 1884; sub editorial. By 1884 enormous difficulties with earth closet systems and manure depots were being experienced in the many cities and towns which had followed Brisbane in adopting that system. For some examples of this widespread problem see The Northern Miner (Charters Towers) 8 Jan 1884; letter to editor from Peter Gorrie, nightman, Ibid., 9 Jan 1884, Ibid., 26 Jan 1884; Minutes of Charters Towers Municipal Council, 25 Jan 1884, Ibid., 11 Mar 1884; letter to editor from Just-in-time Resident, Ibid., 10 May 1884; editorial, The Queensland Times, (Ipswich) 20 Apr 1884; letter to editor from Health, and Ibid., 1 May 1884; letter to editor from Decency, The Maryborough Chronicle, 3 Sep 1884, The Mackay Mercury, 24 May 1884, Bundaberg Municipal Council to Colonial Secretary, 6 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 400, in-letter no.6317 of 1884, and Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 567 (for the Toowoomba situation), The Cairns Post, 24 Jul 1884; letter to editor from Inflicted, and Ibid.; main editorial.
- 156. The Brisbane Courier, 13 May 1884; letter to editor from Robert T. Scott, Ibid., 14 May 1884; further letter from Scott, and Ibid., 21 May 1884; letter to editor from A Kelvin Grove Resident.
- 157. Ibid., 14 May 1884; sub editorial.
- 158. E.L. Jones, The Development of English Agriculture 1815-1873 (London, 1968), p.15. William Pettigrew suggested that tile drains should be used in the depot from its commencement in 1874, but because of expense, or some reason unknown to Pettigrew, their use was precluded, and the depot was never a success. The Brisbane Courier, 26 Apr 1887; letter to editor from Wm. Pettigrew (member of "the first committee having to do with that place".)
- 159. Visit of sub committee of Central Board of Health on 10 May 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 390, unnumbered memo attached to in-letter no.3526 of 1884. The atmosphere at the depot was probably improved because rain-soaked, impassable roads had forced the dumping of excrement on private property some distance away, with the owner's consent. Angry nearby residents were quick to complain on this score also. The Brisbane Courier, 13 May 1884; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 12 May 1884, Mayoral statement on complaints.

Nevertheless, two relatively new elements,¹⁶⁰ enthusiastically received by the general public and vested interests, now entered into the Central Board of Health's discussion of the nightsoil and manure depot problem. The first was the suggested use of

duplicate pans which would involve no manipulation till arrival at the depot, and no offensive odour in transit.

... The necessary work can be carried out during the day, the intolerable stench and annoyance of the night-carts be avoided, and the air when people sleep will not be loaded with poison.

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This idea was quickly picked up for perusal by cities on the periphery,¹⁶² though the scheme itself was still "open to great improvement".¹⁶³ The second suggestion from the central board - that all refuse should be subject to "purification by fire" -¹⁶⁴ had been mooted earlier in the Courier's columns,¹⁶⁵ and plans and specifications for a furnace to perform some burning operations had been placed before the Brisbane City Council,¹⁶⁶ which had already registered its approval of the system.¹⁶⁷

An intensely interested Brisbane Courier, urged the city council to destroy town refuse, nightsoil and street and yard sweepings by fire. According to the editor, the real solution to the Kelvin Grove problem would be a new depot, situated downstream from Brisbane, equipped with

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- 160. It is obvious from the details which follow that the Brisbane City Council already had these two ideas under consideration.
 - 161. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 16 May 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 390, in-letter no.3526 of 1884. Duplicate pans could not overcome one large problem. Brisbane pans were square, making it almost impossible to seal them properly. The demand for round pans, which could be easily sealed and cleaned, was made by the Central Board of Health in June 1885. The Brisbane Courier, 20 Jun 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 19 Jun 1885.
 - 162. See for example The Northern Miner, 24 May 1884, which printed in full a letter from Henry G. Marshall, Town Clerk Brisbane to the Townsville Municipal Council, explaining and advocating the double pan system.
 - 163. Ibid. See also The Brisbane Courier, 21 Jul 1884; letter to editor from Ratepayer. This correspondent was already complaining about the new system. The main difficulty seems to have been the return of old battered pans for new strongly made ones.
 - 164. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 16 May 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 390, in-letter no.3526 of 1884.
 - 165. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Apr 1884; letter to editor from J. Nightingale.
 - 166. Ibid., 14 May 1884; sub editorial.
 - 167. Ibid., 13 May 1884; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 12 May 1884. See also Ibid., 15 May 1884; letter to editor from Fuego.

a properly-built furnace, to which the city's refuse could be conveyed in air and watertight punts.¹⁶⁸

This well-meant suggestion produced another spate of correspondence. Dr. Joseph Bancroft, who had never deviated from the view that nightsoil treated correctly was an excellent manure,¹⁶⁹ was horrified by the idea of the furnace and the river transport.

Putting nightsoil on punts in town would create an additional and grave nuisance, and to carry the stuff on the river would pollute the river air.... Any destruction /of nightsoil/ by fire will pollute the city... in whatever direction the wind blows, and would require a great expense of fuel.

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Dr. Bancroft was quite wrong, retorted the manufacturer's representative. "But for the fastidious associations, the works could be in the city itself, they are so free of odours."¹⁷¹ As for the doctor's championship of farms, "from our experience of the Chinamen's gardens around Brisbane, the less we have of the perfumes of nature's laboratory the better".¹⁷²

168. The Brisbane Courier, 14 May 1885; sub editorial.

169. Ibid., 20 Jun 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 19 Jun 1885. See also Ibid., 4 Jul 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 3 Jul 1885. By July 1885, all members of the board except Bancroft favoured destruction of all refuse, including excrement, by fire.

170. Ibid., 15 May 1884; letter to editor from Joseph Bancroft. Bancroft's pet plan was for the transport of nightsoil in sealed railway wagons to a "manured farm".

171. Ibid., 15 May 1884; letter to editor from Brown and David representative.

172. Ibid., 16 May 1884; letter to editor from Manlove, Allcot, Fryer and Co., London, /agent in Brisbane, V. Petherick./ The Chinese market gardeners' manuring methods were hotly disputed. In 1888, the Brisbane City Council insisted that the Central Board of Health conduct a "thorough inspection... of all Chinamen's vegetable gardens within the city and suburbs... /to ascertain/ the mode of manuring and cultivating vegetables". Minutes of the Proceedings of the Brisbane Municipal Council, 11 Dec 1888, No.6, p. 69. The Brisbane Courier took up the question in two long and scathing editorials. Ibid., 6 Dec 1888; main editorial, and Ibid., 22 Dec 1888; main editorial. The central board began investigations in January 1889, finally, drawing up regulations in December of that year. Considerable health breaches were uncovered, but the "regulations" "were nothing more than instructions.... and did not require any formal approval of the Governor in Council". Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 5 Dec 1889, Q.S.A. COL/A 599, in-letter no.10677 of 1889, and a large number of attachments. See also The Brisbane Courier, 30 Sep 1889; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 29 Sep 1889.

It was not only the vested interests which sprang to the defence of the "cleansing fires". In a rather vicious attack on his colleague, Dr. Leighton Kesteven deplored Bancroft's "unwarrantable and misleading assertions" in reporting on the furnace system. But Kesteven regretted above all "that the thinking public cannot be aroused to the superior claims of water conveyance".¹⁷³

Indeed in this year of special interest in the public health of Queensland, the whole sewerage question was revived once more, with prominent medical men taking opposite sides in the argument, to the general confusion of newspaper readers.¹⁷⁴ In the Legislative Assembly, during the debate on the 1884 health bill, the fact that

we have allowed our large towns to grow up without any thorough system of drainage and sewerage

was blamed for the apparently inevitable consequence that

Queensland is now one of the most unhealthy colonies of the Australian group. The death-rate is higher in Queensland now than in any other of the Australian colonies.... And I believe we should have a system of national sewerage through all the towns of the colony. That will cost something like a million of money, but it will be money well expended.¹⁷⁵

On the other hand, even where the earth closet had been

given a fair chance, it had worked badly. Theoretically the system was a good one, but practically it had been found to be a nuisance and an abomination. The only thing they could do in the city of Brisbane was to have the matter drained into the river and taken away by the tide.

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Despite the inability of legislators to agree on particular systems, the 1884 health bill had a successful passage, and great expectations accompanied its passing into law on 21 October 1884.¹⁷⁷

173. The Brisbane Courier, 18 May 1884; letter to editor from Leighton Kesteven.

174. For instance Dr. C. Gunn wrote a series of letters to the Courier in praise of sewerage, which he asserted had greatly lowered the death rate in the United States of America. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Feb 1884, and Ibid., 19 Mar 1884; letters to editor from C. Gunn, B.A., M.D. (Harvard). But see also Ibid., 24 Mar 1884; letter to editor from Dr. J.E. Matthew Vincent, denying that sewerage was the answer and extolling "an efficient earth closet system carried out with real energy... as the triumphant solution of the sewage difficulty". Laymen were still debating the pros and cons of the systems late in the year. See for example, Ibid., 24 Oct 1884; letter to editor from J.W.T., and Ibid., 29 Oct 1884; letter to editor from D. Mapleston.

175. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 506-07.

176. Ibid., p.564. Opinion of Sir Thomas McIlwraith.

177. For detailed discussion see Within, pp.346-49.

The bandying about of suggestions and counter suggestions on sewerage, manure depots, burial and burning methods,¹⁷⁸ the general airing of grievances which took place in both houses of parliament,¹⁷⁹ and were subsequently given wide coverage in newspapers throughout Queensland,¹⁸⁰ might have been expected to lead to rapid sanitary improvements.

Certainly a number of cities and towns throughout the colony, taking advantage of the powers granted to local authorities under the new Act, hastened to produce public health by-laws, or to improve existing ones.¹⁸¹

178. See for example, Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLII (1884), 138-140, and Ibid., XLIII (1884), 566-67.
179. It is not certain just how wide an airing these grievances were given. In August 1884, the leader of the opposition, Boyd Dunlop Morehead, alleged that the "proprietor of certain country papers" had been excluded from the parliamentary press gallery. As The Brisbane Courier pointed out, this was a grave matter, since "Hansard does not reach the general public.... The great majority of voters in the colony can only know what takes place from the press reports". See The Brisbane Courier, 8 Aug 1884, Ibid., 9 Aug 1884; sub editorial, and Ibid., 11 Aug 1884; letter to editor from E. Thorne. Two of the papers concerned, Punch and Figaro, were very active in reporting health debates, and in offering opinions on the public health situation.
180. Some examples of editorials and general reporting on those parts of the health bill debate which concerned sanitation are, The Brisbane Courier, 25 Aug 1884; main editorial, Ibid., 3 Sep 1884; main editorial, Ibid., 9 Oct 1884; Special Supplement devoted to articles on the public health, Ibid., 31 Oct 1884; main editorial, Ibid., 8 Nov 1884; sub editorial, The Queensland Times, 4 Sep 1884; editorial, The Northern Miner, 12 Sep 1884; editorial, Ibid., 22 Nov 1884, Ibid., 5 Dec 1884; editorial, Ibid., 11 Dec 1884, The Maryborough Chronicle and Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser, 17 Sep 1884; editorial, Ibid., 11 Nov 1884, The Colonist, 27 Sep 1884; sub editorial, Wide Bay and Burnett News, 1 Nov 1884, Ibid., 22 Nov 1884, and The Cairns Post, 20 Nov 1884; sub editorial.
181. For example, Police Magistrate, Clermont to Under Colonial Secretary, 27 Oct 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 405, in-letter no.7672 of 1884; The Brisbane Courier, 18 Nov 1884, Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 17 Nov 1884, Ibid., 13 Nov 1884; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 12 Nov 1884, Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 15 Nov 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 406, in-letter no.7997 of 1884, Town Clerk, Clermont to Colonial Secretary, 17 Nov 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 407, in-letter no.8138 of 1884, The Colonist, 29 Nov 1884; Minutes of Maryborough City Council, 28 Nov 1884, Town Clerk, Mackay to Colonial Secretary, 11 Dec 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 409, in-letter no.8744 of 1884, Town Clerk, Maryborough to Colonial Secretary, 6 Dec 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 411, in-letter no. 8607 of 1884 and attachments, Town Clerk, Bundaberg to Colonial Secretary, 19 Dec 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 410, in-letter no.8954 of 1884 and attachments, and Town Clerk, Rockhampton to Colonial Secretary, n.d., Q.S.A. COL/A 412, in-letter no.452 of 1885 and attachments.

One of the main ingredients of these by-laws was the insistence that closet contents and rubbish should be removed by appointed contractors possessing the necessary equipment.¹⁸² The eventual result of this genuine desire to improve the sanitary situation was that cities and towns coming under the Health Act were at the mercy of firms owning nightsoil removal and disposal plant. These firms had an absolute monopoly of the work,¹⁸³ whether performed well or badly. In the interim, ratepayers and residents failed to detect any great amelioration of insanitary conditions.¹⁸⁴

In Brisbane, the city council swiftly made "arrangements by which they would have immediate control of the cleansing of the city",¹⁸⁵ and endless discussion took place in the search for improvements. These included the levying of a "very high" health rate to meet the expenses of cleansing;¹⁸⁶ the examination, for possible implementation in the colony, of ideas already tried and proved in Britain;¹⁸⁷ the appointment of a sanitary inspector whose special duties would embrace investigations at the manure depot;¹⁸⁸ and the purchase of new apparatus

182. See for example Wide Bay and Burnett News, 1 Nov 1884, The Maryborough Chronicle, 11 Nov 1884, The Brisbane Courier, 18 Nov 1884, Ibid., 25 Nov 1884, and Ibid., 2 Dec 1884.

183. Ibid., 4 May 1886; sub editorial.

184. See for example The Brisbane Courier, 8 Jan 1885; sub editorial, Ibid., 5 Mar 1885, Ibid., 25 Mar 1885; Minutes of Sanitary Vigilance Committee, 24 Mar 1885, Wide Bay and Burnett News, 13 Oct 1885; editorial, and The Queensland Figaro, 7 Nov 1885.

185. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jan 1885; main editorial.

186. Ibid. There were immediate protests from irate ratepayers. Ibid., 6 Jan 1885; Report of special meeting of ratepayers on the sanitary levy.

187. Ibid., 7 Jan 1885; long article - communicated - on Birmingham, England, and "Report on Water Supply and Sewage Disposal; by W.F. Taylor, M.D., M.R.C.S.", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1885), 555-594.

188. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Jan 1885; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 26 Jan 1885.

to steam clean the offending sanitary pans.¹⁸⁹ Most importantly, with the expiration of the lease of the Kelvin Grove manure depot in sight,¹⁹⁰ the desperate search for a new area, preferably within a ten mile radius of the city, began all over again.¹⁹¹ The same protesters wrote angry letters to the health authorities,¹⁹² people likely to be affected by the newly proposed depot site on Nundah Creek prepared a series of objections,¹⁹³ and The Brisbane Courier urged long-suffering Kelvin Grove residents to take the matter to law, should perfidious politicians fail to keep their word.¹⁹⁴

The editor little realized, in May 1885, how important and necessary that advice would be. During the rest of that year, and throughout 1886 and 1887, protests over the "terrible state of the sanitary depot" which was "something awful enough to kill a blackfellow"¹⁹⁵ mounted. Representatives of interested local authorities waited upon the Premier, in a concerted effort to have the manure depot removed from

189. Secretary, City and Suburban Sanitary Co. to Colonial Secretary, 2 Apr 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A419, in-letter no.2271 of 1885. See also The Brisbane Courier, 16 Apr 1885, for the report of an official visit to the depot. The majority of the "dignitaries" reported favourably, possibly influenced by the champagne luncheon. But see also the protest from one correspondent, Ibid., 17 Apr 1885; letter to editor from A Resident, and another dissenting note from Dr. Hill Wray, secretary to the central board. Wray considered the depot very unsatisfactory, the pan steaming "inadequate to destroy germs", and the attendants' work "slovenly and slipshod". This depot was in strong contrast to the one on the prison island St. Helena in Moreton Bay where three hundred men were accommodated with a clean odour-free system. Ibid., 25 Apr 1885, Minutes of Central Board of Health, 24 Apr 1885.
190. The Brisbane Courier, 30 May 1885; sub editorial. The lease was to expire in June 1886.
191. Ibid., 28 Mar 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 27 Mar 1885.
192. See for example, Ibid., letter to the March meeting of the central board from James Campbell.
193. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Apr 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 12 Apr 1885. Main objectors were the Sisters of Mercy, Brisbane, trustees for the Roman Catholic Orphanage, Nudgee. On 19 May 1885, fifty-six acres of land were permanently reserved on Cabbage-tree Creek for a manure depot. Queensland Government Gazette, I (1885), 1202 and 1676.
194. The Brisbane Courier, 30 May 1885; sub editorial.
195. Ibid., 25 Jan 1887.

their environs;¹⁹⁶ large numbers of letters expressing disgust over the manure depot continued to appear in newspapers;¹⁹⁷ more deputations sought to influence government ministers to remove "the horror";¹⁹⁸ very large public meetings of irate Kelvin Grove and Enoggera residents were held at which members of parliament, doctors and influential landowners protested at being "inflicted with the abominable place for so long";¹⁹⁹ and ratepayers and residents directly affected by the depot nuisance resorted to petitions to their local authorities, and to the Central Board of Health.²⁰⁰ In order to prove that a manure could be properly conducted the Courier sent its special reporter to inspect the "model" depot at Woolloongabba. The correspondent "failed to detect any bad smell whatever /though/ the afternoon was close and hot", and gave credit to the perfectly dried earth, the well dug, well covered trenches, and the fact that "the men at Woolloongabba depot are all teetotallers"!²⁰¹

- 196. In particular Booroodabin and Ithaca. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Dec 1885. But see also a defence of the depot following the December deputation's complaints. Benjamin H. Babbidge to Colonial Secretary, 18 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 448, in-letter no.9618 of 1885. As Brisbane's Mayor, Babbidge had an interest to protect, but Colonial Secretary Griffith went out of his way to congratulate him on his "efforts for the health of the people of Brisbane". Marginal note by Griffith on above.
- 197. One of the most persistent correspondents was "Sanitas". Some of his letters appeared in The Brisbane Courier, 26 Apr 1886, 15 May 1886, 23 Nov 1886, 27 Jan 1887, 19 Mar 1887.
- 198. James Campbell led a Booroodabin deputation to the Premier in April and a large group from Kelvin Grove led by Dr. Bancroft saw Griffith in July 1886. Ibid., 3 Apr 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 2 Apr 1886, and Ibid., 28 Jul 1886.
- 199. Ibid., 9 Jul 1886.
- 200. Ibid., 7 Jan 1887; Ratepayers' petition to Booroodabin Divisional Board, Ibid., 7 Mar 1887; Petition to the Central Board of Health from one-hundred-and-twenty Toombul ratepayers, and Ibid., 12 Mar 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Mar 1887; Petition to the central board from the residents of Enoggera, Breakfast Creek and other areas.
- 201. Ibid., 31 Mar 1887. This depot was undoubtedly a curiosity in Queensland. For descriptions of the all-too-familiar evils of depots in Herberton, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Ipswich and Townsville, see The Northern Miner, 5 May 1884, Johnston, Police Magistrate, Bundaberg to Colonial Secretary, 6 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 400, in-letter no.6317 of 1884, The Colonist, 15 Dec 1884; Minutes of Tinana Divisional Board, 14 Dec 1884, Brassall Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary, 2 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 446, in-letter no.9023 of 1885, The Herberton Advertiser, 12 Feb 1887, and The Democrat, 27 Mar 1897.

But the central board, which was charged with the general oversight of all health matters for the whole of Queensland under the 1884 Health Act, had another solution. It responded to the outcry with some positive recommendations on the use of "cremation /as/ the most effectual means of disposing of all refuse, excreta, etc. in Brisbane."²⁰² Unfortunately the mere passing on of resolutions to the Brisbane City Council hardly represented a commendable and energetic attack on a most urgent public health problem. In the first place, the final cost of cremating the nightsoil of Brisbane and Booroodabin was calculated at £40,000, an amount well beyond the means of the city council.²⁰³ Secondly, the central board appears to have "put off" positive discussion on a more suitable manure depot site for an inordinately long time, through the dithering indecisiveness of its members.²⁰⁴ "Sanitas" was certainly of this opinion, feeling that the remedying of relatively minor sanitary problems had left the board without

sufficient vitality to enable it to deal with the removal of the notorious manure depot. Could anyone... not come to the conclusion that it had outlived its usefulness, and that it had set the seal on its own ineptitude? 205

The Queensland government had done little better than its appointed board. In October 1885, a harrassed Francis Beattie, Chairman of the Booroodabin Divisional Board, accused the government of refusing permission to have the depot removed, in spite of four years entreaty by residents.²⁰⁶ And in December of that same year the Premier, in his haste to be rid of an importunate deputation, pleaded pressure of more urgent business, and his inability to shift the depot "at a moment's notice"²⁰⁷ - excuses unlikely to cut any ice with the complainants.

- 202. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Jul 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 17 Jul 1885, Ibid., 18 Dec 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 17 Dec 1886, Ibid., 20 Dec 1886; sub editorial, and Ibid., 12 Mar 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Mar 1887.
- 203. Ibid., 21 Apr 1887; Minutes of Brisbane and Suburban Sanitary Conference, 20 Apr 1887.
- 204. Ibid., 20 Jul 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 19 Jul 1885, and Ibid., 24 Jul 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 23 Jul 1886.
- 205. Ibid., 19 Mar 1887; letter to editor from Sanitas. He refers here to the board's go-slow tactics during discussion at its meeting held on 11 March 1887.
- 206. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLVII (1885), 881. Supply debate.
- 207. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Dec 1885.

Small wonder that Griffith was reproved for being "somewhat case hardened and callous" in his attitude towards the manure depot sufferers,²⁰⁸ or that protesters considered that it was the laggard Colonial Secretary's immediate duty to "produce /an/ alternative scheme and the locality of /a/ new depot".²⁰⁹ But the colony's cynics were not really surprised, when the Colonial Secretary's office shifted the responsibility for the latter chore onto the Secretary for Public Lands.²¹⁰

Nevertheless, as had happened before, the greatest censure was reserved for the Brisbane City Council. At the least the council was charged with neglect, resulting in "constant danger from pestilence and disease".²¹¹ At worst its members were labelled

the only real culprits in the matter.... Let the ratepayers ... concentrate their indignation on the real offenders, the Brisbane Municipal Council, who should have spared them the maladorous controversy... and the unpleasant consequences now resulting from it. The fact... that the Kelvin Grove Depot was a nuisance of which the continuance was becoming yearly more intolerable has long been present to the aldermanic mind. But what has been done? Nothing, or at most only just so much as could not possibly be avoided. The consideration of the question has constantly been put off or huddled aside.... Unless the ratepayers are overcome by mental paralysis, by the flabbiness that is said to be sapping the public life of England, they will find some means of awakening the municipal conscience on this point, and compelling a decision on some other way of dealing with the city refuse than the present disgusting and barbarous method.

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In the end, it was an act of God which brought the manure depot situation to a complete impasse. Very heavy flood rains, "more severe than any since 1841",²¹³ did enormous damage at the Kelvin Grove depot.

- 208. The Brisbane Courier, 26 Apr 1886; letter to editor from Sanitas.
- 209. Ibid., 9 Jul 1886.
- 210. Colonial Secretary to Secretary for Public Lands, 28 Sep 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 482, out-letter no.7341 of 1886. On 18 Dec 1885 the Premier had told Beattie, "I have already looked for a suitable site, but cannot find one".
- 211. The Brisbane Courier, 4 May 1886; sub editorial, and Ibid., 6 May 1886; sub editorial.
- 212. Ibid., 10 Jul 1886; sub editorial.
- 213. Ibid., 27 Jan 1887; letter to editor from N. Bartley. In another place Bartley suggests that the 1841 Brisbane flood was only surpassed by that of 1890. N. Bartley, Opals and Agates (Brisbane, n.d.), p.259.

Parts of the paddock were from two to ten feet under water for days on end, the contents of pans were flung into the water, and no dried earth was available.²¹⁴ The deposits from some sixty or seventy pits and trenches, together with a mass of decaying vegetables from the neighbouring Chinese gardens were washed away, to be strewn all over the creek flats and the nearby allotments. Horses and night-carts were hopelessly bogged, sheds and equipment were blown to the ground, hundreds of earth closet pans were swept away, and the access road was completely eroded and quite impassable.²¹⁵ Chaos reigned.

The Brisbane City Council, driven to hurried consultation by the unusual circumstances, held a special meeting to consider various systems for refuse destruction.²¹⁶ The Central Board of Health deplored "the great nuisance caused by the recent flooding of the manure depot".²¹⁷ Brisbane seemed set for another round of animated discussion accompanied by masterly inactivity. But one Kelvin Grove resident, George H. Buzacott,²¹⁸ forced to close his house and leave the place because of worse-than-usual abominations following the floods, gave notice through his solicitor that he intended to "take such steps as he may be advised to compel the depot's^s removal",²¹⁹ if a shutdown were not effected immediately. Even then, as a penultimate resort, Buzacott waited with Robert T. Scott and Major Sanderson Lyster as a deputation on the Acting Chief Secretary. James Robert Dickson was sympathetic.

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- 214. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Jan 1887; letter to editor from One who is afraid of Typhoid. According to observers the dry earth reserve was under six feet of water and two hundred loads of dried earth ready for distribution were destroyed. Ibid., general reporting.
 - 215. Ibid., 25 Jan 1887. See also Ibid., 28 Jan 1887; Minutes of adjourned meeting of Brisbane City Council, 27 Jan 1887, Ibid., 1 Feb 1887; letter to editor from Citizen, and Ibid., 7 Mar 1887; letter to editor from One of them.
 - 216. Ibid., 9 Mar 1887; Minutes of special Brisbane City Council meeting, 8 Mar 1887, and Ibid., 10 Mar 1887. The favoured method was burning but all systems are detailed. See also Ibid., 19 Mar 1887.
 - 217. Ibid., 12 Mar 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Mar 1887.
 - 218. Buzacott had actively protested previously, Within, p.22.
 - 219. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Mar 1887. The complete text of the letter from Messrs Hart and Flower to the Brisbane council through the Booroodabin Divisional Board is given here, together with the Brisbane Town Clerk's admonitory reply to Booroodabin in which he accuses the board of making a large contribution to the manure depot nuisance.

As member for Enoggera he might well have been. But he could only promise "to take the necessary steps to bring it forcibly before the council... that they should take some action".²²⁰ Incredibly, the council still delayed

not prepared at present to adopt any scheme for settling
the much vexed question.

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Goaded beyond endurance, Buzacott took his case to the Supreme Court, and on 7 April 1887, an injunction restraining the Brisbane Municipal Council from depositing nightsoil at the manure depot, Kelvin Grove, or within a three mile radius, was granted.²²² The council, which learned the dreaded news first in the columns of The Observer,²²³ had eight days to comply with the ruling.

For a brief time, Brisbane's twenty-seven ponderous night-carts, with their loathsome contents, could be seen trundling over the Victoria Bridge bound for paddocks in Woolloongabba. But mercifully for the residents of that district, this proved to be a very temporary expedient.²²⁴ Another solution was hurriedly found. Brisbane's filth was about to pollute the river and the bay on a scale as yet undreamt.²²⁵ The long nightmare was over for the residents of Kelvin Grove. But the carelessness, the foulness and lack of system, had simply been moved elsewhere. A new environmental problem had begun.

- 220. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Mar 1887. In a letter dictated by Dickson, the Under Colonial Secretary directed the council's attention to the Courier's report of the deputation, and requested that it give immediate thought to establishing depots in Yeerongpilly and Redcliffe on land already earmarked but not gazetted by the government for this purpose. The full text of the letter is given in Ibid., 29 Mar 1887.
- 221. Ibid., 31 Mar 1887; main editorial.
- 222. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1888, p.67. The three mile radius provision was added by the Chief Justice Sir Charles Lilley, in order to prevent the use of the paddock commandeered temporarily in 1884. Within, p. 25, f.n.159.
- 223. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Apr 1887; Minutes of special meeting of Brisbane City Council, 12 Apr 1887. Newspaper columns were used to an extraordinary extent in the dissemination of official statements at this time - not only for the public's consumption, but also apparently, to acquaint various authorities.
- 224. "Where are those twenty-seven manure vans bound?" a dismayed Councillor Baynes asked the Woolloongabba Divisional Board. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Apr 1887.
- 225. Ibid., 3 May 1887.

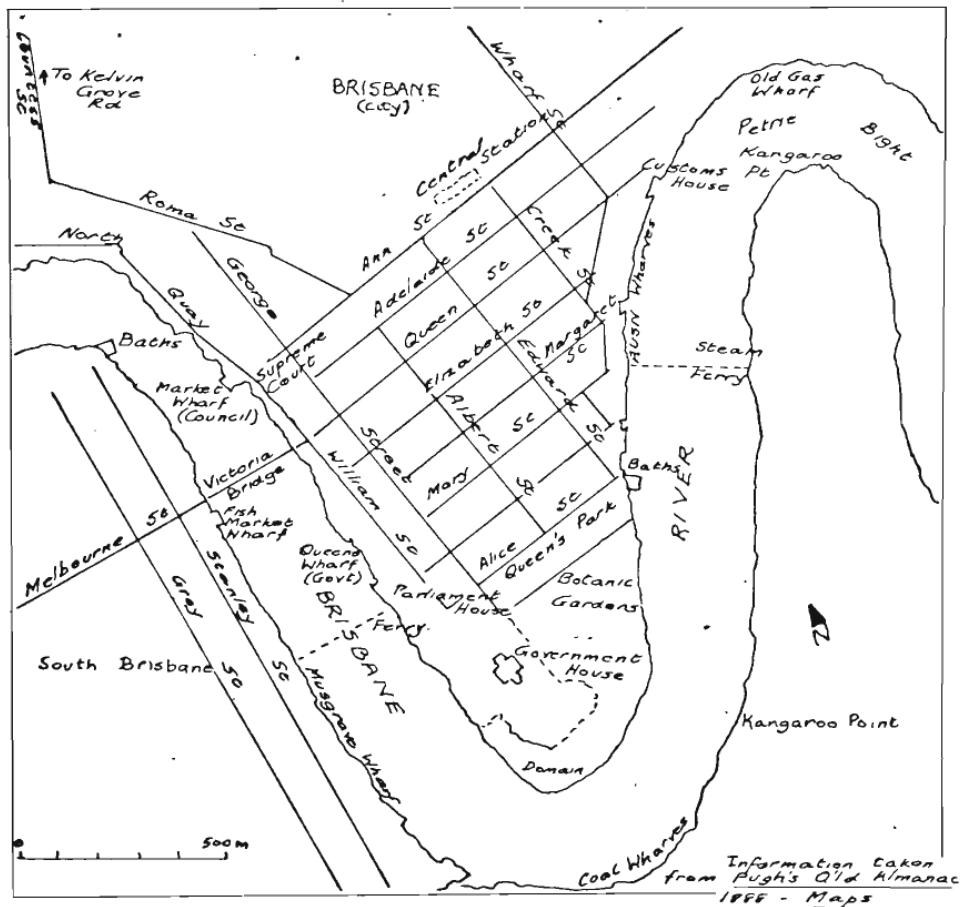
The closure of the largest single source of Brisbane's environmental pollution, the Enoggera Creek manure depot, did absolutely nothing to eliminate basic problems. Indeed, if anything the difficulties worsened and the protestations grew more vigorous. As The Brisbane Courier declared

/t/he problem of the disposal of the nightsoil of the city in a manner that will offend the susceptibilities of no one, and in a place where it cannot be a nuisance to someone, is at present impossible of solution. Every new scheme proposed, no matter how feasible and simple at first sight, brings down a host of wrathful objectors. 1

This public reaction was inevitable. Still underlying the puzzle of what to do with Brisbane's stinking refuse was the colonists' stubborn adherence to the miasmatic theory of disease transmission, in spite of advancing medical knowledge.² The old views were reinforced constantly by long and plausible newspaper articles,³ by the published opinions of local medical men,⁴ by the Registrar-General's dismal figures on the incidence of preventable diseases,⁵ and by the evidence of their own eyes and noses.

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1. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Dec 1887; main editorial.
 2. There was no excuse for complete ignorance of the advances. See for example, The Brisbane Courier, 19 May and 7 Jun 1884; letters to editor from J. de Vis, F.R.C.S., Ibid., 5 Jan 1887, an article taken from The Times on the occasion of the Queen's jubilee, which outlines national gains in morality, in conduct, and above all in science, Ibid., 19 Mar 1887, an article "Germs", taken from The Daily News, Ibid., 27 Dec 1888, an article "The Germs of Disease", taken from The Scotsman, Ibid., 12 Jan 1889; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Jan 1889, Ibid., 29 Aug 1889, an article "Our Microscopic Foes, Bacteria and Bacilli", taken from Knowledge, The Colonist, 11 Feb 1888; sub editorial, and The Queensland Times, 17 Jan 1889; editorial.
 3. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Jan 1887, a long article taken from The Times, Ibid., 26 Apr 1888; sub editorial, Ibid., 2 Aug 1888; letter to editor from Proteus, Ibid., 12 Sep 1888; sub editorial, Ibid., 17 Sep 1888; Minutes of Toowong Progress Association, The Colonist, 11 Feb 1888; sub editorial.
 4. The Brisbane Courier, 6 Apr 1887; letter to editor from Richard Rendle, Ibid., 30 Apr 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 29 Apr 1887, The Herberton Advertiser, 8 Apr 1887; Minutes of Tinaroo Divisional Board, Report of Dr. Bowkett, The Boomerang, 14 Jan 1888, an article "Sanitation and the Public" by Dr. E. Matthews Owens, and Ibid., 18 Feb 1888, an article "The Brisbane Water Supply", by Dr. Richard Rendle.
 5. For example, "The Registrar-General's Report - Vital Statistics for 1888", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1889), xxxi and xxxiii.

As the river traffic in nightsoil began, another fundamental fear provided even greater motivation to oppose the setting up of new "depots" on various Brisbane wharves,⁶ or on islands in the river.⁷



Brisbane City Showing the Sanitary Wharves.

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6. The council's Market wharf at North Quay was used first for barge traffic in nightsoil, but following strident complaints from the Supreme Court, this "depot" was closed and the government owned Queen's wharf was used. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Dec 1887; sub editorial, and general reporting, Ibid., 9 Dec 1887; report on threatened Supreme Court action, Ibid., 14 Dec 1887; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 13 Dec 1887, and Ibid., 9 Jan 1888; letter to editor from Richard Philip Adams.
 7. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Dec 1887; Minutes of Toombul Divisional Board, 13 Dec 1887. Fisherman Islands were referred to here.

Property anywhere near these disease-prone,⁸ smell-ridden areas would lose value at once, or perhaps become completely unsaleable. This was serious - especially when high-priced allotments in the city centre were at stake.⁹

Money, or lack of it, was also basic to the Brisbane City Council's attitude to public health improvements, as the Lord Mayor reminded the municipality for the umpteenth time late in 1887.¹⁰ For example, the council needed all of its persuasive powers to overcome ratepayer resistance to the high cleansing rates which were essential if satisfactory work were to be performed.¹¹ This was a proviso which some cynics felt would forever preclude Queenslanders from acquiring "the best sanitary system".¹² And yet another dread haunted all Brisbane health authorities at this time - the possibility that an outbreak of

8. The smell from the council's work on the Queen's wharf was said to produce sickness, vomiting and diarrhoea in Richard Adams's household. A number of public servants were also struck down with fevers of a "choleraic and typhoid nature". Some were of the higher echelon who presumably could not be accused of faking the symptoms. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Dec 1887; letter to editor from Richard Philip Adams, and general reporting.
9. Ibid., 11 Jun 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 10 Jun 1887, letter to board from Mrs. Scott of St. Helens.
10. Ibid., 14 Dec 1887; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 13 Dec 1887.
11. Ibid., 23 May 1889. Minutes of special meeting of Brisbane City Council, 22 May 1889. According to the Courier the rates were excessive and the service "fitful". The rates were :-

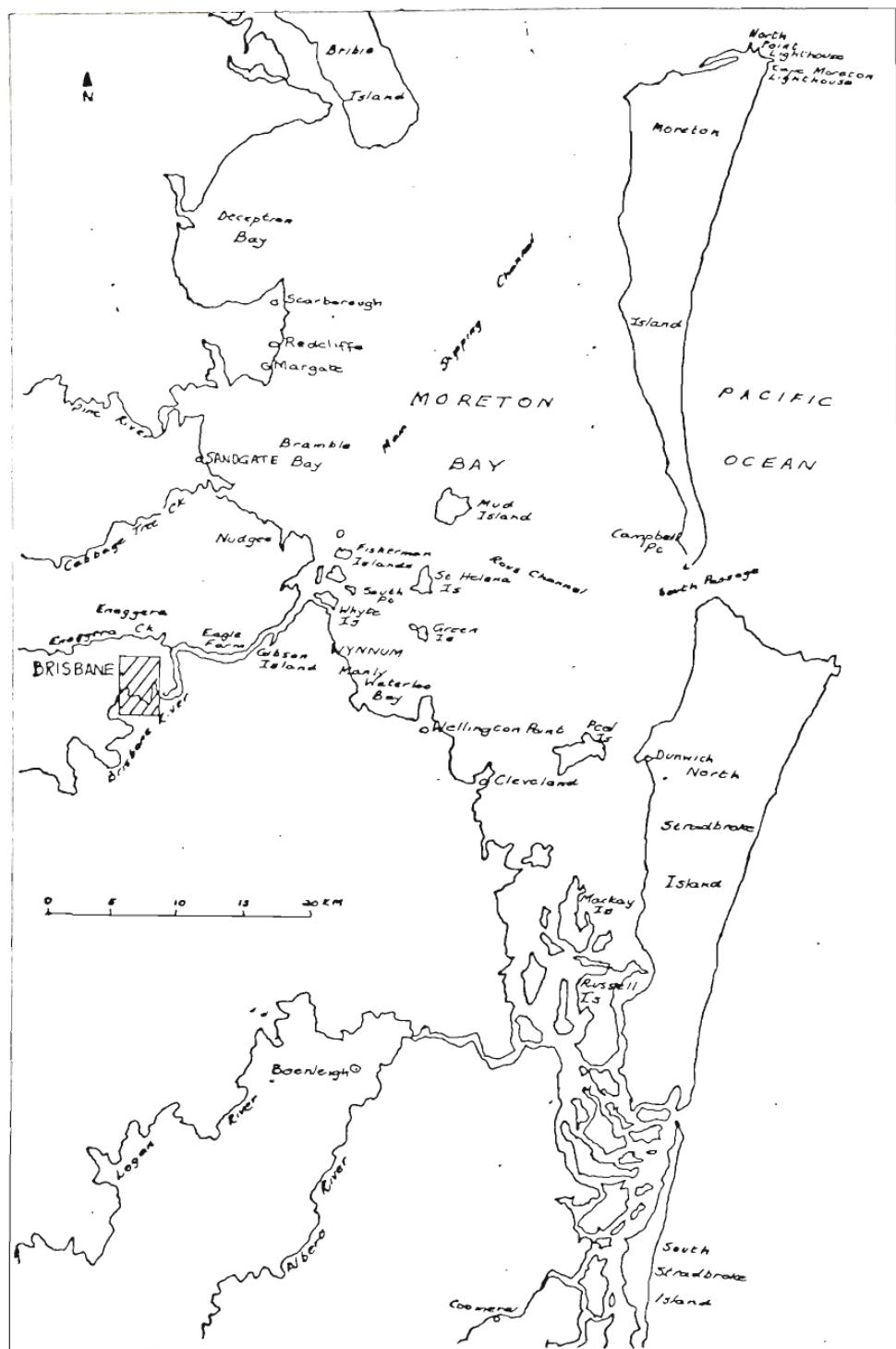
1 pan emptied once a week	9d.
Emptied oftener	6d per service.
Where more than one pan in use 6d per pan per service.	

 This was a rise of 1½d per week in the basic rate. Ibid., 24 May 1889, main editorial. As a ratepayer itself, the Brisbane Newspaper Company objected to the high sanitary rate on the Courier building, and the manner in which the closet services were carried out. Minutes of the Proceedings of the Brisbane Municipal Council, No.6, 27 May 1889, p.167.
12. The Maryborough Council's health committee had been watching Brisbane's scavenging situation carefully, and by August 1890, a spokesman concluded that "the ratepayers would not stand" the cost of a duplicate pan service on Brisbane lines. The Maryborough Chronicle, 6 Aug 1890; Minutes of Maryborough City Council, 5 Aug 1890. See also an Ipswich objection to any new expensive scheme. The Queensland Times, 16 Oct 1890; letter to editor from Ratepayer.

epidemic fevers, "traceable to maladorous shipments", might well prove more costly than the expensive preventive measures at which they baulked.¹³

As far as the general public was concerned, added to the now well-known grievances forcefully advanced over the years by sufferers from Brisbane's sanitary system, were the new, if temporary,¹⁴ horrors of large loads of "excrement emptied within the flood-tide influence of the Brisbane River", from punts "so constructed that it /was/ impossible to prevent the liquid portion of the filth from making its way into the river en route".¹⁵ Even after the government had offered the use of the burial facilities on St. Helena Island,¹⁶ when the steamer Mary replaced the punts, neither cleanliness nor efficiency obtained. Conditions on board ship were unbelievably bad. At first the pans were stacked on racks in the hold, but the unbearable atmosphere led to the prostration of employees, two of whom had to leave the contractor's service.¹⁷ Later the tins were carried on deck, leading to protests about the sickening stench which enveloped the Mary, affecting riverside homes, passengers on other ships, and the unfortunate residents of St. Helena and Dunwich.¹⁸ The problem was exacerbated by a series of engine breakdowns which not only caused quite long delays in the clearing of closets,¹⁹ but also led to the dumping of the city's nightsoil in

13. Once again it was a London experience which brought this home very forcibly. During 1887, authorities there were faced with a bill of £60,000 to quell an epidemic outbreak which might have been avoided through the installation of upgraded sanitary facilities. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Dec 1887; main editorial. See also Ibid., 22 Dec 1888; main editorial, in which the current preventable loss of life in Brisbane, at the rate of 200 per annum, was said "from a brutal money point of view /to be/ a direct loss of thousands of money yearly to the city and the country".
14. The government granted the Brisbane City Council one month's permission to dump nightsoil in the Bay, just inside Moreton Island. Ibid., 18 Apr 1887, and Ibid., 9 May 1887; sub editorial.
15. Ibid., 29 Sep 1887; letter to editor from F.
16. Within, p.31, f.n.189.
17. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Feb 1888.
18. Ibid., 2 Mar 1889; letter to editor from Viator. Sir Thomas McIlwraith mentioned the matter in parliament during the 1889 health act amendment bill debate. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVII (1889), 377.
19. For some strange reason Captain William Collin "could not engage another vessel to take Mary's place temporarily"! The Brisbane Courier, 16 Feb 1888.



No. 2. Moreton Bay and Islands.

waters much closer to home than was normal.²⁰ The Brisbane River, whose purity had caused such concern to the first Central Board of Health and other stalwarts in succeeding years, was "thus contaminated, polluted, /and/ corrupted".²¹

And there was no end to the evils for the community as a whole. Night-carts which missed the boat stood in the road throughout the following day with their nauseating, leaking freight,²² a practice known to and condoned by the municipality's nuisance inspector.²³ The corporation's Spring Hill swimming baths, and those of the South Brisbane council, which were looked upon as an essential²⁴ - "an absolute necessity for preserving health and vigour in a hot climate"²⁵

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- 20. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Feb 1888. The government hopper barge was pressed into service and the contents of pans were emptied off Mud Island. This greatly endangered the fore-shores of nearby watering places and health resorts. The Sandgate authorities had already alerted the government to the dangers of jetsam polluting the beach at Sandgate. Town Clerk, Sandgate to Colonial Secretary, 8 Feb 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 460, in-letter no.1047 of 1886. The Courier had also warned of this possibility much earlier, Ibid., 5 Dec 1884; sub editorial, and occasional letters to the press and articles kept the matter before the public. Ibid., 18 Apr 1887, and Ibid., 20 Apr 1887; letter to editor from Ozone. Queenslanders had also heard of the destruction of the Yarra River in Melbourne and the pretty bays of Sydney Harbour, because of the drainage and sewerage systems used in the southern capitals. Ibid., 24 May 1886; sub editorial. For a short contemporary piece on the need to intercept Sydney's sewage to prevent fore-shore damage, see J.M. Smail, "Sanitary Engineering and Public Health", Minutes of Proceedings of the Engineering Association of New South Wales, Vol. V, 1889-1890, pp.121-122 and 124. For a description of Melbourne's manure depots and early water carriage arrangements see B. Barrett, The Inner Suburbs (Melbourne, 1971), pp.75-86 and 126-37.
 - 21. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Sep 1887; letter to editor from F. The produce of the river, especially the fish and the oysters, was also of great concern to this correspondent.
 - 22. Ibid., 1 Feb 1888; letter to editor from Richard Philip Adams.
 - 23. Ibid.. On receipt of Adams's letter The Brisbane Courier made enquiries and elicited this reply.
 - 24. The public baths were equipped with hot and cold washing facilities. For a comment on the necessity for public bathing facilities see The Maryborough Chronicle, 13 Oct 1884; letter to editor from Joseph H. Ward, M.D.
 - 25. The Bowen Observer, 26 Nov 1889; sub editorial, and Ibid., 21 Jan 1890; editorial. See also Dr. E. Matthews Owens's signed article in The Boomerang, 14 Jan 1888, in which he extols the provision of steam baths and plenty of soap in factories and mines, and calls for the erection of public baths and wash-houses throughout Queensland.

A LIVE NEWSPAPER - RACY OF THE SOIL.

No. 12

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4.



There's Nothing like Our Building Sanitary System to Get Devil in Cancer - And He Takes it, Too.

No. 3. The Boomerang, 4 February, 1888.

- were transmogrified into a public menace. For the baths pumping station was located but a short distance downstream from the "disease disseminating factory" of the nightsoil depot wharf. Similar dangers attended the use of supplies from the polluted stream for the watering of the city streets.²⁶

But the main problem was that the Brisbane system itself remained unchanged.²⁷ A substantial number of Queensland observers might be sufficiently impressed with Adelaide's deep drainage and sewage farm arrangements to hint strongly that Brisbane could do worse than follow South Australia's lead;²⁸ the Central Board of Health might have "committed itself to cremation and not the burying process".²⁹ But the Brisbane City Council was apparently determined to avoid the expense of either system while any possibility of retaining the tried - although

- 26. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Sep 1887; letter to editor from F., and Ibid., a main editorial which enlarges on "F's" letter. Street watering and the sluicing of drains was considered essential to Brisbane's well-being, but citizens feared the risky water supply, and the carelessness with which the watering was done. Ibid., 5 Jan 1888, and Ibid., 29 Feb 1888; letter to editor from Ratepayer.
- 27. One of the evils most often complained of was the method of deodorizing the nightsoil. The lucky householder received a "moiety" of dried earth, and often this was damp - sometimes wet. As a result the stench from Brisbane's closets was "unbearable". A large number of letters were sent to the press on this subject of which a small sample is given here. Ibid., 9 May 1887; letter to editor from Alex M'Lean, Ibid., 5 Jan 1888; letter to editor from Ratepayer, Ibid., 7 Jan 1888; letter to editor from Joseph Fletcher, F.C.S., F.I.C., M.R.I.A., Ibid., 19 Jan 1888; letter to editor from Ann Street, Ibid., 8 Feb 1888; letter to editor from S. Pole, Ibid., 10 Feb 1888; letter to editor from Caustic, Ibid., 20 Mar 1888; letter to editor from W.H. Chambers, Ibid., 23 Mar 1888; letter to editor from H., and Ibid., 22 May 1888; letter to editor from J.B.
- 28. The Queensland Figaro, 7 May 1887; sub editorial. For good examples of the considerable interest in Adelaide developments, see The Brisbane Courier, 21 Mar 1888, a long article taken from the Melbourne Argus on Adelaide's improvements, and subsequently reduced death rate, Ibid., 6 Dec 1888; main editorial, for a similar article, and Ibid., 16 Feb 1889, long article taken from The Queenslander, largely on Adelaide's successful sewage farm system.
- 29. The Brisbane Courier, 30 Apr 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 29 Apr 1887.

unsavoury and untrusted - methods remained.³⁰ Few voices were raised against the St. Helena proposal, which was made in compensation for the government's refusal to reserve the council's first choice, Gibson Island.³¹ The Brisbane Courier did wonder if the government had contemplated the possibility of mutiny.

No work is so distasteful to the average prisoner as having to carry away his own slops, and there would certainly be a rebellious objection to acting as scavengers of the lowest order in spreading the nightsoil of Brisbane over the sandy peninsula and covering it out of sight. ³²

The Courier was also reluctant to countenance the use of the island, because the comings and goings involved would remove "the single advantage which St. Helena possesses as a penal establishment, namely its isolation".³³

The Queensland Figaro could only agree that "an unsavoury difficulty" should not be even temporarily settled "at the expense of the security and exclusiveness of the prison system of the colony". But the Figaro's editor was much more worried about another aspect.

- 30. Attempts were made to inaugurate the railway carriage of Brisbane's nightsoil to a reserve where it could be incinerated or put to use on farms. The Pine River was proposed. Residents along the railway line protested to the minister at once. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Feb 1888, Ibid., 17 Mar 1888; letter to editor from R.J. Cottell, Ibid., 20 Mar 1888; letter to editor from Richard Rendle, and Ibid., 26 May 1888. Premier McIlwraith and Minister for Railways Nelson were sympathetic, McIlwraith feeling that railway carriage was "a filthy idea". Ibid., 16 Oct 1888. The matter of the Pine River area was resolved when the government refused the council the deeds of the land, Ibid., 27 Nov 1888; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 26 Nov 1888. Letter from Under Secretary for Lands to Mayor printed in full, but the question of rail carriage was still a matter for public discussion. Ibid., 27 Mar 1889; Deputation to Brisbane City Council, 26 Mar 1889, and Ibid., 11 Jun 1889; main editorial. Some medical men strongly opposed the idea. Ibid., 1 Apr 1889; letter to editor from M.R.C.S., (London).
- 31. Ibid., 9 Jan 1888; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 8 Jan 1888. Letter to Under Secretary for Lands regretting Gibson Island and accepting St. Helena, printed in full.
- 32. Ibid., 15 Dec 1887; main editorial.
- 33. Ibid.

I should like to hear from Dr. Wray what he thinks about this manure disposal from a sanitary point of view. I suppose even the sternest flagellator of the criminal will admit that the healths of its prisoners are among a government's sacred charges. Here are several hundreds of men herded together in close confinement. They are to be subjected to all the malarial gases and noxious vapours inseparable from the transit and disposal of nightsoil - inseparable, I mean, if the work is carried on in the same manner as hitherto, for has not typhoid followed the nightsoil nuisance to its every halting stage?... And typhoid does not only select convicted prisoners, but cares not tuppence for warders, visiting magistrates, or even visiting members of government.... This solution of the nightsoil problem is both injudicious and recklessly cruel. We want to punish our prisoners and reform them if possible; but we don't want to poison them off with typhoid. 34

In fact, the actual work of disposal was undertaken by "corporation labourers", but it was not long before the sober tones of the superintendent at St. Helena were echoing the Figaro's sentiments. In his 1887 report, W.M. Townley admitted that

so far... this arrangement has been unattended with any serious or untoward results, yet the dangerous probability exists of infectious diseases being disseminated amongst the prisoners and free people resident here. 35

Moreover, the prison system suffered the drawbacks of "the constant influx of strangers by the 'Mary'", the blocking of the island's tramway with nightsoil trolleys, and the disruption of prisoners' work, as officials attempted to prevent unauthorized outside contacts. 36

One year later, the new superintendent, C. Pennefather, was still concerned with the prisoners' trafficking with the city workmen, and with the security of the Mary. Both irregularities caused staff problems, with the imposition of extra, irksome guard duties. Pennefather also bemoaned the encroachment of the nauseating depot on the island's already limited agricultural land. But he was most alarmed about the stench arising from the nightsoil trenches, and the clouds of flies which had invaded the island as never before. 37 He ascribed

34. The Queensland Figaro, 31 Dec 1887.

35. "Penal Establishment, St. Helena, Superintendent's Report for 1887", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1888), 920.

36. Ibid.

37. In recognising the danger of flies, "and the idea that they came from the corporation trenches", Pennefather was being very astute. General realization of the fly menace came considerably later. See for example, Within, p.123.

a good deal of the sickness which has prevailed during the year, especially during the summer months,... to the disgusting system pursued in the disposal of nightsoil on this island. 38

If Pennefather was justifiably anxious, the Brisbane authorities were not very happy about the St. Helena arrangements either. Richard Southall, who became Mayor of Brisbane for the first and only time in 1888, was very critical, attributing the badly cleaned closet pans and other inefficiencies, to the restrictions enforced on the contractor and his employees by prison regulations.³⁹ But once again it appears that the city council itself had been remiss in failing to insist on the proper carrying out of procedures by their contractors, Dobbyn and Company. Dr. Hill Wray, on examining the place at the request of the Colonial Secretary, found that the stuff was being buried in far too shallow trenches, and that leaking pans were "seriously injurious to the health of the prisoners".⁴⁰ His findings were confirmed by "a gentleman" whose curious hobby seems to have been taking the "opportunity to watch the St. Helena" process for hours at a stretch". He reported that the condition of the Mary and the disgustingly slovenly manner of dealing with the nightsoil was a disgrace not only to the corporation of Brisbane, but to all concerned. The contents of pans were not deodorized with dry earth, the essence of the earth closet system, and the long primitive process of landing the foul, leaking pans was potentially dangerous to the health of everyone on the island.

The decking of the jetty, the trucks, and the clothes and hands of the men employed were liberally bespattered with liquid filth, while the disgusting effluvia given forth poisons the atmosphere all around.

The route to the trenches, a mile distant, was clearly visible from the overflow from the pans. Some three hundred people - prisoners, warders and their families, and other officials - were forced to live on this island. They were condemned to "a constant purgatory of

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- 38. "Penal Establishment, St. Helena, Superintendent's Report for 1888", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1889), 1162.
 - 39. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Feb 1888.
 - 40. Ibid., 16 Mar 1888. Perhaps it was his too frequent contact with manure depots which led Hill Wray to proffer his resignation as secretary to the Central Board of Health shortly after. He wanted to stand aside "for someone more enthusiastic in the matter of sanitary science". C.J. Hill Wray to Chief Secretary, 13 May 1888, Q.S.A. COL/A 233, in-letter no.5114 of 1888.

tainted atmosphere".⁴¹

By early 1889, the inconvenience and danger of conveying nightsoil to St. Helena was clearly apparent. The most convenient alternative, a depot on Gibson Island, was granted to the Brisbane council by the government of the day.⁴² But once again the protesters prevailed, after "the largest and most influential /deputation/ that had ever waited on the mayor of the city" came to complain about the proposal. Members of the group protested about everything from the destruction of the beautiful river, which was the highway in and out of the colony, to the possible injury to the trade and commerce of Brisbane, and the loss of property values. One very telling argument was the indisputable fact that Gibson Island had been completely inundated with floods four times in twenty years. A disastrous feature, as far as the projected manure depot was concerned, was that no hole of more than eighteen inches deep could be sunk, without striking water.⁴³ The Brisbane Courier added another objection. Life in Brisbane's hot, narrow streets was only bearable thanks to sea breezes.

The breeze from the ocean naturally follows the course of the river.... Each waft of wind must therefore sweep over Gibson's Island, and will henceforth... circle about us heavily with odours.... Nay it may precipitate an invisible and unfelt, but not less deadly rain of typhoidal microbes.

44

In the face of this trenchant opposition the Brisbane City Council abandoned Gibson Island, and requested the continued use of the

- 41. The Brisbane Courier, 21 Sep 1888. See also Ibid., 25 Sep 1888; sub editorial, and Ibid., 4 Feb 1889, for the Courier's comments on St. Helena.
- 42. Ibid., 21 Mar 1889; main editorial. The council was very anxious to secure Gibson Island. To this end members met McIlwraith and Morehead in deputation, inspected the island with Dr. Joseph Bancroft, and discussed the question at length at various council meetings. See for example, Ibid., 20 Mar 1889; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 19 Mar 1889, and general reporting on the deputation, Ibid., 2 Apr 1889; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 1 Apr 1889, Ibid., 12 Apr 1889; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 11 Apr 1889, and Ibid., 30 Apr 1889; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 29 Apr 1889.
- 43. Ibid., 27 Mar 1889. The deputation included John Buckland, member for Bulimba, Michael Cannon, candidate for Toombul (returned 10 May 1888) prominent businessman Tom Finney, J.D. Campbell, president of the Chamber of Commerce, and a Mr. Dickson from the Toombul Shire Council.
- 44. Ibid., 21 Mar 1889; main editorial.



BOYD D. MOREHEAD, M.L.A. Etc.

No. 4. Queensland Figaro, 10 October, 1885.

St. Helena depot.⁴⁵ In the meantime, the council toyed with ideas which, if they had been pursued, would have altered Brisbane's disposal plans very drastically indeed.⁴⁶ But the Brisbane authorities had not yet given up seafaring for good. If all else failed, the council now proposed dumping Brisbane's closet refuse in the Pacific Ocean, in deep water not less than five miles outside Cape Moreton.⁴⁷

In this they had the support of the Chief Secretary, Boyd Dunlop Morehead who, careless of the eventual effects of pollution,⁴⁸ "was bold enough to say that /the council/ 'had the whole ocean before them'".⁴⁹ In fact, this was far from true if the poor inadequate Mary continued in use. Shipping authorities warned that in rough weather the high seas would sweep the vessel's decks, with unfortunate results for the serried ranks of closet pans nestling there.⁵⁰ Moreover, the extra strain on the Mary would have an increasingly deleterious effect on Brisbane's cleaning service.⁵¹ Even a faster, more powerful boat would find the long haul to the ocean and back a hard day's work, though the main difficulty there would be the prohibitive purchase price of such a craft.⁵²

By June 1889, the Brisbane sanitary situation had reached another crisis point. The Brisbane press had begun a concerted attack on the

- 45. The Brisbane Courier, 14 May 1889; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 13 May 1889. In response to a complaint from St. Helena, the council agreed to station a corporation employee on the island to oversee and direct all nightsoil disposals. Minutes of the Proceedings of the Brisbane Municipal Council, No.6, 10 Jun 1889, p.178. In October 1889 the Central Board of Health was still trying to assess the extent of the council's negligence on St. Helena. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 8 Oct 1889, Q.S.A. COL/A 593, in-letter no.8853 of 1889.
- 46. The Brisbane Courier, 28 May 1889; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 27 May 1889. A letter about nightsoil destruction by fire to E. Parr Smith, Chairman of the Eureka Contracting Company is printed in full.
- 47. Ibid., 11 Jun 1889; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 10 Jun 1889, Resolution of Committee of the Whole.
- 48. The Brisbane Courier and some of its readers, were only too well aware of pollution dangers. See for example, Ibid., 31 May 1889; sub editorial.
- 49. Ibid., 11 Jun 1889; main editorial. See also Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVII (1889), 374.
- 50. Morehead's answer to bad weather problems was to dump the stuff in the South Passage.
- 51. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Jun 1889; main editorial.
- 52. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVII (1889), 375. It was estimated that such boats would cost £8,000 each.

municipal authorities in an attempt to have the capital's nightsoil problems eradicated for good. The Boomerang published caustic cartoon comment, and warned all authorities concerned with health matters that

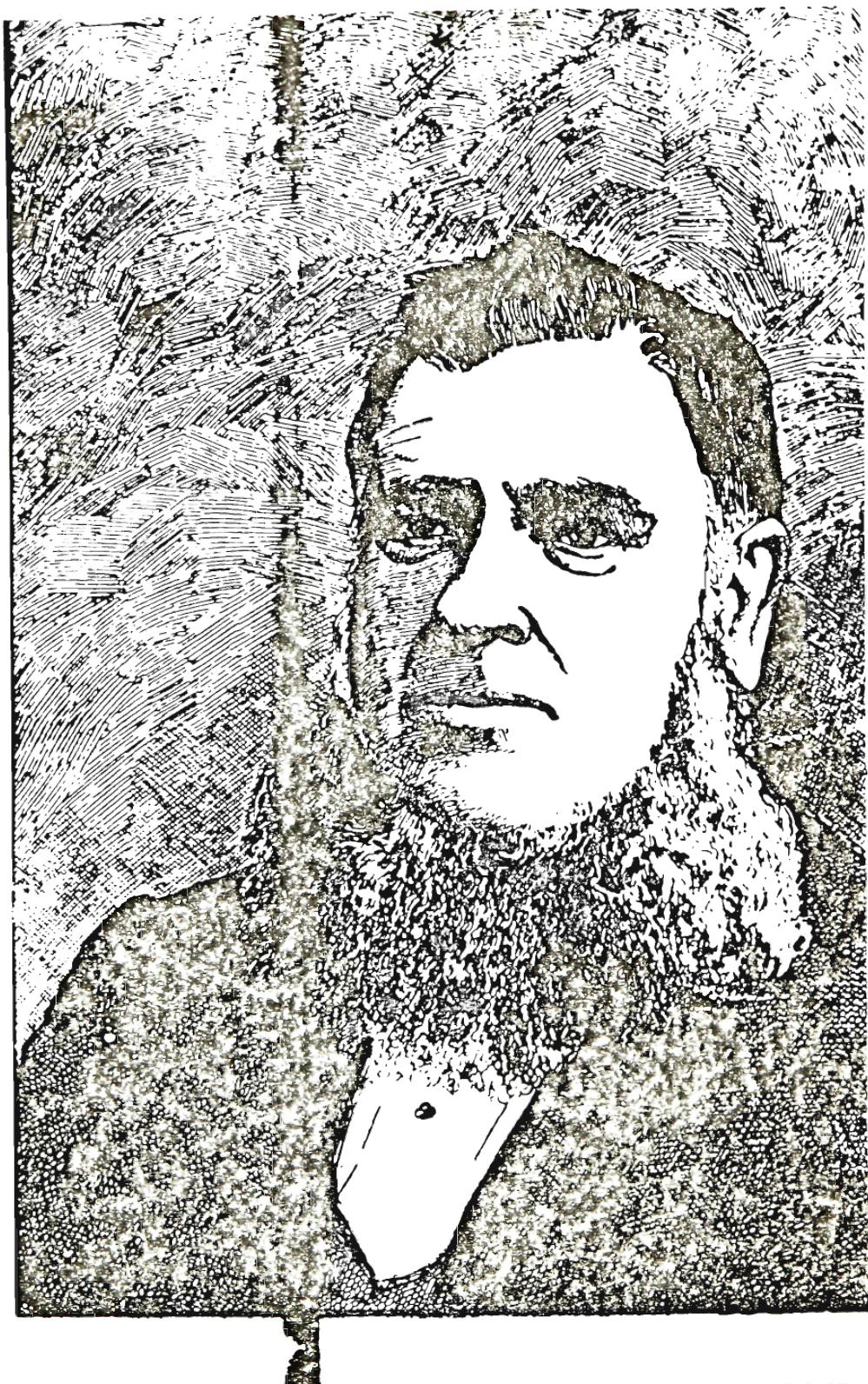
/a/t last Public Opinion, the great motive power in our modern civilisation, has spoken and demands some change, the present system must at least be amended if not abolished.

53

Other papers harped on the crippling inefficiency of the Brisbane council,⁵⁴ the futile attempts to work the earth closet system without earth,⁵⁵ and the projected council plan which "deliberately provides for the pollution of our Bay for a considerable number of days in the year".⁵⁶ Even the colony's parliamentary representatives were drawn into the general condemnation of "the present extremely offensive arrangements", which had worried the government very much in the past,⁵⁷ and would worry it a good deal more in the future.

To a considerable degree, the acrimonious debate which followed Sir Samuel Griffith's introduction of this touchy subject during the motion for adjournment, followed predictable lines. Premier Morehead continued to oppose railway carriage,⁵⁸ and defended his ocean solution vigorously. At the same time, he attacked the corporation of Brisbane which, he said, was "perfectly incompetent to manage their own affairs", and which had burdened the government quite unfairly with the task of finding a solution to a purely municipal problem.⁵⁹ John McMaster, member for Fortitude Valley, Brisbane city councillor, and sometime Mayor of Brisbane,⁶⁰ admitted only the council's lamentable record in dealing with the earth closet system, but suggested "that they /were/ driven to that incompetency by the action of the Government".

- 53. The Boomerang, 15 Jun 1889; "The Sanitary Question" by Dr. F.G. Connolly.
- 54. The Colonist, 27 Apr 1889; sub editorial.
- 55. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Jun 1889; letter to editor from B.T. Gartside.
- 56. Ibid., 26 Jun 1889; sub editorial.
- 57. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVII (1889), 373, 26 Jun 1889.
- 58. As The Brisbane Courier pointed out, Morehead's objection was personal. He lived at Bowen Hills near the line which had been proposed for nightsoil carriage. Ibid., 28 Jun 1889; sub editorial.
- 59. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVII (1889), 374.
- 60. McMaster had been Mayor in 1884, and was to take office in the years 1890, 1893, 1897, and 1918.



JOHN MCMASTER, M.L.A., MAYOR OF BRISBANE.

No. 5. The Judge, 21 June, 1890.

He claimed, in picturesque language, that the council had done its utmost to solve this vexed question, but

We are placed in the position of the doves in Noah's ark when they were sent to look for dry ground. We have been sent all round the compass looking for a place for the disposal of nightsoil, but on every occasion, as soon as the council decide on a place, a deputation waits on the Government... and the Government accede to the petitioner's request.... It is the duty of the Government to assist the municipal council or any other town in the colony by providing a place to deposit the nightsoil. We are met on every hand by local authorities outside the municipality, and we have no jurisdiction beyond our own boundaries. 61

McMaster had raised two very important points in his speech. Local jealousies had put difficulties in the way of progress throughout the whole history of public health in Queensland, and on this occasion there were not lacking those who rose to point out "that respect will have to be extended to other places besides Brisbane".⁶²

The other matter was even more difficult to resolve. One of the more troublesome aspects of the manure depot disputes had been the resistance of neighbouring local authorities to the dumping of Brisbane refuse within their boundaries, or to the use of public roads within their areas for the carriage of the foul stuff.⁶³ Thomas McIlwraith reminded his colleagues of the fairly recent legislation which had strengthened local authority hands,⁶⁴ while at the same time, he made a devastating attack on the Brisbane council's administration of sanitary affairs, and on the dry earth closet system itself.

The colony has just come under a new system... under which very great powers were given to local authorities. We found... we were actually precluded in every possible way from getting beyond our boundaries by the powers we ourselves gave to local authorities. But I think the remedy is in our own hands.... I am perfectly satisfied that the House will listen to a well-digested scheme by which the sewage of the town is taken outside and deposited on the ground of any local authority, whether they object or not.... I hope the Brisbane council will not dirty their hands with the matter in the way they are now doing. I know of no city that has ever been

61. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVII (1889), 374.

62. Ibid., pp.376-77. Horace Tozer (Wide Bay) and William Groom (Drayton and Toowoomba) were quick to suggest that any scheme adopted for Brisbane "will have to be made applicable to other towns besides Brisbane".

63. See for example, Within, p.21.

64. He refers here to the Local Government Act Amendment Act of 1886 and the Divisional Boards Act of 1887.

served on the same system that Brisbane is. I do not believe one exists. Theoretically the process is right enough, but in practice it is a huge failure.... It is all nonsense to say that the sewage can be taken out by carts or boats, by the river or on the railway, without being a nuisance. I am introducing to-day the Brisbane Water Scheme, and that is the very solution of the question we are talking of at the present time.... /Water-borne sewerage/ is the only solution, and now that the town has grown so large, I do not see how they can put the question off any longer. 65

In the meantime, McIlwraith advised the city to get rid of the sewage in the best way it could.⁶⁶

No radically new, readily available, and economically feasible suggestion had come out of the debate. But as far as Samuel Griffith was concerned, the real source of the difficulty had been laid bare. Everyone must now see that no scheme could work, because the laws themselves were defective. Griffith summed up his view of the colony's needs. There should be a general law, by which a local authority could secure land anywhere, for the purpose of nightsoil disposal. Troublesome interference by the Supreme Court should be eliminated, and no injunctions should be permitted except at the instance of the government. No private person should be allowed to proceed against a local authority for the removal of any nuisance. Taking a line which was becoming increasingly popular with politicians and the press - that "the liberty of the subject... must be regulated by the regard for the public good"⁶⁷ - Griffith concluded that it is better that any unpleasantness

should be a nuisance to one man than an intolerable nuisance to 10,000 people. At present a person by trying to prevent what is a nuisance to himself may cause a much greater one to his neighbours, and that ought not to be so. 68

The press campaign and the parliamentary debate led to a great deal of correspondence to the newspapers. Readers offered ideas on island sites for future manure depots,⁶⁹ advice on the actual handling of nightsoil, suggestions as to the addition of deodorants other than

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- 65. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVII (1889), 376. My italics.
 - 66. Ibid.
 - 67. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Feb 1888; main editorial, quoted from the Sydney Morning Herald.
 - 68. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVII (1889), 377.
 - 69. Bribie was the unfortunate choice of one correspondent. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jul 1889; letter to editor from Pro Bono Publico.

dried earth, and anguished protests against the McIlwraith proposal for "the dilution and spreading of the noxious excreta by water".⁷⁰

Even more importantly, this public interest was sustained as Premier Boyd Morehead introduced a health act amendment bill to parliament on 12 July 1889.⁷¹ The bill dealt directly with Brisbane's nightsoil disposal problems. It gave the medical members of the upper house an excellent opportunity to air their views on the poor performance of the Brisbane council, which had delivered "dirty, old, battered pans covered with ejecta, and containing typhoid and diphtheritic germs", instead of the clean, round pans with airtight lids which should have been supplied.⁷² Both honorable members, W.F. Taylor, M.D. and C.F. Marks, M.D. suggested that the best mode of disposal was destruction by fire. They quoted the English experience, where in inner city Manchester crematory works were carried on without offence, and strongly opposed the "absolutely unnecessary" bill. If it were passed, it would grant local authorities "absolute control over /sanitary affairs/ and the government /would/ have no right to interfere.... There /would/ be no attempt at cleanliness".⁷³

There was far less resistance in the lower house where the bill was greeted as "a very short... really good one".⁷⁴ The main fears were for the erosion of citizens' rights of access to the Supreme Court,⁷⁵ and the possibility that the bill

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- 70. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jul 1889; letter to editor from Dr. Joseph Bancroft. Other examples are, Ibid., 6 Jul 1889; letter to editor from Dr. Hugh Bell, Ibid., 10 Jul 1889; letter to editor from Edwin Alt of Shone and Alt, Civil Engineers, London, Ibid., 13 Jul 1889; letter to editor from Farmer, Ibid., 19 Jul 1889; letter to editor from W., Ibid., 20 Jul 1889; letter to editor from J.S., and Ibid., 22 Jul 1889; letter to editor from R.S. Warry. Warry had been a Brisbane alderman for many years, and had been Mayor of the city in 1866.
 - 71. Morehead introduced the bill, but newspapers gave the credit to the leader of the opposition, Samuel Griffith. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Jul 1889; sub editorial. What the press and even most members of the parliament did not realize was that Griffith had actually initiated and drafted the amendment bill. There was little opposition to the measure except on the grounds of Griffith's overgreat involvement. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVII (1889), 657 and 679-80.
 - 72. Ibid., LVI (1889), 106.
 - 73. Ibid., pp.89-91.
 - 74. Ibid., LVII (1889), 656. View of William Stephens, Woolloongabba.
 - 75. Ibid., p.682. View of James Drake, Enoggera.

would give rise to endless trouble.... /should/ a local authority select a site for the deposition of nightsoil... on land which drained into a running stream from which a community lower down might draw its water supply. 76

Members were almost evenly divided on the rival claims of rail or ship conveyance,⁷⁷ and although there was a certain amount of support for sewage farm arrangements on South Australian lines,⁷⁸ the old bugbear of costs prevented any serious consideration of that scheme. Clauses in the bill did open the way for the acceptance of the "burning and desiccating" methods, and there seems to have been a general feeling that "sooner or later it would be found necessary to cremate rather than bury nightsoil".⁷⁹

But while the bill was before the upper house for a review of amendments, the Brisbane City Council acted. Claiming to be sick of "going cap in hand to the government", it accepted the Brisbane Sanitary Company's tender for the carriage of the city's nightsoil to Moreton Bay

for the term of five years from 1st January next, /1890/
for the sum of £17,500 per annum for all ratable and corporation properties, and £1,000 per annum for government properties.

80

This tender was subject to government agreement as to the amount /it would/ be called upon to pay for services, /and/ more especially in regard to the place of deposit, which might possibly be considered to come under the second section of the Health Act of 1884 Amendment Act of 1889 now before parliament. 81

An irate Samuel Griffith, armed with his Brisbane Courier, once again elevated the "disposal of nightsoil" to the level of a motion for adjournment debate.⁸² Griffith acquainted the house with the sneaky

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- 76. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVII (1889), 682. View of Arthur Morgan, Warwick.
 - 77. Ibid., p.683.
 - 78. The debate revealed that members had "made themselves acquainted" with various schemes in the southern colonies and in Europe. Ibid., pp.682-85.
 - 79. Ibid., p.685.
 - 80. The Brisbane Courier, 6 Aug 1889; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 5 Aug 1889. The council proposed setting up "a depot right under the Victoria Bridge, which is a main artery of traffic to and from both sides of the river,... right in front of the new public offices" /the Treasury Buildings/. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVIII (1889), 974.
 - 81. The Brisbane Courier, 6 Aug 1889; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 5 Aug 1889. The recommendation also appears in full in Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVIII (1889), 974.
 - 82. Ibid., p.972.



JUBILATE, JUBILATE JUBILEE!

No. 6. The Boomerang, 15 June, 1889.

behaviour of the Brisbane City Council, whose hastily-accepted, long-term contract was an evasive tactic designed to side-step a bill momentarily expected to become law.⁸³ He urged the government to end the pollution of the Bay and the "wicked waste of a large quantity of earth, besides other valuable ingredients which are to be thrown into the sea",⁸⁴ by refusing permission for the use of the Queen's wharf as a place of shipment.⁸⁵

Griffith had little satisfaction from the government on this score. The Mayor of the city had already intimated to the Premier that the corporation "had to deal with the matter as they thought best",⁸⁶ an attitude defended by McIlwraith who considered that the council had "been in leading strings too long already.... and that the Government /had/ no business to interfere".⁸⁷ The leader of the opposition, whose surprise at the council's "inexplicable", "remarkable" resolution was shared by The Brisbane Courier,⁸⁸ did see his amendment bill passed with "a unanimity which might well convince the council of the sympathy of our legislators".⁸⁹ The Act was very close to the original Griffith draft, though the right of any person

- 83. The bill was expected to return to the Assembly for the passage that morning, 6 August 1889.
- 84. This attitude was quite prevalent in the community, farmers in particular regretting sea disposal for this reason in spite of the claims of cynics that the stuff was valueless. "Nightsoil deodorised and dessicated... is of little value as a manure". The Brisbane Courier, 11 May 1887; letter to editor from Hygiene. For some examples of dismay at the destruction and waste of the stuff see, Ibid., 11 May 1887; Minutes of Local Authorities' Sanitary Conference, 10 May 1887, Ibid., 6 Oct 1887; letter to editor from J.F.M., Ibid., 31 May 1889; letter to editor from X.Y.Z., and Ibid., 18 Dec 1889; main editorial.
- 85. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVIII (1889), 973. The arrangement was to terminate at the end of 1889, and the government did not intend to extend the period. Ibid.
- 86. Ibid.
- 87. Ibid. This of course tied in with McIlwraith's general anti-centralist feelings. He also pointed out that Griffith's present suggestion was "distinctly contrary" to his own action. "He now rises to something like enthusiasm over the matter, but when he was Premier, and had power to do what he urges the Government to do, what action did he take? Absolutely none".
- 88. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Aug 1889; sub editorial.
- 89. Ibid.

to claim and recover compensation from any Local Authority in respect of any actual damages sustained by him by reason of any nuisance

was preserved.⁹⁰

The Assembly was now fully involved in the nightsoil business. As well as passing the Act, it decided to appoint a select committee with wide powers

to enquire into any sanitary contracts that have been made with the municipal authorities of North and South Brisbane during the last five years.

91

The committee quickly uncovered a Gilbertian situation. The august Brisbane City Council had entered into a five year contract with a company which, at that stage, was still only "provisional".⁹² Further confusion followed as one key witness, George Dobbyn,⁹³ first of all flatly refused to appear before the committee, and later, when attending with his solicitor and a barrister-at-law,⁹⁴ declined to produce vital documents, or to answer up to fifty questions put to him by the committee.⁹⁵

The witness problem was brought before parliament as a matter of privilege. In a very lengthy and acidulous debate, members of the government chose to defend Dobbyn, regretting the committee's attempts to convert the parliament of Queensland into a Star Chamber.⁹⁶

90. An Act to Facilitate the Exercise by Local Authorities of certain Powers under "The Health Act of 1884", Clause 5. Queensland Government Gazette, XLVII (1889), 1497-8. My italics. One of the main problems which legislators hoped to settle with this Act was the public's tendency to "imagine a nuisance when there is actually no nuisance existing". Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVII (1889), 656.

91. Ibid., LVIII (1889), 1039.

92. "Progress Report from the Select Committee on Sanitary Contracts with Municipal Authorities of North and South Brisbane", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1889), 895-97, and "Final Report", in Ibid., p.920.

93. George was the under age son of William Dobbyn whose company had held the Brisbane sanitary contracts from 1 July 1886 to 30 June 1889. At the time of the committee's sitting William was visiting Great Britain. The lad had been left in charge of his father's business, and had been duly constituted legal attorney. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVIII (1889), 1862 and 1865-6.

94. At the hearing Dobbyn was instructed by his firm's legal adviser, Thynne and Goertz, Solicitors. A.J. Thynne was Minister for Justice at this time.

95. Ibid., pp.1858-59 and 1865.

96. Ibid., pp.1866-67.

They deplored a tendency to persecute the lad, in spite of the "notorious rumours" which were rife in Brisbane, and the fears that Dobbyn senior might have engaged in "serious wrongs", if not a definite "swindle", against the Brisbane City Council by failing to carry out his contract properly.⁹⁷ Indeed, the continued insanitation of the capital and Dobbyn's contribution to that unfortunate state, caused several members to introduce unsavoury irrelevancies to the debate, necessitating a warning to the house that it "had better confine itself⁹⁸ to the question of privilege".⁹⁹

The government managed to stifle the privilege debate by "putting on the clôture",⁹⁹ but they were unable to check newspaper comment or public interest.¹⁰⁰ Nor could they withhold the select committee's final report, though Dobbyn's continued refusal to answer questions made it an abortive one.¹⁰¹

The report contained little that the people of Brisbane did not already know only too well - that many fully justified complaints had been made as to the manner in which the contract had been performed, or not performed, as the case might be.¹⁰² The report also skirted around some things which the citizens had only guessed, and because of Dobbyn's reticence could still not confirm - that some council and parliamentary members had had rather closer relations with Mr. William

97. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVIII (1889), 1858 and 1864.

98. Ibid., pp.1864-65 and 1873.

99. Ibid., p.1873. As the Speaker explained to William Smyth, Gympie, "it is a form of the House usually adopted when it is desired to put an end to the debate without deciding the question one way or the other".

100. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Sep 1889; sub editorial, Ibid., 1 Oct 1889; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 30 Sep 1889, Ibid., 2 Oct 1889; sub editorial, Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVIII (1889), 1866, for a comment on a public meeting held on the subject of the contracts at the Brisbane town hall, and Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1890, p.73, for an item on the same matter.

101. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LIX (1889), 2053, and "Sanitary Contracts with the Municipal Authorities of North and South Brisbane. Final Report.", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1889), 906.

102. Ibid., pp.911-12.



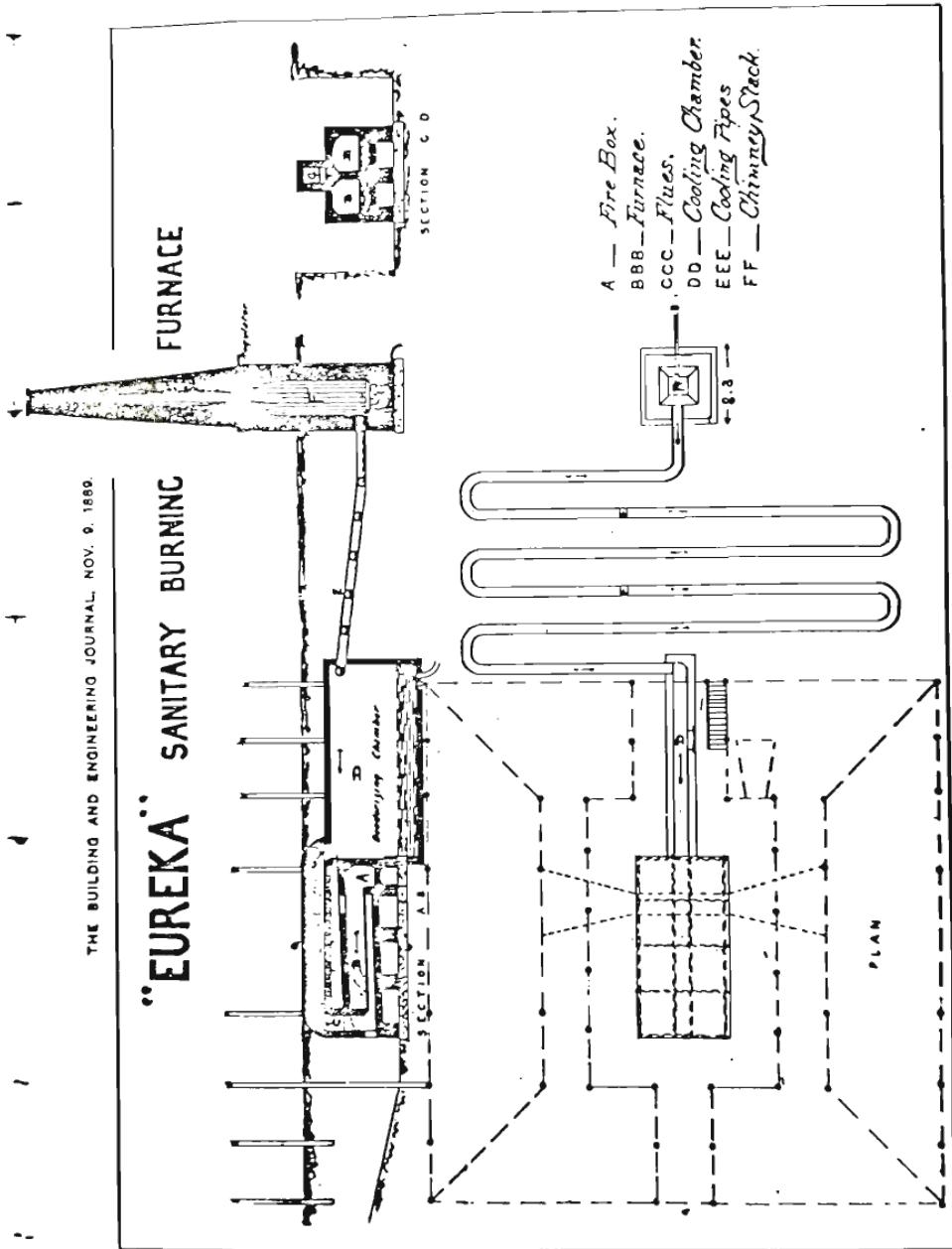
HOW LONG IS THIS TO BE?

No. 7. The Boomerang, 2 February, 1889.

Dobbyn than they would care to admit.¹⁰³

The full specifications of the new five year contract, which were included in the report, did reveal the dangers to Moreton Bay and the Pacific Ocean.¹⁰⁴ But they also laid down the conditions that far more "proper and suitable carts and vans" should shortly be transporting Brisbane's nightsoil, and that the Central Board of Health's repeated request for round, sealed pans was soon to be met.¹⁰⁵ But in a year when cases of typhoid were quite extensive,¹⁰⁶ and were traced by many medical men to "the odorous and primitive night-cart system";¹⁰⁷ at a time when the Brisbane water police and other witnesses allegedly saw Dobbyn and Company workmen breaking their contract by emptying nightsoil into the

- 103. George Dobbyn acknowledged legitimate business dealings with John McMaster (ex-mayor and parliamentarian) and R.S. Warry (ex-mayor), but denied having drawn cheques as bribes for members or officers of the corporation or their families. Ibid. Subsequent withholding of a Brisbane City Council letter to A.H. Barlow, chairman of the select committee, seemed to John McMaster to indicate that some council members had "something dark behind the scenes" to hide. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Oct 1889. See also Ibid., 17 Oct 1889; sub editorial, for the Courier's comment on the apparently underhand affair, in which the editor refers to McMaster as "the watch-dog of the council", and Ibid.; letter to editor from R.S. Warry, Ex Alderman, offering to open all of his books for inspection. For comment from the provincial centres see The Queensland Times, 17 Oct 1889; editorial, and The Colonist, 2 Nov 1889; sub editorial.
- 104. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1889), 915-16. In part this was because two strong, fast, large steam boats were to be employed in the ocean dumping services in place of the Mary.
- 105. Ibid., p.916. See also Within, p.51.
- 106. "Registrar-General's Report for 1890 - Vital Statistics", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1890), 235. See also The Colonist, 28 Sep 1889; main editorial, The Brisbane Courier, 10 Oct 1889, The Queensland Times, 26 Oct 1889, Ibid., 31 Oct 1889; letter to editor from Parent, Ibid., 7 Nov 1889; letter to editor from Another Ratepayer, Ibid., 12 Nov 1889; letter to editor from Chloride of Lime, Ibid., 17 Nov 1889; editorial, Ibid., 26 Nov 1889; letter to editor from Victor Carandini, C.E., and The Colonist, 30 Nov 1889; letter to editor from Victor Carandini, C.E., of Brisbane. Carandini had a special interest in communicating with provincial newspapers. He was "the Queensland Architect of the Eureka Burning Process", and in this capacity he also sent correspondence to the Central Board of Health. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Dec 1889; Minutes of adjourned meeting of Central Board of Health, 13 Dec 1889.
- 107. Ibid., 24 Oct 1889; letter to editor from Channing Neill, M.D.



No. 8. The Building and Engineering Journal, 9 November, 1889.

river at the wharf;¹⁰⁸ when a newly passed Health Act opened the way for a crematory system; when professional and trade journals were openly advocating the latest available burning processes and designs;¹⁰⁹ and when the Central Board of Health was putting definite recommendations on such a scheme to the north and south Brisbane councils,¹¹⁰ The Brisbane Courier took the north Brisbane authorities severely to task for persisting with the "Cape Moreton service", and refusing to give the Eureka scheme a chance.¹¹¹

Even so, the Brisbane Sanitary Company's director, E. Parr Smith,¹¹² did claim that he had met every objection previously put forward to an earth-closet, ocean-dumping programme. He "had spared no expense", having purchased the whole of the now defunct Dobbyn and Company's plant and some other equipment,¹¹³ and could carry out the contract "without offence", since "the obnoxious night-carts /would/ no longer find a camping ground in the lane leading to the Queen's wharf". To preserve modesty, he intended to erect an iron fence to obstruct the wharf itself from the view of passers-by. He pledged "that the pans /would/ be covered with lids, which lids /would/ not be removed until the steamer... /was/ out of the river", that the "pans /would/ be stowed away... and battened down", and that they would be thoroughly cleansed and steam dried before return. He announced the purchase of one of the promised boats, the Pacific, a worthy, ocean-going craft of 355 tons, and also revealed that he had acquired adequate land to provide dry earth for Brisbane closets. In short, E. Parr Smith confidently informed The Brisbane Courier's editor that, contrary to

108. The Brisbane Courier, 26 Nov 1889; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 25 Nov 1889. The employee concerned was brought to court. The report of the case appears in Ibid., 6 Dec 1889.
109. See article and illustration in The Building, Engineering and Mining Journal, July and December, 1889. See also Smail, pp.124-25.
110. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Dec 1889; Minutes of adjourned meeting of Central Board of Health, 13 Dec 1889. But as central board members pointed out "if the fire process was accepted, objections would probably be taken by the inhabitants of any place near where it was proposed to erect the buildings".
111. Ibid., 11 Dec 1889; sub editorial.
112. E. Parr Smith was in an excellent position to extract a profit from the nightsoil and rubbish disposal business whatever system was adopted. He was also chairman of the Eureka Contracting Company.
113. Since Dobbyn and Company had never had decent equipment there may have been some doubt in some minds on the "suitable carts and vans" and the "round, sealed pans" which were supposed to be provided.



TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

No. 9. The Boomerang, 14 September, 1889.

his predictions made just two years before,¹¹⁴ the new work would "prove of little annoyance to anyone" - a view shared by the "greatly pleased" Mayor and aldermen who had made a trial trip in the fully-fitted-out Pacific on the previous day.¹¹⁵

Unfortunately for the high hopes, the performance fell considerably below the promise. True, the newly installed Mayor, John McMaster, did "comment on the satisfactory manner in which the sanitary contract was being carried out",¹¹⁶ after the reprimanding of two workmen, the dismissal of another, and the appointment of a sub-inspector who would ensure that all closet pans were thoroughly cleaned and dried, and supplied with lids.¹¹⁷ But at the Central Board of Health's first meeting for 1890, two medical members reported that they had been supplied with sand instead of the guaranteed sufficiency of dried earth;¹¹⁸ both The Brisbane Courier and its readers complained that "the sanitation arrangements /continued to be/ far, very far from what they should be";¹¹⁹ and the retiring president of the Queensland Medical Society prayed that "some hygienic Hercules would rise and purify and cleanse this fair city of ours".¹²⁰ The Brisbane harbour-master, J. Mackay, protested to the Brisbane Town Clerk, that the city's refuse, including some nightsoil, had been deposited on the river bank along the North Quay.¹²¹ The port-master, Captain Heath, laid a formal report before the Colonial Secretary, detailing a number of breaches of the sanitary contract with respect to the five mile ocean

114. Within, p.37.

115. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Dec 1889.

116. Ibid., 18 Feb 1890; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 17 Feb 1890.

117. Ibid., Report of Robert Lee Bryce, the Brisbane City Council's chief nuisance inspector.

118. Ibid., 11 Jan 1890; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 10 Jan 1890.

119. Ibid., 16 Jan 1890; main editorial. See also Ibid., 24 Jan 1890; letter to editor from Alexander Costello, Ibid., 30 Jan 1890; letter to editor from Alfred Hughes, and Ibid.; letter to editor from Scholasticus.

120. Ibid., 27 Jan 1890. Address of Dr. John Thomson to Queensland Medical Society, 26 Jan 1890. For Courier comment on Thomson's main points and on the doctor's very considerable contribution to medicine in Queensland see Ibid., 30 Jan 1890; main editorial.

121. Ibid., 28 Feb 1890. Mackay's complaint was mostly concerned with street refuse, but other filth had also found its way to the river banks because of the "unusual rains". See also Ibid., 1 Mar 1890; sub editorial.

limit.¹²² And to cap all other complaints, as Brisbane faced "very bad, very widespread floods" which threatened to affect all corporation services and all river traffic,¹²³ the Premier Boyd Morehead and others were granted an interim injunction against the Brisbane City Council and the Brisbane Sanitary Company, who were prohibited from carting the contents of any closets

to the wharf,... or any vessel thereat...unless the same shall be sufficiently purified and deodorised so as not to be a nuisance to the plaintiffs.

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All of the heavy weaponry of argument and persuasion which Sir Samuel Griffith could bring to bear on behalf of the defendants,¹²⁵ all of his new-found solicitude for a whole city "thrown into confusion" and exposed "to the danger of a pestilence" for the sake of three plaintiffs, could not move Mr. Justice Mein from his original decision, and the injunction was upheld. Mein had some sympathy for the council, especially under the prevailing flood conditions,¹²⁶ but he had visited

122. The Colonial Secretary's report on the depositing of nightsoil outside Cape Moreton was laid before the Central Board of Health on 7 March 1890. The method of determining the strength of the "running sea" and sailing conditions generally was a rather complicated one, and is given in full in The Brisbane Courier, 8 Mar 1890; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 7 Mar 1890. In essence the report revealed that the sanitary steamer had failed to dump the nightsoil in the correct location on a number of days during January, even when weather conditions permitted. Captain Heath was very concerned over the illicit dumping and the breaking of the contract.
123. Ibid., 14 Mar 1890.
124. Ibid., 8 Mar 1890. During the Health Amendment Act of 1889 debate, Morehead had been anxious to allow the Brisbane council to deal with nightsoil matters as they saw fit. But when the Premier himself, or property in which he had an interest, was affected, he was just as vicious in his attack on the system and the method as any other protestor.
125. Affidavits were made on behalf of the defendants by William Baker, manager of the Brisbane Sanitary Company, Drs. Bancroft and W.F. Taylor, Messrs. J.A. Clark and J.W. Ayscough, city councillors, and John McMaster, Mayor.
126. For the first few weeks of 1890, the Brisbane Sanitary Company had berthed the Pacific near Victoria Bridge, but when a landslip caused by the floods carried this wharf away, a temporary move was made to the old gas-works wharf at Petrie Bight. This arrangement fell through, and "in their own blundering fashion, the council transferred their unpleasant business into the heart of one of the most eligible sections of the city,... within a stone's throw of the houses of parliament, and not very distant from government house". The Brisbane Courier, 20 Mar 1890; main editorial.

one of the affected properties,¹²⁷ and it seemed to him that the nuisance there was very injurious indeed. The defendants had to find an unobjectionable place for shipment somewhere within the municipality.¹²⁸

If Charles Stuart Mein felt some pity for the council in its dilemma, The Brisbane Courier could find no excuse for it at all. As far as the paper was concerned, the council's sanitary arrangements had been "consistently offensive" for as long as Brisbane residents could remember.¹²⁹ Moreover the council's attempted alteration of the injunction¹³⁰

was an admission that the sanitary company had been exceedingly remiss in the very business they had contracted to perform.

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Once again, when the Supreme Court pronounced its verdict, the Brisbane City Council burst into a flurry of activity,¹³² eventually reaching a temporary accommodation with the Colonial Secretary, J.M. Macrossan, for the use of the Queen's wharf. At the same time, the council pledged itself to the immediate re-erection of the flood-damaged sanitary wharf. Of more importance, was its initiation of a vigorous campaign of inspection of all nightsoil arrangements,¹³³ the promotion of an extensive programme to educate the public on the essentials of the deodorization and covering of nightsoil pans, with the threat of quite stiff penalties and fines for those who

- 127. The occupant of this premises, Samuel Cohen, gave damaging evidence against the defendants, which was corroborated by Dr. E. Matthews Owens.
- 128. The proceedings of this important Supreme Court civil case are recorded in full in The Brisbane Courier, 19 Mar 1890. The plaintiffs were the Honourable B.B. Morehead, the Honourable W. Pattison, and John Stevenson, Member of the Legislative Assembly and company manager and director.
- 129. Ibid., 21 Mar 1890; sub editorial.
- 130. Griffith had claimed that "to purify and deodorize all the nightsoil of Brisbane was... absolutely impossible... without extremely expensive works, if it was possible at all". This meant, in the Courier's view, that E. Parr Smith had falsely represented his company's abilities both in the five year contract and in his claims to the Courier on 28 December 1889. Within, p.58.
- 131. The Brisbane Courier, 20 Mar 1890; main editorial.
- 132. Council met three times as the committee of the whole, as well as holding normal meetings.
- 133. Three extra temporary subinspectors of nuisances were employed to enforce the sanitary regulations.

ignored its instructions.¹³⁴

The people and press of Brisbane were not completely satisfied with the results of the crusade,¹³⁵ but there is indirect evidence of considerable improvement. Late in 1890, parliament passed a further Health Act Amendment Act. The initiation of the bill was prompted by the government's desire to reduce "the unusually large share of the general vote" which some local authorities, notably South Brisbane, had extracted from the treasury under the local government endowment system¹³⁶ - an important consideration in a year which saw some depression in trade and a general uneasiness in the economic situation.¹³⁷ However, the Act did allow local authorities to charge the actual cost of cleansing services directly to the occupier of any premises,¹³⁸ a provision which, it was hoped, would normalise local authority services and finances, by strengthening their hands and increasing their taxing powers.¹³⁹

134. The public was to be educated through the work and example of the subinspectors and through a series of newspaper advertisements. Strict supervision of the contractor's collection and cleansing methods was also to be undertaken. For the council's decision on all of these matters see The Brisbane Courier, 1 Apr 1890; Minutes of Committee on Sanitary Matters, 24 Mar 1890. For the growing world-wide realization of the need to teach the masses obedience to hygienic laws which only "a small instructed minority understands while the mass of mankind is careless and indifferent, so that the portions of these laws which are personal in their application remain a dead letter", see "Despatch respecting International Congress of Hygiene and Demography, London, 1891", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1890), 699, and The Colonist, 14 Jul 1891, a long article taken from The Speaker, reporting on the International Congress.

135. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Apr 1890; sub editorial.

136. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXII (1890), 931.

137. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1891, p.64. See also The Cairns Post, 23 Apr 1890, on the situation in north Queensland where unemployed men were reported to be "starving", and where mayors, police magistrates, and other officials were seeking government funds for "relief works".

138. An Act to further Amend "The Health Act of 1884", Queensland Government Gazette, LI (1890), 1061.

139. For debate on this bill and another equally important - the Local Government Endowments Bill - see Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LX (1890), 176-77 and 229-32, and Ibid., LXII (1890), 930-32 and 1029-45. The government also showed an awareness of the need to protect workers from the "effluvia arising from any drain, privy or other nuisance" at their place of employment. See debate on the Factories and Shops Bill of 1890. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXI (1890), 346. Unfortunately for the working classes of Queensland, this bill was not enacted until 1896.

Other indications of sanitary improvements in north Brisbane were the sudden decline in complaining letters to the press;¹⁴⁰ the mayoral call for congratulations to the council because "very few complaints were now made",¹⁴¹ and because of "the excellent state of health of the city";¹⁴² and the back-handed compliments paid to the Brisbane City Council by residents of outer suburbs and country towns, which still suffered the "abominable, brutal, wretched pan system", or the even filthier cesspit evil, under which "the authorities did not even take the sanitary precaution that was

- 140. The researcher has to go to provincial papers and the reports of divisional boards in the Brisbane suburban areas for any large and detailed complaints about the nightsoil disposal question after about March 1890. See for example, letters, articles and editorials expressing grave concern in The Cairns Post, 25 Jan 1890; sub editorial, Ibid., 15 Mar 1890, The Colonist, 19 Jul 1890; sub editorial, The Maryborough Chronicle, 6 Aug 1890; Minutes of Maryborough City Council, 5 Aug 1890, The Cairns Post, 24 Sep 1890, The Brisbane Courier, 26 Sep 1890; Minutes of Ithaca Divisional Board, The Maryborough Chronicle, 2 Oct 1890; Report for year ending 30 Jun, by the Municipal Health Officer, 30 August 1890, The Queensland Times, 2 Oct 1890, The Brisbane Courier, 11 Oct 1890; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 10 Oct 1890, letter of complaint from the Coorparoo Ratepayers Association, The Queensland Times, 16 Oct 1890; letter to editor from Ratepayer, The Bowen Observer, 9 Dec 1890, Ibid., editorial, The Mackay Mercury, 13 Dec 1890; Minutes of Mackay Municipal Council.
- 141. John McMaster reiterated this claim in the Legislative Assembly during the supply debate. The improvement had resulted from the pans being "taken away with covered lids and /being/ thoroughly cleansed with steam before being returned". Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXV (1891), 2044.
- 142. The Brisbane Courier, 22 Jul 1890; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 21 Jul 1890. The Courier did remind the Mayor that Brisbane had "not attained perfection" in sanitary affairs yet, Ibid., 1 Aug 1890; sub editorial, and some letters criticising particular nuisances not connected with earth closets were received. Ibid., 24 Jul 1890; letter to editor from Dr. Richard Rendle, Ibid., 26 Jul 1890; letter to editor from Rosalie, and Ibid., 24 Sep, 30 Sep and 2 Oct 1890; letters to editor from Hubert J. Tracey. In his letter of 24 September, Tracey did admit that "the council has done much in the past and is still working to keep the city clean... but much more remains to be done".

taken in the city".¹⁴³

With its now generally accepted five year sanitary contract in hand,¹⁴⁴ with the Central Board of Health more deeply concerned with specific diseases rather than with sanitary complaints,¹⁴⁵ and with the rapid approach of the most severe depression yet to darken the colony's history - a depression which definitely precluded any radical

143. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXV (1891), 2043, view of Thomas Glassey, Bundamba, referring specifically to the Booroodabin situation. This type of complaint continued well into the twentieth century as far as some centres were concerned. For instance, the annual reports of the Commissioner of Public Health revealed continuing grave offences in nightsoil arrangements, which were accompanied by severe outbreaks of disease, in such towns as Dalby, "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1903), 169, Charters Towers, Ibid., I (1906), 184, Allora, Brassall, Bowen, Childers, Mackay, Rosewood and Howard, Ibid., II (1908), 304. Inadequate nightsoil disposal facilities in Southport, Beenleigh and Beaudesert were "severely criticised by the Health Department" in 1910. The Brisbane Courier, 6 Jan 1910. Some of the towns continued to offend for the whole period covered by this thesis. See for example, Chief Inspector John Simpson to Health Commissioner, 25 Jan 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 890, in-letter no.1160 of 1908, for a general condemnation of "faulty sanitary conditions at the various centres of population ... especially at outside places". Simpson's italics. For specific examples in Beenleigh see The Brisbane Courier, 12 and 21 Jun 1913, and most importantly in Sandgate, a seaside resort for Brisbane, see Ibid., 26 Jan 1910; letter to editor from Mater, Ibid., 28 Oct 1910; letter to editor from Resident, Ibid., 3 Nov 1910; letter to editor from I.A.D., Ibid.; letter to editor from G. Plumridge, Alderman, and Ibid., 4 Nov 1910; letter to editor from C.D. Ferguson. The Sandgate difficulties had not been resolved by 1913. Ibid., 26 Jun 1913; letter to editor from A Long Sufferer.
144. The ocean dumping contract was extended well beyond its five year term, but since conditions and complaints were similar to those already described, no details will be given here, but see for example, The Street, 18 Jun 1898.
145. During the early 1890's, the board's time was taken up to a large degree with diseases which are dealt with in detail in this thesis - that is, leprosy, smallpox, typhoid, and diphtheria. It was also particularly concerned to answer British government enquiries about the incidence of influenza in the colony. See Within, p.244, f.n.137. For extra references not included in that place see also The Brisbane Courier, 28 Jan 1890, The Colonist, 1 Feb 1890; sub editorial, The Brisbane Courier, 5 Mar 1890, a long article taken from the Pall Mall Gazette, Ibid., 2 Apr 1890, Lord Knutsford, Secretary of State for Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of Queensland, 2 Apr 1890, Q.S.A. COL/A 671, 21 Apr 1890, and Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 17 Sep 1890, Q.S.A. COL/A 629, in-letter no.9826 of 1890.

changes in the sanitary system of the capital¹⁴⁶ - the Brisbane City Council felt no need to experiment with crematory methods in the early nineties.¹⁴⁷ The relatively new South Brisbane authority was not in that happy position.¹⁴⁸

Nightsoil disposal arrangements on the south side of Brisbane River had always contrasted favourably with the filthy north Brisbane depot on the Enoggera Creek.¹⁴⁹ But by early 1890, the South Brisbane situation had deteriorated sharply.¹⁵⁰ The depot itself had become an insufferable nuisance. Soakage from the area was contaminating Sandy Creek which was the water supply "for culinary purposes" for some residents of the nearby Thompson Estate,¹⁵¹ and both the Central Board

146. Although one medical man urged Queenslanders to "awaken to the fact that the wealth of the community is intimately associated with its health", The Brisbane Courier, 8 Feb 1890; letter to editor from Richard Rendle, even some essential projects connected with the maintenance of good health were postponed because of the depression. In fact, government funds were very low indeed, because of the combined effects of drought in the west, floods in Brisbane and the dislocation of business. Pearson, pp.29 and 40. As a result, the government decided, in an unprecedented move, to allow Brisbane local authorities to borrow on the outside market, a concession which had been consistently refused to this time. The Brisbane Municipal Loan Act 1893, Queensland Government Gazette, III (1893) 395, and Brisbane Municipal Loan Act, 1896, Ibid., II (1896), 144. In spite of these concessions, local authority chances of independent borrowings were small, because of bank failures.
147. One interesting private experiment with model apparatus for burning "sanitary refuse" was made by the Honourable A.C. Gregory, member of the Legislative Council, at his Baroona Road, Rainworth home. Gregory's contribution to local government as a member and sometime President of the Toowong Divisional Board had given him the incentive to seek improvements in contemporary sanitary arrangements. Reporters from The Brisbane Courier witnessed the "decided success" of the trial. Gregory claimed that the fuel used would be less than that needed to take the sanitary vessel to the Bay, and that in addition, the cremated refuse would find a ready market as manure. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Jan 1890. For provincial interest in Gregory's experiment see for example, The Bowen Observer, 9 Dec 1890.
148. South Brisbane became a separate entity with its own Mayor, Alderman William Stephens, and council in 1888. See Laverty, p.264, The Brisbane Courier, 16 Feb 1888, Minutes of South Brisbane Council, and Queensland Government Gazette, XL (1888), 29.
149. See for example The Brisbane Courier, 10 Feb 1888; letter to editor from Caustic.
150. Ibid., 16 Feb 1888, Ibid., 20 Feb 1888, and Ibid., 23 Feb 1888.
151. The Brisbane Courier, 1 Feb 1890; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 31 Jan 1890. The report of inspector Marlow was read and discussed for a second time at this meeting.

of Health's inspector Marlow, and some ratepayers, were demanding that this health hazard be closed.¹⁵²

The council was not convinced that the manure depot did constitute an injurious nuisance.¹⁵³ But the young body, which had gained something of a reputation for showing initiative and "out-generalling the aldermen of the city",¹⁵⁴ had already shown considerable interest in alternatives to the burial process. For instance, in January 1890 the South Brisbane Council had pronounced itself "favourably disposed" to Victor Carandini's Eureka workings, and had asked for a rough estimate of costs.¹⁵⁵ William Stephens was concerned enough to go to the trouble and expense of a visit to the Eureka Burning Works at Newcastle, and in his opinion, a similar system, combined with the adoption of "duplicate airtight pans", would solve all of the South Brisbane problems.¹⁵⁶

Damaging reports of ratepayer resistance, and proposed local council action against the Newcastle works appeared in the Queensland press.¹⁵⁷ But after thorough consideration of the various schemes

- 152. The ratepayers led by J.H. Henzell, an unsuccessful candidate at the South Brisbane council elections, threatened the authorities with a Supreme Court injunction if the burial of nightsoil was continued. Ibid., 25 Mar 1890.
- 153. There had always been some altercation as to the actual source of the undoubtedly overpowering stench which arose from the manure depot area. There was considerable agreement among representatives of the press and an inspecting party from the South Brisbane Council that it was not the manure depot, but the effluent from a nearby tannery and the Graziers' Butchering company which was the true cause of the trouble. Ibid., 2 Jul 1888. This suspicion continued to be held by many in the succeeding period up to 1890, when the council's health committee made a visit to the depot without notice, and found nothing to endanger health. Ibid., 11 Mar 1890; Minutes of South Brisbane Council, 10 Mar 1890.
- 154. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXII (1890), 1032.
- 155. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Jan 1890; Minutes of South Brisbane Council, 13 Jan 1890.
- 156. Ibid., 11 Mar 1890.
- 157. See for example The Queensland Times, 16 Oct 1890; letter to editor from Ratepayer, and The Brisbane Courier, 1 Nov 1890. The managing director of the Newcastle company, R.M. Rooke, contacted the Courier to deny the Brisbane press reports, citing the favourable evidence of members of the New South Wales and Victorian Central Boards of Health and the chief guardian of the public health in New South Wales, Dr. John Ashburton Thompson, all of whom had visited the Newcastle plant. Ibid.

available,¹⁵⁸ the South Brisbane Council decided to go ahead with the crematory work.¹⁵⁹

As the Central Board of Health had predicted,¹⁶⁰ protests over the site of the works began at once. The first and most devastating came from the neighbouring Stephens Divisional Board, which objected to the furnaces being erected within its borders just outside the South Brisbane boundary.¹⁶¹ Public protest meetings and petitions brought a promise of support for the Stephens Division from Colonial Secretary Horace Tozer, who in turn took a stand on Section 2 of the Health Act Amendment Act of 1889.¹⁶² This clause certainly allowed a local authority to dispose of its refuse either within or beyond its own district, but it included the rider that

such use shall be subject to such conditions as the Governor in Council may from time to time prescribe. 163

The Colonial Secretary wished to be assured on several points before advising consent. These included positive information on places where the scheme had been tried and found successful - such claims to be accompanied by reports from "competent authorities" - and reasons why the works could not be set up in South Brisbane itself if they were as innocuous as claimed.¹⁶⁴

In an effort to gain Brisbane Courier support for its cause, the South Brisbane council handed all of the relevant official correspondence to the press for publication.¹⁶⁵ To a certain extent this ploy

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- 158. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Jul 1890; Minutes of South Brisbane Council, special report of sanitary committee, 4 Jul 1890.
 - 159. The council called for tenders on 20 January 1891, accepted the Eureka company's bid on 7 March 1891, and entered into a ten year contract with the company on 20 June 1891. The Brisbane Courier, 21 Jan, 4 Mar, and 7 Oct 1891.
 - 160. Within, p.57, f.n.110.
 - 161. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Sep 1891.
 - 162. Ibid., 8 Sep 1891.
 - 163. An Act to Facilitate the Exercise by Local Authorities of certain Powers under "The Health Act of 1884", Clause 2, Queensland Government Gazette, XLXII (1889), 1497.
 - 164. The Brisbane Courier, 22 Sep 1891, a letter to the South Brisbane Council from the Under Colonial Secretary, printed in full.
 - 165. Ibid., 10 Sep 1891. The South Brisbane council claimed that the site was large enough to ensure that no other buildings could be erected close to the actual furnace, that there would be no drainage problems, that the land was only just inside the Stephens division, and that the works would cause absolutely no annoyance.

succeeded. When compared with the "slow - very slow - North Brisbane council", the go-ahead South Brisbane body deserved praise for its acceptance of the crematory system, for "it /was/ impossible to believe... that the system involve/d/ deadly or intolerable offence to health or comfort". Nevertheless, continued complaints from Newcastle demonstrated that the process was not as "absolutely innocent and inoffensive" as the company had alleged. Even allowing for the strength of prejudice, it appeared that all objections had not yet been satisfactorily overcome. The Brisbane Courier, like Horace Tozer, could not help finding it "suspicious that the South Brisbane council ha/d/ not found room for the erection of the works in its own territory".¹⁶⁶

Even after further deputations,¹⁶⁷ and favourable reports on both the site and system from the government's superintendent architect Alfred B. Brady and analyst Robert Mar, Tozer was still against the Stephens division site.¹⁶⁸ Once again a nightsoil contract became the subject of parliamentary debate,¹⁶⁹ with the final decision to set aside an area of land within South Brisbane boundaries being reached by the cabinet itself.¹⁷⁰

The choice of site was a curious one. It abutted on the gaol reserve, and was in close proximity to the Woolloongabba state school, the Diamantina orphanage, the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Institution, and reserves for a future hospital and a girls' grammar school. Also handily placed, "giving access to the company's site", was the South Brisbane cemetery.¹⁷¹ The selection either indicates the Griffith ministry's touching faith in the efficacy of the Eureka burning works, or their hope that the people most likely to be affected - prisoners, school children, orphans, and the deaf and dumb, "who although they

166. The Brisbane Courier, 24 Sep 1891; sub editorial. In any case the South Brisbane council was not the only body to show this sort of initiative. The Ipswich hospital now had a working crematory, and the Toowong Divisional Board was on the verge of installing one.

167. Ibid., 30 Sep 1891. This was a South Brisbane deputation.

168. Ibid., 3 Oct 1891; Report of South Brisbane deputation, and Ibid., 7 Oct 1891; Report of deputation from Stephens division.

169. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXV (1891), 1939-1943.

170. Ibid., pp.1939 and 2044.

171. Ibid., p.1939. Complaint of Abraham Fleetwood Luya, South Brisbane. The state school had an enrolment of 971 at that time.



No. 10. The Boomerang, 21 November, 1891.

might write something about it would not say much"¹⁷² - would or could not be very vocal in objection.

If this was their expectation, it was sadly misplaced. The parliamentary debate officially revealing the site took place on 5 November 1891. The first letters bewailing the rumoured, projected presence of the offensive works in the midst of the "pleasant villas" of South Brisbane, and in close proximity to a large state school had appeared in The Brisbane Courier almost one month before - on 8 October 1891.¹⁷³ But once the formal announcement was made, the residents of South Brisbane organised themselves rapidly to express their displeasure. On 6 November, the first deputation waited on the Colonial Secretary "to urge on him the inadvisableness of allowing the sanitary works to be erected".¹⁷⁴ A working committee was formed on the spot, and well attended indignation meetings followed.¹⁷⁵ The Boomerang joined in the fray with a barbed cartoon well calculated to raise the hackles of any politician in either local or central government.¹⁷⁶

- 172. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXV (1891), 1941. View of B.D. Morehead, Balonne.
- 173. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Oct 1891; letters to editor from Common-Sense and Ratepayer.
- 174. Ibid., 7 Nov 1891; Report of deputation of South Brisbane residents to Horace Tozer.
- 175. Ibid., 12 Nov 1891.
- 176. The Boomerang, 21 Nov 1891. At the same time as these protests were raging, Brisbane local authorities, roused by Brisbane Courier comment, The Brisbane Courier, 31 Aug 1891; sub editorial and Ibid., 2 Sep 1891; sub editorial, by the efforts of some Brisbane aldermen, Ibid., 1 Sep 1891; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 31 Aug 1891, and by letters to the Brisbane press, Ibid., 9 Sep and 6 Oct 1891; letters to editor from W.F. Bell, Hydraulic civil engineer, and Ibid., 15 Sep 1891; letter to editor from Robert Wilson, were holding a conference to look seriously at the sewerage question for North and South Brisbane, Toombul, Booroodabin, Ithaca, and Toowong. The authorities were interested enough to form a sub committee under Alderman Galloway to plan further action, but no practical steps were taken at this time. Ibid., 23 Oct 1891, and J.A. Clark, Mayor, Mayoral Report 1891-92 (Brisbane, 1893), pp.29-30. Interest was revived again in 1893, with a call for a sewerage scheme from George Watson, Jnr, Mayor of Brisbane and from The Brisbane Courier, Ibid., 28 Jan 1893; letter to editor from George Watson, and Ibid., 31 Jan 1893; sub editorial. When the worst strictures of the depression were over, more agitation for a sewerage system for North Brisbane again appeared in the press. Schemes incorporated ideas not unlike those of the Adelaide deep drainage, sewerage farm arrangement, since its author, M.J. Dempsey, was in the tradition of those who did not want to pollute the river. See for example, Ibid., 13, 15 and 18 Jan 1894; letters to editor from M.J. Dempsey, sanitary engineer, Ibid., 16 Jan 1894; letter to editor from W.T. Birkbeck. Then on 29 January 1894, the city engineer published a scheme for the disposal by sewerage for the city of Brisbane. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1895, p.66.

The protests were of no avail. The South Brisbane council had espoused a "new" method and was determined to see it in use. Delays were inevitable because of the difficulties over the site, and the illness of key personnel.¹⁷⁷ But by mid-August 1892 all obstacles had been overcome and the burning work commenced. By early September, a number of letters of objection to the plant had been received by the council, some of them from people who had detected and complained very bitterly about an evil burning smell "weeks before there was any business done".¹⁷⁸

Nevertheless, as far as the already antagonistic Colonial Secretary was concerned, the protests appeared to have some substance. The medical officer for Brisbane Dr. Edward Tilston had reported to him that a nuisance was being caused by the cremation works on the Boggo Road, and that in consequence of the intolerable stench arising from the works, the officials of the gaol had, in some instances, been unable to continue with their duty during the prevalence of certain winds.... /T/he nuisance was particularly offensive to... the Diamantina Orphanage.... The doctor had made strong representations as to the certainty of its proving a fruitful source of disease, and accordingly... it was absolutely necessary that steps be taken at once by the council to abate the nuisance. 179

In an attempt to placate Tozer, adjustments were made to the furnaces to try "to quite remove all distinguishable odours from the chimney vapours",¹⁸⁰ though South Brisbane's Mayor Heaslop maintained that

if persons would only disassociate from their minds the fact that the smells were coming from incinerating works, the "intolerable stench" complained of would not be so intense. 181

His contention was certainly borne out by government architect Brady, who reported verbally to the Colonial Secretary that he had no complaint regarding the works.¹⁸² The Brisbane Courier's representative agreed.

177. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Apr 1892. A. Morry, the project's architect, was absent from work for some time.

178. Ibid., 6 Sep 1892; Minutes of South Brisbane Council, 5 Sep 1892, claim of Alderman M'Kenna. See also Ibid., 9 Sep 1892; letter to editor from Disgusted.

179. Ibid., 20 Sep 1892; Minutes of South Brisbane Council, 19 Sep 1882, letter written to the council at the direction of Horace Tozer, printed in full.

180. Ibid., 4 Oct 1892; Minutes of South Brisbane Council, 3 Oct 1892.

181. Ibid.

182. Ibid., 18 Nov 1892.

The system seems to be a thoroughly good one.... The work was in progress... and although at the time of the visit the morning was hot and dull... the smell... was not strong nor particularly offensive.... Only in the building where the pans were opened... was there an offensive smell, but the pans are covered until actually required.... The interior arrangements are such that as far as persons passing close to the works are concerned, there would be no offence whatever.

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Hot on the heels of this championship of the crematory works, a large deputation waited on the Colonial Secretary, armed with a petition signed by 226 ratepayers and baleful tales of a nuisance "provocative of sickness,... headaches and vomiting". Horace Tozer believed every word about the injurious smells, but he refused to take the responsibility for action, and "be inspector of nuisance for the nonce". He advised the deputation instead to sue the South Brisbane council and the sanitary works for redress,¹⁸⁴ a suggestion which the ringleaders were quick to implement.¹⁸⁵

After receiving the petitioners' threats, and the report of its own health officer,¹⁸⁶ the South Brisbane council reluctantly decided to summon the Eureka Sanitary Company under the provisions of the Health Act of 1884, "calling on them to abate a nuisance said to exist".¹⁸⁷

183. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Nov 1892.

184. Ibid., 23 Nov 1892.

185. Ibid., 29 Nov 1892.

186. Dr. Kebbell's very long report was optimistic for the most part. By far the largest nuisances arose from atrocious drainage problems, and the bad habits of many householders in dealing with slops and other household wastes which certainly contributed to a large degree to the madadorous odours which hung about South Brisbane. As far as the incinerating works were concerned, in Kebbell's opinion "imagination ha/d/ something to answer for", but he did admit that there was an unpleasant smell at times. He did not suggest tha the odours caused sickness. The Brisbane Courier, 30 Nov 1892; Minutes of South Brisbane Council, 28 Nov 1892, Report on sanitary condition of the borough by Dr. Kebbell, Health Officer. Dr. F.G. Connolly, who treated some patients in the vicinity of the Eureka works was "not prepared to say if they had got worse from the smell,... but in his opinion the smell was injurious to health". Ibid., 31 Dec 1892.

187. Ibid., 14 Dec 1892; Minutes of South Brisbane Council, 13 Dec 1892, Recommendation of the Health Committee.

Ironically, this "go-ahead", "modern" council was proceeding on the premise that bad smells cause sickness and are dangerous to health, an acceptance of the miasmatic theory of disease transmission no longer held by most contemporary medical men.¹⁸⁸ The other fear which usually accompanied the propagation of the outworn theory was also a real factor in these proceedings. One of the first facts drawn from a witness, when the case of the South Brisbane Council versus the Eureka Sanitary Company opened on 29 December 1892 before Mr. R.A. Ranking, Police Magistrate, and a large and eager crowd, was that "the value of property depreciating was causing him a great deal of personal anxiety".¹⁸⁹

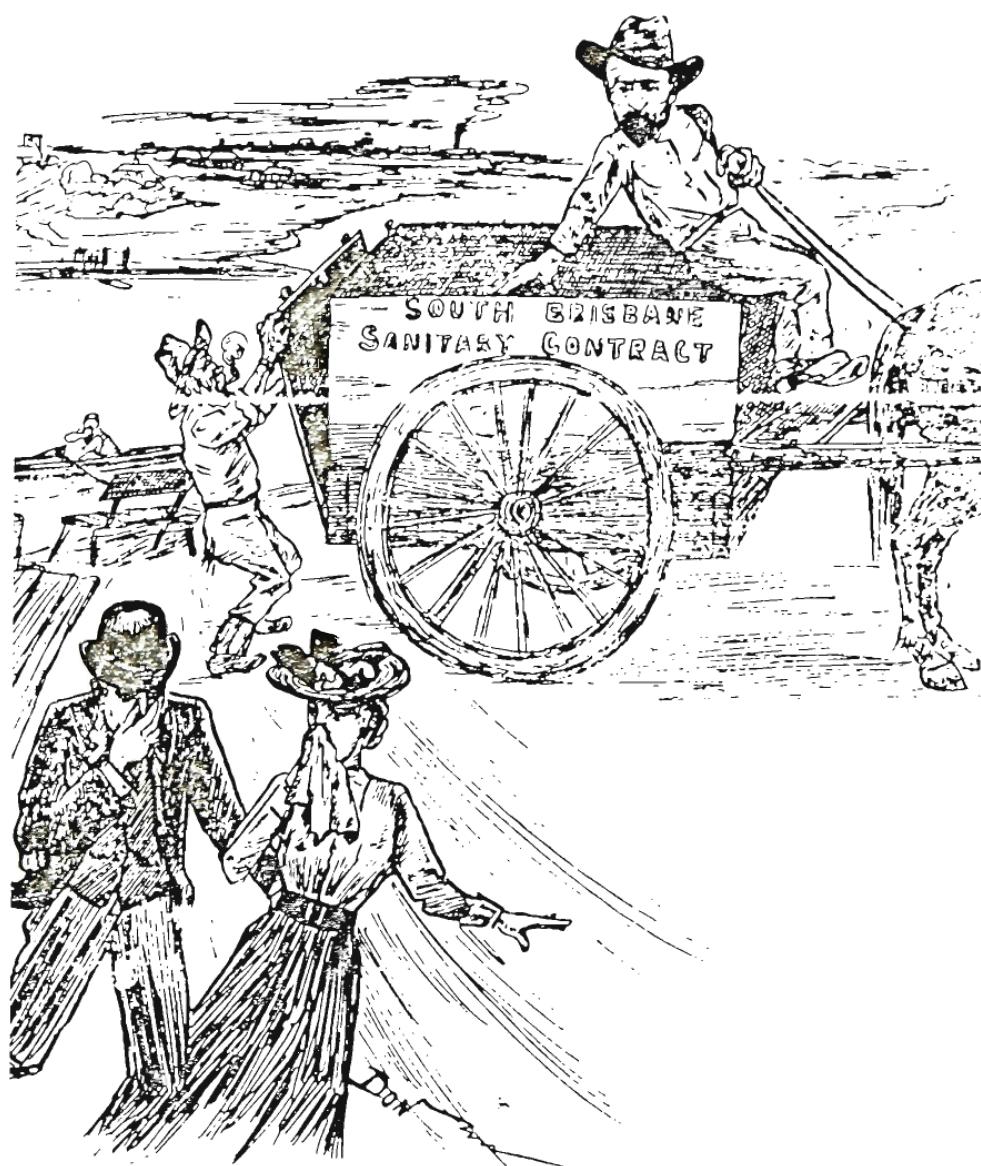
Mr. Ranking's findings in a very difficult case were praised as being "remarkably judicial".¹⁹⁰ A nuisance had undoubtedly been present, and had continued to assail delicate noses even after adjustments had been made. But Ranking was convinced that if ideas put forward by an eminent engineer were adopted,¹⁹¹ and if arrangements were made to increase temperatures during the destruction process, the business could be conducted on the site without causing any further irritation.

In fact,

/i/n view of the great benefit which must accrue to the health of the borough as a whole from so rational a method of disposal of closet refuse, /changes can be made/ which will allow the company to continue operations, at the same time reducing the nuisance... to such infinitesimal proportions as may well be borne by the few in view of the inestimable boon... to the community at large. 192

188. Sir Raphael Cilento suggests that by 1878 the truth on insect carriers of disease had been discovered, thanks in part to the work of Dr. Joseph Bancroft, "thus disposing of the 'miasma' rubbish." Raphael Cilento, Medicine in Queensland (Brisbane, n.d.) p.37. But as late as 1894, Dr. Charles Creighton, medical writer, lecturer and practitioner, in his History of Epidemics in Britain Vol II, still accepted the miasmatic theory. Frazer, pp.68 and 70. Some Queensland doctors were also obviously still unsure of their position in the 1890's. See for example f.n.186 above and Within, p.69. For the most part however, Queensland doctors followed the latest overseas developments. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LX (1890), 258. View of Dr. W.F. Taylor.
189. The Brisbane Courier, 30 Dec 1892. The case was very fully reported in the Courier and no details will be given here. See Ibid., 30 Dec and 31 Dec 1892, and Ibid., 4 Jan and 6 Jan 1893.
190. Ibid., 16 Jan 1893; main editorial.
191. This was M.J. Dempsey, sanitary engineer, whose later suggestions on sewerage made quite an impact on Brisbane thinking. Within, p.68, f.n.176.
192. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Jan 1893.

1 SEP 1901



"FLORODORA" IN SOUTH BRISBANE.

No. 11. The Street, 7 September, 1901.

There was at least one cynic amongst the Courier's readers. Though hopeful, Dermott O'Donohue doubted if the remedies prescribed would be as effective as predicted, but he did feel that "no more would" be heard of that nuisance".¹⁹³ O'Donohue was not entirely correct. South Brisbane residents still had good reason for complaint over their sanitary contract arrangements as late as 1901,¹⁹⁴ and the destructor itself was a "very unsuitable one" in the opinion of the newly installed Commissioner of Public Health, Dr. B. Burnett Ham.¹⁹⁵

Nevertheless, as Weston Bate has pointed out with reference to sanitary arrangements in Brighton, Victoria, the real break-through had already been made with the era of the universally accepted double pan system, which allowed the quick, easy removal of hermetically sealed, and therefore inoffensive pans.¹⁹⁶ And if the capital of Queensland and other cities and towns in the state still had to wait to acquire that amenity which closes the gap between countrified simplicity and city sophistication,¹⁹⁷ real improvements had been made, and when compared with the furore of earlier years, complaints were at a minimum.

Moreover, there was a noticeably increased public awareness of medical advances, together with a growing understanding of the individual's need to attend to personal hygiene. The arrival of the dreaded bubonic plague, which frightened even the careless into some sort of appreciation of the need for sanitary precautions, also had a salutary, if terrifying effect. The elevation of public health affairs to sub-departmental status with the passing of the Health Act of 1900, and the appointment of a commissioner of public health who could concentrate his energies on the solution of health problems for the whole of Queensland was another very considerable step forward in the struggle to protect the environment of the state.

- 193. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Jan 1893; letter to editor from Dermott O'Donohue, Vulture Street, The Valley.
- 194. The Street, 27 Jul, 8 Aug, 10 Aug, 7 Sep 1901. See also The Brisbane Courier, 23 Apr 1901.
- 195. B. Burnett Ham to J.F.G. Foxton, 30 Mar 1901, Q.S.A. COL/A 286, in-letter no.5609 of 1901 - written in reply to a private memorandum from Foxton. With this exchange, the interest in destructors turned to Toowoomba, and long drawn out and acrimonious negotiations took place in that centre and with the government over the equipment, the positioning of the "depot", and so on. The Toowoomba affair is a saga in itself and cannot be dealt with here.
- 196. Weston Bate, A History of Brighton (Melbourne University Press, 1963), p.212.
- 197. The idea is Weston Bate's. "Sewerage was one of the important factors in closing the gap between Brighton as a country place and Brighton as a suburb." Ibid., p.211.

3 - SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS -

THE STRATTON DRAIN AND SOME NOXIOUS TRADES

Apart from the difficulties associated with the unsatisfactory waste disposal system, one of the fertile sources of environmental pollution in the colony of Queensland was the very imperfect drainage. The grave miasmatic dangers to health from large areas of swamp land were well understood by the early settlers,¹ and firm if sometimes ineffectual steps were taken to try to eliminate this menace, both in the heart of Brisbane itself,² and in important centres of rural interest or coastal trade such as Toowoomba and Rockhampton.³

Later on in the century, as Brisbane's suburban sprawl began and large, densely populated estates were carelessly drained into convenient waste water areas, The Brisbane Courier suggested that both government and local authorities were

to a great extent wasting the money spent on water tables and drains and the removal of rubbish, while we allow in our midst, festering swamps and accumulations of liquid filth, reservoirs so to speak, of the foulness that drains from our streets. 4

Several of these fens - prominent among them the Red Jacket, Bayswater and Rozetta swamps which lay in the adjoining Milton, Toowong, Ithaca and Rosalie areas, and in Booroodabin - continued to threaten the well-being of nearby residents and large numbers of

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1. Within, p. 6.
 2. This was the Frogs' Hollow swamp, see Ibid.
 3. Minutes of Executive Council, 31 Mar 1865, Q.S.A., EXE/E11 65/18E. Local rivalries were already spurring the worthies of one centre to ape those of another. "The petitioners felt that the draining of Toowoomba swamps was more important than Rockhampton". See also Queensland Parliamentary Debates, II (1865), 257-58.
 4. The Brisbane Courier, 10 Aug 1885; sub editorial.

school children well into the early 1900's.⁵ This was partly caused by the straitened circumstances in which all of the affected local authorities found themselves,⁶ but was also attributable to government unwillingness to bear any part of the cost of drainage, even where reserved crown lands were involved,⁷ unless the possibility of future sales of land made the project economically worthwhile.⁸

As well as these large and obvious nuisances, the citizens of Queensland had to cope with other house and street drainage problems. Laverty has pointed out with respect to Brisbane, that

the appointment of a competent City Engineer in 1875 enabled the Council to assume full responsibility for the comparatively large drainage works being undertaken at the time. ⁹

Full credit must be given for the very considerable contribution which that and other local bodies were endeavouring to make to the gradual improvement of the colony's health, but many nuisances, arising

5. Ibid., 27 Feb 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 26 Feb 1886, Reports of local authorities, Toowong and Ithaca, Ibid., 11 Jun 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 10 Jun 1887, Report of inspector J. Marlow, Ibid., 11 Oct 1889; Minutes of Ithaca Divisional Board, Samuel Hammond, M.D. to Chairman, Shire Council, Toowong, 18 Jul 1892, Q.S.A. COL/A 706, in-letter no.8876 of 1892, The Brisbane Courier, 16 Mar 1900; letter to editor from "O'Connelltown". (The very large, evil-smelling, rat-ridden O'Connelltown swamp was in the Brisbane suburb of Windsor.) Other evidences of the continuing swamp problems are Ibid., 1 Aug 1901; Deputation to J.F. Foxton from Toowong Divisional Board and Milton State School Committee regarding the Red Jacket swamp, and Department of Health to Under Secretary Home Secretary's Department, 14 Jul 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 891, in-letter no.8507 of 1908, asking for information about another Red Jacket swamp near Jericho in western Queensland.
6. The Brisbane Courier, 21 Jun 1887; Minutes of Ithaca Divisional Board.
7. Ibid., 25 Apr 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 24 Apr 1885, and Ibid., 11 Feb 1888; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 10 Feb 1888.
8. The government did obtain a parliamentary vote for some swamp clearance in the Milton area. Ibid., 12 Dec 1885; main editorial. "/A/fter being partially and imperfectly drained" this land was later divided into small, unsatisfactory blocks and sold by the government to unsuspecting clients. Ibid., 14 Feb 1888; main editorial, accusation of Dr. Joseph Bancroft at meeting of Central Board of Health, 11 Feb 1888. See also the reply of Maurice Black, Minister for Public Lands, to a Maryborough deputation seeking the drainage of government owned marshland within their municipality, since "the stench from the swamp was becoming a great nuisance.... Black said he did not see what the government would gain by draining the swamp unless they could sell the land afterwards". Ibid., 21 Aug 1889; Deputation to M.H. Black regarding Maryborough's sanitary difficulties.
9. Laverty, p.226.

from inadequate or completely absent drainage, still remained throughout the whole colony. In 1882 in Maryborough, a town labelled "filthy" by its own inhabitants, the local board was trying to keep certain drains flushed.¹⁰ Two years later, the city requested government loans for drainage works,¹¹ and although Maryborough was plagued with diseases of all kinds throughout the 1880's, a Brisbane Courier reporter did notice a definite improvement by 1885.¹² But in spite of this, there were "stenches... which would not be tolerated in Canton",¹³ and very insanitary drains and sewers.¹⁴ Even after the arrival of bubonic plague in the early twentieth century had frightened the Maryborough council into immediate improvements, Queensland's chief health inspector, John Simpson, discovered that the whole town was "most insanitary".¹⁵ And at the very end of the period under review, the street water channels of the city still carried urinal wastes, and the smell at night was "very marked".¹⁶

Maryborough was not an isolated case. Many other Queensland cities and towns had similar problems. Very often these were attributable to the apathy of the inhabitants,¹⁷ to the small populations which found the cost of sanitary engineering exorbitant,¹⁸ and to the resistance of giant vested interests. For example, the Colonial Sugar Refinery in Mackay created "a seething mass of corruption" in the drains and creeks in its area, but refused to take remedial action.¹⁹ Other difficulties arose in peripheral areas because of the carelessness, lack of understanding, or indifference of public servants in Brisbane, who failed to remedy the obvious sanitary evils, in the face of complaints from their own officers in the field. One such incident arose in Roma,

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- 10. Wide Bay and Burnett News, 18 Jan 1882.
 - 11. The Maryborough Chronicle, 19 Aug and 20 Aug 1884.
 - 12. The Brisbane Courier, 17 Mar 1885.
 - 13. The Colonist, 27 Apr 1889; sub editorial.
 - 14. "Report of the Health Commissioner", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1903), 174.
 - 15. Ibid., II (1908), 318.
 - 16. Ibid., II (1914), 33.
 - 17. The Mackay Mercury, 18 Jan 1894.
 - 18. The Northern Miner, 2 Jun 1884 and Town Clerk, Mackay to Colonial Secretary 11 Dec 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 409, in-letter no.8744 of 1884.
 - 19. The Mackay Mercury, 15 Nov 1894; letter to editor from Donald Beaton.

where a "filthy", "fetid", "stagnant", "offensive" nuisance, created on government property, was not removed, in spite of official protests,²⁰ until newspaper criticism forced ministerial action.²¹ In some cases, it was local councils which either could or would not act, leaving nuisances like the notorious Bell Street drain in Ipswich, which poisoned "the atmosphere for a considerable radius".²² And there were plenty of instances in the heart of Brisbane, where water tables were found "to be very defective indeed",²³ and complaints about "dangerous nuisances... from green slimy pools" in the main streets recurred again and again.²⁴ At Petrie Bight, an abominable smell arose from "pools of foul-smelling, stagnant water",²⁵ and the situation in that area, which was accentuated by the perfumes from Pettigrew's saw-mill, did not improve as the months went by.²⁶

In Fortitude Valley, "filthy stagnant water... disgusting in odour... black in colour... enough to sicken anyone... settled in gutters".²⁷ In the scandalous Spring Hollow drain, which was for the most part an open sewer... constructed of rough-faced blocks of stone,... suspended matters from the sewer... left behind in the hollows and crevices... /created/ putrefaction and consequent nuisance.... Into this drain, tributary drains from the houses with all house drainage discharge... black noxious looking compound/s/ with a most offensive odour....

20. These began on 26 July 1883 and are attached to Seymour's letter noted in f.n. 21.
21. Letters and press clippings from the Roma Free Press and the Western Star, filed under D.T. Seymour, Commissioner of Police to Colonial Secretary, 10 Jul 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 430, in-letter no.5012 of 1885.
22. The Queensland Times, 29 Nov 1883.
23. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Sep 1883, report of Brisbane City Council's inspector Noble. The streets concerned were Queen and George Streets. Wharf Street was also extremely defective.
24. See for example, Ibid., 17 Feb 1886; letter to editor from H.P. But see also Ibid., 15 Mar 1884; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 14 Mar 1884, during which Thomas Finney attacked the Brisbane City Council for the "simply abominable", "unendurable" smells near his premises on Queen and Edward streets, Ibid., 25 Mar 1884; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, being the report of the city engineer, tracing the smell to Finney's own water closets, and Finney Isles to Town Clerk, 25 Mar 1884, Q.S.A. 1BRI/B3, letter no.189 of 1884, and Finney Isles to Mayor of Brisbane, 15 Apr 1884, Q.S.A. 1BRI/B3, letter no.239 of 1884, denying that his sanitary arrangements were the source of the trouble.
25. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Nov 1883.
26. Ibid., 26 Feb 1884.
27. Ibid., 20 Jul 1885; letter to editor from Ratepayer.

Spring Hollow drain contains very strong elements of sewage indeed. Everything there,... urinal drainage, stable refuse, slopwat^{er}, house water... all except a small fraction excrementitious. 28

Things were no better in the suburbs, where drainage nuisances "so horrible that we think it better to leave /them/ undescribed", existed.²⁹ Indeed in 1889, the Central Board of Health complained that

whole districts in the city and suburbs /were/ absolutely undrained.... and /that the/ soil /was/ becoming sodden with the stuff, solid and liquid, from which fever germs spring and spread. 30

None of these nuisances was as extensive nor as horrific as the Stratton Street drain. This badly neglected channel had effected the Stratton estate and other low-lying portions of Booroodabin for some ten years,³¹

- 28. Ibid., 25 Sep 1885; letter to editor from W.F. Taylor, giving the testimony of Drs. Richard Rendle and Taylor. The latter was an accepted expert on drainage and other sanitary matters. See for example "Report on Water Supply and Sewage Disposal; by W.F. Taylor, M.D., M.R.C.S.," Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1885), 555-594.
- 29. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Nov 1883; sub editorial.
- 30. Ibid., 24 Jan 1889; main editorial. This was in spite of the Brisbane Town Clerk's report to the central board in 1886 in which he claimed a vastly improved condition after the expenditure of £26,330 1. 3 exclusive of the monies laid out in drainage work, forming gutters, and other sanitary matters. The central board was astonished at the report which it regarded as neither fair nor true, and a committee of enquiry was set up to look into the matter. Ibid., 27 Feb 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 26 Feb 1886. For a few other examples of inadequate drainage see Ibid., 31 Jan 1900, for an account of Southport's Nerang street drain nuisance, A. Jefferis Turner, M.D., Health Officer for Central and Northern Queensland to Mayor of Gladstone, 7 Jul 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 239, in-letter no.10770 of 1900, for a description of Gladstone's mud flat drainage problems, The Brisbane Courier, 1 Mar and 2 Mar 1901, for John Simpson's scathing report on Booroodabin's Rozetta swamp, The Port Douglas and Mossman Record, 15 Apr, 29 Apr and 6 May 1903; editorial, for extensive discussion of drainage problems in Port Douglas, and John Simpson, Chief Inspector, Health Department to Commissioner of Public Health, 5 Feb 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A 878, in-letter no.9706 of 1906, for an appreciation of the special dangers of inadequate drainage and other sanitary problems in such northern towns as Rockhampton, Charters Towers and Cairns.
- 31. Apparently the drain had been in existence for at least twenty years, though its harmful effects had been felt for the shorter period. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Jun 1883; letter to editor from J.L. Bourne. Bourne was a medical practitioner who called himself a health officer.

exposing "the life and health of the inhabitants to serious risk".

It first attracted press attention in 1883,³² when a meeting of ratepayers denounced the Booroodabin Board for the "highly reprehensible" general neglect of the drainage of the division, and more specifically, for the widening and deepening of the Stratton Street drain.³³

The new extensions created enormous possibilities for environmental pollution. The open drain was

fourteen feet wide /and from three to five feet deep/ down the middle of the street (which /was/ fifty-two feet wide) leaving a narrow lane on either side.

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Nearby residents, though bemoaning the drain's existence, were not slow to take advantage of its potential. A bitter Booroodabin Board Chairman, mindful of the enormous cost of cleansing the channel,³⁵ complained that some people in the area had

turned this drain into a receptacle for all their household refuse and assured the Board that human excrement had been repeatedly emptied into it.

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This was not the only, or even the biggest problem facing the board. The lack of a proper drainage scheme for that part of Brisbane bounded by Gregory Terrace and Boundary Street had for long resulted in the flooding of the lower portion of Fortitude Valley and the Stratton estate with the storm and surface waters from the York and Spring Hollows.³⁷ In 1884, both the government of Queensland and the Brisbane City Council appeared to have excellent plans for alleviating

32. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Jun 1883; letter to editor from A Ratepayer.

33. Ibid., 21 Apr 1883; Meeting of Booroodabin ratepayers chaired by B.D. Morehead. Another meeting, also chaired by Morehead, was held in June. Ibid., 21 Jun 1883. The sceptical might wonder if that gentleman's burst of activity on behalf of the ratepayers had anything to do with his candidacy for the seat of Fortitude Valley in the 1883 elections. Morehead actually represented Balonne from October 1883 until he went to the upper house for the second time in June 1896. Waterson, Biographical Register, p.130.

34. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Jun 1883; letter to editor from J.L. Bourne. The first petitioners who protested the enlargement of the drain were more concerned with limbs than life. The Brisbane Courier also took the board to task over this aspect of the nuisance. Ibid., 6 Jun 1883.

35. The previous bill for cleansing was £20, and the absence from work of three employees, who "were laid up with fever". Ibid., 5 Jan 1884; Minutes of Booroodabin Divisional Board, 4 Jan 1884.

36. Ibid.

37. See Within, p.15, for the difficulties of coping with drainage from the York's Hollow manure depot. The Spring Hollow area alone was about 205 acres and the approximate size of the two hollows was 352 acres.

this vexatious problem.³⁸ By the end of 1885, the municipal council was well on the way to completing drainage works between Wickham and James Streets, while the government was constructing a channel "through what was known as the disputed territory".³⁹ But the failure of the Booroodabin Board to do its share to carry out all of these elaborate intentions,⁴⁰ created new and bigger problems for that board itself, and eventually, after the initiation of Supreme Court proceedings, for the Brisbane authorities as well.

In the meantime, the "exceedingly offensive, dreadfully bad stench" arising from the Stratton Street drain attracted the attention of two medical members of the Central Board of Health, Drs. Marks and Bancroft.⁴¹ A protracted correspondence followed,⁴² underlining the difficulties faced by the central board in wresting co-operation from local authorities, who in turn were anxious about the mounting costs of disease prevention through large cleansing operations.⁴³ At no time did the Booroodabin board deny the truth of the doctors' claims about the state of the drain, or the likelihood that it might cause disease. But the board refused to contemplate the expense of lining the watercourse with the stone facing which was necessary if more than temporary abatement of the nuisance was to be achieved.⁴⁴

Booroodabin authorities were also reluctant to accept the sole responsibility for the removal of the filth, a good deal of which reached their division from areas under the jurisdiction of the municipal

- 38. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Mar 1884; Minutes of Booroodabin Board. Letter from Mayor of Brisbane to board, printed in full. See also City Engineer to Mayor of Brisbane, 4 Mar 1884, Q.S.A. 1BRI/B3, letter no.114 of 1884.
- 39. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Sep 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Sep 1885, report on Valley drainage works by Dr. Hill Wray.
- 40. Extract of minutes of Central Board of Health meeting held 12 Jan 1886, filed under Central Board of Health to Booroodabin Board, 12 Jan 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 461, letter no.0269 of 1886.
- 41. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Jul 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 17 Jul 1885.
- 42. Unnumbered extracts of proceedings of various Central Board of Health meetings held between 17 Jul and 23 October 1885, concerning the Stratton street drain, filed under Central Board of Health to Booroodabin Board, 12 Jan 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 461, letter no.0269 of 1886.
- 43. Letters from Booroodabin Board to Central Board of Health, 10 Aug and 9 Sep 1885, filed under Q.S.A. COL/A 461, letter no.0269 of 1886.
- 44. Ibid., letter from Central Board of Health to Booroodabin board, 17 Aug 1885.

council - a matter over which they were already in dispute.⁴⁵ Even when attempts were made to clear out the accumulated ordure, which had made its way to the "low and swampy" James Street-Stratton Street drain area, the result was a strewing of the roads with "slimy mud and rusty dangerous tins", from which "in fact the smell was sickening".⁴⁶

Early in the following year, The Brisbane Courier began an attack on the Stratton Street drain because, it was alleged, its "filthy and dangerous state"⁴⁷ made it a serious source of typhoid fever.⁴⁸ At the Central Board of Health, Dr. Thomson castigated the Booroodabin board for its failure to "put an end to a most disgraceful nuisance", suggesting that disputes between the board and the municipal council should not be allowed to jeopardise that matter "of the utmost importance ... the health of the city". The doctor moved

that the Booroodabin Divisional Board, having made default in making, maintaining and cleaning the drain in that Division known as the Stratton Drain, this Board do recommend that the Governor in Council should insist on the Booroodabin Board performing its duty in the matter of such complaint and limiting a time for its performance in accordance with the 15th Section of the Health Act of 1884.

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At the same time, the central board urged Colonial Secretary Griffith to initiate a short piece of legislation which would ensure that all creeks, rivers and watercourses would be kept free from pollution, and that all visible stagnant water should be drained away, but the minister

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- 45. Ibid., extract from minutes of Central Board of Health held on 28 August 1885.
 - 46. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Dec 1885; Deputation to Premier from Booroodabin and Ithaca Divisional Boards concerning the Enoggera Creek manure depot, the Stratton drain, and the Milton cemetery swamp, 17 Dec 1885. See also Mayor of Brisbane to Colonial Secretary, 18 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 448, in-letter no.9618 of 1885, in which Benjamin Babbidge denied that the "cleansing of the city... result~~/ed/~~ in an accumulation of filth within the Booroodabin Division".
 - 47. Report of Inspector J. Marlow, in extract of minutes of Central Board of Health held 12 January 1886, filed under Central Board of Health to Booroodabin Board, 12 Jan 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 461, letter no.0269 of 1886.
 - 48. "No fewer than fifteen men employed on the excavation of the Gas Company's new works have... typhoid fever... and the famous Stratton drain is asserted to be... responsible for some of the mischief". The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jan 1886.
 - 49. Extract of minutes filed under Q.S.A. COL/A 461, letter no.0269 of 1886.

simply acknowledged the suggestion and returned it to the board.⁵⁰

The government also declined to take the central board's advice on the Stratton Street drain,⁵¹ even though complaints that the nuisance was the direct cause of fevers and death were increasing.⁵² This was hardly surprising, for according to John Marlow,

the drain /was/ if possible in a worse state than before. The bottom of the drain /was/ covered with old kerosene tins and /was/ also evidently used for the purpose of a manure depot.... The smell arising from the accumulation of filth reach^{ed}/ Ann Street and the Breakfast Creek Road.... This Stratton Drain /was/ a most serious nuisance and very dangerous to the public health, and should be thoroughly cleaned out and stone faced....

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In defiance of this damning report, and to the amazement of contemporary observers, the Booroodabin Board which had cried poor whenever the necessary permanent improvements to the Stratton drain were proposed, now determined to place £2,000 of its surplus funds at fixed deposit.⁵⁴ Even worse, in the opinion of Dr. John Thomson, who was mystified as to how a drain "full of stinking ink coloured sewage.... had been allowed to exist so long", the Booroodabin Board had engaged on a lawsuit to determine the Brisbane corporation's liability for the

- 50. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 15 Feb 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 455, in-letter no.1148 of 1886, and Under Colonial Secretary to Central Board of Health, 26 Feb 1886, Q.S.A. COL/G 33, out-letter no.615 of 1886.
- 51. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Feb 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 26 Feb 1886. The Booroodabin Board had promised to clean out the drain and the Colonial Secretary therefore decided to allow the matter to stand until after the May sitting of parliament. Marginal note on Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 3 Apr 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 459, in-letter no.2571 of 1886.
- 52. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Mar 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 12 Mar 1886. The normal unpleasantness was exacerbated by the Gas Company which partially obstructed that part of the channel which ran through its property. The complaints were in letters and by deputation to the central board. See for example, Petition of March 9th to Board of Health, Brisbane, from forty ratepayers of the Booroodabin Division, filed under Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 13 Mar 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 459, in-letter no.2108 of 1886.
- 53. Dr. Hill Wray to Under Colonial Secretary, 19 Mar 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 459, in-letter no.2088 of 1886, enclosing unnumbered copy of Marlow's report of 4 March 1886.
- 54. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Apr 1886; Minutes of Booroodabin Divisional Board. The board had a bank balance of £3,868, part of which had been extracted from the government as endowments, paid under the Health Act of 1884. See Within, p.61. An astonished Brisbane Courier, claiming that the decision "was a remarkable one" in view of the source of two-thirds of the money asked, "Do the Boardsmen suppose that their Division is in a state of absolute perfection?"

state of the Stratton channel.⁵⁵ As Thomson stressed, this action could only delay remedies which were "a matter of life and death to many of the residents there".⁵⁶

At long last, the Queensland government, which had so far shown great patience with Booroodabin, began to pressure the board,⁵⁷ which resulted in more promises of immediate action from that body.⁵⁸ Indeed, when the work had been done, further inspections of the Stratton drain appeared to vindicate the board's decision to venture into court. For although the drain had been cleared so that

the water now /ran/ freely there, /it was/ nevertheless an intolerable nuisance still, in consequence of the character of the discharge from the municipal drain. 59

Certainly this was the conclusion reached by Mr. Justice Harding, who found favour of the divisional board.⁶⁰ The "municipality had exceeded the rights of the dominant tenement over the servient tenement by creating a nuisance", a judgement which The Brisbane Courier, The Daily Observer, and the Brisbane City Council, found very hard to

- 55. In fact the action brought by Booroodabin against Brisbane in the Supreme Court concerned the James Street drain in particular. The Brisbane Courier, 1 Jun 1886; sub editorial and a very large amount of general reporting. But since this drain joined the Stratton channel and since refuse entered the latter from the city via James Street, both Drs. Hill Wray and Thomson probably felt justified in speaking of their main concern, the Booroodabin watercourse, in this somewhat misleading way.
- 56. Ibid., 3 Apr 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 2 Apr 1886.
- 57. Ibid., Minutes of Booroodabin Divisional Board.
- 58. Ibid., 17 Apr 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 16 Apr 1886. In fact John Marlow found that the work had not been done, or at least not to his satisfaction. Mud, tins, and other refuse had been thrown on the banks to lie stinking in the sun, instead of being carted away.
- 59. The Brisbane Courier, 15 May 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 14 May 1886, report of Booroodabin board sanitary inspector.
- 60. Although Harding gave judgement for Booroodabin and granted a suspended injunction against the Brisbane City Council, he did not award damages to the division and gave the municipal authorities adequate time to do the necessary work. Ibid., 1 Jun 1886; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 31 May 1886. See also City of Brisbane Mayor's Report 1887-88 (Brisbane, 1888), pp.25-26.

understand and very difficult to accept.⁶¹ To the dismay of angry city councillors,⁶² for once British experience and a British law which had gradually grown to full development over eight hundred years, simply was not applicable to a new country like Queensland.⁶³ The government was urged to provide fresh legislation,⁶⁴ and Samuel Griffith promised the matter "careful attention".⁶⁵

The results of Harding's decision were very far-reaching. It led to renewed talk of a "united municipality",⁶⁶ or at least to the allocation of fixed drainage areas with the "cost of the works /being/ relatively borne".⁶⁷ It resulted in severe parliamentary criticism of the Central Board of Health's apparent inability to deal quickly and successfully with grave dangers to the public health.⁶⁸ When negotiations between the city and Booroodabin over methods of building

- 61. Harding found that "'all lands are of necessity burdened with a servitude to receive and discharge all waters which naturally flow down to them from lands on a higher level' but.... if the proprietor of the higher lands altered the natural condition of his property,... he would be responsible for all damage thereby caused to the possessor of the lower land". Harding's emphasis was on the natural. "So long as he was natural he was safe". The Brisbane Courier, 1 Jun 1886; report of Booroodabin Divisional Board versus the Mayor and Corporation of Brisbane before Mr. Justice Harding in the Supreme Court, Ibid., 2 Jun 1886; sub editorial, The Daily Observer, 2 Jun 1886, and James Hipwood, Mayor of Brisbane to Chief Secretary, 7 Jun 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 469, in-letter no.4376 of 1886. Hipwood enclosed cuttings from The Brisbane Courier and The Daily Observer, which upheld his position, for the minister's perusal.
- 62. One of the most disturbed members was John McMaster. The Brisbane Courier, 31 May 1886.
- 63. The Daily Observer claimed that to try to apply English principles to a new country was "absurd", Ibid., 2 Jun 1886, yet the Queensland parliament did this constantly throughout the whole history of the public health in the colony.
- 64. Mayor of Brisbane to Chief Secretary, 7 Jun 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 469, in-letter no.4376 of 1886.
- 65. Griffith's marginal comment on Hipwood's letter above.
- 66. The Brisbane Courier, 1 Jun 1886; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 31 May 1886.
- 67. Ibid., 1 Jul 1886, report of Thomas Kirk, acting city engineer, on the effects of Harding's judgement. Kirk was strongly in favour of conveying all sewage directly to the river, as the most economical and suitable system.
- 68. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, L (1886), 1128. John McMaster during the supply debate.

and paying for the necessary improvements and extensions to the drain broke down,⁶⁹ the outcome was a local authority conference on the drainage question as it related to upper and lower tenements.⁷⁰ Finally, problems over land levels, the drain sizes, and the provision of funds, sent a Booroodabin board deputation scurrying to see the Treasurer of Queensland.⁷¹

James Dickson, anxious "that a large and populous neighbourhood should be relieved from the danger of disease and inconvenience", and that the citizens should be denied the opportunity to raise a furore over any delays, urged the boardsmen to make haste with the project, and promised them precedence over all other claims on the public purse.⁷² And after the Booroodabin board's receipt of an £11,000 government loan,⁷³ the extraction of a £3,000 compensatory payment from the Brisbane City Council,⁷⁴ and some excellent work on the part of the contractor and his men, The Brisbane Courier was able to announce that

/t/hat famous and now historical Stratton ditch extending from James Street to Longland Street and near the Brisbane Gas Company's new works has been completely done away with.... Work now completed cannot fail to be of lasting benefit to the thickly populated neighbourhood through which it passes,... and the benefit... to residents and property owners is incalculable.

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69. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Nov 1886; report of drainage conference, 17 Nov 1886. Brisbane, Ithaca, Toowong, and Woolloongabba sent representatives, but the Booroodabin board did not attend.
70. Ibid., 23 and 28 Oct 1886.
71. Ibid., 19 Nov 1886; report of Booroodabin board's deputation to Treasurer Dickson, 18 Nov 1886.
72. Ibid., The fact that this money was made available with such speed when the treasury was so low, and the government had recently had to cope with an expensive cholera scare, shows the proportions which the Stratton drain nuisance had assumed in the government's eyes. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, L (1886), 1129.
73. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Jan 1887; Minutes of Booroodabin Board.
74. Mayor's Report 1887-88, p.26. See also The Brisbane Courier, 11 Jan 1887; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 10 Jan 1887, Ibid., 28 Jan 1887; Minutes of adjourned meeting of Brisbane City Council, and Ibid., 21 May 1887; Minutes of special meeting of Booroodabin Divisional Board, 20 May 1887.
75. The offending drain had been taken completely underground by means of a tunnel fitted out with flushing chambers, massive iron access doors which acted as valves, manholes and so on. The Brisbane Courier, 21 Jun 1887.

Many drainage nuisances remained, and in the Central Board of Health at least, pessimism over the sanitary situation persisted. But with the elimination of the Stratton Street blight, a considerable break through had been achieved, to the immeasurable improvement of a small part of Queensland's environment. Moreover, the successful completion of this relatively large engineering project in the short space of six months gave heart and example to other local authorities throughout the colony which suffered the unbearable effects of similar large nuisances.

Only one other environmental problem, noxious trades, will be dealt with very briefly here, though many others, such as the struggle to initiate a thorough-going, efficient scavenging service for Brisbane and other Queensland cities and towns was also of immense importance in the history of the public health in this state.⁷⁶

One of the earliest noxious trade problems, produced as men went about their normal business in the infant colony of Queensland, concerned the ubiquitous butchers' shops and boiling down works. An 1865 protester, concerned over the air in the vicinity of one such establishment, claimed that it was

loaded with the effluvium of a frightfully dangerous description, while the ground /was/ covered with bones, skulls, hides, horns etc. etc. in all stages of decomposition. Joking apart, the nuisance in question is of a most dangerous description calling for immediate eradication.

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Things had not changed much some twenty or thirty years later. Three butchers died in the Brisbane hospital, allegedly because of the conditions under which they worked,⁷⁸ and abominable stenches, resulting from the run-off from butchers' shops in the main street of Brisbane and in Ithaca, made life unbearable for all other shopkeepers

76. Attempts to bring in regular rubbish removals for Brisbane were long drawn out and parallel the nightsoil removal problem. The need to educate citizens to understand the importance of keeping their premises clean and the struggle to encourage them to pay for such services is also similar to the other refuse saga.
77. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Jan 1865; letter to editor from Pure Air.
78. Ibid., 23 Apr 1884.

and residents in that area.⁷⁹ The associated trades of fellmongering and tanning, and full-scale slaughtering yards caused even more distress. At the worst abattoirs, inspectors found "all manner of animal matter, sweltering and putrifying, contaminating the atmosphere and breeding countless swarms of maggots".⁸⁰ Dr. Kebbell found conditions at one Woolloongabba tannery so bad, that he ordered immediate improvements under the threat of immediate closure,⁸¹ and John McMaster complained to parliament about the pollution of streams by a tannery and slaughterhouse, "that was a great hardship to the population of Nundah and the district of Eagle Farm".⁸² Other protests came from Dr. Armstrong and some residents in Toowoomba about the pollution of Gowrie creek by tanneries which rendered the water "highly dangerous for public use".⁸³

One very foul slaughterhouse, which emitted "smells most injurious to health", was that owned by Messrs. Baynes and Walmsley in Woolloongabba. Inspectors claimed that if this nuisance was not abolished at once a grave outbreak of fever might be expected.⁸⁴ Baynes's yards were still operating as Walmsley and Company, though Baynes, who was standing in a local government election at the time, defended them strongly, refusing to alter his methods and blaming the nearby Burnett's

79. Ibid., 27 Feb 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 26 Feb 1886, Ibid., 1 Mar 1886; letter to editor from Sparkes & M'Kinnon denying the charge, Ibid., 5 Mar 1886; sub editorial confirming the intensity of the smell, Ibid., 13 Mar 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 12 Mar 1886, report of John Marlow tracing the nuisance to small goods boiler. Sparkes & M'Kinnon were also in trouble over their slaughterhouses in Enoggera which were infested with pigs and from which a dreadful smell "was spread broadcast over the neighbourhood". Ibid., 22 Apr 1886. The Enoggera boardsmen found the place even worse two years later, Ibid., 7 Dec 1888, but in spite of this, the company's licence to slaughter was renewed by the Brisbane Licensing court. For the Ithaca nuisance see Ibid., 27 Apr 1889, and Ibid., 4 Jul 1890; Minutes of Ithaca Divisional Board.
80. Report of Dr. John Thomson on five slaughterhouses in Lutwyche, 8 April 1878, filed under John Bale to Colonial Secretary, 2 Mar 1881, Q.S.A. COL/A 308, in-letter no.981 of 1881. Thomson made another inspection in 1881 as the nuisance continued unabated, with similar results. He was still convinced that slaughter yards were a possible source of typhoid in 1884. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Apr 1884; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 24 Apr 1884.
81. Ibid., 4 Mar 1887.
82. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LV (1888), 994.
83. The Brisbane Courier, 17 Nov 1888; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 16 Nov 1888.
84. Ibid., 17 Oct 1884; Minutes of Woolloongabba Divisional Board, health committee's report.

swamp and Chinamen's gardens for the very obvious stinks.⁸⁵

Slaughterhouses and butchers' shops were still the subject of intense scrutiny up to 1914, and of course beyond, but the emphasis in the twentieth century was on cleanliness of utensils, unblemished beasts, and general spotlessness of premises rather than on smells. Tanneries, fellmongeries, wool scours and glue piece factors' premises, were also closely inspected. The fact that pressure of other work was allowed to preclude the inspector from furnishing a report in 1906, may mean that by that time the works were satisfactory enough,⁸⁶ though this is by no means certain. Grave shortages of staff plagued the department in that year, and to the regret of chief inspector Simpson, some "useful work /including the inspection of a few slaughter yards/..."⁸⁷ had to be set aside owing to the lack of assistant inspectors".

This was a far cry from the 1880's when the growing complaints prompted a mayoral call for the establishment of public abattoirs. These would not only eliminate the contemporary haphazard method of slaughtering animals for food, but would at the same time, provide a central slaughterhouse which would be outside the control of powerful vested interests.⁸⁸ Implicit in the scheme was the real possibility of a properly inspected, thoroughly clean establishment. But as butchers' shops and slaughterhouses, with their attendant piggeries, continued to

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- 85. Ibid., 2 Feb 1886, Ibid., 2 Oct 1886, Ibid., 16 Jun 1888; report of public meeting of South Brisbane residents, and Ibid., 2 Jul 1888, "unbiased" report of Brisbane Courier representative.
 - 86. "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1906), 200.
 - 87. John Simpson to Dr. B. Burnett Ham, 5 Feb 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A 878, in-letter no.9706 of 1906.
 - 88. Mayor of Brisbane to Colonial Secretary, 6 Jun 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 362, in-letter no.2831 of 1883. McIlwraith's view was that this was a local authority matter. Marginal comment on above. The government did approve a by-law to prevent the improper carriage of meat, which helped to clean up the "barbarous and disgusting" meat carts, which were covered with dust and flies, at least a little. See The Brisbane Courier, 6 Nov 1884; sub editorial, Mayor of Brisbane to Colonial Secretary, 17 Dec 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 409, in-letter no.8814, and Queensland Government Gazette, XXXVI (1885), 305.

pollute the water and poison the air throughout the 1880's and 1890's,⁸⁹ the Central Board of Health joined the Brisbane authorities in calling on the government to provide public abattoirs.⁹⁰ Realising the large amount of butcher meat consumed in Australia in proportion to its population,⁹¹ and the consequent necessity that the produce be as pure as possible, the board kept up this pressure in the face of government refusals.⁹²

As repeated accounts of renewed licences being granted to slaughtermen who kept foul premises filled the newspaper columns,⁹³ a specially convened conference of Brisbane local authorities met to discuss the slaughterhouse conditions, and to urge upon the government "the necessity of at once erecting public abattoirs".⁹⁴ But in spite of this request, and the long and bitter newspaper tirade on the state of the meat trade,⁹⁵ it was not until 1897 that a really comprehensive slaughtering bill was proposed.⁹⁶ It was not until the following year that the bill

- 89. Pigs were fed butchers' offal as one way of reducing pollution. For protests over this and other nuisances connected with the slaughterhouses see Town Clerk to Colonial Secretary, 30 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 402, in-letter no.6808 of 1884, and The Brisbane Courier, 4 Oct 1884; report of deputation to Colonial Secretary, 3 Oct 1884.
- 90. Ibid., 24 Jul 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 23 Jul 1886.
- 91. It was impossible for contemporaries to estimate exactly how much meat was consumed per head of population. However, it was calculated that the meat taken by one person per week would be "more than sufficient for a whole family in England". Ibid., 3 Jan 1887 - article on the supply and consumption of meat in Australia.
- 92. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Jun 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 10 Jun 1887, letter to the Chief Secretary, printed in full. See also Ibid., 30 Jul 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 29 Jul 1887.
- 93. By the Brisbane Licensing Court. See for example, Ibid., 10 Oct 1889, Ibid., 16 Oct 1889; sub editorial, Ibid., 5 Dec 1889, Ibid., 7 Dec 1889, Ibid., 24 Dec 1889; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 23 Dec 1889, Ibid., 11 Jan 1890; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 10 Jan 1890, The Queensland Times, 18 Jan 1890; letter to editor from B, and The Brisbane Courier, 1 Feb 1890; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 31 Jan 1890.
- 94. Ibid., 10 Oct 1889.
- 95. See for example, Ibid., 24 Jan 1890; main editorial, Ibid., 30 Jan 1890; letter to editor from Hygiene, Ibid., 29 Mar 1890; sub editorial, Ibid., 3 Apr 1890; letter to editor from Consumer, Ibid., 11 Jun 1890; sub editorial.
- 96. Confidential letter from Under Secretary, Justice Department, to Under Secretary, Home Department, 25 Aug 1897, Q.S.A. HOM/A 12, in-letter no.10910 of 1897 enclosing copies of proposed Slaughtering Bill of 1897.

framed in the direction of obtaining a thorough inspection of slaughterhouses, the establishment of public abattoirs, and the proper regulations of all matters connected with the slaughter and sale of meat

was passed.⁹⁷ Even then the Act, which repealed five existing Acts, was to be brought into operation by proclamation only when necessary.⁹⁸ As late as 1913, in the opinion of one observer, who poured very drastic criticism on the slaughterhouses of both Brisbane and the country centres of Queensland, the sanitary condition of these places was very badly neglected, and vested interests had not yet lost their powers.⁹⁹

The sugar industry was another stronghold of the well-established, and another source of pollution and complaint. Some of the worst single instances of very gross nuisance were provided by the sugar mills of Queensland. For instance, at Hemmant, the effluent from the Clydesdale Mill which was allowed to lie in open drains, created "a smell worse than a dozen manure depots", and in the opinion of Drs. Thomson and Wray of the Central Board of Health, would certainly account for the sickness of the nearby residents. But the company, although acknowledging its liability,¹⁰⁰ refused to remove the nuisance.

97. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXX (1898), 1567.

98. The Slaughtering Act of 1898, Queensland Government Gazette, II (1898), 1545.

99. The Brisbane Courier, 21 Oct 1913; letter to editor from Edward W. Archer, a pastoralist, had been a federal parliamentarian from 1906 to 1910, and represented Normanby in the Queensland Legislative Assembly from March 1914 to May 1915. In his letter Archer refers in glowing terms to the South Australian abattoirs. The southern colonies had always been ahead of Queensland in the provision of this service, but the advice given by New South Wales probably influenced the Queensland government against the establishment of public works. See especially Ibid., 30 Jun 1885; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 29 Jun 1885, letter from New South Wales Colonial Secretary to Colonial Secretary Queensland, intimating that freezing arrangements and desiccating works were far from satisfactory, and the abattoirs were to be closed. See also Ibid., 16 Dec 1886, report on the abattoirs of Sydney and Melbourne from P.R. Gordon, chief inspector of stock, and "Royal Commission on the Meat Industry", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1913), pp.677 ff.

100. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Sep 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Sep 1885. According to Dr. Thomson this was the worst smell he had ever encountered. Similar instances occurred in Maryborough, Bundaberg, Mackay and Townsville. The sugar industry polluted in another way, according to Dr. Thomas Lane Bancroft, through the shocking conditions and housing given to Kanakas on the fields. Thomas Lane Bancroft to Colonial Secretary, 25 Sep 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 439, in-letter no.7315 of 1885. The Queensland Times was extremely critical of "King Sugar" for this reason as well. Ibid., 17 Nov 1885; sub editorial.

Many citizens, alert to the impossibility of shifting offending industries once they had become established,¹⁰¹ brought very vigorous protest to bear on anyone foolhardy enough to propose rope factories for South Brisbane,¹⁰² chemical manufacturing in the Ithaca division,¹⁰³ and soap factories at Hill End.¹⁰⁴ But the whole question of noxious trades was a very difficult one, both for officialdom and for the residents concerned. Given the early implicit belief in the miasmatic theory of disease transmission, and the background of many new Australians who were only too well aware of the dangers pouring from the "dark satanic Mills" of their English home-towns, it was hardly surprising that, having settled in Queensland, they should object to the

- steam mills which were appearing in every direction, poking their brick noses alias chimneys skyward... and bidding fair to annihilate every vestige of uncombed nature.

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Clauses attempting to prevent belching chimneys and stinking effluent were written into the Health Act of 1884.¹⁰⁶ But it was very clearly brought before the citizens of Queensland, that although nuisances should if possible be suppressed, business - which was essential to the economic health of the colony - was not to be interfered with in any way.¹⁰⁷

This was a principle very well understood by the people of Maryborough, who were fearful of the possible health risks presented by a proposed soap factory in the area,¹⁰⁸ but were more afraid that the

101. In fact established industries were actually protected under the Health Act of 1884, whereas new industries had to prove themselves innocuous to the public health before being set up. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 572.
102. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Dec 1884; letter to editor from Pedestrian.
103. Ibid., 13 Oct 1885, report of a very largely attended public meeting objecting to the Elliott Brothers' factory which was to produce chemicals.
104. Ibid., 12 Nov 1885; letter to editor from Nausea.
105. Ibid., 11 Sep 1871; article from a "Special Correspondent".
106. See in particular The Health Act of 1884, Part V, Clause 71 (7), Queensland Government Gazette, II (1884), 1430.
107. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 572.
108. Very strong objections were presented by some ratepayers who were backed by some aldermen. The Colonist, 1 May 1886.

"stamping out of all new industries in the town" would lead to economic stagnation and increased unemployment.¹⁰⁹ For the same reason, the Bulimba Divisional Board was only too eager to welcome the chemical factory which had been refused a place in Ithaca¹¹⁰ - again despite some quite vigorous protest.¹¹¹

As early as 1889, Dr. Joseph Bancroft tentatively proposed the segregation of industry from populous areas of the capital, on the lines of the Sydney experiment.¹¹² But the government had not advanced very far from its 1884 position, and a further suggestion from the Central Board of Health, that the government should prevent the indiscriminate setting up of noxious trades and manufactories, also fell on deaf ears.¹¹³ Even in 1913, local authorities in Brisbane were still questioning whether so-called noxious trades should be relegated to defined areas,¹¹⁴ though most had no difficulty in recognising health hazards from chimneys and drains, if others besides themselves or their vested interests were apparently at fault.¹¹⁵ Certainly by this time, local authorities were much better informed and far better equipped to deal with noxious trades wherever they arose.¹¹⁶

109. The Colonist, 1 May 1886.

110. See Within, p. 90.

111. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Jul 1887, Ibid., 8 Sep 1887, several letters from doctors and aldermen in Balmain Sydney, defending the Elliott Brothers, Ibid., 12 Sep 1887; letter to editor from John Moffatt, deplored the works, and Ibid., 13 Sep 1887; letter to editor from Bulimba Resident, again protesting.

112. Ibid., 16 Dec 1889; Minutes of the adjourned meeting of Central Board of Health, 15 Dec 1889.

113. Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 1 Jun 1894, Q.S.A. COL/A 787 in-letter no.6198 and further letter no.13839 attached.

114. The Brisbane Courier, 24 Jun 1913; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 23 Jun 1913.

115. See for example South Brisbane complaints on the "standing disgrace" of the government's chimney stack at the dry dock. Apart from any danger to the public health, or perhaps even more importantly than that, the councillors were afraid that "if persisted in the smoke would ruin the pictures of the South Brisbane Art Gallery"! Ibid., 26 Aug 1913.

116. Ibid., 23 Sep 1913; Minutes of South Brisbane Council, 22 Sep 1913.

Even so, the picture painted in this overview of the environment is a grim one of slow, and not always steady improvement in the sanitary affairs of the state. But concern over the pollution problem is not, as one might sometimes think, the preserve of the 1970's. As doctors, engineers, politicians, and the aware general public of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became increasingly conscious of the need for change, reforms were made, and the public health was improved. Contemporary understanding went much further than this, for not the least of Queensland's problems were the frightening specific diseases which held the population in thrall from 1859 to 1914. In many cases, the connection of the diseases with the environmental conditions present in the developing state seemed painfully clear to those professionals charged with their removal. The stories of some of those diseases are included here, for they were indeed a great part of the problems of Queensland's search for adequate public health.

In Queensland, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, typhoid fever presented the colonists with the all too familiar faces of death and disease, usually associated with the more dreadful exotic diseases of cholera, leprosy and bubonic plague. Not only did typhoid remove an inordinately large number of sufferers permanently over the years under review, it also left those who survived its attack greatly debilitated, and with complications which sometimes affected them seriously in later life.

More than any other disease which made its presence felt in Queensland, typhoid fitted into the generally accepted medical theories of the mid-nineteenth century - that bad smells and dirt caused sickness and death. Although scientific advances have been made, this connection still cannot be denied; for even today, the incidence of typhoid fever in various parts of the world indicates the level of community hygiene. Where this is bad, typhoid is apt to be rife.

Because it affected large numbers of people, many of them in the prime of their working lives, Queensland authorities gradually became aware that they must prevent the spread of this disease at almost any cost. Illness, unemployment, and the indigence of widows and orphans unavoidably presented society with that huge account, which is the economic cost of ill-health to any nation. As Queensland's Public Health Commissioner was to observe in 1911, typhoid, "both from its age incidence and the long period of disablement which it causes, is a peculiarly costly and uneconomic disease".¹

There are yet other reasons for the importance of typhoid fever in the history of public health. The discovery that the disease was transmissible in water and milk, and carried by flies and human vectors, together with the later development of an anti-typhoid vaccine to provide immunity, ensures that the story of attempts to conquer typhoid in Queensland presents a picture of advancing medical knowledge and experiment as it unfolds in the period up to 1914.

1. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1911), 5. Besides being of considerable importance in stimulating moves to improve the public health in Queensland, this axiom was the starting point of the greatest enquiry ever made into human conditions and ills in the nineteenth century. See Flinn, p.58.

One of the greatest problems in tracing the very early incidence and therefore, the influence of this disease in Queensland, is the lack of accurate information available on the subject. This is partly the result of the confusion prevailing amongst medical men, as to the nature of typhoid and typhus fevers during the early years of settlement. The uncertainty as to the diagnosis of the disease was not confined to Australian medical men. Though many scientists had already groped towards defining the diseases, it was the American, W.W. Gerhard, who first clearly differentiated typhoid from typhus in 1837.² Even then, many prominent medical writers continued to maintain that the diseases were identical. According to Charles Murchison, the author of the classic work on continued fevers, this doctrine was still being taught in most medical schools, as late as 1863.³ Not surprisingly, official recognition was slow, the distinction between the two fevers being adopted in Registrar-Generals' annual reports for Scotland in 1865, for England in 1869, for New South Wales in 1875, and for Queensland in 1879.⁴

In Australia, early medical men and interested laymen paid little or no attention to typhoid fever in their reports of diseases, or in addresses before learned societies. Cumpston and McCallum contend that typhoid fever was present during the first sixty years of settlement, but since it was endemic and sporadic, because the settlements themselves were scattered, it caused little alarm.⁵ Dr. E. Sandford Jackson suggests of Queensland that "if there were a common continued fever, it was not typhoid, and it did not find its way into hospital" from 1825 to 1849.⁶

By the early 1850's, the interest in fevers as death-dealing diseases in Queensland began to build up. The health officer for the port of Brisbane refers to the arrival of the ship Rajahgopaul in 1852,

2. Haagensen and Lloyd, pp.12 and 40.
3. Lambert, p.316.
4. J.H.L. Cumpston and F. McCallum, The History of Intestinal Infections (and Typhus Fever) in Australia 1788-1923 (Health Service Publication, 1927), pp.13, 87, and 281.
5. Ibid., p.7.
6. E. Sandford Jackson, "Historical Notes from the Records in the Brisbane Hospital (1850-1870)", in the Medical Journal of Australia, I, 17 Mar 1923, p.281.

stating that many of the immigrants from that vessel "fell sick of typhoid en route to the interior",⁷ and spread their malady to Ipswich, Drayton and Myall Creek.⁸ Dr. Sandford Jackson's research reveals that about 1857, Brisbane hospital records began to show evidence of appearances of typhoid in the Eagle Farm area of the settlement.⁹ The Reverend R. Creyke, when addressing the Philosophical Society of Queensland on "Public Health in Brisbane", mentioned fever as a frequent contributor to the death rate of the capital during the summer months.¹⁰

Early in 1864, a considerable alarm was raised in Brisbane when the vessel, the Flying Cloud, was accused of introducing a fever "of a highly dangerous and infectious nature", which was thought to be either typhus cerebralis or typhoid pneumonia.¹¹ Neither the precise nature of the fever, nor the exact cause of the outbreak, seems to have been clearly established, though several passengers from the Flying Cloud were taken to the Brisbane Hospital suffering from fever.¹² The vessel itself was placed in quarantine "in consequence of the appearance of fever of a malignant type among the crew",¹³ and the ship's surgeon was later sentenced to be imprisoned in Brisbane gaol for six months, for having given the port health officer a false report on the medical condition of the passengers and crew.¹⁴

Virulent fever "of a typhoid nature" had allegedly been prevalent in Brisbane for at least two months before the Flying Cloud's arrival in Moreton Bay, and the cause was obvious to "A Citizen", who, in a letter to The Brisbane Courier, drew attention to the shocking state of the backyards of the capital. After personal inspection, he reported that many contained water closets filled to overflowing with "offensive matter... actually flowing about the premises", which with other nuisances, were a constant offence to the olfactory nerves. No wonder his medical adviser had never seen so many cases of fever in the city

7. Challinor to Colonial Secretary, 11 May 1878, Q.S.A. COL/A 257, in-letter no.1766 of 1878.
8. Moreton Bay Courier, 23 Oct 1852.
9. Jackson, p.284.
10. R. Creyke, "Public Health in Brisbane" in Transactions of the Philosophical Society of Queensland 1859 to 1872 (Brisbane, 1872). No consecutive page numbering.
11. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Mar 1864.
12. Ibid., 4 Mar 1864.
13. Queensland Government Gazette, V (1864), 182.
14. Cumpston and McCallum, p.336.

before, "A Citizen" concluded.¹⁵ This letter and the publicity surrounding the Flying Cloud incident, which saw the start of a vigorous correspondence in the daily press,¹⁶ brought the typhoid fever question before the people of Queensland in a hitherto unprecedented manner.

Public concern and government interest in the typhoid-typhus episode gradually diminished as the fever abated, and justice appeared to have been done with the conviction of the Flying Cloud's surgeon. Yet it is possible to speculate, in the absence of any concrete evidence to the contrary, that the severe outbreak of fever in Brisbane during 1864, and the public interest it engendered, may have played some part in the Executive Council decision of February 1865, to appoint a central board of health.¹⁷ The government was certainly worried over the high death-rate attributed by the Registrar-General to miasmatic diseases,¹⁸ which had accounted for the high percentage of 28.70 deaths in 1864,¹⁹ increasing to 29.54 per cent in 1865.²⁰ It was anticipated that the miasmatic group of diseases, the exciting cause of which was thought to be a poison formed by the corruption or decomposition of organic matter,²¹ would be the first to be affected by the initial task proposed for the central board - the formulation of some plan to improve the sanitary conditions of towns in the colony.

Attempts to fathom the motivation of the executive to appoint a health board are conjectural, and evidence of the incidence of typhoid fever in various parts of Queensland up to 1879 is fragmentary.

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- 15. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Jan 1864; letter to editor from A Citizen.
 - 16. A Citizen followed with another letter to Ibid., 4 Mar 1864, in which he accused Dr. W. Hobbs, health officer, of allowing the typhoid fever ashore. Hobbs countered, Ibid., 5 Mar 1864, as did Captain H.C. Keen, who labelled A Citizen an "ignoramus", and Henry Fowler, passenger on the Flying Cloud, Ibid. Dr. William Smith, who had theories on the atmospheric causes of diseases then entered the controversy in Ibid., 7 Mar 1864.
 - 17. Executive Council Minutes, 17 Feb 1865, Q.S.A. EXE/E11, Vol.7 of 1865.
 - 18. These included scarlatina, diphtheria, dysentery, and fever.
 - 19. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1865), 868.
 - 20. Ibid., (1866), 1260.
 - 21. Dr. T. Southwood Smith, A Treatise on Fever (1830) quoted in Flinn, p.62.

But one thing is certain - the findings of the select committee on the hospitals of the colony, published in 1866, ended any doubts as to the actual presence of "colonial" or typhoid fever in Queensland.²² The prevalence of the disease was attributed by the committee to "the large number of immigrants of the poorer class" who had lately arrived in crowded and ill-managed vessels,²³ and to navvies who worked on the railways.²⁴ Both of these economically-deprived groups were particularly susceptible to typhoid fever, according to the committee of investigation, and the disease was authoritatively stated to be widespread in Brisbane, Ipswich, Toowoomba and Rockhampton.²⁵

There were very few other official reports published on the health situation in Queensland in this period, and except for one relating to Toowoomba,²⁶ these were not concerned with typhoid fever. It is ironic, for instance, that a large part of the Central Board of Health's progress report for 1877 should have been devoted to fearful predictions about a possible outbreak of smallpox,²⁷ while the problems of typhoid fever, "the most common of the serious ailments of civilized life /from which/ no household is safe",²⁸ were entirely neglected. The main public interest in typhoid fever in Queensland up to 1878, appears to have been centred on the arrival of ships carrying fever-stricken passengers, like the Gauntlet in 1875,²⁹ and the Windsor Castle in 1877. The Windsor Castle was ordered into quarantine by the Brisbane port health officer, Dr. Henry Challinor, in spite of the warning of the ship's surgeon that it would be "detrimental if not fatal to the health of some of those who are now in the enjoyment of sound bodily health to be sent to Peel Island", with its badly run-down "conveniences".³⁰ The Central Board of Health overruled the quarantine order in this case,³¹ informing Dr. Challinor, that the Windsor Castle was to be spared the

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- 22. Cumpston and McCallum, p.289.
 - 23. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1866), 1613-17.
 - 24. Ibid., p.1616.
 - 25. Ibid.
 - 26. Within, pp.100-102.
 - 27. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1877), 1145-46.
 - 28. Dr. T.J. MacLagan, "Is Typhoid Fever Contagious?", The Nineteenth Century, XXIX, (1879), p.809.
 - 29. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1877, pp.49 and 51.
 - 30. Surgeon Superintendent Hickling to Colonial Secretary, 16 Sep 1877, Q.S.A. COL/A 245, in-letter no.1536 of 1877.
 - 31. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 17 Sep 1877, Q.S.A. COL/A 245, in-letter no.4541 of 1877.

inconvenience of quarantine provided no fresh outbreak of disease was reported.³² Challinor complained at once to the Colonial Secretary, attempting to expose the "hygienic defect or neglect" on board the Windsor Castle which had allowed typhoid fever to develop, defending the quarantine station at Peel Island, and expressing his contempt for the Central Board of Health's advice.³³ Challinor did not voice any fears that the population of Queensland would be gravely endangered by the release of passengers from the Windsor Castle, though the need for protection for the country's permanent residents was implicit in all his arguments.

The situation with regard to typhoid fever had grown infinitely worse by 1878, in many parts of Australia. A survey organised in New South Wales by the management of the Australian Practitioner, the quarterly journal of medical, surgical, and sanitary science in the Australian colonies, revealed that typhoid fever headed the list of "prevailing preventable diseases" treated by doctors in the preceding twelve months.³⁴ The years 1877-1878 were also notable for the epidemic prevalence of typhoid fever in Victoria, admissions to the Melbourne hospital for 1878 reaching the highest level for any year between 1860 and 1883.³⁵ In Queensland, the need to deal promptly and efficiently with any severe outbreak of typhoid fever was brought home forcibly to the government by events in Toowoomba, early in that same year.

Toowoomba had "long enjoyed the reputation of being a healthy, salubrious town....free from contagious diseases of every kind".³⁶ This reputation had prevented the Public Health Act of 1872 - proclaimable in any part of the colony only when formidable epidemics threatened - from being extended to the town, and Toowoomba's health arrangements had been left in local government hands. Over one

- 32. Central Board of Health to Challinor, 17 Sep 1877, Q.S.A. COL/A 245, in-letter no.4542 of 1877.
- 33. Challinor to Colonial Secretary, 22 Sep 1877, Q.S.A. COL/A 245, in-letter no.4640 of 1877. A very incensed Challinor returned to the attack during the following year, see Challinor to Colonial Secretary, 11 May 1878, Q.S.A. COL/A 257, in-letter no. 1766 of 1878. Dr. Hickling, the ship's surgeon claimed that the patient contracted the disease through "nervous anxiety". Hickling to Colonial Secretary, 16 Sep 1877, Q.S.A. COL/A 245, in-letter no.1536 of 1877.
- 34. Quoted in The Brisbane Courier, 11 Feb 1878.
- 35. Cumpston and McCallum, pp.174-5.
- 36. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1878), 774.

hundred cases of typhoid fever,³⁷ which local medical men attributed directly to the pollution of the wells in the district, underlined a "state of affairs not very creditable /to those in charge/" of the sanitary affairs of the town",³⁸ and emphasised the need for central government interference, if the health of Toowoomba were to be restored. Towards the end of April it was reported that while the "semi-panic" lasted and "ratepayers would consider no measure too arbitrary", the council was moving to flush out some of the most noisome water channels. But there was no doubt that even these precautions would meet with stiff opposition when "frost had squashed the disease".

In the meantime, Toowoomba suffered under the rule of "King Typhoid". Cases were so numerous, that rather than estimate the number of families afflicted with the fever, "one counts the households where it is not".³⁹ This was a gloomy estimate of the health situation of a town which had "hitherto been held up as a sanatorium for the cooped up and enfeebled residents of Brisbane",⁴⁰ and by 26 April 1878, Premier John Douglas, who had a special interest in the Darling Downs area, was thoroughly alarmed. He was determined, not only to extend the Health Act to Toowoomba to pave the way for the appointment of a local board of health,⁴¹ but he also set up a special board of enquiry to investigate "the cause of the prevalence of typhoid fever at Toowoomba and... to report as to the best means to be adopted for the suppression of the same".⁴²

In spite of the obvious urgency of the matter, some members of the Legislative Assembly attacked the government over the appointment of this board, claiming that predictable findings made such appointments a "monstrous farce".⁴³ But in this case the government had acted

37. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1878), 769.

38. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Mar 1878.

39. Ibid., 27 Apr 1878.

40. Ibid., 16 May 1878; main editorial.

41. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1878), 49.

42. Under Colonial Secretary to John Garget, 26 Apr 1878, in Ibid., II (1878), 768 and Executive Council Minutes, 25 Apr 1878, Q.S.A. EXE/E 40.

43. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXV (1878), 71.

wisely and chosen well. It had set up a working board, two members of which - the Mayor of Toowoomba John Garget and the parliamentary representative William H. Groom - were familiar with local conditions. Together they could ably supplement the work of the third member, Dr. John Thomson, an acknowledged expert on typhoid fever.⁴⁴

The board's task was not an easy one, for theories on typhoid fever had been varied up to this time, and the bacillus involved was not discovered until Carl Eberth isolated it in 1880. But the board was offered plenty of advice. In the Queensland Legislative Assembly, laymen bandied words over the predisposing causes of typhoid fever,⁴⁵ and The Brisbane Courier offered a choice.

Opinions are divided as to whether ordinary decomposing sewage in water is sufficient to produce the disease, some authorities upholding the "emanation" theory, whilst others adhere entirely to the transmission theory. Probably both are right. There can be no doubt that the faecal impurities are a most favourable medium for the spread of typhoid poisons.

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But in Toowoomba in 1878, Dr. Thomson and his helpers acted upon the generally-accepted association of the disease and filth, and on "the first tentative working hypothesis /of medical scientists/ that typhoid fever was the result of drinking polluted water".⁴⁷

The board made house-to-house inspections, visited public institutions, Chinese gardens and the tanneries, inspected cesspools and wells, interviewed medical men practising in the town, the resident dispenser at the Toowoomba hospital, the inspector of police, the inspector of nuisances for the Toowoomba council, and the nightman. Dr. Thomson made assessments and eminently useful suggestions,⁴⁸ and the report was presented to the minister concerned on 6 May 1878. The board found four basic causes for the prevalence of typhoid fever in Toowoomba - drought, well water contamination, total neglect of ordinary cleanliness, and ignorance.⁴⁹

44. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXV (1878), 71.

45. Ibid., p.73.

46. The Brisbane Courier, 16 May 1878; main editorial. See also Maclagan, p.809, for an 1879 view.

47. Cumpston and McCallum, p.9.

48. Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, II (1878), 774.

49. Ibid., p.769.

The main source of water supply for the seven to eight hundred houses in the town was individual wells. These were very low, and were on an average only twenty feet from cesspits, which from carelessness and inattention, were in a disgusting state. The board, and some medical witnesses in the town, did not doubt that the wells were receiving a considerable amount of soakage from these filthy pits.⁵⁰ Lack of education on the proper disposal of the discharges of typhoid patients, which were thrown without disinfection into a common cesspit, had lamentable results. Combined with the "filthy pig-stys, dirty poultry houses, offensive middens,... putrefying accumulations of fruit and vegetables, ill-kept drains and stagnating slop-water and slime", they had led to a situation in which "anything in the way of disease or death might most naturally be expected".⁵¹ One disturbing feature of the report was the revelation of the filthiness of a number of government and public buildings. The immigration depot, which temporarily housed many of the migrants who were accused of spreading the disease, was "simply disgraceful". Banks and offices were also conspicuous for lack of cleanliness, and the huge slop-pit at the Toowoomba hospital, where the majority of the typhoid fever patients were being cared for, was in a state of "stagnant putrescence".⁵²

The board's report, which was almost entirely the work of its medical member,⁵³ was described by The Brisbane Courier as a "most important one that all of our local authorities should take note of",⁵⁴ by The Lancet as "interesting",⁵⁵ and by Cumpston and McCallum as "succinct and forcible".⁵⁶ It recommended the total abolition of all cesspits and the substitution of the dry earth closet system, the proper disposal of slop water, a ban on the use of the well water supplies in favour of reservoir water or rain water from tanks, the supervision of all Chinamen's gardens, and a prohibition on the keeping of pigs in the town area. It stressed the need for a system of registration of disease, a matter which was of "the very utmost importance

50. Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, II (1878), 769 and 770.

51. Ibid., p.770.

52. Ibid., pp.770 and 772.

53. Ibid., p.774.

54. The Brisbane Courier, 16 May 1878; main editorial.

55. The Lancet, 13 Nov 1880, p.790.

56. Cumpston and McCallum, p.314.

if any attempt /was/ to be made to check or stamp out contagious or infectious disease". It urged the proclamation of the Toowoomba district under the Health Act of 1872, and the appointment of a qualified inspector of nuisances.⁵⁷ It suggested that Queensland school children should be instructed on the subjects of food, water, air, exercise, dress, ventilation and drainage, in an attempt to wipe out the ignorance evident everywhere, and to teach the necessity for scrupulous cleanliness, not only of individuals, but of their houses, yards and general surroundings.⁵⁸

The question of standards of cleanliness in the Toowoomba district state school buildings, a matter which had been of public concern and complaint for some time,⁵⁹ was also raised in the report. One school in particular, where "the accommodation for the pupils was something abominable, 300 children using one apartment for the calls of nature",⁶⁰ was suspected by the people of Toowoomba generally and Dr. John Thomson, of being the source of the 1878 typhoid fever outbreak.⁶¹ At the height of the epidemic, all Toowoomba schools were temporarily closed. Following this closure and the commencement of cooler weather, the numbers of typhoid fever cases in Toowoomba began to fall rapidly, and despite the sense of urgency with which the government had initiated their enquiry, and the stress which the board had laid on bringing Toowoomba under the 1872 Health Act, the government delayed proclamation of the town until 17 November 1878.⁶²

Unfortunately for Toowoomba, neither the Act, nor the local board of health formed under it,⁶³ could ensure immunity from typhoid fever. By 1884, typhoid was again prevalent in the town and on the Downs. Toowoomba's Mayor blamed the lack of proper management, and the central government failure to confirm urgently needed, effective by-laws for the prevalence of the disease. Without co-operation between central

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- 57. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1878), 770-71.
 - 58. Ibid., pp.770, 773, and 774.
 - 59. The Brisbane Courier, 11 May 1878. Complaints were made to the Minister for Education, but to no avail.
 - 60. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXV (1878), 74.
 - 61. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1878), 774
 - 62. Queensland Government Gazette, XXIII (1878), 1021.
 - 63. Minutes of Executive Council, 14 Nov 1878, Q.S.A. EXE/E 42.

and local bodies, the earth closets which had been advocated as a means of preventing the spread of typhoid fever in 1878, had deteriorated into "a most disgraceful condition", and were now alleged to be the chief means of dissemination of the disease.⁶⁴

One other provincial centre was, like Toowoomba, proclaimed under the Health Act of 1872 because of a severe outbreak of typhoid fever. In 1865,

Maryborough was the seaport to a large and fertile tract of country, and it was almost impossible to estimate the size and importance to which it would attain in a few years. It was anticipated that the new product of sugar growing, would alone render Maryborough the most important port in the colony.

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But Maryborough had the serious problem of a high sickness and death rate to overcome, if it were to realise its full potential. During the 1860's, there was a great deal of "fever" in the town,⁶⁶ which was blamed on impurities in the water supply. The sickness reached a peak in 1875, when torrential rain left a trail of damage and a thick coating of putrid mud. Local residents were first dismayed, and then alarmed, by the presence of typhoid fever in epidemic proportions, and Maryborough was proclaimed under the Health Act on 27 March 1875.⁶⁷ The town was still "suffering considerably" from the epidemic in June of that year,⁶⁸ and the combined efforts of the Maryborough Municipal Council and the Local Board of Health failed to effect any improvement to the defective state of the drainage of the place, which was assumed to be the cause of the continuing scourge.⁶⁹

The sanitary situation in the town did not improve much in the following years. "Intolerable nuisances" and stenches which "almost suffocated workers" and caused fevers and sickness were commonplace in the town, according to "Riflebutts", a correspondent to one local newspaper whose columns were "always open to prevent such abuses".⁷⁰

64. W.H. Groom to Colonial Secretary, 24 Apr 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 388, in-telegram no. 3122 of 1884.

65. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, II (1865), 603.

66. The Maryborough Chronicle, 12 Apr 1865.

67. Queensland Government Gazette, XVI (1875), 75.

68. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XVIII (1875), 447.

69. Ibid., p.474.

70. Maryborough and Dunolly Advertiser and Carisbrook, Timor, Majorca, Amhurst, Avoca and General Register, 25 Sep 1876; letter to editor from Riflebutts.

Voluminous correspondence between the Central and Local Boards of Health and the government failed to right the situation,⁷¹ and by 1882, both "fearful nuisances" and typhoid fever were still widespread in Maryborough.⁷²

Dr. Power, one of the medical members of the Local Board of Health, attempted to halt any further spread of the disease through the careful disposal of patients' excreta, and also proposed that all medical men should compulsorily report typhoid cases to local boards of health throughout Queensland.⁷³ This was represented to the Central Board of Health as an urgent matter, to be gazetted and enforced. A special sub-committee of the Maryborough board, including Dr. Power, was appointed to carry out the work locally, with some encouraging results.⁷⁴ But the excellent suggestion on the notification of disease was ignored by the central health authorities.

By 1883, typhoid fever had become extremely prevalent and fatal, not only in Queensland, but in all of the Australian colonies.⁷⁵ Realising that Maryborough could expect no respite, the council proposed a new set of by-laws for the municipality, under which it was hoped that health and other community affairs might be improved.⁷⁶ But largely for legal reasons, the government delayed the approval of these by-laws until September 1883.⁷⁷ By that time, through the ravages of drought and a general monetary depression which had led to the suspension of several of the town's largest industries, Maryborough's council was hardly in a position to carry out the reforms made possible under the by-laws, and all but essential sanitary works were brought to

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- 71. See for example, E.P. Wells, Honorary Secretary of Maryborough Local Board of Health, 2 Sep 1878, Q.S.A. COL/A 275, unnumbered in-letter of 1878, A. Rawlins to Under Colonial Secretary, 7 Apr 1879, Q.S.A. COL/A 275, in-letter no.1368 of 1879, E.P. Wells to Central Board of Health, 29 Mar 1879, Q.S.A. COL/A 275, in-letter no.1264 of 1879, and Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 23 Jul 1881, Q.S.A. COL/A 317, in-letter no.3217 of 1881.
 - 72. The Wide Bay and Burnett News, 22 Apr 1882.
 - 73. Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 23 Jul 1881, Q.S.A. COL/A 317, in-letter no.3217 of 1881.
 - 74. The Wide Bay and Burnett News, 13 May 1882.
 - 75. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1884), 155.
 - 76. Town Clerk Maryborough to Colonial Secretary, 9 May 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 368, in-letter no.2382 of 1883.
 - 77. Colonial Secretary to Town Clerk Maryborough, 17 Sep 1883, Q.S.A. COL/G 21, out-letter no.1643 of 1883.

a standstill.⁷⁸ During this period, when municipal neglect and private citizens' carelessness was "fully indicated by the beastly state of street gutters", the number of typhoid fever patients was very considerably above the average. In the opinion of The Maryborough Chronicle, this situation called for some special consideration - even from an impoverished local authority.⁷⁹

As the number of typhoid fever victims reached unprecedented heights, Maryborough was included in the list of towns which had the greatest loss of life from the disease.⁸⁰ The situation was such that the public analyst for the municipality, Daniel March, Ph.D, was convinced that even the district's cows, which were dying in considerable numbers, were suffering from typhoid fever! And in far off Charters Towers, where many typhoid cases had broken out owing to "the protracted drought and the neglect of the most ordinary sanitary precautions",⁸¹ the Maryborough situation was closely reported upon, as an example of what not to do in the case of typhoid fever outbreaks.⁸²

Typhoid was certainly making inroads in the provincial cities of Queensland. But the capital of the colony was also badly affected by the disease, which received special mention in the Registrar-General's weekly reports on Brisbane's health situation towards the end of 1882.⁸³ Early in the following year, the presence of typhoid fever in the city and nearby districts was causing some excitement. The Central Board of Health viewed "with dismay the ever-increasing cases of typhoid and enteric fever traceable entirely to deficient sanitary arrangements", and called on the Brisbane Local Board of Health "to thoroughly eradicate the numerous existing fever beds in this municipality".⁸⁴ To this end, the central board compiled amended regulations which it was hoped would ensure the better working of the Health Act, and prevent the accumulation of those nuisances which appeared to be causing the

78. The Maryborough Chronicle, 5 Oct 1883.

79. Ibid., 17 Oct 1883.

80. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 501.

81. The Northern Miner, 11 Jan 1884; editorial.

82. Ibid., 5 May 1884.

83. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Nov 1882; Minutes of Brisbane Local Board of Health, 1 Nov 1882.

84. Central Board of Health to Brisbane Local Board of Health, quoted in full in The Brisbane Courier, 20 Apr 1883.

rapid spread of the disease.⁸⁵ And people living in the vicinity of well-known nuisances, or those with specific health problems, took the opportunity to link the outbreak of typhoid fever with the furthering of their own causes, in the hope that the general alarm over the disease would hasten government or local authority action for nuisance removal.⁸⁶

Some people did reject the generally accepted opinion that typhoid was the result of bad smells and obnoxious effluvium". "Hygeia", for example, called on the city council and everyone else concerned with health matters, to look at the question from a scientific point of view.

Some people seem to think that mere filth itself will produce specific and contagious diseases.... The modern microscope has quite upset such a theory.... Typhoid can only come from typhoid germs.... Specific and contagious diseases are produced by minute living organisms which cannot be spontaneously generated Mere filth will not produce typhoid fever... but it may present a favourable medium in which the germ seeds will be well preserved... and a good medium of dissemination....⁸⁷

But the majority of the letters to the newspapers continued to deal with the old, familiar, offensive problems, which were literally right under Brisbane noses. A Brisbane Courier correspondent called attention to the bad state of the Normanby stockyards where dead sheep were left rotting in the sun, a nuisance which should certainly be removed "seeing that typhoid fever is very prevalent and so deadly in its effects".⁸⁸ Long-suffering residents of low-lying areas in Fortitude Valley and Spring Hill began to protest about "fever beds" which had existed for years, which they were now hopeful might finally be removed.⁸⁹ One of these, in Gloucester Lane, Spring Hill, was said to receive "the drainage of about fifty houses and form a fever breeding swamp containing the germs of typhoid and other deadly diseases".⁹⁰

Other specific instances of shockingly insanitary conditions, which it was alleged had led to a proliferation of typhoid fever germs, were supplied to The Brisbane Courier by medical men as a warning to

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- 85. Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 13 Apr 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 357, in-letter no.1795 of 1883.
 - 86. See for example, Petition of Residents and Freeholders of Booroodabin and Ithaca Divisions to Colonial Secretary, 14 Mar 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 355, in-letter no.1239 of 1883.
 - 87. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Jun 1883; letter to editor from Hygeia.
 - 88. Ibid., 6 Nov 1883; letter to editor from A. McLean.
 - 89. The Telegraph, 8 Oct 1883; letter to editor from W.P. Gordon.
 - 90. Ibid., 11 Oct 1883; letter to editor from R.E. Warwick.

all who should read of them. One of these was the infamous Herbert Street, Spring Hill, nuisance where, according to Dr. John Thomson, a child had died from typhoid fever, "poisoned by the foul gases arising" from closets nearby.⁹¹ Another example was supplied by Dr. Leighton Kesteven.

When the epidemic of typhoid fever is assuming such alarming proportions as it is now, very energetic efforts for the arrest of its extension are needed. Such a state of affairs as the following case... are not calculated to forward such ends.... In a shanty... on the Kelvin Grove Road, 8 feet by 5 feet in dimension, lived a man and his wife, three boys of from 3 to 7 years of age and a girl of 21.... Not unnaturally typhoid fever made its appearance, all or nearly all of the family being struck down by it. In the midst of this, the addition of an adult uncle from England was made to this snug party. Shortly afterwards the superior sanitary authority took steps to relieve the overcrowding, by removing two of the boys to a better world. The others are... convalescent now, but the wretched den, the sides of which consist of old sacks and blankets, the roof of kerosene tins, still stands, though the medical man in attendance ordered it to be burnt. As one result of this festering focus of disease, I am now attending a child suffering from typhoid fever in an adjacent house. How many more cases may spring from this is impossible to say.

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Such gross examples of insanitation and disease were not confined to the dwellings of the poor. The Brisbane Courier noted with regret "the existence of pestilential nuisances not only in the heart of the city but in the most fashionable neighbourhoods".⁹³ Breezy, hill-top homes were just as liable to attack as were houses in lowly-situated places. As Dr. Joseph Bancroft concluded, in an address to the Brisbane Local Board of Health, it was "very hard to say how typhoid fever comes or where from".⁹⁴

One local board of health on the outskirts of Brisbane was quite convinced that it had discovered the cause of an outbreak of typhoid amongst pupils attending public schools in its area. The Bulimba Board of Health had no doubt that the outbreak stemmed from the school tanks which were foul from years of neglect. Armed with the findings of the Brisbane City Council's analyst, that the tank was "unwholesome and likely to cause illness", the board approached the Education Department

91. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Apr 1883.

92. Ibid., 5 Nov 1883; letter to editor from Leighton Kesteven.

93. Ibid., 12 Oct 1883; sub editorial.

94. Ibid., 20 Apr 1883; Minutes of Local Board of Health, Brisbane, 19 Apr 1883.

for filters, only to receive an unsympathetic reply from the Under Secretary. A deputation to the Colonial Treasurer and Secretary for Education, Archibald Archer, was also unsuccessful. The minister, though considering it a "gross thing that children should have to drink impure water", was not convinced that the government should provide the remedy. One of the great drawbacks of paternal government was that parents "neglected their duty to their children and threw them on the state." It was the business of school committees to cleanse the tanks and provide the filters.⁹⁵

Shortly afterwards, this same conservative government, led by Thomas McIlwraith, decided to discontinue the proclamation of the 1872 Health Act, doing away with local boards of health, and leaving the conservation of public health, as tradition demanded, "entirely to the local bodies elected by the ratepayers".⁹⁶ The Brisbane City Council did make some attempt to cope with the urgent typhoid problem, passing a new by-law by special order.⁹⁷ But according to The Brisbane Courier, matters seemed to grow worse daily, as the fever carried off victims from even the "supposed salubrious heights" of the city.⁹⁸ Correspondents to newspapers were also deeply disturbed by what they saw as lack of action on the part of the Brisbane council.

Don't the Rip van Winkles care that hundreds of children die... or that affliction, poverty and desolation are brought to hundreds of homes by disease.... Do they now want to see the adult portions of the population decimated by typhoid... and a few hundred orphans thrown on the world?

"Citizen" thundered. When the board of health was in authority, the aldermen were always lamenting that they were powerless. But the council now had its powers over the public health fully restored, and there was still no improvement.⁹⁹ As far as "An Old Scavenger" was concerned, the corporation was guilty of a "pernicious folly", for

95. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Feb 1883.

96. Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Department to Central Board of Health, 28 Apr 1883, Q.S.A. COL/G 20, out-letter no.750 of 1883.

97. Town Clerk, Brisbane City Council to Colonial Secretary, 17 Jul 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 365, in-letter no.3684 of 1883.

98. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Oct 1883; sub editorial.

99. Ibid., 20 Dec 1883; letter to editor from Citizen.

so much unnecessary stink was made and so much needless dirt was lying about. There were several wholesome provisions in the city by-laws not one of which was carried out owing to the municipal mind interposing its hugger mugger. 100

"An Old Scavenger's" assessment of the situation was not entirely correct. The city's nuisance inspectors had been extremely busy investigating backyards and shops under the by-laws, and these diligent efforts had led to a number of convictions.¹⁰¹ One of these, denoted by Mr. Day the police magistrate as "the worst case in all my experience", concerned the burial of highly offensive nightsoil in the tiny backyard of a home where one child was a certified victim of typhoid fever.¹⁰²

In spite of increased inspectorial activities, the conviction of certain offenders, and some attempts to rectify the most glaringly offensive nuisances, the Brisbane City Council continued to be the main target for criticism during this period, as the newspapers, individual protesters, and combinations of ratepayers, tried to ensure that "this terrible but entirely preventible disease /typhoid/ should not be allowed to spread".¹⁰³ But, the government itself was not free from the charge that neglect, improper drainage, and insanitary conditions in public buildings, provided foci for the dissemination of typhoid fever. Nor did the central government always co-operate with local authorities to remove reported nuisances, even though most medical men and laymen accepted a mixture of the miasmatic and germ theories of disease propagation, and laid the blame for the continued spread of typhoid on these "fever beds". The government had, for example, erected a number of water closets in the Queensland treasury buildings, in close proximity to the river, though such installations connected to public drains were contrary to the Brisbane City Council's by-laws.¹⁰⁴

100. The Brisbane Courier, 20 Dec 1883; letter to editor from An Old Scavenger (name supplied).

101. Ibid., 21 Dec 1883.

102. Robert Gowdy to Dr. Bancroft, 17 Oct 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 377, no numbers given.

Memorial from Robert Gowdy to Colonial Secretary, 20 Dec 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 377, in-letter no.6756 of 1883.

Report on Petition from Mr. Gowdy by Mr. Day, P.M., 2 Jan 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 377, in-letter no.78 of 1884.

Also attached are medical certificate of 11 Jan 1884, and testimonial of John Hardgrave, Inspector of Nuisances for the Brisbane City Council.

103. See especially The Brisbane Courier, 9 Jan 1884, for a report on a very well attended meeting of North Ward ratepayers.

104. Municipality of Brisbane, Bye-Law No.5, Clause 6.

Concerned over the obvious breach, and convinced that the closets were an offensive menace to health, the council requested their immediate removal,¹⁰⁵ but the colonial architect, I.J. Clark, demurred. In his view, the water closets were far superior to the earth closets then in use in the same reserve. Certainly no one but the council inspector had made any complaint. There were only four water closets involved, and their conversion into earth closets would cost the considerable sum of eighteen pounds - perhaps the most persuasive argument as far as government officials were concerned. Clark suggested that the council's objections be overridden and that the water closets be kept, as and where they were.¹⁰⁶

But one of the worst instances of government neglect of filthy and overcrowded conditions was uncovered in the immigration depot. This building was allegedly "saturated with typhoid germs", which had already accounted for the grave illnesses of several officials,¹⁰⁷ not to speak of a considerable number of unfortunate immigrants. Added to the problem of the actual cases was the fear that the newcomers who had been kept cooped up in the grossly insanitary surroundings would "go from the Depot carrying the poison in their systems to private homes in town and country".¹⁰⁸ The Brisbane Courier was concerned that something should be done as soon as possible to right this evil, lest the colony's climate get a bad name, when in fact the defects "were entirely due to the neglect of those charged with the administration of public affairs".¹⁰⁹ A number of parliamentarians were also sufficiently convinced of the depot's potential threat to form a deputation to wait on William Miles, the Minister for Works.¹¹⁰ Their object was the removal of the immigrants from the depot, which, as William Brookes impressed on the minister, had neither proper lavatories, nor adequate laundries.¹¹¹

105. Complaint No.156 from Inspector Alex Noble of Municipality to Mr. Gee, undated, Q.S.A. WOR/A 216, in-letter no.2970 of 1883. Mr. Gee's notation on the complaint is dated 28 Nov 1883.

106. I.J. Clark, Colonial Architect to Under Secretary for Works, 19 Dec 1883, Q.S.A. WOR/A 216, in-memorandum no.3224 of 1883.

107. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Dec 1883; sub editorial.

108. Ibid.

109. Ibid.

110. Miles saw the deputation of members of the Legislative Assembly, William Brookes, Simon Fraser, Francis Beattie, and a Mr. R.P. Adams, in his capacity as Acting Colonial Secretary. MacDonald Patterson and J.F. Buckland, also of the Assembly, were very troubled about the depot, but were unable to be present at the interview.

111. The Brisbane Courier, 22 Dec 1883.

The prolonged and vociferous calls for action from the press and other interested parties,¹¹² and the obvious reluctance of Queensland landlords to let their premises to immigrants who had been housed temporarily at the depot,¹¹³ finally prodded the government into action, and the immigration agent was instructed to report on the depot. The agent attempted to shift some of the blame for the only-too-obvious insanitation onto the immigrants themselves, pointing out that the married quarters were "always dirty, for there are so many children lodged there, and the mothers are so careless of the cleanliness of their quarters". Similarly, although everything within reason was done for the convenience of the single men, "in water closet matters... they preferred to make the place as filthy as lay within their power".¹¹⁴

Even so, the agent could not deny that changes were necessary. Bathing accommodation was certainly "indifferent", and the supply of water to the closets was "inadequate".¹¹⁵ More deficiencies were revealed, apparently inadvertently, by the colonial architect's memorandum on the very restricted improvements which were ordered by the government, on receipt of the report.¹¹⁶ In the architect's opinion, complaints from migrants about lack of privacy could not be remedied, because the place was "barely ventilated now", and the erection of divisions would prevent any free circulation of air.¹¹⁷ Moreover, extra partitions would make the married quarters far too dark, for the place was "only just sufficiently lighted now".¹¹⁸

The unsatisfactory government provision for new settlers, which posed definite dangers for established colonists as well, was now officially confirmed; yet the immigration agent deplored newspaper attempts to make these dangerous inadequacies public, with an attack on the

112. See for example, Ibid., 18 Dec 1885; letter to editor from A Correspondent, Ibid., 31 Dec 1883; letter to editor from Knocked Down, and Ibid., 17 Jan 1884; letter to editor from Hygeia.

113. Ibid., 11 Jan 1884.

114. Report of the Immigration Agent to Colonial Secretary, 24 Jan 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 383, in-letter no.637 of 1884.

115. Ibid.

116. Marginal comment on above. Only the water closet accommodation was to be put right, but it was to be done at once.

117. Memorandum on the Immigration Depot from Colonial Architect to Colonial Secretary, 7 Feb 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 383, in-letter no.1017 of 1884.

118. Second Report from Colonial Architect to Colonial Secretary, 20 Feb 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 383, in-letter no.1529 of 1884.

foolish and utterly unsupported outcry against this building on the part of the press of the colony... that it is a nest of typhoid fever, completely unfit for occupation by immigrants. It is true that at least two cases of typhoid have been contracted in this building. It is equally true that the large numbers of cases sent hence to hospital (correctly recorded) have been brought by the ships themselves. 119

Whatever the cause of Queensland's typhoid problem, the situation was so bad by 1884 that newspapers, which normally concerned themselves with special interests, began to express fears about the dangers posed by the disease to the public health. The Catholic organ, The Australian for example, devoted an editorial to the subject, stressing the widespread nature of the sickness in towns throughout the whole of Queensland.¹²⁰ Certainly "typhoid was stalking through the colony in a free and easy manner... with the terrible pestilence striking everywhere".¹²¹

In the north, the ravages of typhoid were very serious, Townsville and Charters Towers being particularly affected. In both towns, local authorities desperately sought the advice of medical men as to the best means of arresting the disease.¹²² In Warwick and Toowoomba, a virulent type of typhoid fever was making "its baleful power felt",¹²³ the Toowoomba outbreak being blamed on the central government's tardiness in dealing with the by-law question.¹²⁴ Ipswich was "badly afflicted",¹²⁵ and Gympie had the "fell disease" in its midst, "causing a great deal of uneasiness... since there was not the slightest sign of abatement but rather the reverse".¹²⁶ Another coastal town, Bundaberg, was recording a high incidence of the disease and many deaths,¹²⁷ the difficulties

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- 119. Report of Immigration Agent to Colonial Secretary, 24 Jan 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 383, in-letter no.637 of 1884.
 - 120. The Australian, 3 May 1884; main editorial. The editor proposed to continue his discussion over the following issues, but does not appear to have done so; nor did he discuss the Public Health Act of 1884, which, in part, resulted from fears over the severe typhoid outbreak.
 - 121. The Queensland Times, 1 May 1884; main editorial.
 - 122. The Northern Miner, 29 Mar 1884; editorial, and Ibid., 9 May 1884; editorial.
 - 123. The Queensland Times, 3 Apr 1884; editorial.
 - 124. W.H. Groom. Mayor of Toowoomba to Colonial Secretary, 28 Apr 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 388, in-telegram no.3112 of 1884.
 - 125. The Queensland Times, 3 Apr 1884; editorial.
 - 126. Ibid., 1 May 1884.
 - 127. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1885, p.174.

being aggravated in that city, as they were in Maryborough,¹²⁸ by the numbers of Polynesians who had succumbed to the diseases.¹²⁹

Enormous as the problem on the periphery was, no place was attacked in greater force than that "city of sin, smells and sorrow",¹³⁰ the capital of the colony. Consternation over the epidemic prevalence of typhoid fever forced the always reluctant chairman of the Central Board of Health, Samuel Griffith, to the board's April meeting,¹³¹ where he initiated a special committee of enquiry into the disease.¹³² Three members of the central board, Drs. Cannan, Marks and Thomson, were nominated for the task.

The doctors commenced to plan their strategy at once, but did not report to the government until August of that year. If the report is to be believed, the medical gentlemen tackled their task manfully. They inspected unsavoury and insanitary lodging and boarding houses in the most populous parts of the city; they looked into the waste disposal methods and the water supply in Brisbane; and they examined the production and storage conditions in Brisbane and suburban dairies.¹³³ Nevertheless the report afforded few positive results. The committee's findings echoed the uncertainty felt by many of Queensland's medical men, whose conflicting views on the causes and cures for typhoid had

128. The Colonist, 24 Nov 1884; sub editorial.

129. Report of Enquiry into the deposit of nightsoil on Avoca Millbank Plantation to Colonial Secretary, 6 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 400, in-letter no.6317 of 1884. The whole question of Bundaberg nightsoil disposal, the liability of council contractors, and the general sanitary conditions of the town was thrashed out over one particular Polynesian death, which the police magistrate refused to admit was caused by typhoid. Johnston, Police Magistrate to Colonial Secretary, 5 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 400, in-letter no.6188 of 1884, and R. Thompson, Town Clerk, to Police Magistrate, 3 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 400 unnumbered letter.

130. The Queensland Times, 3 Apr 1884; editorial.

131. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Apr 1883; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 24 Apr 1883.

132. Ibid., and Cumpston and McCallum, p.315.

133. "The Prevalence of Typhoid Fever in Brisbane and Suburbs", Votes And Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, III (1884), 885.

RETURN for FIVE YEARS showing the NUMBER of DEATHS from some of the principal Causes in the order of the Degree of Fatality; also their Proportion per 10,000 of the TOTAL DEATHS and MEAN POPULATION respectively for each of the YEARS 1885-89.

Most Common Causes of Death.	1885.			1886.			1887.			1888.			1889.			
	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	
Phthisis	693	951.08	18.62	494	846.09	14.86	411	853.66	12.43	402	859.83	13.04	470	766.17	11.84	
Diarrhoea	363	582.20	11.40	335	600.90	10.04	317	613.63	8.01	375	678.21	9.04	414	724.07	11.18	
Convulsions	352	561.55	11.05	322	577.08	9.68	292	565.23	8.24	334	604.09	8.85	311	556.10	8.59	
Typhoid Fever ...	197	315.96	6.19	301	315.29	9.11	137	265.20	3.86	163	294.81	4.32	252	459.86	7.10	
Enteritis	89	142.74	2.80	106	156.13	3.19	114	220.67	3.21	147	265.87	3.90	217	402.80	6.22	
Premature Birth ...	120	192.46	3.77	133	238.57	4.00	123	235.10	3.47	161	206.62	4.35	239	389.76	6.02	
Pneumonia	234	373.30	7.35	135	212.15	4.06	170	329.07	4.79	247	416.74	6.55	222	362.04	5.59	
Dysentery	310	497.19	9.74	216	367.44	6.50	163	315.52	4.59	178	321.94	4.72	209	340.83	5.26	
Tetanus	180	285.69	5.66	182	326.46	6.17	195	353.28	5.58	181	327.36	4.80	205	334.31	5.16	
Bronchitis	139	222.94	4.37	110	213.43	3.59	149	259.42	4.20	172	311.09	4.56	155	252.77	3.90	
Other Diseases of the Circulatory System	195	312.75	6.12	208	373.00	6.26	196	379.40	5.52	127	229.70	3.37	147	239.73	3.70	
Drowning (Accidental)	140	224.54	4.40	144	258.30	4.33	205	396.83	5.78	123	222.46	3.26	132	215.26	3.32	
Cancer	53	85.00	1.66	92	165.02	2.77	81	150.79	2.28	88	150.16	2.33	130	212.00	3.27	
Senile Decay and Old Age	130	208.50	4.08	120	215.23	3.61	108	209.06	3.04	125	226.08	3.31	105	171.23	2.64	
Simple and Illdefined Fever	252	404.17	7.91	104	186.55	3.13	108	209.06	3.04	65	117.56	1.72	103	167.97	2.59	
Want of Breast Milk	30	48.12	0.94	31	60.90	1.02	69	133.57	1.94	65	117.56	1.72	100	163.08	2.52	
Tuberculosis ...	101	161.99	3.17	102	182.96	3.07	126	213.90	3.55	115	207.99	3.05	95	154.92	2.39	
Other Diseases of the Respiratory System	143	229.35	4.49	91	163.23	2.74	105	203.25	2.06	112	202.57	2.97	93	151.66	2.34	
Diphtheria	87	139.53	2.73	98	175.78	2.95	94	181.96	2.65	86	155.54	2.28	90	146.77	2.27	
Alcoholism	71	113.87	2.23	58	104.04	1.74	45	87.11	1.27	65	117.56	1.72	67	141.88	2.19	
Tuber. Mesenterica	87	139.53	2.73	61	109.42	1.83	62	120.03	1.75	64	115.75	1.70	84	136.99	2.12	
Whooping Cough ...	28	44.91	0.88	62	111.21	1.86	60	116.14	1.60	73	132.03	1.94	83	135.36	2.09	
Croup	121	194.07	3.80	102	182.96	3.07	65	125.82	1.83	70	126.61	1.86	75	122.31	1.89	
Inflammation of Brain or its Membranes	84	134.72	3.64	75	134.53	2.26	79	132.92	2.33	97	175.44	2.57	74	120.68	1.86	
Sunstroke	41	65.76	1.29	37	66.37	1.11	34	65.81	0.96	44	79.58	1.17	70	114.16	1.76	
Apoplex	57	91.42	1.79	50	89.69	1.50	65	125.82	1.83	59	106.71	1.56	63	102.74	1.59	
Peritonitis	47	75.38	1.48	37	66.37	1.11	27	52.26	0.76	40	72.35	1.06	51	83.17	1.28	
Recurrent Fever ...	29	46.51	0.91	30	53.81	0.90	21	40.65	0.59	56	101.28	1.48	39	61.97	0.96	
Childbirth	49	78.59	1.54	34	60.99	1.02	29	56.14	0.82	36	65.11	0.95	35	57.03	0.88	
Atrophy	35	56.13	1.10	116	208.07	3.49	36	69.69	1.01	11	19.90	0.29	21	34.25	0.53	
Total Deaths of each Year from all Causes	6,235	...	5,575	...	5,166	...	5,629	...	6,132	...						
Mean Population of each Year	...	318,415	...	332,510	...	354,777	...	377,201	...	397,061	...					

No. 12. "Registrar-General's Report, 1889", Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, II (1890), 1235.

RETURNS FOR FIVE YEARS showing the Number of Deaths from some of the principal Causes in the order of the Degrees of Mortality in 1894; also their Proportion per 10,000 of the Total Deaths and Mean Population respectively for each of the Years 1890-94.

Most Common Cause of Death.	1890.		1891.		1892.		1893.		1894.		
	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	
Phtisis ...	515	913.52	12.42	501	969.05	12.35	423	803.27	10.17	476	835.82
Pneumonia ...	250	413.42	6.03	171	330.75	4.22	224	425.37	5.30	261	458.30
Convulsions ...	273	494.86	6.73	216	417.79	5.34	283	337.41	6.81	266	467.07
Diarrhoea ...	320	567.58	7.72	301	582.24	7.11	257	388.01	6.18	272	477.61
Enteritis ...	134	247.67	3.23	98	189.56	2.42	172	516.50	6.51	232	437.90
Bronchitis ...	180	335.23	4.56	174	336.56	4.30	166	315.23	3.99	148	259.68
Cancer ...	117	207.52	2.82	134	259.19	3.31	130	246.87	3.13	121	212.47
Premature Birth ...	214	379.57	5.16	176	310.43	4.35	165	313.33	3.97	192	337.14
Drowning (Accidental)	340	603.03	8.20	137	264.99	3.35	127	241.17	3.05	170	314.31
Endocarditis, Valvular Disease of the Heart	66	117.06	1.59	86	160.34	2.12	63	157.61	1.90	131	230.03
Influenza, Coryza, Catarrh	44	78.04	1.06	31	59.96	0.76	47	80.25	1.13	52	91.31
Diphtheria ...	162	287.31	3.91	157	303.68	3.88	107	203.19	2.57	106	186.13
Measles ...	148	262.50	3.57	156	301.74	3.85	165	313.33	3.97	186	326.60
Other Diseases of the Circulatory System	138	214.77	3.33	127	245.65	3.11	152	288.61	3.66	120	210.71
Typhoid or Enteric Fever	103	182.69	2.48	106	205.03	2.62	121	235.47	2.98	100	191.30
Dentition ...	160	283.79	3.86	143	276.00	3.53	124	235.47	2.98	110	193.15
Dysentery ...	148	262.50	3.57	156	301.74	3.85	165	313.33	3.97	206	361.72
Other Tubercular Diseases, Serofulosis, &c.	93	161.95	2.24	67	129.59	1.66	97	181.20	2.33	95	166.81
Inflammation of Brain or its Meninges	64	113.52	1.54	53	102.52	1.31	52	98.75	1.25	60	121.16
Apoxy ...	62	109.97	1.49	56	108.32	1.38	66	125.33	1.59	77	135.21
Remittent Fever ...	63	111.74	1.52	38	73.50	0.94	55	104.41	1.32	50	87.80
Other Diseases of Respiratory System	66	117.06	1.59	51	98.65	1.26	55	101.44	1.32	45	79.02
Bright's Disease ...	40	70.05	0.96	53	102.51	1.31	29	55.07	0.60	50	87.80
Want of Breast Milk	68	120.61	1.64	64	123.79	1.55	66	125.33	1.59	67	117.65
Other Diseases of Liver	56	99.33	1.35	56	108.32	1.35	70	132.93	1.68	44	77.26
Debilis ...	34	60.31	0.82	57	110.25	1.41	68	129.13	1.63	64	112.38
Tubes Mesentericae	55	102.87	1.40	45	87.04	1.11	32	60.77	0.77	62	105.87
Total Deaths of all Causes	5,635	...	5,170	...	5,206	...	5,095	...	5,298	...	
Mean Population of each Year	414,716	...	404,772	...	415,813	...	426,795	...	438,727	...	

No. 12(a). "Registrar-General's Report, 1894", Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, III (1895), XXXV.

been well and truly aired in the newspapers of the capital.¹³⁴ Drs. Cannan, Thomson and Marks desired

to represent that any inquiry as to the exact cause or origin of typhoid fever was futile, because we are still in the dark on the subject of the spontaneous origin of typhoid fever..../but though we cannot account for the cause, or prevent the periodic occurrence of epidemic diseases, the sanitarian has learnt how to mitigate the severity of the visitation by clearing away those foulnesses upon which these maladies feed, and that pure air and pure water afford almost absolute safeguards against most forms of zymotic disease. ¹³⁵

Even before this "well intentioned but rather impractical report" from those foremost in public health affairs was openly revealed,¹³⁶ two demands began to appear in the Queensland press. One was the call for the appointment of a medical adviser to the government on sufficient salary that he need not undertake other work.¹³⁷ The other was an urgent request for the bringing down of new, effective legislation, the present "Health Act and the Boards established under it having proved unequal to the work".¹³⁸

The difficulties and inadequacies which had been evident to many Queenslanders for so long, and which were highlighted by the typhoid epidemic, were belatedly acknowledged by the government, and a new Health Act was passed in 1884. The main object of the new Act was to bestow sufficient powers on central and local governments, and on the boards

134. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jun 1884; sub editorial. The Courier had kept its columns "freely open... to wide discussion" of the disease, until it feared that the readers of the journal would "probably be surfeited by letters concerning typhoid fever and the repulsive details necessarily dwelt on". See Ibid., 13 Jun 1884; main editorial. There were far too many letters published for any useful discussion of their contents to be entered into here. Many of the letters came from interested laymen, but there were many more from medical men. For a sampling of letters from these doctors, see the following which are all taken from the same newspaper.
The Brisbane Courier, 26 Feb 1884; letter to editor from Hugh Bell, M.D., F.R.C.S.
Ibid., 24 Mar 1884; and 12 Jun 1884; letters to editor from J.E. Matthew Vincent.
Ibid., 15 May 1884, 17 May 1884, 22 May 1884, and 10 Jun 1884; letters to editor from Dr. Joseph Bancroft.
Ibid., 18 May 1884; letter to editor from Leighton Kesteven attacking Bancroft.
Ibid., 19 May 1884 and 7 Jun 1884; letter to editor from J. de Vis, F.R.C.S., also differing in opinion from Bancroft.
135. "The Prevalence of Typhoid Fever in Brisbane and Suburbs", Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, III (1884), 885 and 886.
136. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jun 1884; sub editorial.
137. Ibid.
138. The Northern Miner, 5 Mar 1884; editorial.

RETURNS FOR FIVE YEARS showing the NUMBER of DEATHS from some of the principal Causes in the order of the Degree of FATALITY in 1898; also their Proportion per 10,000 of the TOTAL Deaths and 100,000 of the MEAN POPULATION respectively for each of the Years 1894-98.

Most Common Cause of Death.	1894.			1895.			1896.			1897.			1898.			
	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 100,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 100,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 100,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 100,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 100,000 of the Mean Population.	
Phthisis ...	446	812	102	420	815	93	444	787	95	418	771	87	421	674	85	
Pneumonia ...	301	568	69	299	580	66	377	608	81	331	610	69	362	580	73	
Enteritis ...	216	408	49	188	365	41	218	439	53	236	372	53	310	515	69	
Influenza, Coryza, Catarrh	121	228	28	64	124	14	79	140	17	29	53	6	262	420	53	
Cancer ...	157	296	36	180	367	42	183	324	30	187	345	39	229	367	46	
Diarrhoea ...	232	438	53	223	433	49	245	505	61	291	537	61	227	364	46	
Premature Birth ...	157	296	36	173	336	38	197	349	42	205	378	43	199	319	40	
Endocarditis, Valvular Disease	123	232	28	160	311	35	199	353	43	192	354	40	196	314	40	
Bronchitis ...	202	381	46	160	311	35	163	289	35	163	301	34	188	301	38	
Convulsions ...	235	444	54	211	409	47	199	353	43	178	328	37	180	288	37	
Typhoid or Enteric Fever	102	192	23	72	149	16	130	230	28	183	337	38	149	239	30	
Circulatory System, other diseases of	111	210	25	142	276	31	160	283	34	158	291	33	148	237	30	
Whooping Cough ...	35	66	8	128	248	28	65	115	14	42	77	9	146	234	30	
Mawas ...	113	213	26	2	4	138	221	28	
Drowning (Accident)	137	259	31	104	210	24	159	282	34	101	186	21	127	203	26	
Bright's Disease ...	61	115	14	71	138	16	92	163	20	95	175	20	113	181	23	
Apoplexy ...	72	136	16	83	161	18	82	145	18	106	195	22	104	167	21	
Dysentery ...	91	172	20	115	223	25	90	159	19	64	118	13	97	155	20	
Dentition ...	95	187	23	88	171	19	107	190	23	75	138	16	88	141	18	
Dengue Fever	26	50	5	4	7	1	97	179	20	87	110	18	
Scarlet Fever	1	2	...	1	2	87	140	18	
Tuberculosis (other forms of) Scrofula	86	162	20	67	130	15	88	156	19	67	124	14	84	135	17	
Senile Decay ...	49	92	11	53	103	12	64	113	14	72	133	15	73	117	15	
Diphtheria ...	113	215	27	67	130	15	31	55	7	42	77	9	70	112	14	
Inflammation of Brain or its Membranes	75	142	17	82	159	18	83	147	18	60	111	12	66	106	13	
Tubes Mesenterica	52	98	12	51	99	11	53	94	11	54	100	11	66	106	13	
Disease of Stomach	48	91	11	42	81	9	54	96	12	33	61	7	55	88	11	
Starvation (Want of Breast-milk)	56	106	13	62	120	14	50	89	11	43	79	9	43	69	9	
Epilepsy ...	26	49	6	31	60	7	28	50	6	39	70	8	43	69	9	
Burn (Accident) ...	46	87	10	60	116	13	40	71	7	9	35	65	7	43	69	9
Total Deaths of all Causes	5,298	...	5,152	...	5,645	...	5,423	...	6,243	...	6,243	...	6,243	...	6,243	...
Mean Population of each Year	438,727	...	452,852	...	466,364	...	478,440	...	492,602	...	492,602	...	492,602	...	492,602	...

No. 13. "Registrar-General's Report, 1898", Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, II (1899), xxii.

appointed by them, to deal with those preventable diseases which had "caused the greatest loss of life,... especially typhoid fever, which during last summer proved more deadly than many diseases that are regarded by the public with much greater alarm".¹³⁹ Within and outside of parliament, typhoid fever was seen as a menace which could not be effectively attacked and subdued, without the added powers bestowed by the new health provisions.¹⁴⁰

But neither this Act, nor the much more comprehensive legislation of 1900, proved to be the panacea which would enable the authorities to rid Queensland of typhoid fever. The lack of adequate figures before the introduction of compulsory disease notification under the Health Act of 1900, makes it difficult to assess the true incidence of the disease in the colony during the rest of the nineteenth century, though the death-rate was very high indeed.¹⁴¹ For the years 1901 to 1916 inclusive, typhoid topped the lists of notified, communicable diseases, for twelve of the sixteen years.¹⁴²

As the century progressed, newspaper comment, correspondence of interested readers, warnings of doctors and the Central Board of Health, and vilification of local authorities, on whose negligence the continued presence of typhoid fever was blamed, have a familiar ring, and only a few examples are included here. Correspondents attacked the "disgusting and dangerous" methods of the Brisbane City Council's sanitary service, and laxness of the central board, which "spread infection abroad so manifestly".¹⁴³ Indeed, The Brisbane Courier was afraid that typhoid fever had taken up its abode permanently in Brisbane,¹⁴⁴ and Dr. Bancroft regretfully announced that the disease was rife in the state schools,¹⁴⁵ a circumstance which was inevitable, according to The Boomerang, which

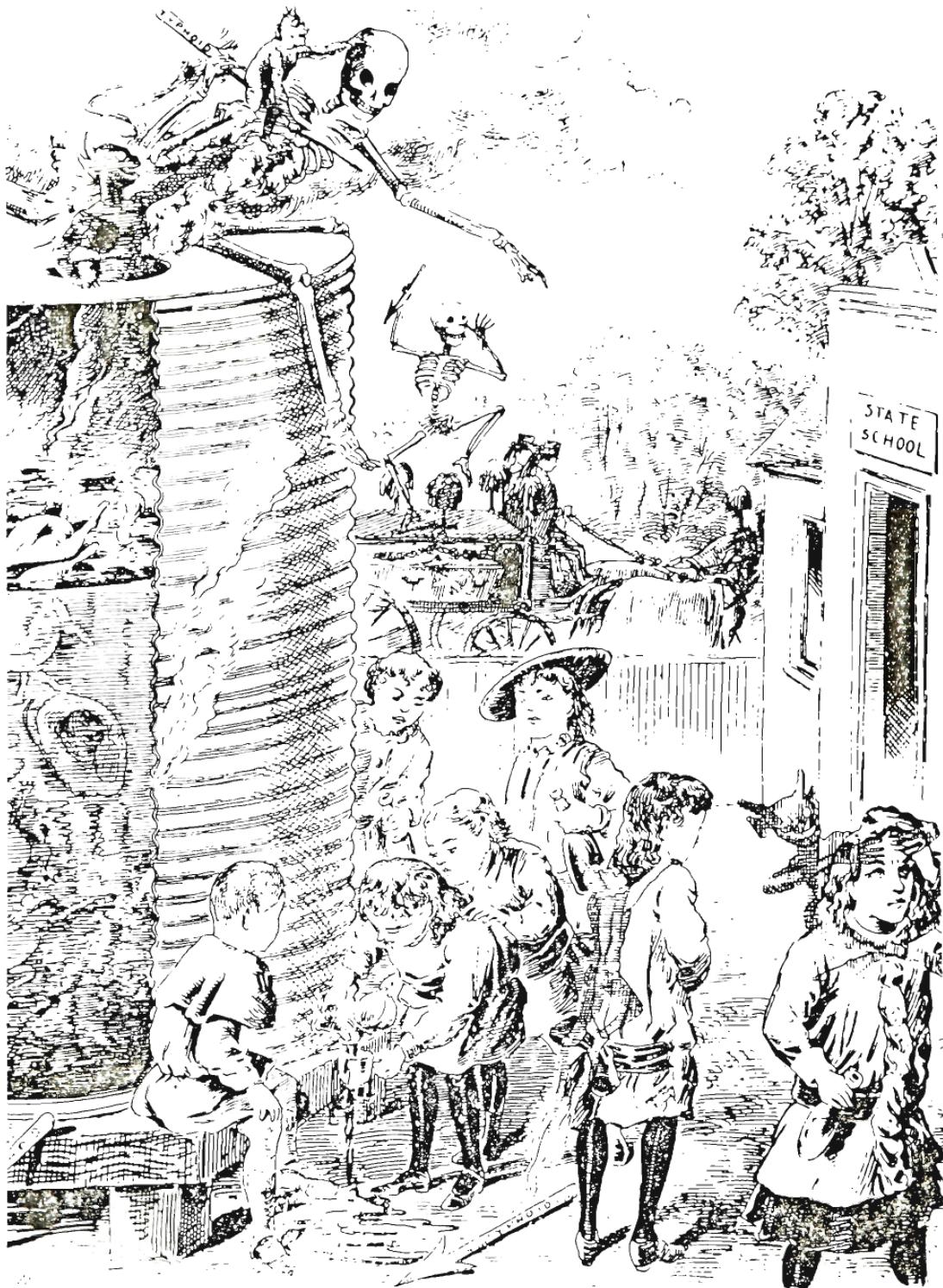
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- 139. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 501.
 - 140. Memorandum on the Health Bill for the use of the Colonial Secretary from Dr. Joseph Bancroft to Colonial Secretary, 1 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 404, in-letter no.7385 of 1884.
 - 141. See the various tables from Registrar-General's Reports given as examples.
 - 142. See Within, p.143. Diphtheria had a higher incidence during 1910-11, 1912-13, 1913-14, and 1914-15.
 - 143. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Nov 1885; letter to editor from Indignant.
 - 144. Ibid., 4 Jan 1886; sub editorial.
 - 145. Ibid., 18 Dec 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 17 Dec 1886.

A LITTLE PAPER IN THE CIVIL



SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 1889.

Price, :



DEATH SITS ON THE UNCLEAN TANK.

No. 14. The Boomerang, 16 March, 1889.

alleged that the polluted water in school water tanks was teeming with typhoid germs.¹⁴⁶

Dr. Bancroft's colleague and fellow board member, Dr. John Thomson, also fulminated against typhoid's disgracefully high incidence in the capital.¹⁴⁷ Thomson grew increasingly alarmed when, by 1888, he saw "cases of typhoid fever in every part of the city among both rich and poor".¹⁴⁸ Typhoid was certainly no respecter of persons. It was a matter of some alarm to the affluent, because "filth" diseases were considered the almost unavoidable appurtenances of the poor, the degraded, the needy, and the badly-housed. Dr. Cannan himself was prostrated by the disease, although with Drs. Rendle and Love in almost constant attendance, he was expected to recover,¹⁴⁹ while in Ipswich, where typhoid was particularly prevalent in 1889, there were several prominent people in hospital with the disease.¹⁵⁰ Significantly, newspapers and councils in towns such as Herberton, which had not been much troubled with typhoid, suddenly took an unprecedented interest in sanitary conditions, and in special precautions to deal with the hazard, as the disease made its very unwelcome appearance amongst them.¹⁵¹

Once again, the government came under fire for the mismanagement of its establishments. On this occasion, it was for permitting, at the Boggo Road gaol, the persistence of foul drains, generally unsatisfactory sanitary conditions, and severe overcrowding, detrimental to the lives of prisoners. Although convicted offenders might "deserve incarceration.. they were entitled to protection from... the terrible and all too frequently fatal disorder, typhoid",¹⁵² which had laid the gaol's governor low, and seriously threatened the rest of the inmates.

146. The Boomerang, 16 Mar 1889.

147. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Jan 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 14 Jan 1887.

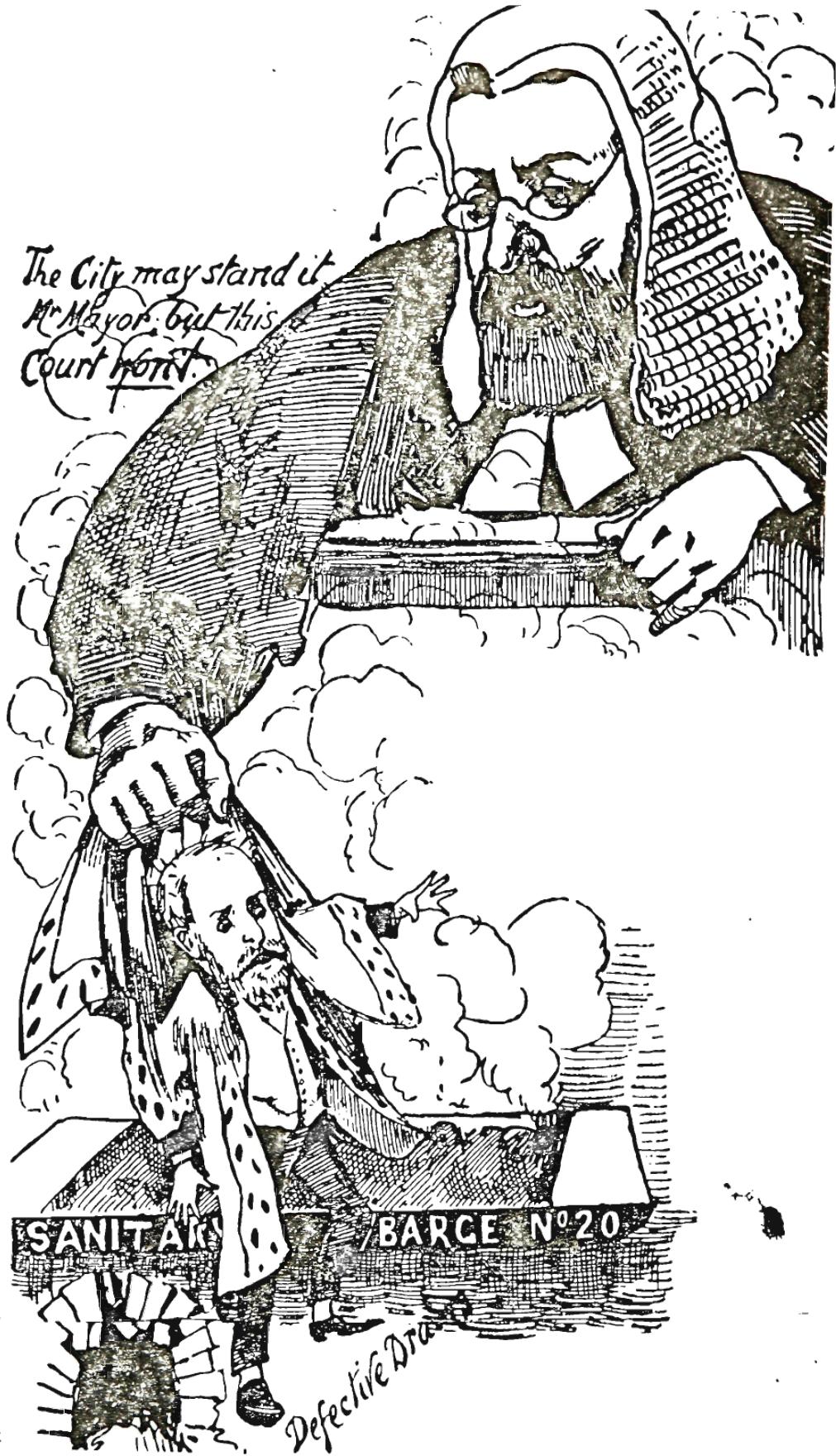
148. Ibid., 17 Nov 1888; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 16 Nov 1888.

149. Ibid., 27 Feb 1889.

150. The Queensland Times, 26 Oct 1889.

151. The Herberton Advertiser, 8 Apr, 15 Apr, 13 May 1887.

152. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Jan 1888. Captain Jekyll did die from typhoid on 31 January. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1889, p.70. The complaints of gross overcrowding and foul, unbearable smells in and around the gaol reserve were of long standing. Near-by residents claimed that they also were in danger from the pervasive odours. See for example, Sheriff to Under Colonial Secretary, 5 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 447, in-letter no.9271 of 1885.



No. 15. The Boomerang, 19 November, 1887.

In fact, a combination of government negligence and city council sanitary bungling put prisoners at considerable risk from typhoid fever and other diseases, before they actually received their deserts at the hands of the law. The supreme court building, to the possible detriment of all persons who attended there, stood perilously close to two "veritable fever beds". One was the wharf where the contents of Brisbane closets were loaded onto vessels for eventual disposal at sea.¹⁵³ The other was a loathsome old channel which had drained the grounds of the hospital which was formerly in that neighbourhood. This drain passed on its stinking way, right under the supreme court building.¹⁵⁴

Mr. Justice Harding complained that both nuisances combined to give off

offensive odours which pervaded the building.... He had great cause of complaint.... Foul smells were calculated to injuriously effect the health of the judges and those present in the court.... He and others connected with the court were anxious to complete their duties, but should not be compelled to do so in unpleasant surroundings. ¹⁵⁵

Harding contacted the Attorney-General, Arthur Rutledge, to rectify the matter, but when no action was immediately forthcoming, he took his grievance to his brother judges, bringing the Chief Justice into the affair, and incidentally forming an extremely effective pressure group. Although The Boomerang alleged that North Quay was no more foul than many parts of Brisbane where poor folk were expected to live and work,¹⁵⁶ the court refused to tolerate the situation. Chief Justice Charles Lilley attacked the government over its evil-smelling sewers, and the city council over its vile wharf work, and insisted that places where men were compelled to come together by law, should receive special sanitary attention. He pointed out that the criminal sittings were at hand, and prisoners - mostly unconvicted persons - would be confined in a cell right over the offending drain. The dangers were obvious, for the court keeper's wife, who lived in a cottage within the grounds, had recently been at death's door from typhoid fever, contracted, Lilley had no doubt, "from living in the neighbourhood of such foul, malodorous stenches".¹⁵⁷

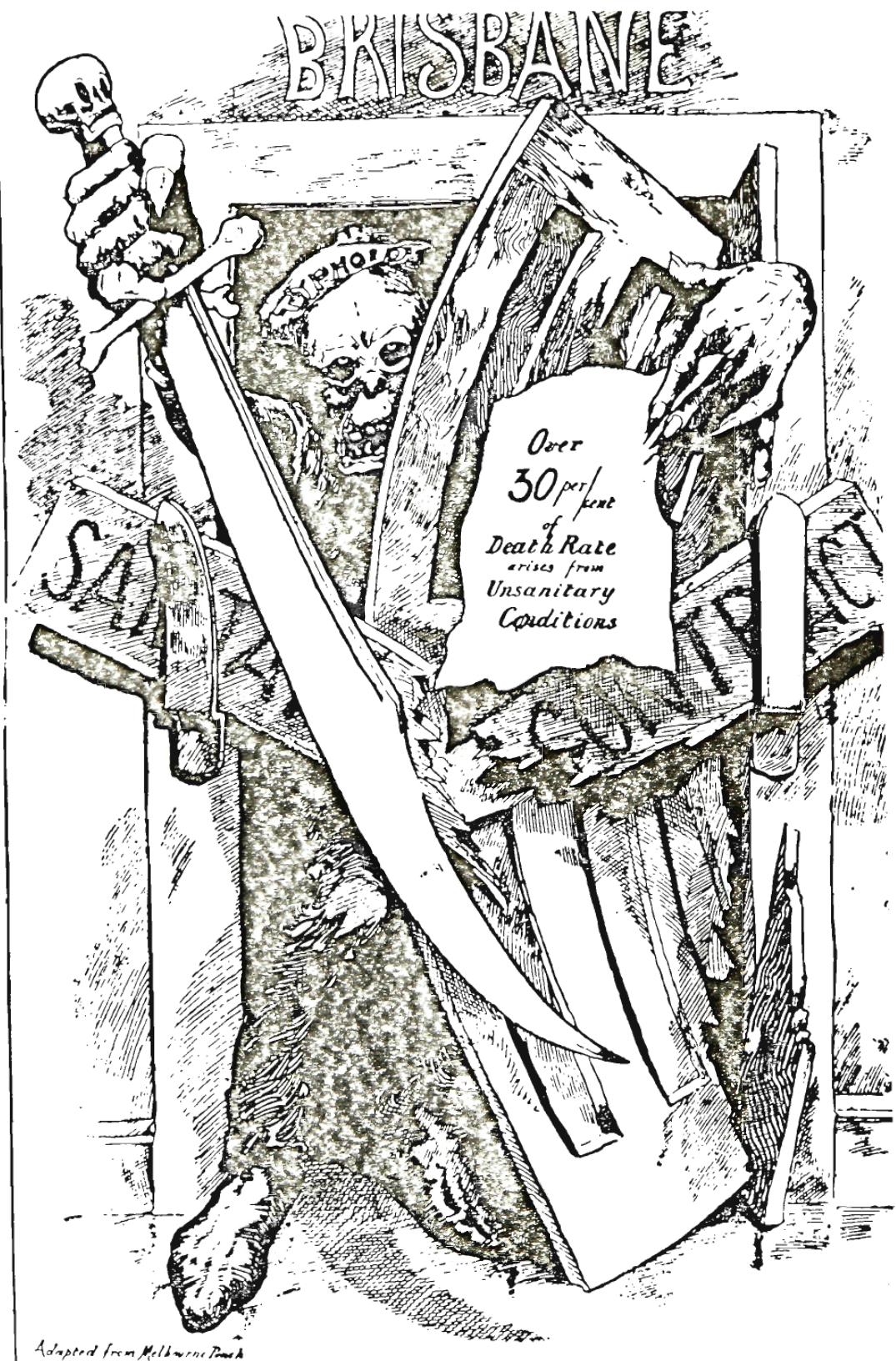
153. The Brisbane Courier, 11 May 1887.

154. Ibid., 9 Nov 1887, 11 Nov 1887; letter to editor from George H. Buzacott and general reporting, and Ibid., 12 Nov 1887.

155. Ibid., 9 Nov 1887.

156. The Boomerang, 19 Nov 1887.

157. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Nov 1887.



Adapted from Melbourne Punch

OUR "JACK THE RIPPER."

No. 16. The Boomerang, 16 February, 1889.

Mr. Justice Harding, not to be outdone, summoned his jurors together to gauge their feelings about continuing to try his case in the "permeated" building. Further damaging evidence of the court's "infectiousness" was brought to light. One juror had suffered from "intense headache and bowel disturbance", attributable to the foul sewer gas hovering in the courtroom. Another had succumbed to sleepiness, headache and a severe attack of colic, and yet another "came to court well and was taken ill though he was a healthy man". Again typhoid fever proved a useful ally in finally damning the court building, for Dr. Richard Rendle, whose opinion Harding sought for the benefit of the jury, listed a number of dysentery and typhoid fever cases which he had attended "at places within a stone's throw of the court".¹⁵⁸

Clearly the place was unfit for use, and the judges promulgated a rule of court delaying all business. In the face of this militancy, a now fully co-operative Attorney-General set gangs of men to work, even on a Sunday, in order that the evil drain might be removed swiftly. Other workmen were engaged to fumigate the building, while the judges expected that the nuisance caused by council wharf operations would also be removed as soon as possible.¹⁵⁹ The threat of the spread of typhoid, backed by the eminence of the protesters, had achieved results with a speed seldom seen in the history of public health in Queensland.

The dangers of typhoid fever and the theories as to its possible source continued to occupy the attention of all the members of the Central Board of Health, as the disease revealed itself "more murderous than Jack the Ripper".¹⁶⁰ At the same time, the general interest in typhoid fever, the constant criticism of the sanitary systems of most cities and towns in the colony, and the flood of letters to the newspapers, encouraged some patent medicine manufacturers and at least one enterprising salesman, to take economic advantage of the typhoid scare. Many claims for the efficacy of various pills and potions appeared in the pages of the daily press, and this advertisement turned up amongst the letters to the editor of The Queensland Times,

158. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Nov and 12 Nov 1887.

159. Ibid.

160. Ibid., 19 Feb 1889; letter to editor from Patient. Gory details of the Ripper's crimes were appearing daily in Queensland newspapers during this period.

under the heading Typhoid Fever, and marked original correspondence. It was in fact, public notice No. 714, in favour of Hargreaves and Company of Ipswich.

It is with great sorrow together with deep sympathy with the suffering and their friends that we note the abnormal spread in our midst of that fell disease typhoid fever, and yet we are bound to confess that considering the extremely faulty nature of the sanitary arrangements in this town, the allowing of filthy cesspits and the want of supervision over the emptying and carrying away of their contents, in fact the want of system in the entire arrangements, we could hardly expect it to be otherwise. We venture to assert that on account of the number of cesspits that are and have been in use in North Ipswich and in other parts, together with the nature of the soil and the contour of the land, that a large portion of the soil of that part of the town, and especially where most of the typhoid appears to be germinating must be reeking with the accumulation of the cesspits for years. In this filthy mass, the typhoid germs have entered, and are now being emitted with ten-fold malignity. And now we offer to the public, not a cure-all like some patent medicines, but that which we conscientiously believe would largely, very largely, diminish the spread of this our common enemy. We refer of course to Scott's patent air closets. Notwithstanding all the prejudice that has been brought to bear, and everything its detractors can say, this closet with its excellence has fought its way into prominence, and we are now in receipt of testimonials from all sides - medical men, architects, engineers and citizens. There are a large number at present in use in the town, but to make it the success it deserves, it should become so general as to be the recognised system. We are prepared to meet the hard times in the matter of price. 161

During the last decade of the century, typhoid continued to menace the people of Queensland - indeed Dr. John Thomson dreaded that it would become the scourge of Brisbane.¹⁶² Communities in the country were incensed when central authorities appeared unmoved by their distress as typhoid struck in their areas,¹⁶³ though where disease and mortality was high, action was taken to proclaim towns under the whole of the Health Act. Sometimes the problem provoked almost as much correspondence to the press as the 1884 outbreak in Brisbane.¹⁶⁴

161. The Queensland Times, 2 Nov 1889.
162. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Jan 1890; address by Dr. John Thomson, the retiring president, before the annual meeting of the Queensland Medical Society.
163. One particular outbreak in Laidley caused considerable alarm on the spot and in Ipswich. It was reported to the press by Dr. Albert Dunlop who despaired of government action as even a telegram had failed to rouse the Colonial Secretary. Ibid., 10 May 1892, and 14 May 1892; sub editorial.
164. Ibid., 10 May and 12 May 1889; letter to editor from Dr. Albert Dunlop, Ibid., 16 May 1892; letter to editor from Richard Rendle, Ibid., 8 Jun 1892; letter to editor from Dr. Joseph Bancroft, and Ibid., 26 May 1892; letter to editor from F.M. Geoghegan, M.D.

As well as this, the kind of action taken to combat the disease began to change. The drive for cleanliness and sanitary improvements was still of paramount importance, but the new scientific knowledge that the typhoid-inducing bacillus could be present in, and be conveyed by either water or milk, ensured that the typhoid prevention and eradication programmes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would include stringent examinations of dairies and tank water supplies, in any area where an outbreak occurred.¹⁶⁵ Another important alteration took place. Typhoid remained one of the most prevalent diseases throughout the whole of Queensland, and consequently interest in the disease never disappeared completely.¹⁶⁶ But towards the end of the 1890's, the greatest amount of government attention was turned to the frontier areas of the colony,¹⁶⁷ where interest was focused especially on railway camps and other outposts where important developmental works were in progress, undertaken by men living under the most primitive sanitary conditions.

This caused some resentment in some quarters. When typhoid broke out at the Murphy's Creek railway deviation works in 1896, and an apprehensive Colonial Secretary pressed the Central Board of Health

- 165. Since it was feared that tuberculosis could also be spread by infected milk supplies, the importance of providing pure milk became a matter of the utmost importance. See for example, The Wide Bay and Burnett News, 18 Oct 1895; letter to editor from One who Knows. Tap water from Brisbane reservoirs was reported to be perfectly free from typhoid bacilli by the Central Board of Health. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Jan 1895; Minutes of Meeting of Central Board of Health, 4 Jan 1895.
- 166. As bubonic plague made its appearance in Brisbane accompanied by outright panic, The Brisbane Courier still held that typhoid fever, though more familiar, was the greater evil. Ibid., 7 Mar 1900; sub editorial.
- 167. There were some exceptions. When there was a severe outbreak at Thargomindah, involving the exchange of a number of telegrams, Horace Tozer could not think how the government could aid the stricken town, where the hospital was overflowing with typhoid victims, except by sending some tents, and testing the water supply. Police Magistrate, Thargomindah to Colonial Secretary, 31 Dec 1895, Q.S.A. COL/A 801, in-telegram no.15571 of 1895. Three other telegrams, unnumbered, were sent the same day.

into service at once,¹⁶⁸ a somewhat peeved Dr. W.F. Taylor wrote to The Brisbane Courier.

There is a mild outbreak of typhoid fever near Toowoomba and the Colonial Secretary becomes alarmed... and takes the chair at the Central Board of Health.... Very commendable,... but why show such indifference to typhoid fever here... and the probable cause of it, a contaminated water supply. Surely the health and lives of the people of Brisbane are as important as the healths and lives of others elsewhere.... Nevertheless we have prompt, almost hysterical action in the latter case, and a masterly inactivity in the former. 169

Taylor may have been somewhat harsh in judgement, for the ills of the capital had for long been a potent factor for change and improvement in Queensland public health measures. Nevertheless, this new development underlines a new sense of government responsibility for working men previously outside the attention of the legislators and their legislation. For the districts in which itinerant labourers lived and worked had rarely, if ever, been proclaimed under the provisions of the Queensland health acts. By 1898, it was still necessary to draw attention to the plight of the itinerant worker. In that year, a bad one for typhoid, particularly in the west,¹⁷⁰ Thomas Glassey repeated his warning of the previous year, about the lamentable sanitary arrangements in the shearing sheds, and demanded that sufficient funds be given to the Central Board of Health to investigate the causes of

168. Dr. Love and Mr. Pound, the government bacteriologist, were sent to co-operate with Dr. Garde, the health officer at Toowoomba, and the immigration depot at Toowoomba was used as a ward for the typhoid patients. However, Tozer's main object was to ensure that the local authorities would "look after the patients as it was their duty to do", and not expect the central government to foot the bill. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Jan 1896; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 3 Jan 1896.
 Some later examples of government interest in typhoid outbreaks in railway and other camps can be found in the following records:- Health Department to Home Secretary, 31 Jan 1911, Q.S.A. HOM/B 39, in-letter no.918 of 1911, and subsequent of 13 Jun 1911, Q.S.A. HOM/B 39, in-letter no.5670. This refers to the railway camp at Malbon. See also The Brisbane Courier, 27 Nov 1911. The men were working on a connection of the Duchess-Malbon line with the Great Western line. Typhoid was reported in the same camp and others in the area in 1912, John May, M.L.A. to Home Secretary, 29 Mar 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B 40, in-letter no.4074 of 1912, and on the Duchess-Townsville line in 1913. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Jan 1913
 Other outbreaks connected with camps were at Friezland, Queensland Parliamentary Debates, CX (1911-12), 2573, and Winton and Selwyn, The Brisbane Courier, 10 Apr 1913.
169. Ibid., 16 Jan 1896; letter to editor from W.F. Taylor.
170. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXIX (1898), 560.

the disease in remote areas.¹⁷¹

The requirements of the burgeoning state would eventually ensure that the health of the workers on the periphery would receive attention, though progress was slow.¹⁷² It was not until 1909, that the government bestirred itself to provide regulations to deal with the special requirements of sanitation in railway, rabbit fencing and other camps.¹⁷³ By that time, reports being sent by health department inspectors on the spot made it impossible for the government to ignore any longer the need for appropriate provisions.¹⁷⁴

The long drawn out business of eradicating this "most preventable of all preventable diseases"¹⁷⁵ was also very wearisome. As late as 1914, the Public Health Commissioner spent considerable periods of time investigating typhoid fever trouble spots,¹⁷⁶ and preparing and questioning various aspects of the typhoid regulations.¹⁷⁷ Yet, in spite of the outbreaks which took place with monotonous regularity, in identical locations¹⁷⁸ - and there is absolutely no doubt that the outbreaks were regarded very seriously indeed by the various health

- 171. There were serious outbreaks at Longreach, Allora, Ipswich, Hughenden, Mt. Morgan, and in Brisbane. Incidence rates in the west were particularly high. See Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1899, pp.63, 64 and 72. See also The Truth, /Mt. Morgan/, 26 Feb, 5 Mar and 9 Apr 1898, and The Street, 9 Apr, 23 Apr, and 14 May 1898
- 172. For example, the Act to improve the Shearers' and Sugar Workers' Accommodation, which was largely a sanitary measure, was not passed until 1905, after long and bitter opposition. Provisions under the Act were still in dispute in 1914, as they conflicted with Queensland Health Acts. See Health Department to Home Secretary, 17 Oct 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.9298 of 1914.
- 173. Secretary, Department of Health to Home Secretary, 28 Jan 1909, Q.S.A. HOM/B 22, in-letter no.1126 of 1909.
- 174. See for example, Inspector Wilson's report on sanitary conditions of various camps and workings in connection with the construction of the Kananga and Blackbutt railway. Secretary, Department of Public Health to Home Secretary, 6 Feb 1909, Q.S.A. HOM/B 22, in-letter no.1560 of 1909.
- 175. "Forty-first Annual Report on the Vital Statistics of Queensland for the year ended 31st December 1900", Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, II (1901), 1362.
- 176. Especially in various centres visited by Dr. Moore on his northern tour during 1914. Health Commissioner to Home Secretary, 16 Nov 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.9491 of 1914.
- 177. Health Department to Home Secretary, 10 Dec 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.10285 of 1914.
- 178. Throughout the fourteen years under review here typhoid recurred again and again in the same areas. Mt. Garnet, Beenleigh, Bundaberg Ipswich, the Boggo Road gaol, St. George, Charters Towers, Chillagoe, Townsville, Maryborough, and always Brisbane.

commissioners involved¹⁷⁹ - great strides in detection and prevention were made. The recognition that flies spread the disease, and the campaigns aimed at educating the public to protect food and even their homes with wire screening, did something to reduce the incidence of typhoid and other diseases during this period.

Of even greater importance was the discovery that certain persons, themselves often apparently unaffected by the disease, were typhoid carriers - a potent threat to the whole of the community in which they lived.¹⁸⁰ The Commissioner of Public Health, Dr. Burnett Ham, summed up both the long-standing situation, and the new scientific break through in his 1909 report.

There are few diseases the prevalence of which occupied the attention of the officers of the Department more closely than typhoid fever. Despite inquiry into the water and milk supplies, sewage and refuse disposal, or investigation of the household foodstuffs, likely to have been contaminated by the house fly, the disease had a tendency to cling to or to recur again and again in the same place or locality. The discovery by German investigators of persons known as "typhoid carriers" serves to throw light on certain aspects of the question. In most cases of typhoid fever the individual becomes quite free from typhoid bacilli within a comparatively short time after recovery. Recent research has, however, shown that in a small percentage of cases germs may persist for months or even years. Persons who thus retain the specific organism become what are known as "typhoid carriers". That such typhoid carriers are a grave menace to the public health there can be no question, and that they may not unfrequently be the cause of so-called sporadic outbreaks seems probable. While the Medical Officer of Health may be fully alive to the importance of the part played by such persons in spreading the disease, the difficulty of discovering them and of preventing them from doing further mischief once they are discovered is great. In at least one instance of recurring cases in one locality we were able to obtain definite evidence of a "typhoid carrier".

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179. A good example of this is the long investigation by both the health department's inspector W.G. Wilson and medical officer Dr. I. Moore, later to be health commissioner, the careful administration of disinfectants, and the conference of local authorities and the health department, all of which arose out of the relatively small outbreak on a farm at Mt. Beppo. See Report from W.G. Wilson to Dr. Burnett Ham, 6 Apr 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 892, in-letter no. 1248 of 1908, and subsequent correspondence and memos attached from the minister, A.G.C. Hawthorn, Dr. Moore, Dr. Ham, the Under Secretary, W.R. Ryder and others.
180. During 1903-4, Frosch, Drigalski and Dönnitz established the theory of typhoid bacillus carriers.
181. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1909), 337.

An important section of the Health Act Amendment Act of 1911 dealt with this particular problem,¹⁸² giving power to the health commissioner to have any person suspected of being a typhoid carrier examined medically. Should tests prove positive, the carriers were required to register, in order to ascertain whether their movements were in any way connected with any outbreak of the fever. Under particular circumstances, the Governor-in-Council might order such persons to be isolated and detained for as long as necessary.¹⁸³

There was no resistance or even much discussion of the provisions during the legislative debate on the health bill. While a few words were said on the role of cesspits in the dissemination of typhoid, particularly in the west,¹⁸⁴ members of both houses accepted, without reserve, Home Secretary John George Appel's explanation of the clause, which in itself underlines the important scientific advances.

Ten years ago when an epidemic of typhoid broke out...
 the cause was generally ascribed to the
 drain - there must be something wrong with the drain. We find
 today, as the result of scientific research, that persons... may
 act as carriers.... Such a carrier... is a very grave danger
 indeed... where they handle food, or in connection with dairy
 work.... Such necessary provision has been made, so far as
 they are concerned, having due regard to the interest of the
 community as a whole.

185

Yet another scientific triumph was to be achieved in the pre-1914 period in the fight against typhoid fever. In 1909, in a well-documented and closely watched experiment, F.F. Russell vaccinated the United States army against typhoid fever.¹⁸⁶ The remarkable results obtained from the immunisation of more than sixty thousand men, and the effects of a similar programme undertaken in 1910 by the British army in India were noted with enthusiasm by the then Commissioner of Public Health, Dr. J.S.C. Elkington

182. Stories of "typhoid Mary", a notorious carrier, were partly responsible for prodding the Chief Secretary into making provision for dealing with carriers in the 1911 Health Act. Chief Secretary's Office to Home Secretary, 1 Feb 1912, Q.S.A. COL/B 40, in-letter no.1578 of 1912. Press clippings about "typhoid Mary" were attached.

183. The particular was Clause 65 of the Health Act Amendment Act of 1911. Queensland Government Gazette, XCVII (1911), 1789 and 1790.

184. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, CVIII (1911-12), 646.

185. Ibid., p.515.

186. Fielding H. Garrison, History of Medicine (London, 1929), p.869.

in his 1912 report to parliament.¹⁸⁷ By 1913, he was convinced that this method of protection afforded "the best and most easily applicable safeguard against typhoid fever which has yet come within the grasp of the practical sanitarian".¹⁸⁸ Anti-typhoid vaccine, and the directions for administering it, were made available by the health department wherever and whenever necessary,¹⁸⁹ both through local medical practitioners, or if required, by means of a special medical officer.

Queensland still faced very real problems in administering the full treatment then required - three injections at intervals of seven days - since the principally infected parts of the state were now more often than not in the far north and west, and were separated by vast distances.¹⁹⁰ It was complicated, as the Home Secretary noted during a northern tour, by the mushroom growth of new towns, which had sprung up in many areas, without drainage or any sanitation.¹⁹¹

The health programme was put at further risk because the injections had to be paid for by the recipients. During one outbreak in the Rockwood shearing shed near Hughenden, sixty men agreed to pay five shillings per head for the three injections, but eventually many refused the treatment, and those who did consent would only pay three shillings. In the end, twenty-seven men out of the sixty were vaccinated. As the Chairman of the Flinders Shire Council pointed out ruefully, the unvaccinated men remained a danger to their fellow workers and to the community at large, and the local council which, under the health acts, had the right to "adjudicate but lacked the power to compel vaccination", had practically thrown away the £100 spent on the sanitary improvements hastened by the outbreak.¹⁹²

If ordinary citizens baulked at the possible pain and expense of protecting Queensland from typhoid through vaccination, the Department of Public Health was soon to have a captive body on which to use the anti-typhoid vaccine being produced on a considerable scale at its laboratory of microbiology.¹⁹³ Immediately after war was declared in

187. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1912), 7.

188. Ibid., (1913), 5.

189. Secretary, Health Department to Home Secretary, 7 Jan 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.244 of 1914.

190. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1913), 5.

191. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Jun 1914.

192. Ibid., 16 Jun 1914; letter to editor from William Hammond, Chairman, Flinders Shire.

193. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1913), 5.

August 1914, the Public Health Commissioner offered the military authorities a supply of vaccine to prevent an outbreak of typhoid among the recently mobilized forces.¹⁹⁴ The offer was accepted at once - any action which would avert the occurrence of enteric being welcomed by the Home Secretary.¹⁹⁵

Queensland had come a long way from the first tentative recognition given to typhoid in the 1860's and the official distinction made in 1879.¹⁹⁶ The history of typhoid fever is in essence the history of public health in Queensland. As the apparently indisputable example of the correlation between filth and disease, typhoid fever epitomises the long struggle for sanitary improvements, followed by the often slow acceptance of scientific advances. But if medical opinion readily accepted changes when proven, "Toowongite's" letter to The Brisbane Courier, published in December 1914, shows that the education of the public had far to go. For he, and many to whom he had spoken, still blamed the "maladorous" creeks and swamps for the prevalence of typhoid.¹⁹⁷ It is quite clear from the Public Health Commissioner's report of 1913 that he at least was fully aware that the lesson still had to be learned and that he would need to repeat it.

The problem of typhoid prevention has now been reduced to the absolute simplicity of efficient vaccination.... Drains have little or nothing to do with typhoid, save as possible collecting places for infective discharges....

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194. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 7 Aug 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.6674 of 1914.

195. Appel's marginal comment of 10 Aug 1914 on above.

196. Within, p.94.

197. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Dec 1914; letter to editor from Toowongite.

198. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1913), 5. My italics.

The acute infectious disease diphtheria is of special interest in the history of Queensland's public health movement for several reasons. Although persons of all ages may be attacked by this disease, it is between the second and tenth years that most cases occur, children up to five years being the most prone to attack.¹ The young, developing colony of Queensland could ill afford the relatively high sickness and mortality which diphtheria began to effect among this most important section of its population from the latter half of the nineteenth century onwards. The history of diphtheria in Queensland underlined the importance of the dissemination of accurate, up-to-date medical knowledge in the fight against disease. Official attempts to deal with severe outbreaks of diphtheria throughout Queensland emphasised the urgent need for cooperation between agencies charged with the carrying out of public health measures. And as well as this, the government's refusal to accept the advice and regulations of their own central health authority on the ways and means of dealing with diphtheria was one of several instances which brought the whole question of central board powers before the people of the colony. The problems connected with the widespread incidence of the disease, combined with other difficulties in the management of public health matters, eventually made inevitable the appointment of a suitably empowered commissioner of public health, working directly with his overseeing minister.

Although this disease was known in ancient times, being accurately described by Artaeus about the second century A.D.,² it was not until 1826 that Pierre Bretonneau clearly recognised and named

1.

Age incidence of the disease in Australia

	Under 5	5-10	10-15	Over 15
1878-1884	86.55	9.65	1.22	2.58
1885-1889	83.55	14.76	0.45	1.24
1890-1894	82.73	15.33	0.85	1.09
1895-1899	80.09	15.98	1.21	2.72
1900-1904	80.54	16.03	2.29	1.14

These figures are taken from J.H.L. Cumpston, The History of Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, Measles and Whooping Cough in Australia 1888-1925 (Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Health Service Publication No.37), p.63.

2. Frazer, p.81.

diphtheria as distinct from other throat infections.³ This crowned his contribution of the previous year when he introduced tracheotomy to give relief to sufferers from laryngeal diphtheria.⁴ Later in the nineteenth century, the causative bacteria was tracked down by two German doctors, Klebs and Loeffler.⁵ In 1888, Roux and Yersin isolated the toxin of diphtheria, and in the following year von Behring discovered the antitoxin. Five years later the serum was in mass-production in Vienna and being administered even to suspect cases to reduce the risk of death.

The antitoxin came into general use in Europe in 1895, and mortality rates from diphtheria began to decline. Queensland hospitals were reporting the successful treatment of diphtheria cases with the antitoxin in that same year. In 1912, von Behring began to immunize with the toxin-antitoxin. He was no longer concerned only to save distressed patients in the throes of the disease, but to accomplish diphtheria prevention. The real breakthrough in the containment of diphtheria lies outside the time span of this thesis, for this was not achieved until immunization with the toxin-antitoxin mixture was freely accepted by both governments and the general public. Curiously and tragically, although diphtheria inoculation was available for some years before, large-scale immunization was slow in coming to Britain, not being accepted until 1940.⁶ The first active immunization in Queensland took place at Ipswich in 1925, but it was not until 1952 that the vast majority of Queensland school children were adequately protected from the disease with two doses of toxoid.⁷

Diphtheria was prevalent in Europe and in North America in the eighteenth century, but did not appear in England until 1857, after which it extended rapidly over the whole country.⁸ Cumpston suggests

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3. G.S. Metraux & F.Crouzet (eds.), The Nineteenth Century World (New York, 1963), p.199.
 4. Frazer, p.81.
 5. In 1883, Edwin Klebs discovered the diphtheria bacillus, and in 1884 Loeffler obtained a pure culture of the bacillus.
 6. J.Pemberton, Will Pickles of Wensleydale (London, 1970), p.112.
 7. The Health of Man in Australian Society - Social and Preventive Medicine for Queensland Students, Vol.2, 1967-1968, p.17.
 8. Haagensen and Lloyd, p.47. "Putrid throat" was present in England much earlier, see Burton, p.208, but Haagensen suggests that the older epidemics of "'throat distemper' cannot be definitely differentiated as diphtheria or scarlet fever." Haagensen and Lloyd, p.108.

that very shortly afterwards the disease was introduced to Australia from Great Britain.⁹ Certainly diphtheria was first listed in death rate statistics in Australia in 1860,¹⁰ and seems to have been present in a recognisable form for the first time in Queensland in 1862.¹¹ But although Cilento contends that diphtheria was "constantly flogging the public" from that date on,¹² and Dr. Kevin O'Doherty reported having seen a malignant form of the disease in Ipswich in 1865,¹³ public interest in the disease was not aroused until the mid-1880's when diphtheria showed signs of becoming a destructive force in various cities and towns throughout Queensland, and in the capital itself.

On 14 April 1883 a grief stricken father wrote to the editor of The Brisbane Courier warning the paper's readers of the dangers to children of "serious diphtheria" if they were "brought into contact with any bad smell". According to his doctor, the correspondent's own child had died from diphtheria, "poisoned by the deadly emanations... from a foul mass of corruption" in a friend's closet.¹⁴ The Brisbane Courier did not take up the matter, except as it concerned the generally insanitary condition of certain parts of Brisbane,¹⁵ nor was there any further correspondence on the subject of diphtheria at that time. Indeed, in June 1883, Registrar-General Henry Jordan's report revealed that diphtheria had actually been a very small-scale killer during the previous five years.

The situation was similar in 1884 when the new Registrar-General presented his report for the previous year, though it was obvious that the incidence of diphtheria was increasing.¹⁶ Dissension among doctors over a well-publicised alleged case of diphtheria in Rockhampton also made it evident that Queensland medical men could not agree, either on

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- 9. Cumpston, Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, Measles, p.119.
 - 10. Ibid., p.61.
 - 11. Ibid., p.103.
 - 12. Cilento, p.49.
 - 13. Cumpston, Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, Measles, p.61.
 - 14. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Apr 1883; letter to editor from A.Alder.
 - 15. Ibid., 17 Apr 1883; main editorial.
 - 16. Diphtheria deaths had risen to 39 or 77.37 per 10,000 of the total deaths. "Twentyfourth Annual Report of the Registrar-General for 1883", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1884), 157.

the diagnosis, or the treatment of the disease. There was not even a consensus as to whether or not the patient should be put in isolation.¹⁷

TABLE showing the NUMBER of DEATHS from some of the principal Causes; also their Proportion per 10,000 of the Total DEATHS and MEAN Population respectively for each of the Years 1878-82. - RETURN for FIVE YEARS, arranged in the order of their Degree of Fatality for 1882.

Most Common Causes of Death.	1878.			1879.			1880.			1881.			1882.			
	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of the Mean Population.	
Phthisis	263	623·22	12·72	281	876·21	13·12	301	997·68	13·56	292	879·52	13·21	404	945·25	17·00	
Dysentery	431	1021·33	20·84	206	642·34	9·61	214	709·31	9·64	281	846·39	12·71	317	741·69	13·35	
Diarrhoea	257	609·00	12·43	161	502·03	7·52	118	391·12	5·32	158	475·90	7·15	268	627·05	11·28	
Convulsions	377	893·36	18·23	253	788·90	11·81	229	759·03	10·32	227	683·73	10·27	257	601·31	10·82	
Pneumonia	109	258·29	5·27	86	268·16	4·02	91	301·62	4·10	117	352·41	5·29	182	425·83	7·66	
Teething	126	298·60	6·09	103	321·17	4·81	77	255·22	3·47	87	262·05	3·94	151	353·30	6·35	
Typhus { Typhus Fever, { Typhoid &c. { Infantile	197	466·82	9·53	{ 6	18·71	.28	1	3·31	.05	150	350·96	6·31	
				{ 99	308·70	4·62	45	149·15	2·03	73	219·88	3·30	36·14	16	37·44	.67
				{ 27	84·19	1·26	9	29·83	.41	12	36·14	.54	12	308·84	5·56	
Drowning { Accidental)	79	187·20	3·82	109	339·88	5·00	100	331·46	4·51	80	240·96	3·62	132	287·79	5·18	
Heart Disease ...	115	272·51	5·56	73	227·63	3·41	124	411·00	5·59	114	343·37	5·16	123	271·41	4·59	
Bronchitis	77	128·46	3·72	54	168·38	2·52	85	281·74	3·83	58	174·70	2·62	116	264·39	4·76	
Atrophy	163	386·26	7·88	83	258·81	3·88	103	341·40	4·64	111	334·34	5·02	113	168·46	3·03	
Remittent Fever ...	114	270·14	5·51	72	224·51	3·36	61	202·19	2·75	38	114·46	1·72	80	187·18	3·37	
Croup	63	149·29	3·05	45	140·32	2·10	57	188·93	2·57	88	265·05	3·08	72	168·46	3·03	
Apoplexy	41	104·27	2·13	43	134·08	2·01	36	119·32	1·62	59	177·71	2·67	46	107·63	1·93	
Alcoholism	28	66·35	1·35	15	46·77	.70	28	92·81	1·26	30	90·36	1·36	44	102·95	1·85	
Childbirth	37	87·68	1·79	30	93·55	1·40	37	122·64	1·67	37	111·45	1·67	41	95·93	1·73	
Brain Disease ...	38	90·05	1·84	41	127·84	1·91	32	106·07	1·44	38	114·46	1·72	40	93·59	1·68	
Measles	1	2·37	.05	1	3·12	.05	3	9·04	.14	32	74·87	1·35	
Diphtheria	17	40·28	.82	25	77·95	1·17	30	99·44	1·85	28	84·34	1·27	29	67·85	1·22	
Scarlatina	4	9·48	.19	1	3·01	.05	2	4·68	.08	
Total Deaths of each Year from all Causes	4,220	...	3,207	...	3,017	...	3,820	...	4,274	...						
Mean Population of each Year	...	206,797	...	214,180	...	221,964	...	221,011	...	237,611	...					

17. The Rockhampton Bulletin, 11 Feb 1884, and The Brisbane Courier 12 Feb 1884.

18. "Twentythird Annual Report of the Registrar-General for 1882" Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1883), 358 and 362.

In May 1885 diphtheria broke out in St. George, resulting in three deaths and a number of other serious cases, causing the closure of the public school, and prompting the Mayor to appeal to the government for protection under the 1884 Health Act.¹⁹ Griffith, rather unsympathetically, informed the Mayor that his town was already proclaimed under the relevant sections of the Act, and that there was nothing more that the central government could do.²⁰ By the end of the year yet another Queensland town, Maryborough, was trying to cope with a mild form of diphtheria which was prevalent in one suburb, and which despite its mildness, "had carried off a number of children".²¹ The colony's doctors had little to offer in the way of advice, being uncertain whether foul drains and decaying matter,²² or the filthy accumulations of fowl houses were the fertile sources of the diphtheria germs.²³

Very little was heard of diphtheria in Queensland during the following year, but as was often the case in the history of Queensland public health, a serious outbreak of the disease in the capital of the colony brought some reaction both from the health authorities, and from the press. At the July meeting, Dr. John Thomson drew the attention of the Central Board of Health to the grave situation in Brisbane which had existed for some time.

From 1st January to 28th July there had been no less than sixty-five deaths from the Brisbane Registry district alone... They knew that filth of all kinds was supposed to be a fruitful source of this disease, and the present epidemic ought to warn the authorities that it was time to take action and to put the town in the state it was at the time of the cholera scare.... Milk was known to be a very fruitful medium for the conveyance of disease. Therefore the dairies should be inspected, and the people about them as well as the cows. It was a disgrace to Brisbane at the present time that there was no fumigating chamber in the city where the poor people could get their garments properly fumigated. The majority of these people had little idea how to go about it if left to themselves. The Board ought to insist on a proper disinfecting chamber being provided by the municipal authorities. 24

- 19. Mayor of St. George to Colonial Secretary, 20 May 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A425, in-letter no. 3969 of 1885.
- 20. Colonial Secretary to Mayor of St. George, 5 Jun 1885, Q.S.A. COL/G30, out-letter no. 1748 of 1885.
- 21. The Wide Bay and Burnett News, 17 Dec 1885.
- 22. Ibid., 13 Oct 1885; editorial.
- 23. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Dec 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 14 Dec 1885.
- 24. Ibid., 30 Jul 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 29 Jul 1887.

Thomson received immediate support from his colleague and fellow Board member Dr. W.F. Taylor, who castigated the local authorities for their neglect of sanitary laws, their refusal to appoint a sufficient number of properly qualified medical inspectors, and their reliance on the judgment of ordinary inspectors of nuisances in the important matter of the examination of the houses where diphtheria victims had lived. In Taylor's opinion, "the local authorities were morally guilty of a great number of the deaths that had taken place in Brisbane".²⁵ Dr. Bancroft could not agree. He was convinced that "to charge diphtheria to defective sanitation was wrong. They all knew that this disease often occurred when sanitation was perfect or in the bush". The matter was complicated because the cases were occurring in winter, a time when the adverse effects of vile smells and sanitary evils were usually abated.²⁶

The Brisbane Courier took up the question of the "dreaded disease" and "pitiless ravager" at once, and in doing so, did not spare its criticism of either the local authorities or the Central Board of Health. The board had certainly sounded the alarm, but the editor feared that the medical trumpet had given rather an uncertain sound for people expected to prepare themselves for battle against such a foe. In the face of a disease which mercilessly strangled its unfortunate victims, the central health authority could give no practical help. Even worse, they did not even speak with one voice. The editor declared that at least one thing about diphtheria was obvious. It was very highly infectious and dangerous, and he called upon the doctors and scientists to trace it to its origins.²⁷ The apathy and lack of action of the local authorities might very well be traceable, not to the laissez-faire system under which they operated, but to their very understandable want of confidence in the dicta of the Central Board of Health.²⁸

The central board was not without its champions in the community, and a brisk correspondence ensued. One reader warned of the very real possibility of diphtheria germs being present in milk, and

25. The Brisbane Courier, 30 Jul 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 29 Jul 1887.

26. Ibid.

27. Within, p.128. Noone wrote to The Brisbane Courier about the Klebs, Loeffler discoveries, nor did the Central Board discuss them.

28. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Aug 1887; sub editorial.

offered the practical suggestion that it should be used only after boiling.²⁹ Dr. Richard Rendle, after expressing his views on diphtheria, took the opportunity to point out specific instances of sanitary neglect.³⁰ Dr. Lockhart-Gibson soundly berated The Brisbane Courier for its attacks on the central board, and came to the defence of the views of all his confrères. He contended that bad smelling drains and defective sanitation could neither produce germs nor alone produce diphtheria. But they did foster those germs, placing them in favourable conditions where their virulence increased. Germs could develop very rapidly in milk, and cold westerly winds increased the possibility of catching cold, thereby assisting the spread of diphtheria by preparing the soil for the germs to take root. Lockhart-Gibson, who saw the possibility of scientific truth emerging from the honest differences of doctors, called for the appointment of a fully qualified and well paid medical man, and a sanitary engineer, who could concentrate their energies on looking to the health of the people.³¹

Incensed, The Brisbane Courier's editorial writer again attacked, not only the central board, but also those "disciples of Galen" who had rushed "to the defence of their brethren". The whole question of central board powers was discussed in this long and bitter diatribe, and relatively little space was devoted to the discussion of diphtheria. But the editor did warn that as the whole colony became increasingly insanitary, and with the recurring virulence of deadly epidemics, the central board had no time to waste on "internal dissensions" over the diagnosis and treatment of diphtheria.³² In the same issue, a Brisbane grandmother, apparently despairing of the effectiveness of modern science, gave details of the diphtheria cure propounded by a Dr. Dewar of Kirkcaldy which had appeared years before in an "old" Courier. "Grandmere" knew from personal experience in saving her own daughter that Dr. Dewar's remedy worked, and she thought that his ideas on the origin of the disease were at least as

29. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Aug 1887; letter to editor from Arthur J. Drury.
30. Ibid., 6 Aug 1887; letter to editor from Dr. Richard Rendle.
31. Ibid., 8 Aug 1887; letter to editor from J. Lockhart-Gibson, M.D.
32. Ibid., 9 Aug 1887; main editorial.

sensible as those of the central board.³³

Naturally other colonies were having similar problems to Queensland's in coping with this elusive yet devastating disease. Indeed, Cumpston suggests that very possibly infection was being imported from colony to colony, though records confirming intercolonial transfers of the disease are very sketchy.³⁴ The Brisbane health board was certainly interested to learn of the very considerable attention paid to diphtheria by the Victorian Central Board of Health. The easy propagation by means of exhalations and the breath of the patient, the importance of cleanliness of dwelling and person, the necessity of pure milk and clean air, were all stressed in the Victorian report, which was eagerly perused in Brisbane.³⁵

The Queensland health authorities soon had another very vexing problem on their hands with regard to diphtheria. Much to their annoyance, the Premier, Samuel Griffith, refused to recommend their regulations for dealing with the outbreak, by the quarantining of sufferers. Griffith took this stand on the advice of the Attorney-General, who considered that the proposals were ultra vires,³⁶ but he also objected to the gross infringement of personal liberty which such regulations would impose.

At an adjourned meeting, the central board, protested to Colonial Secretary B.B. Moreton over the refusal, pointing out again that the death rate from diphtheria for the first six months of 1887 was higher than that for the whole year in each of the previous four years.³⁷ The board also emphasised the extremely infectious nature of the disease and the consequent necessity to take repressive

33. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Aug 1887; letter to editor from Grandmere. Dewar prescribed the use of sulphur - sulphuric acid painted on the throat, and fumigation, by sprinkling sulphur on red hot embers. Frequent liquid foods and orange juice formed part of the cure.

34. Cumpston, Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, Measles, pp.121-22.

35. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Sep 1887; sub editorial.

36. Ibid., 1 Oct 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 30 Sep 1887.

37. 1 Jan to 31 Dec 1883 34 deaths
 " " " 1884 38 deaths
 " " " 1885 41 deaths
 " " " 1886 43 deaths
 1 Jan to 28 Jul 1887 65 deaths.

measures.³⁸ The mortality from diphtheria during the early part of 1887 was certainly abnormally high, as the studies later undertaken by Dr. David Hardie were to show, and the deaths continued, at a reduced rate, after a peak had been reached in June.³⁹

Despite the urgency and the danger, the Premier refused to comply with the board's second request of 15 October 1887, since the regulations were still repugnant to him. He took the argument to parliament and predictably gained support for his views. The central board might be "very indignant that /its/ advice was not accepted", but Albert Norton, member for Port Curtis, thought the "idea of taking from their homes children suffering from diphtheria was preposterous".⁴⁰ And Mr. McMaster, a member of that allegedly defaulting local authority the Brisbane City Council, felt that the board had no possible justification for quarantining children who were "supposed to be suffering from diphtheria, /when/ they could not agree amongst themselves as to the cause of the disease".⁴¹

The board was officially notified of the Premier's decision in a letter from the Colonial Secretary. It stated that the Chief Secretary, who had had personal opportunities for judging, was fully sensible of the dangers posed by diphtheria, but found that the suggestion to quarantine all diphtheria patients was attended by many obnoxious objections. It would be likely to cause very considerable distress, and in many cases would be absolutely cruel. Moreover it appeared that no other country in the world had adopted such a course, and in the absence of examples, Samuel Griffith was not inclined to create a precedent.⁴²

It would almost appear that the central board, having been refused their proposed regulations for dealing with the problem of diphtheria, for a time at least, washed their hands of a matter which they felt themselves unjustly denied the power to control.

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- 38. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Oct 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 7 Oct 1887.
 - 39. David Hardie, Diseases in Queensland (Brisbane, 1893), p.11.
 - 40. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LIII (1887), 1252.
 - 41. Ibid., p.1255. McMaster was both a Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly and of the Brisbane City Council.
 - 42. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Nov 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 18 Nov 1887.

Diphtheria did continue to affect the young children of the colony, being prevalent in the St. Lawrence area,⁴³ in Hughenden, Charters Towers and other parts of Queensland, as well as appearing in the capital,⁴⁴ but the board did not discuss the disease at any length at their meetings. It was left to The Brisbane Courier to publish a pamphlet issued by the Melbourne Central Board of Health describing the symptoms and treatment in cases of diphtheria, because, as the Courier reminded its readers, the disease was "frequently appearing in Brisbane".⁴⁵

1890 was yet another bad year for diphtheria. It prompted long articles on the disease in newspapers,⁴⁶ and led Dr. John Thomson, in his address to the annual meeting of the Queensland Medical Society, to express his dread that an unclean Brisbane would see diphtheria as one of its curses.⁴⁷ Unfortunately it also allowed Dr. A. Jefferis Turner to go some way in confirming Thomson's fears. Jefferis Turner stated that "by far the worst scourge of childhood in this city is diphtheria from which there were 50 deaths in the first six months of 1890".⁴⁸ It caused "Scholasticus", in commenting on Dr. Thomson's speech, to declare dramatically that the "entire body politic is palpitating at heart over the demoniacal grip obtained amongst us by... diphtheria".⁴⁹ And because it occurred in the hot summer months rather than in autumn, it upset Dr. Hardie's calculations on the effects of atmospheric conditions in relation to the disease.⁵⁰

- 43. The Rockhampton Bulletin, 20 Sep 1888. These cases were in grave danger as "much time was lost in obtaining medical assistance".
- 44. Cumpston, Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, Measles, p.61.
- 45. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Jun 1888. This article was picked up and used by other newspapers outside Brisbane. See for example, The Wide Bay and Burnett News, 11 Aug 1888.
- 46. See for example The Brisbane Courier, 3 Jan 1890. The particular article includes homeopathic and other remedies.
- 47. Ibid., 27 Jan 1890.
- 48. Cumpston, Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, Measles, p.61.
- 49. The Brisbane Courier, 30 Jan 1890; letter to editor from Scholasticus.
- 50. Hardie, pp.18-19. December 1889 and January and February 1890 had particularly high death rates. The pattern had previously been for high mortality in the autumn months, associated, according to Hardie, with low barometric pressure, low absolute range of temperature, high humidity, and rainfall, and a large amount of cloud.

The report of Maryborough's health officer indicated that the mortality among children under five had been excessive in that city as well - no less than forty-one deaths having been registered up to 30 June 1890. Nine of these deaths had been due to diphtheria, which was "more rife than usual". Dr. J. Hugh Harricks, like Dr. Hardie, laid part of the blame for the high diphtheria death rate on the very unusual weather experienced in Queensland in the flood year of 1890.⁵¹

This was to be the pattern in Queensland in the early 1890's. No year went by without some serious outbreak somewhere in the colony, usually in areas fairly far removed from the apparent germ centre, the capital itself. So 1891 saw serious attacks of diphtheria in Gayndah.⁵² In the following year the shire of Toowong was visited by the disease with tragic results, as the medical officer to the council reported. In the light of the European advances, Dr. Hammond offered a rather unscientific opinion as to the cause of the outbreak of the first fatal case brought to his attention in Toowong. He thought "that it was probably due to the want of proper drainage causing the sore throat to take on a malignant aspect". The doctor laid some of the blame for the many other cases on infected milk supplies, and suspected that still others arose from close contact with the families of diphtheria victims. On hearing that some of the affected children had been attending the public school, Hammond suggested that the place be closed for four weeks. He also recommended that the Central Board of Health should at once bring diphtheria under the same act as scarlet fever, but with more stringent regulations; that all dairies in any way affected by diphtheria, should be strictly quarantined; that all cases which could not be properly treated in their own homes should be removed to hospital at once; that the strictest quarantine be carried out, with a properly qualified officer to see to the fumigation of an infected house and all its contents; and finally, that during the epidemic any person attacked with a severe cold, should seek medical advice.⁵³

51. The Maryborough Chronicle, 2 Oct 1890; being an exact copy of the Report for the year ending 30 June 1890 by J. Hugh Harricks, Health Officer to the Municipality of Maryborough.

52. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1892, p.63.

53. Samuel Hammond, M.D., to Chairman, Shire Council, Toowong, 18 Jul 1892, Q.S.A. COL/A706, in-letter no. 8878 of 1892.

Hammond had undoubtedly done his inspectorial work very well indeed. He had thoroughly examined particular trouble spots like the infamous Red Jacket Swamp, and many of the ditches, drains and sewers in the Toowong area which were generally in a "state of stagnation and stink".⁵⁴ His report was quickly passed on to the Colonial Secretary and to the Department of Public Instruction, with some rather curious results.⁵⁵ Indeed it is not clear from the available records just what action was taken. The Minister for Education was obviously incensed by the whole business, since he had "been afflicted with a case of diphtheria in /his/ own house... owing to the gross neglect of ordinary sanitary precautions on the part of the local authorities in respect to drainage and dairy cattle". He declared that these matters "and the deprivation of Education caused by closing the school" required immediate remedial action.⁵⁶ However, a marginal notation on further correspondence reads "I do not recommend closing Toowong School".⁵⁷ To complicate matters further, at the Toowong shire's regular meeting a letter was produced from the Under Secretary to the Education Department stating that he was "unable to direct the closing of the school as a means adequate to the solution of the diphtheria epidemic". Attention to neglected drainage was also required.⁵⁸

The Central Board of Health did act, but not as quickly nor as comprehensively as the medical officer of health to the Toowong shire would have liked. The regulations for the shires of Toowong and

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- 54. The responsibility for draining and clearing of the Red Jacket Swamp and other trouble spots in the Toowong shire was disputed by the local authorities adjoining the shire, and by the government of Queensland.
 - 55. Shire Clerk Toowong to Colonial Secretary, 20 Jul 1892, Q.S.A. COL/A706, in-letter no. 8878 of 1892.
 - 56. This is from a note attached to Shire Clerk Toowong to Colonial Secretary, 28 Jul 1892, Q.S.A. COL/A706, in-letter no. 9150 of 1892.
 - 57. Under Colonial Secretary to Under Secretary, Department of Public Instruction, 3 Aug 1892, Q.S.A. COL/A706, out-letter no. 9937 of 1892.
 - 58. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Aug 1892; Report of the Toowong Shire Council Meeting - my italics. The minister was more correct than he realized. When writing his report for the years 1910-1911, the Commissioner for Public Health, Dr. J.S.C. Elkington suggested:- "Closure of the school is of little use, as the unrecognised infectious individual will return on reopening and will continue to infect others". Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1911), 6.

Ithaca and the division of Taringa approved by the Executive Council for twelve months amounted to nothing more than temporary compulsory notification of the presence of the disease to the local authorities concerned. The requirement to notify was binding on either the householder affected, or on any qualified medical practitioner who "observed" a case of diphtheria. The regulations were not gazetted until 6 October 1892.⁵⁹ No doubt they satisfied the central board as little as they did Dr. Hammond. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the battle for compulsory, automatic, colony-wide notification of infectious diseases had not yet been won. As late as 17 August 1894, Dr. Hardie was suggesting to the Central Board of Health that it was "desirable that discussion take place on the advisability of requiring compulsory notification of infectious diseases";⁶⁰ and the amended regulations, approved by the crown law officer in December 1894, were considered by the board to be useless, since they "did not make notification compulsory as had been intended in framing the original regulations".⁶¹ In the light of this, the central board's diphtheria regulations of 1892 were the normal response to a very unsatisfactory situation. Providing their efficient administration could be assured, and this was by no means certain in all cases, they could even be seen as a tentative step forward.

But in the following year, when The Brisbane Courier was lamenting that "diphtheria is always with us more or less",⁶² the central board's advice to the government on the diphtheria question was overruled again, this time by Colonial Secretary Horace Tozer. The western town of Barcaldine had recently had an outbreak, serious enough to close the state school and to create "much havoc".⁶³ Unfortunate as this had been, at least Barcaldine had a resident medical officer of health, able to deal with the situation and to

59. Queensland Government Gazette, LVII (1892), 356.

60. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Aug 1894; Minutes of the Central Board of Health, 17 Aug 1894.

61. Ibid., 15 Dec 1894; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 14 Dec 1894. Compulsory notification was finally provided for under the Health Act of 1900.

62. Ibid., 18 Sep 1893; main editorial.

63. Ibid.

attend the cases.⁶⁴ When diphtheria appeared for the second time amongst the children of St. Lawrence, very deep concern was felt by the Central Board of Health since the nearest medical man was in Rockhampton.⁶⁵Appealed to, the Colonial Secretary replied that all the central board could do was to forward general directions of a popular nature as to the mode of treatment.⁶⁶

The board, unhappy about such a flimsy contribution in the face of desperate need, discussed the matter at a special meeting, and resolved to advise the government to send a doctor to St. Lawrence at once.⁶⁷ Tozer's reaction was brusque - after all he had already spoken. Reiterating that general advice on the best method of popular treatment was all that was wanted, the Colonial Secretary concluded - "It is no part of my duty to supply medical aid".⁶⁸ This apparent callousness is probably evidence of a general government anxiety about funding for health and many other public matters in a year of very grave depression, and it should not be automatically assumed that Tozer was uninterested in Queensland's health problems. Unlike many of his predecessors in office, he showed a concern which can only be called remarkable. He was always present at Central Board of Health meetings, and, on his own confession, had been saved a great deal of trouble and uneasiness by the advice he had received from that body.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, it would appear that the Colonial Secretary did rate the threat from diphtheria as being less than that posed by other diseases. For whereas he approved of measles being put "under a ban", sanctioning the central board's stringent regulations for the control of that disease, "he declined to make any order with respect to so fatal a disorder as diphtheria". The Brisbane Courier suggests that

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- 64. Queensland Government Gazette, LVII (1892), 115.
 - 65. Dr. O'Doherty to Central Board of Health, 11 Sep 1893, Q.S.A. COL/A747, in-letter no. 10657 of 1893. A telegram from St. Lawrence requesting aid was enclosed.
 - 66. Horace Tozer's marginal comment on above.
 - 67. Secretary, Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 15 Sep 1893, Q.S.A. COL/A747, in-letter no. 10848 of 1893.
 - 68. Marginal comment on above.
 - 69. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXX (1893), 507.

the Colonial Secretary probably had good grounds for his decision though he did not see fit to reveal them,⁷⁰ and in view of the large amount of attention paid to diphtheria during 1894 in parliament, in the press, and among the general public,⁷¹ the distinction made between the two diseases of childhood is strange.

At least one correspondent to The Brisbane Courier found it so. Writing in 1894 and reviewing the government's action, or lack of it, on diphtheria from 1887 onward, "Surprised" thought it amazing that the advice of the "Central Board, men of long standing in their profession /should be/ set aside by governments composed largely of lawyers The public has a right to know on what grounds,... on matters of life and death... advice given was disregarded by governments".⁷²

Fortunately for the children of Queensland help was very near, if medical staff was available. On 20 October 1894, Dr. Hirschfeld addressed the Royal Society stressing the "urgent need to use the new treatment for diphtheria if the patient /was/ to be saved".⁷³ Early in 1895 - the same year which witnessed its general use in Europe - doctors at the Brisbane hospital successfully administered the antitoxin treatment to a diphtheria patient.⁷⁴ This was followed by further complete successes in other parts of Queensland.⁷⁵ At the April meeting of the Central Board of Health the secretary, Dr. Wilton Love, announced that up to that date forty-two tubes of the antitoxin had been distributed to hospitals and medical men throughout Queensland. The board was not sure what method of distribution should be used, but finally agreed that the hospital in each district should be made the distributing centre. Should there be no hospital established, the health officer for the area should be

- 70. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Oct 1893; sub editorial.
- 71. See for example Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXI (1894), 4, The Brisbane Courier, 4 Sep 1894, 11 Sep 1894, 22 Sep 1894, 30 Oct 1894, 15 Dec 1894, and The Woman's Voice, Vol.I, No.8, 1 Dec 1894, p.117. These were articles or comments of considerable length - not just reports of cases.
- 72. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Sep 1894; letter to editor from Surprised.
- 73. Hirschfeld's address to the Royal Society of 20 October 1894 was commented on in The Brisbane Courier, 30 Oct 1894; sub editorial.
- 74. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1896, p.71.
- 75. For example, in Charters Towers later in the same year, see Ibid., p.73.

responsible. At the same time, other medical men were to be informed that the serum was available if required. The Queensland government was to supply twelve tubes a week for distribution during 1895, after which the matter was to be left in the hands of private enterprise.⁷⁶ One Queensland city made almost immediate use of the scheme.

Diphtheria again "prevailed to an unusual extent" in Maryborough during 1895. The health officer, Dr. Harricks, reported that "as soon as he knew that the government would make an antitoxin available, he at once applied and also supplied it to the medical men of the town... as occasion required".⁷⁷

In spite of the use of the life-saving serum, diphtheria continued to be a problem in Queensland right up to 1914 and well beyond that year. From time to time during the late 1890's the prevalence of the disease caused schools to close,⁷⁸ though during this period sanitary problems, and difficulties over scarlet fever, typhoid, lead poisoning, the approaching plague, leprosy, and the question of their own powers were occupying the colony's health authorities to a very large extent. But it was in the early part of the twentieth century that diphtheria again began to cause real alarm in Queensland.

George Rosen, in discussing the trends in diphtheria morbidity and mortality in England, Wales, and France, suggests that even before the widespread use of the antitoxin there was a marked decline in the incidence of, and death-rate from, the disease. He contends that this position undoubtedly reflects, at least in part, the impact of the nineteenth century sanitary reform movement.⁷⁹ According to

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76. The Brisbane Courier, 6 Apr 1895; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 5 Apr 1895.
77. The Wide Bay and Burnett News, 17 Oct 1895; being an exact copy of the Half-Yearly Report of Dr. Harricks to the Maryborough Municipal Council for half year ending 30 Jun 1895.
78. For example, Clermont State School in 1897, see Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1898, p.72.
79. G. Rosen, A History of Public Health (New York, 1958) pp.337-339. Death Rates from diphtheria in England and Wales and in France per 1000 inhabitants.

YEARS	ENGLAND AND WALES	FRANCE
1841-1850	22.4	23.3
1861-1870	21.3	23.6
1881-1885	19.4	22.2
1891-1895	18.7	22.3
1896-1900	17.7	20.7
1901-1905	16.0	19.6
1906-1910	14.7	19.2

some observers, there are indications that a similar trend was present in Australia, with the downturn taking place after 1915,⁸⁰ although the figures which are given by these experts in another place do not bear out this contention.

NOTIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, QUEENSLAND, 1901-1925.

Year	Diphtheria	Typhoid	Scarlet Fever	Poliomyelitis
1901	255	793	115	
1902	149	1582	71	
1903	295	1728	644	
1905	206	444	28	
1906	325	611	20	
1907	306	536	42	
1907-08	490	842	73	
1908-09	536	943	52	
1909-10	750	956	53	
1910-11	1152	848	740	
1911-12	1858	2019	249	5
1912-13	2428	1336	133	38
1913-14	1600	1386	136	6
1914-15	2153	1183	216	332
1915-16	1566	1730	313	27
1916-17	1616	661	556	37
1917-18	1908	552	328	13
1918-19	2369	608	316	119
1919-20	2841	731	340	17
1920-21	2989	522	381	35
1921-22	1391	366	304	25
1922-23	755	458	236	1
1923-24	713	464	357	8
1924-25	963	314	319	142

81.

For Queenslanders living through the period the picture seemed very grim indeed. In 1901, Dr. A.C.F. Halford, the newly appointed medical officer of health to the Metropolitan Joint Board for the Prevention of Epidemic Diseases, thought the diphtheria position, together with that of typhoid and plague, serious enough to warrant his investigation,⁸² though the government's infectious disease

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80. Health of Man in Australian Society, Sections I and 2, 1968-1969, p.30j.
81. Ibid., Sections 3 to 7, 1967-1968, p.18. 1925-1939 was a bad period for diphtheria. Figures were rarely below 1500 per annum, the highest being 2259 in 1932-33.
82. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Aug 1901. See also the Supplementary Report of Finance Committee of the Metropolitan Joint Board for the Prevention of Epidemic Diseases, Thomas Proe, Chairman, 13 Aug 1901, Q.S.A. COL/400, Report No.12 of 1901.

regulations of 1901 mention only plague, smallpox, cholera, scarlet fever and typhoid fever specifically.⁸³ As the minutes of the Central Board of Health meetings and Dr. Ham's disease rate releases confirm, typhoid and diphtheria were by far the most destructive diseases reported consistently to local and central health authorities for some periods of 1901,⁸⁴ although by October of that year only one case of diphtheria was reported.⁸⁵ The improvement in available information was ensured by Part VII of the new Health Act of 1900, which enabled the health commissioner appointed under that Act to institute a proper system of notification.⁸⁶ In 1903-1904 these figures confirmed that diphtheria, though a long way behind typhoid and scarlet fever, had the third highest notifications in the state.

83. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1901), 1667-1673.
84. The Brisbane Courier, 17 May 1901; Monthly return for the State of Queensland for April 1901, reprinted from Dr. Ham's pamphlet.

Typhoid Fever	117 cases	Scarlet Fever	7 cases
Diphtheria	16 "	Erysipelas	3 "
Bubonic plague	7 "	Puerperal Fever	3 "
Deaths from phthisis	11		

Ibid., 13 Jun 1901; Notifications and deaths for May 1901, published by the Central Board of Health.

Typhoid Fever	142 cases	Croup	1 case
Diphtheria	33 "	Erysipelas	3 cases
Plague	12 "	Scarlet Fever	15 "

Ibid., 30 Jul 1901; Notifications and deaths for June 1901, published by the Central Board of Health.

Typhoid Fever	54 cases	Erysipelas	4 cases
Diphtheria	27 "	Plague	3 "
Scarlet Fever	6 "		

85. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Oct 1901.

86. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, I (1902), 882.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

NOTIFICATION

The following cases of infectious diseases throughout the State were reported to the Department :-

Cases			1st July to 31st December, 1903	1st January to 30th June, 1904	Totals
Bubonic Plague	2	29	31
Diphtheria	135	190	325
Phthisis	9	9
Membranous Croup	1	1	2
Erysipelas	44	33	77
Scarlet Fever	473	513	986
Typhoid Fever	331	446	777
Relapsing Fever
Puerperal Fever	9	11	20
Continued Fever	1	1	2
Deaths from Phthisis	56	61	117
Grand total			2,346

Distribution of cases within the Metropolitan Area for the twelve months ending 30th June, 1904, was as follows :-

Local Authority	Typhoid Fever	Scarlet Fever	Puerperal Fever	Diphtheria	Erysipelas	Phthisis	Total
Brisbane	147	46	3	47	10	48	301
South Brisbane	67	30	2	37	9	15	160
Ithaca	54	8	1	19	1	12	94
Toowong	35	1	...	11	2	5	54
Wynnum	6	26	...	1	33
Sandgate	3	5	...	2	10
Balmoral	4	3	2	...	9
Hamilton	11	4	...	9	...	3	27
Coorparoo	5	2	...	1	8
Indooroopilly	1	...	1	2
Enoggera	1	...	1	2
Kedron	4	2	...	5	...	1	12
Stephens.	6	5	...	5	2	9	27
Windsor	24	6	1	15	...	6	52
Toombul	10	6	...	24	...	4	44
Taringa	5	1	...	1	3	6	16
Yeerongpilly	1	1
Sherwood	...	2	...	1	...	1	4
Belmont	0
	381	142	7	185	29	113	857

During the following year there was room for some cautious optimism,⁸⁸ but during the years 1905-1906 the incidence of both diphtheria and typhoid was "distressingly high",⁸⁹ and this trend continued until 1911 with occasional peak outbreaks like those of 1907, which closed a large number of Brisbane state schools,⁹⁰ and sent Dr. I.J. Moore of the health department posthaste to Esk to report on the epidemic diphtheria there.⁹¹

By 1911, Dr. J.S.C. Elkington, the current health commissioner, was seriously worried about the incidence of diphtheria in the state, particularly in Brisbane. Not only were the numbers of victims increasing, but the disease began to assume a most severe type, apparently caused by an epidemic wave spreading from the southern states.⁹² Once again the state schools were foci for the attacks, but Elkington did not favour the indiscriminate closing of schools.

According to the commissioner,

The only rational method of attacking a school outbreak consists in carefully excluding all suspicious cases and all children from infected houses, obtaining swabs from the throats of all children in the infected parts of the school, and examining these swabs for virulent forms of the specific bacillus. Carriers and missed cases can thus be detected and excluded until they are free from virulent diphtheria bacilli....

Diphtheria is an almost typical example of a disease which requires human contact and human association for its spread. Drains and nuisances have probably nothing at all to do with its introduction or spread.⁹³

This method of dealing with the disease was followed successfully in Brisbane during the year covered by this report. It was also used by the newly appointed school medical inspector, Dr. Eleanor Bourne, who was pressed into service at Inglewood in 1911. But Dr. Bourne left nothing to chance. As well as taking swabs from the school children,

88. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1905), 177. The optimism sprang from the very marked reduction in the number of swabbings submitted for examination - suspects reduced from 25,794 for previous year to 12,706.

89. Ibid., II (1906), 180.

90. Ibid., II (1907), 248.

91. Report on Epidemic Diphtheria at Esk by Dr. I.J. Moore, N.D. Q.S.A. COL/B17, in-letter no.6587 of 1907.

92. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1911), 6. Number for 1910-11 - 908 - an increase of 344 on the previous year.

93. Ibid., p.7.

she looked carefully into the milk supply, and, having examined them thoroughly, was severely critical of the sanitary arrangements in the town.⁹⁴ In the face of the danger to their children, the shire council and ratepayers resolved to amend the situation at once.⁹⁵ And with commendable zeal, the health department made sure that they did, calling on the local authorities for a full report from their medical officer of health, and for evidence that disinfectant work had been properly carried out.⁹⁶

At first sight, the department seems to have been somewhat less conscientious about an earlier outbreak at Oakey. For some weeks before 5 August 1911, a censorious Brisbane Courier had been reporting the presence of diphtheria in the town, while residents were daily expecting an investigatory visit from the health department, but nothing had been done. Some further delay caused the highly critical Oakey correspondent, to ask whether there was a health department in Queensland, and what availed the notification of disease if reports were merely pigeon-holed. One of the very real dangers in the Oakey affair, was that diphtheria sufferers from outlying areas were travelling to hospital in Oakey on trains, obviously increasing the possibility of an even more widespread epidemic.⁹⁷

On pursuing its enquiries with the health department, The Brisbane Courier discovered that it had been somewhat hasty in judgment. An inspector had been deputed to visit Oakey,⁹⁸ though it was pointed out that the onus rested on the local authority to deal with the problem.⁹⁹ In fact, Inspector Dudley did arrive in Oakey on the correct date, and did report - adversely - on the Jondaryan Shire Council arrangements.¹⁰⁰

94. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Sep 1911. Bourne was appointed as from 1 Jan 1911. She was on the staff of the Department of Public Instruction.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid., 8 Oct 1911 and 9 Oct 1911.

97. Ibid., 16 Aug 1911.

98. Expected date of arrival 15 Aug 1911.

99. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Aug 1911.

100. Dudley's report is recorded and commented on in Jondaryan Shire Council to Home Secretary, 19 Sep 1911, Q.S.A. COL/B75, in-letter no. 8870 of 1911. I was unable to find the Report itself.

Moreover, far from ignoring the situation in Oakey, the health department had taken a very lively interest, requesting reports on the outbreak, announcing the inspector's proposed visit, and giving cogent suggestions, on receipt of the inspector's report.¹⁰¹ And after all the fuss, and the complaints about the central health authority's refusal to cooperate, the Jondaryan Shire Council itself "declined to pay the expenses for the visit of the inspector during a diphtheria outbreak".¹⁰² The question, as to who was to look to the health of the people, and who was to foot the bill for it, was one of the most contentious issues arising out of diphtheria epidemics up to 1914.

The situation did not improve during the next two years. By March 1913, diphtheria was rife all over Australia,¹⁰³ and in Queensland the ability of central and peripheral authorities to work together amicably to remove the danger had progressed very little. Nor had the local authorities and the general public given up entirely the old outdated medical theories and left the field to the scientists. A frustrated Dr. Elkington wrote in his 1912 Report :-

The widespread, but entirely incorrect, idea that diphtheria is "bred" from drains and insanitary conditions generally, is the principal stumbling block in the road of suppressive measures against this disease. In place of obtaining prompt medical advice, and enlisting the assistance of the Department's Laboratory for the free supply and free examination of swabs from all contacts and suspects, valuable time is frequently wasted in futile attempts to discover a hypothetical source of infection in some adjoining drain. The relationship between human contact and association and the spread of diphtheria is so obvious and well proven by direct bacteriological observation that there is no need here to bring forward fresh evidence to indicate that the ordinary and everyday method of spread is directly from the infected to the healthy person, without any extraneous intervention. No evidence whatever exists to show that drains or nuisances have anything at all to do with its spread. The prejudices of sixty years die hard, however. 104

- 101. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Sep 1911. This report records the following letters to the Jondaryan Shire Council from the Health Department. Request for report, 7 Aug 1911, advice of Inspector's visit, 8 Aug 1911, Elkington's comments on Dudley's report, 24 Aug 1911.
- 102. Health Department to Home Secretary, 13 Nov 1911, Q.S.A. COL/B75, in-letter no. 11588 of 1911.
- 103. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Mar 1913; opinion of Dr. J.S.C. Elkington.
- 104. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1912), 5.

The widespread nature of the disease in Queensland during the next few years illustrates the absolute necessity for all those concerned with public health, and the people of Queensland generally, to take heed of Elkington's warnings and advice. During this time, besides being present in Brisbane,¹⁰⁵ diphtheria was rife, for varying periods, in Mossman,¹⁰⁶ Chillagoe,¹⁰⁷ Beenleigh,¹⁰⁸ Nambour,¹⁰⁹ Oakey - again,¹¹⁰ Clermont,¹¹¹ Kingaroy,¹¹² Mt. Garnet,¹¹³ Toowoomba,¹¹⁴ Tarampa and Clifton,¹¹⁵ Balmoral,¹¹⁶ Childers,¹¹⁷ Many Peaks,¹¹⁸ Ipswich,¹¹⁹ Yeerongpilly and Tingalpa,¹²⁰ Mooloolabah,¹²¹ and Toowong.¹²² Above all it was very prevalent in Mackay,¹²³ an area taken here as an example of

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- 105. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1914), 8.
 - 106. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, CXI (1912), 176.
 - 107. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Jun 1912, and Jellicoe Shire Council to Home Secretary (through Mr. Theodore, M.L.A.), 7 Aug 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 10549 of 1912.
 - 108. Dr. Brade to Under Secretary, Home Secretary's Department, 4 Jan 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 200 of 1912.
 - 109. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, CXIII (1912), 2833.
 - 110. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 15 Oct 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 12571 of 1912.
 - 111. Secretary, Clermont Shire Council to Home Secretary, 15 Nov 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 13769 of 1912 and Police Magistrate, Clermont to Home Secretary, 15 Nov 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 13770 of 1912.
 - 112. Secretary, Nanango Hospital Board to Home Secretary, 9 Dec 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 14648 of 1912.
 - 113. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Nov 1912.
 - 114. Mrs. M. East to Home Secretary, 4 Jan 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B42, in-letter no. 145 of 1913.
 - 115. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Jan 1913.
 - 116. Ibid., 28 Feb 1913.
 - 117. Ibid., 30 May 1913.
 - 118. Health Department to Home Secretary, 2 Jun 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B42, in-letter no. 6582 of 1913.
 - 119. The Brisbane Courier, 22 May 1914.
 - 120. Health Department to Home Secretary, 6 Jul 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B44, in-letter no. 5755 of 1914.
 - 121. The Brisbane Courier, 24 Oct 1914.
 - 122. Ibid., 30 Oct 1914.
 - 123. References to Mackay are too numerous to mention here.

procedures to be followed, wherever necessary, in the event of future attacks. For in Mackay, "an extensive and widespread outbreak... necessitated action by the /health/ department, local effort having failed to check the spread of the disease, which was assuming alarming proportions and threatening other parts of Queensland".¹²⁴

Dr. Eleanor Bourne, who happened to be in the north of the state, was instructed by the Department of Public Instruction to meet Dr. Booth Clarkson - the medical inspector for north Queensland - at Mackay, and to cooperate with him in every aspect of the examination of schools and school children.¹²⁵ The situation was so grave that Dr. Booth Clarkson, after a thorough inspection, and a brief trip to Brisbane for instructions, commenced work with a special staff of inspectors and nurses at Mackay on 15 September 1912.¹²⁶ The local authorities did not resume control until 10 December of that year. In the meantime, Booth Clarkson had recommended the extension of the diphtheria regulations to the town of Mackay and the Shires of Pioneer and Sarina.¹²⁷ There was some considerable dispute as to whether such regulations should cover the removal to isolation of carriers and infectious persons, not themselves showing the symptoms of the disease, but Queensland had come a long way from the days of Premier Samuel Griffith, and this too was finally allowed in the health interests of the many.¹²⁸ Having found the general hospital "far too small", and attributing the probable cause of the continuance of the outbreak to the early discharge of patients to make room for new sufferers,¹²⁹ Booth Clarkson set up a tent hospital, with the full approval and aid of his departmental head, to cater for the overflow.¹³⁰ Armed with the

124. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1913), 5.

125. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Sep 1912.

126. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1913), 6.

127. Booth Clarkson to Home Secretary, 23 Sep 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 11730 of 1912. Elkington requested gazettal on 1 Oct 1912. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 1 Oct 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 12865 of 1912. The original regulations dealing with local conditions in Mackay were published in the Queensland Government Gazette on 14 Sep 1912.

128. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Oct 1912. See also Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 22 Oct 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 14414 of 1912.

129. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Sep 1912.

130. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 25 Sep 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 11789 of 1912.

same authority, the doctor arranged for the removal of convalescent patients to a separate isolation hospital,¹³¹ as well as holding the quarantine station in readiness in case of further emergencies.¹³² In Brisbane, the health commissioner arranged for bacteriological examinations to take place in Mackay and in Brisbane,¹³³ made liberal supplies of antitoxin available,¹³⁴ and, through the Home Secretary, organised the performing of tracheotomies at a cost of about forty shillings each.¹³⁵

All in all, the 1912 Mackay diphtheria outbreak is noteworthy for two things, as The Brisbane Courier pointed out. The Department of Public Health had "taken hold of the diphtheria situation /in Mackay/ in a remarkable way" which contrasted strongly with the nineteenth century efforts of the Central Board of Health. The department's action, in turn, had emphasised "the difference between the old ideas as to the causation and spread of certain diseases and newer conceptions in sanitary science",¹³⁶ based on the utilization of the antitoxin remedy, the use of the bacteriological examination of swabs, and the sterilising measures carried out on proven diphtheria carriers. But the newspaper warned that these measures, far-reaching and modern though they might be, would not be efficacious in coping with the problem in a minimum of time, unless "the local authority and the affected community cooperated heartily in the eradication measures which had been adopted".¹³⁷

Community cooperation was not achieved easily. Having been forced to ask for help, the local authorities, the district newspapers, and their readers continued to search for insanitary conditions and defective drains in an effort to stem a scourge which had troubled

131. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Sep 1912.

132. Ibid., 23 Sep 1912.

133. Ibid., 9 Sep 1912.

134. Ibid., 14 Sep 1912.

135. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary 10 Oct 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 12410 of 1912. Various supplies were also arranged. For example overalls were purchased at 30/- for 6. Commissioner to Home Secretary 10 Oct 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 12396 of 1912. Test tubes and disinfectants were also supplied. Health Department to Home Secretary, 8 Nov 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 13475 of 1912.

136. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Sep 1912; main editorial.

137. Ibid.

Mackay for some three years,¹³⁸ Elkington's strictures notwithstanding. Despite Booth Clarkson's assurances to the Mackay Hospital Board that the sum of £50 per quarter and 4/6d per day per patient would be paid for the treatment of infectious diseases, both this board,¹³⁹ and the health board of the Mackay City Council, consistently and very strongly resisted the use of a special isolation hospital "because of its additional expense" - even to the point of protesting to the health commissioner himself, and to their parliamentary representatives Walter Paget and Edward Swayne.¹⁴⁰ Elkington, annoyed at the obstructions placed in Booth Clarkson's way, telegraphed the Mayor, instructing the health board not to interfere in the work of stamping out diphtheria and to keep within the guidelines forwarded.¹⁴¹

The commissioner took his wide powers to restrict the liberty of convalescents and carriers seriously,¹⁴² though such an assumption of authority was resented by some in Mackay. One convalescent diphtheria patient, William John Hill, who gaily left the hospital without permission because "he felt in good health", was fined £2 or one week's imprisonment. Hill elected to "put in a week... at the isolation hospital", after being lectured by the Bench "on his duty to the public... as a carrier of infection".¹⁴³

Even worse, a nurse who was a convalescent carrier was allowed by the hospital authorities to attend a weekend party and a wedding. Booth Clarkson telegraphed the information to Elkington at once, and the health commissioner was provoked into making an angry statement to The Brisbane Courier.

138. The Mackay Mercury, 9 Sep 1912 and 13 Sep 1912.

139. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Sep 1912.

140. Ibid., 21 Sep 1912. Paget was the member for Mackay and Swayne for Mirani.

141. Ibid., 23 Sep 1912.

142. Ibid., 4 Oct 1912. See also Health Department to Home Secretary, 3 Dec 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 14414 of 1912.

143. The Brisbane Courier, 1 Oct 1912. The regulations covering the detention of these patients or carriers was very thoroughly perused by the Justice Department before being allowed. See for example Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 22 Oct 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 12865 of 1912, and subsequent of 3 Dec 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 14414 of 1912.

I am now informed that the hospital committee of which the chairman is Mr. Macrossan apparently take the view that as they are not legally forbidden to discharge convalescents in an infectious condition, they will do so as they choose, and that the Health Department officers may find the discharged persons as best they can. This remarkable attitude in a public body can and will be summarily corrected by regulation, but it is unfortunately possible that some innocent persons will suffer before this can be done. It is impossible to reconcile action of this kind with any care for the public welfare, or even for the public pocket. An isolation hospital has been established for the very purpose of relieving the general hospital of cases of convalescents in order that they may be kept from infecting the public, and may receive suitable treatment for rendering them non-infectious as rapidly as possible. Any reasonable person would imagine that the hospital committee would transfer their convalescents to the isolation hospital.... As it is, the persistent attempts to thwart and obstruct the Health Department, must, if continued, force the erection of a special isolation hospital, where all acute and convalescent cases can be treated. This will mean a considerable expense to the ratepayers of Mackay which might readily be avoided if the hospital committee could be induced to cooperate in the public interest, or at any rate to refrain from giving trouble. The most serious aspect is the reckless disregard for public safety as evidenced by these later developments. It is easy to understand from this how the outbreak has been allowed to spread. Nearly two hundred cases of diphtheria have occurred. Mackay is normally a healthy place. The only explanation for this undesirable prevalence of a dangerous disease is that the public bodies which are entrusted with the duty of protecting the public health have failed to do their duty. Disease centres of the kind into which Mackay has been allowed to develop are dangerous to the remainder of the State, and the Health Department intends to see the matter through. The life of one child is worth more than the opinions and eccentricities of a dozen Mackay hospital committees.

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This attack "utterly amazed" the president and members of the hospital committee, who took the strongest exception to the commissioner's remarks, which so grossly misinterpreted their position.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, from the time of that incident on, at the request of the Mackay council, diphtheritic patients were removed from the general hospital with all possible haste, and all new patients and convalescents were treated by the Department of Public Health at the isolation hospital.¹⁴⁶

144. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Oct 1912.

145. Ibid., 7 Oct 1912.

146. Ibid., 4 Oct 1912.

While hospital authorities fumed, government departments worked in harmony, good relations being maintained between Education and Health Department officers. Children at state and Catholic schools were examined, and school premises were disinfected, and in some cases, repainted. Local authorities, also deciding to pull their weight, discovered previously hidden breaches of sanitary laws, and dealt with offenders smartly. Some dubious shipping arrangements, involving the over-supply of some goods, were noted and marked for future attention by the relevant authorities. Further supplies of tents were received from Brisbane to improve the isolation hospital accommodation, and Dr. Bowkett arrived in Mackay to take over the running of that unit.¹⁴⁷

By 15 October The Brisbane Courier, which had faithfully followed events in Mackay in the interests of all Queenslanders, was able to relay the Home Secretary's satisfaction with the Mackay situation. The isolation hospital was on a full working basis, and there were no difficulties with examinations, either of patients or of the swabs taken from them. Even more importantly, the Mayor of Mackay had expressed a desire to cooperate fully with the officers from the Department of Health. John George Appel was happy to announce that "cordial public appreciation of the measures being adopted was being met with, and it was anticipated that the cause of the past friction would shortly disappear".¹⁴⁸

The minister's claim that willing cooperation was offered by the locals is not entirely borne out by the facts. The local authorities, while willing to play a part in the fight against the disease, were certainly not rushing into monetary commitments. Indeed, they declined to raise a special rate to pay for the diphtheria endemic expenses, preferring to wait until the outbreak had ended, when they intended to try to borrow the money from the government.¹⁴⁹ Neither was the cooperative spirit evident at a meeting of ratepayers called to discuss the outbreak. The question of whose funds should fight the disease was again the issue, and the ratepayers were very anxious that it should not be theirs. After considerable discussion the meeting passed this motion for communication to the Premier,

147. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Oct 1912.

148. Ibid., 15 Oct 1912.

149. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 10 Oct 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 12396 of 1912.

D.F. Denham, the Home Secretary, and their parliamentary representatives.

That this meeting of ratepayers of Mackay and district, having in view the fact that the action now being taken by the Health Department to deal with diphtheria is in the nature of an isolated experiment not previously tried in the Commonwealth, if at all elsewhere, and that the disease being widely spread through Queensland and the southern states may be re-introduced at any moment unless concerted action is taken simultaneously throughout the Commonwealth, protest against the whole expense of such action being borne by the ratepayers, and urges the government to bear the cost of the experiment. 150

The Mayor's request for funds to cover the cost of the outbreak was refused by the government, which claimed that it had "no fund from which it could bear the expense of the diphtheria campaign".¹⁵¹ The Mackay council therefore decided to issue a precept of £1,000 on all of the local bodies concerned with the outbreak and campaign, but bitter to the end over the isolation hospital, claimed the amount involved for equipping that - £305 - from the government.¹⁵² Mackay and its surrounding districts got little practical help from their members of parliament. Edward Swayne did ask for the correspondence to be tabled in the house, but this the minister was quite willing to do, having nothing to fear from open discussion of the Home Department's record in this case.¹⁵³

By the beginning of December, Elkington, deciding that the epidemic had abated sufficiently for local authorities with their newly appointed or upgraded medical inspectors to take over,¹⁵⁴ reported that Mackay might be safely vacated by the department's officers.¹⁵⁵ Central

150. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Nov 1912.

151. There was a letter from the Mayor of Mackay to the Home Secretary on the incidence of diphtheria in the area and the cost of combating it. It is recorded in Q.S.A. HOM/B40, 1912, but has no number and no date. See also The Brisbane Courier, 20 Nov 1912.

152. Ibid. The shires concerned agreed to pay their parts of the precepts, which were divided as 43% each from Mackay and Sarina, and 14% from Mirani. See Ibid., 27 Nov 1912. See also the correspondence for 1913 on the matter of fitting up of isolation hospitals. Deductions for these were always made by local authorities when forwarding payments. Health Department to Home Secretary, 14 May 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B42, in-letter no. 5830 of 1913.

153. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, CXIII (1912), 2784.

154. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Nov 1912, and 3 Dec 1912.

155. Health Department to Home Secretary, 3 Dec 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 14598 of 1912.

and local health authority relations were as acrimonious at the end of the Mackay emergency as they had been in the beginning. Severe and "unwarranted" criticism of local efforts, emanating from the offices of both the Commissioner of Public Health and the Home Secretary piled harsh insult on citizens already smarting from the injury done to their pockets. The outcome was letters of indignation and calls to the Premier for an enquiry by a supreme court judge.¹⁵⁶ The protests were of no avail. The margins of all correspondence are simply marked "no action" or "AWAY".

In any case the Home Department and its Sub-Department of Health had little to reproach themselves with in their bold departure from the normal treatment of an outbreak of great severity. The anti-diphtheritic serum had been supremely effective. Only three deaths had occurred, and after 124 cases of diphtheria and 1085 carriers of the disease had been treated, the health department could announce that the outbreak was "thoroughly brought under control".¹⁵⁷

Queensland, and particularly Mackay, did not escape serious diphtheria outbreaks up until 1914, as the statistics clearly show.¹⁵⁸ In 1913, when the northern city was again subject to attack, correspondence almost exactly repeated itself as authorities quarrelled over expenses in general and the isolation hospital in particular,¹⁵⁹ as well as over insulting comments which were again bandied about.¹⁶⁰ To calm things down, Elkington finally visited the district to investigate the diphtheria situation and the grievances for himself, and reported

156. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Dec 1912. See also Vice-President of Mackay Hospital Committee to Home Secretary, 11 Dec 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 14799 of 1912, Pioneer Shire Council to Home Secretary, 11 Dec 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 14779 of 1912, J.J. Bolton to Home Secretary (through the Premier), 10 Dec 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 14970 of 1912, and Editor, Daily Mercury to Home Secretary, 16 Dec 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B40, in-letter no. 15019 of 1912.

157. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1913), 6.

158. Within, p. 143.

159. The Brisbane Courier, 10 Jun 1913. An eight month campaign was alleged to have cost £8000, more than the entire cost of running the city for that period. There was a good deal of correspondence on the funding for the isolation hospital. See for example Health Department to Home Secretary, 8 Jan 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B42, in-letter no. 364 of 1913, and Health Department to Home Secretary, 29 Jan 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B42, in-letter no. 1153 of 1913.

160. Mackay Hospital Board to Home Secretary, 28 Mar 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B42, in-letter no. 3865 of 1913.

to his minister on 7 June 1913.¹⁶¹

In the end, the vexed question of who should pay the costs of treating infectious diseases patients was resolved, for the immediate future, not because of a diphtheria outbreak, but because typhoid and scarlet fevers were raging uncontrolled. The local authorities had no joy in the decision, for the crown solicitor found that should any persons within the area of the councils be removed to an isolation ward, the council should pay all costs,¹⁶² with slim chances of recovery even if the patient was financially able to pay.¹⁶³ This decision made local authorities very unhappy, especially in Mackay, where other grievances soon emerged to add to the perennial anguish over funds.¹⁶⁴ In other areas some good was forthcoming. When diphtheria broke out in Yeerongpilly, and began to assume serious proportions because of the large numbers of diphtheria carriers in the district,¹⁶⁵ the shire council decided that an appointment of a long overdue medical officer of health must be made to deal with this and other health crises.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, local authority resentment died hard, and one local representative, councillor McCotter, complained that too much was being put on the already overburdened shoulders of local authorities. The time had arrived for the health department to take sole control, when there was an outbreak.¹⁶⁷

161. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 13 Jun 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B42, no. 7040 of 1913.

162. Crown Solicitor to Home Secretary, 29 Dec 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/A5069, in-letter no. 16754 of the Department of Justice of 1914. Local councils were to be responsible for proper food, medicines, accommodation, nursing and medical attendance for such period of time as may be necessary.

163. Commissioner of Public Health to Under Secretary, Home Secretary's Department, 10 Dec 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/A5069, in-letter no. 10285 of 1914. The health commissioner could make recommendations in certain cases, under the particular regulations concerned.

164. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Sep 1914. This particular complaint alleged that diphtheria regulations for carriers had been relaxed to accommodate "private reasons", and that diphtheria had again appeared in the town because of the relaxation. See Ibid., 11 Nov 1914, for health commissioner's recommendations for re-introducing these regulations.

165. Ibid., 4 Jun 1914.

166. Health Department to Home Secretary, 6 Jul 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B44, in-letter no. 5755 of 1914.

167. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Jun 1914.

Reluctantly or not, the principles essential to the fighting of disease were being accepted in Queensland, and diphtheria outbreaks had played a large part in that acceptance. Scientific methods, in addition to public and private cleanliness, and the necessity of paying for an absence of disease through dealing with suspects and carriers as well as treating grave illnesses, were lessons which the tragedy of diphtheria epidemics eventually brought home to Queensland central and local authorities alike.

In December 1885, the "formidable", "dangerous", "malignant" and "infectious" disease cholera¹ made its appearance among British immigrants travelling down the Queensland coast between Cooktown and Townsville on board the British India steamer Dorunda.² This arrival was not entirely unexpected, and since newspaper coverage on the subject of cholera had been very considerable, Queenslanders should not have been unaware of the dangers which were likely to attend an outbreak of that virulent, exotic disease.

The British had known and feared cholera well before the settlement at Moreton Bay was even contemplated, for in 1818 the disease had ravaged both the native population of India and British troops stationed in that country. But in 1831, when the first outbreak occurred in Britain, cholera was seen as a "terrible new disease",³ one which required novel, far-reaching measures.

Devastating the "new" disease certainly proved to be, leaving a total death toll of 21,882 in England and Wales, 20,070 in Ireland, and 9,592 in Scotland,⁴ yet even these terrible inroads were not without some compensations. The temporary precautions taken during the 1831-33 outbreak indicated for the first time that the central government had even begun to consider its liability in the question of public health. A new central advisory board, responsible to the Privy Council, was appointed to draw up a sanitary code for Britain, and at their request, local boards of health were created throughout the country. The boards lapsed as the epidemic waned and the danger passed, and Longmate considers that no long-lasting impression was made on the British government.⁵ But action taken over the first cholera epidemic in Britain was to set the pattern for future health administration in that country, and eventually in Queensland. Moreover, the most effective way of dealing with such an exotic disease was

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1. Description of Cholera in the Proclamation of the King in Council, 20 Jun 1831, cited in N.Longmate, King Cholera (London, 1966), no page number.
 2. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1886, p.110.
 3. Burton, p.200.
 4. Haagensen and Lloyd, p.44.
 5. Longmate, p.143.

clearly to prevent its entry. The British government very soon recognised the necessity for providing efficient quarantine measures, and the Australian colonies too were not slow to realize their importance.

Despite British efforts, cholera epidemics made further appearances in the country in 1848-49, 1853-54, 1865-66 and 1893. By 1866, during what Longmate calls the Fourth Assault,⁶ The Brisbane Courier, and other Australian newspapers,⁷ were taking it upon themselves to publish, not only almost daily reports on the progress of the disease in Britain, but also long, general reports and descriptions of cholera, together with appropriate warnings.⁸

Interest in cholera died down with the passing of the British epidemic, and it was not until 1883 that Australian colonists were again forced to consider the question.⁹ This time the centre of interest was Egypt, where a very severe outbreak of cholera had occurred, and where panic in Cairo might well have led to the virtual collapse of the Sherif government, but for the prompt action of the British occupation army.¹⁰

Two other high level commissions were also working effectively in Egypt to try to stem the panic of the cholera epidemic - one a French delegation of prominent scientists, the other a German group led by Robert Koch. The cholera-causing bacillus evaded the scientists in 1883, but Koch, after a visit to India, reported to his government in February 1884 that he had found the comma bacillus which causes cholera.¹¹

The very real concern felt in Queensland over the constant reports of cholera in Egypt was not surprising. The Suez Canal had been opened in 1869, and though not widened and deepened until 1886, was attracting a large amount of Australia-bound traffic and considerably reducing ships' sailing times. Added to this was the

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- 6. Longmate, pp.212-222.
 - 7. Notably The Argus from which The Brisbane Courier published several pieces.
 - 8. See for example, The Brisbane Courier, 22 Jan and 23 Jan 1866.
 - 9. See for example Ibid., 13 Jul 1883 and 11 Sep 1883, some reports and letters of importance being copied from The Sydney Morning Herald.
 - 10. P. Mansfield, The British in Egypt (London, 1971), p.84.
 - 11. Longmate, pp.225-6.

quicker passage of the Orient and other steamship lines, which robbed the colonies of the protection gained from the long duration of the voyage of sailing ships from Europe. It was becoming increasingly evident that Australia could no longer depend on immunity from foreign diseases, because of her geographical isolation. This fact was underlined, in early July, by the reports of an outbreak of cholera on board a ship conveying coolies to Fiji which had called into the port of Sydney during the voyage.¹²

A strictly observed quarantine was obviously required, and at least one prominent Australian medical man began to bring this important issue to public attention. On 20 July 1883, the government health officer of New South Wales, Dr. Charles MacKellar, in a paper read before the Royal Society, stressed the need for an efficient quarantine service on a federal basis. MacKellar suggested that the imposition of quarantine was in accordance with the teachings of modern medical science, that rigorous quarantine should be maintained throughout the whole of Australia, and that there should be mutual agreement on this question between the various colonial governments.¹³

The Brisbane Courier, alarmed by the Fiji cholera reports, applauded MacKellar's suggestions on federal quarantine, and called for united colonial action, not "if practicable", nor "if possible", but "of necessity". Trade with India and the East was increasing in ever faster ships, and the dangers increased with it. Commercial interests, the Courier admitted, might be against quarantine for economic reasons, and the governments of colonies might be reluctant to commit funds. But cholera could "be within measurable distance... and certainly no precaution should be avoided which could with prudence be adopted". The Courier, while convinced that concerted colonial action to establish a federal quarantine station at Thursday Island would be best, warned Queenslanders not to wait for a federal operation, but to act promptly and alone if necessary "to perpetuate present immunity", whatever the cost.¹⁴ Unfortunately, Queensland's record in organising her own quarantine facilities left a good deal to be desired, and the possibilities of the quarantine officers themselves acting as carriers of disease had not escaped one interested

12. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Jul 1883.

13. The Brisbane Courier, 1 Aug 1883.

14. Ibid., 1 Aug 1883; main editorial.

observer.¹⁵

In the face of the obvious danger from cholera and smallpox, there was very evident interest in quarantine in the other eastern colonies. But it is very important to notice that although politicians were showing a definite interest in the question at this time, the initiative was coming from medical men - either from those individual doctors in government service, like Dr. Charles MacKellar, or from associations of medical men. For example, on 27 August 1883, the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales forwarded a letter to the governments of South Australia, Victoria, New Zealand, Queensland, Fiji, Western Australia and Tasmania containing the resolutions of the interested and aware New South Wales branch of the British Medical Association on the practical issues of quarantine. Such a system should be "framed and conducted upon federal principles combining efficiency, humanity and hospitality", and be carried out by the unanimous consent and control, and at the expense of, the Australasian colonies, including New Zealand.¹⁶ The Central Board of Health in Victoria was also concerned with the problem, and favoured the establishment of a station at Thursday Island as part of a federal system, if their Queensland counterparts felt that the site was suitable.¹⁷

However, by no means all of the information being published in Queensland was favourable to the idea of quarantine. On 24 November 1883 The Brisbane Courier published a very long article which attacked quarantine as a retrogressive system, a system which was demonstrably inefficient, unless all of the necessary conditions were fulfilled exactly. The colonies would be far better advised to institute the medical inspection of passengers, which would not interrupt the commerce and communications, which were vital to new countries dependent on overseas markets. Instead, they should substitute the "scientific precision of a plan based on intelligent observation and logical inference" for the "blundering brutality" of quarantine. Medical inspection would deal only with those ships which had sickness on board, and would isolate and detain only the sick. Britain had stood alone against the world in recommending medical inspection, having

15. Agent for Gibbs Bright to Colonial Secretary, 31 Aug 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A367, in-letter no. 4433 of 1883.

16. The Telegraph, 8 Sep 1883.

17. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Sep 1883; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 14 Sep 1883.

dropped her earlier strict quarantine measures in the interests of trade and commerce. She had seen her stand vindicated at the International Sanitary Conference held in Vienna in 1874, when medical inspection in the face of an invasion of cholera was proposed by the representatives of twenty-one governments.¹⁸

Dr. W.M. Frazer contends, with the benefit of hindsight, that in the 1870's and 1880's the new port sanitary authorities in Britain were too inexperienced to prevent the admission of persons in the incubation period of disease, and that medical inspection, like quarantine itself, is dependent on the backing of an efficient system of sanitation throughout the rest of the country.¹⁹ This happy state of affairs certainly did not exist in Australia in the 1880's, but in any case, the colonial governments do not seem to have been tempted by the idea; nor did they rush into action to call a quarantine conference.

Impatient at the delay, newspapers throughout Queensland again began to preach the value of an efficient quarantine system, as the possibility of the arrival of cholera loomed. The Northern Miner warned of the still raging Egyptian epidemic,²⁰ and the Rockhampton Municipal Council, stirred by the news of the outbreak of cholera in Europe, requested its Mayor, as a matter of urgency, to wait upon the Colonial Secretary in Brisbane, to discuss possible quarantine improvements.²¹ It was hardly surprising that the citizenry of these northern ports was worried. Steam ships bound for eastern Australia favoured the route which took in the convenient coaling station at Batavia, thus allowing them to proceed through the Torres Strait and down the Queensland coast. The north Queensland ports were the first line of defence in any quarantine system that might be devised, either by the colony itself, or through some federal arrangement. The arrival of the Dorunda was to prove just how weak that defence was.

The Brisbane Courier also kept its readers fully alerted to the cholera situation in Europe, stressing the "fearful rapidity" with which the disease spread, and recording the numbers of deaths from

18. The Brisbane Courier, 24 Nov 1883.

19. Frazer, p.164.

20. The Northern Miner, 2 Jun 1884.

21. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Aug 1884.

cholera in Russia, Italy, France, Switzerland and Germany.²² Apart from the dreadful nature of the disease itself, the editor of the Courier was most concerned at "the possibility that such a plague as cholera should find its way here while we are so utterly unprepared to combat it. It is sufficient to make any thoughtful person shudder".²³ And the editor of The Northern Miner, in warning that Australia could not escape the scourge of cholera, examined Dr. Koch's suggestions and warnings on the disease, and urged all local authorities to take all of the scientific precautions available to diminish the evil, or totally avert a visitation. At the same time, the Miner used the opportunity to swipe at a number of other evils, which it said, obtained in Townsville, though it reserved its special virulence for the Chinese. So it attacked

the creek, reeking with putrid offal of all kinds, back slums with a foundation built on filth and rottenness, and Chinese stores and Chinese dirt everywhere. We wonder that the municipal authorities do not turn their attention to the removal of so direct and immediate cause of disease as the Chinese plant in a town. If they are to be tolerated in a town, they should have a separate quarter or location, a ghetto as the Jews have in Rome. No man should be allowed to poison his neighbours by letting his houses to filthy Chinamen.... /The Northern Miner/ wants the town cleared of Chinkies and and all other rubbish.

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The sanitary conference of government medical delegates from every colony did take place at last, at Sydney in September 1884, Queensland's representative being Dr. Joseph Bancroft. Interest in the conference was probably over-shadowed, as far as Queensland was concerned, by the debate - in parliament and in the press - over the new comprehensive health bill which was then before both houses. The Brisbane Courier was

glad to see doctors getting together better in ways to unite and protect Australia from disease than the politicians do.... Legislation will be necessary, but this paper is confident that there will be no hesitation in passing such legislation, when the necessity for it is explained.

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The editor was wrong in his assessment as to the swift acceptance of the need to unite Australia on this matter. Even after federation,

22. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Aug 1884, 12 Aug 1884, 14 Aug 1884, 19 Aug 1884, 21 Aug 1884, 25 Aug 1884, 3 Sep 1884 and 8 Sep 1884.

23. Ibid., 3 Sep 1884; main editorial.

24. The Northern Miner, 23 Aug 1884; editorial.

25. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Sep 1884.

quarantine systems were to remain the business of the states until their operations were abolished under the Commonwealth Quarantine Act of 1908. And it was not until 1 July 1909 that a branch office within the Department of Trade and Customs was created under the control of a Director of Quarantine,²⁶ and arrangements to suit all parties were completed over a period.²⁷

The Australasian Sanitary Conference of Sydney, New South Wales, was of considerable significance, for not only did it deal with the important questions of sanitation and quarantine, but also, as one of the forerunners of many more colonial conferences on matters of mutual interest, it highlighted the growing trend of Australians to come together across colonial borders to deal with problems affecting the whole country. The resolutions of the conference, which was held as an open forum and which reported back to all colonial parliaments,²⁸ were quite different from the secret compacts previously arranged between colonial governments, through the "vicious system of conducting these conferences behind closed doors".²⁹ Indeed, the conference delegates bluntly told their various governments that for the immediate purpose of preventing the spread of contagious disease from colony to colony, constant and swift intercolonial communications were vital.

This at present is not habitually done; and the communications between the Governments of this information, when it is transmitted, is through the Colonial Secretary's Department. It was unanimously agreed, under Resolution 9, that all information of this kind should be systematically collected by the various Governments; and in order that it might be communicated with the promptitude which alone can render it of practical value, under Resolution 11 it was resolved that the Chief Medical Advisers to the Governments ought to have power for this purpose to communicate with each other. 30

- 26. Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia 1901-1911 (No.5, 1912), p.1117; and see also J.H.L. Cumpston, A History of Smallpox in Australia 1788-1908 (Quarantine Service, Publication No.3), p.198.
- 27. Negotiations were rather more protracted than the bald statements in Cumpston and the Commonwealth Yearbook would suggest. See for example, Under Secretary, Home Department to Health Department, 23 Mar 1910, Q.S.A. B.C. Register of 1910-1912, out-letter no.3282 of 1910. This deals with payment of the Queensland public health commissioner for work done for the Commonwealth quarantine service during a northern tour of the state.
- 28. "The Australasian Sanitary Conference of N.S.W., 1884", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1885).
- 29. The Brisbane Courier, 1 Aug 1883; main editorial.
- 30. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1885), 488.

But this was to request too much power and discretion for government medical men, and colonial governments continued to deal with health matters through the ministers concerned.

In spite of the continued public interest in the cholera problem, this disease received only brief mention in the official report of the conference,³¹ though more attention was paid to the question in discussion between delegates. Queensland's delegate at least was convinced of the propriety of relying on British experience and advice, though doctors from other colonies were prepared to acknowledge the tremendous contribution to medical knowledge provided by French, and pre-eminently German, scientists.³² Above all, both conference delegates and medical men generally, stressed the inadequacy of trying to deal with contagious diseases through quarantine alone. An efficient port system to check disease was essential in Australia, but this had to be backed up with "ordinary cleanliness of roads and courts", "a moderately perfect scheme of drainage", and "pure air and water". Under these conditions "of good drainage and good scavenage, cholera, as has been seen again and again, does not spread".³³ And that was precisely the trouble. In Brisbane, medical practitioners began to warn the general public that with cholera not so far from Queensland, the country's need for better drainage in all her cities and towns was urgent.³⁴

Throughout 1885 reports of cholera in Europe continued to feature in Queensland papers, while The Brisbane Courier began to suggest that no expense on sanitary precautions or delays in communications or loss of trade would be considered too costly and too inconvenient if Brisbane were threatened with the immediate introduction of cholera.³⁵ Hardly had this warning been issued than the Queensland Figaro published a startling editorial - The Cholera is Coming!!!

31. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1885), 495.

32. Ibid., p.510.

33. Ibid., p.489.

34. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Oct 1884; letter to editor from Dr. Richard Rendle, and 9 Oct 1884; letter to editor from Dr. Leighton Kevesten.

35. Ibid., 10 Aug 1885; sub editorial.

....The cholera is here!
 Or, if it isn't here, it soon will be.
 The cholera is here!
 Right here in Australia - in Queensland.
 Down here in Brisbane, up there in Cooktown,
 back in Toowoomba.

The cholera is here!
 Good God! Do you know what that means?
 Can you conceive the presence of such a scourge?
 Have you the least idea of what the
 "cholera" is?
 The cholera is here!
 Ay! Right here. Men fall in the streets and women by the
 roadside. The strong go down like grain before the reaper.
 The weak die off as cattle die in the drought.
 The cholera is here!

....Do we want to Escape?
 Well, I do, rather; don't you? and you? and you?
 Do we want to escape?
 Then, why do we sit here like dotards, when it is time to be
 up and doing? What is Sammy* about that he doesn't set the
 sanitary machinery of the colony in motion, or step down and
 out to give place to a man that will.
Do we want to escape?
 Then let us go through the country with a new broom, scour out
 every city, mop out every town, scrub out every village, and
 holey-stone every house. Dig a hole in the field and bury the
 muck-heap, cart away the stinking filth that rots in many an
 alley-way, take the Chinese by the nape of the neck and, if
 they won't live like Christians bounce them bag
 and baggage.

Do we want to escape?

I think so,....and the way is as plain as a
 pikestaff. Faith is all right, but works count also....
 and the dirty town that goes to church won't stand half
 as good a chance when the cholera is around as the clean
 town that doesn't. The plague without dirt is like fire
 without anything to burn, and when it strikes us we
 should have things fixed so that it dies out for want
 of fuel.

Do you want to escape? ³⁶

Such editorials may have been exaggerations for the sake of
 effect, but cholera was certainly not far away. On 22 September 1885,
The Brisbane Courier announced an outbreak of epidemic cholera in Timor.
 The dreaded disease had almost reached Queensland's very doors. ³⁷

* Samuel Walker Griffith - Premier and Colonial Secretary of
 Queensland at this time.

36. The Queensland Figaro, 22 Aug. 1885; main editorial.

37. The Brisbane Courier, 22 Sep 1885.

Utterly dismayed, the paper contended that there was now a distinct possibility that the disease could find its way to Australia.

Apparently ignoring Koch's discoveries of 1884, and the earlier work of Dr. John Snow in London,³⁸ the Courier fretted that scientific men were not at all sure as to the manner in which cholera spread. This seemed only too obviously true, as equally experienced and well qualified medical men differed quite openly in opinions on the subject. But in any case, as McKeown and Brown have wisely pointed out, increased medical knowledge and professional advances, important as these undoubtedly are, are of no practical significance until "they contribute to the preservation of health or recovery from illness".³⁹ This gap between knowledge and results was certainly evident where cholera was concerned. Only one thing was certain to The Brisbane Courier in September 1885. Dirt, choked drains, and stagnant water, and fear, panic, and hysterical excitement were the trusty allies of the disease. Queensland had plenty of insanitary nuisances, which should be attended to at once, while the colonists should rally without shrinking to resist unreasonable alarm.⁴⁰

The situation had become so grave that even the body directly charged with the sanitary protection of Queensland, the Central Board of Health, began to debate the matter - but not before the Sydney board had telegraphed enquiring what action Brisbane had taken to prevent cholera's entry. That it was an important question was obvious, and the board agreed that they should consider it. But any reply to the Sydney telegram would have perforce to be "that up to the present they had done nothing". The rest of the board's discussion concerned the sanitary conference's proposal that a medical man should go to Thursday Island, to try to stop any virulent, exotic disease from entering Australia. After some derisory talk on government miserliness on the issue of the salary to be paid to the proposed Thursday Island appointee, the board decided to interview the Colonial Secretary to stress the urgency of the case. The Colonial Secretary was also to be warned that ships' officers' guarantees of a clean vessel should not be accepted, and that

38. In 1849, after working through the 1848-49 epidemic in London, John Snow published a pamphlet On the Mode of Communication of Cholera. In 1855 he completely rewrote his work, presenting conclusive evidence that cholera was water-borne. Even so, many refused to believe him, labelling him a reactionary and an anti-sanitarian.

39. McKeown and Brown, p.120.

40. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Sep 1885; sub editorial.

careful and proper inspection of all vessels coming from China and the eastern ports should take place at Cooktown.⁴¹

By now private persons began to take action. A small pamphlet, Precautions against Cholera and Diarrhoea, which was published by the National Society of England with the sanction of the Local Government Board, was reprinted by Mr. W. Carpenter of Boggo Road, and distributed gratuitously from chemist and booksellers' shops.⁴² Politicians also expressed fears that insanitary Brisbane offered excellent conditions for the cholera to "take up a permanent abode".⁴³ And at least one member of that other body which was supposed to look to the health of Brisbane citizens, the city council, began to express his fears on cholera. Far better to proceed as quickly as possible with the drainage and cleansing of the city, as cholera approached, than to spend a large sum of money on the erection of a new town hall, alderman McMaster proposed. Perhaps the idea of a cholera outbreak in Brisbane was too hard for the council to contemplate. McMaster's motion was lost by eight votes to three.⁴⁴ At the same time Ipswich local government bodies were urged to do their part to deal with cholera, in the face of increasingly close communications with European and eastern ports.⁴⁵

The Central Board of Health discussed the cholera question again at their first October meeting, but curiously enough the telegrams which were examined were the ones which had been received and sent in September, and the only bright spot recorded was that a health officer was to be appointed to Thursday Island during the following week.⁴⁶ In fact the appointment of Mr. Arthur Salter, M.B., Ch.B., as health and medical officer at Thursday Island was announced at the board's November meeting, when the secretary was asked to draw up a list of Salter's duties. The Dorunda was even then steaming towards the Queensland coast, but the central board, not being omniscient, made no mention of the possible cholera problem at this meeting.⁴⁷ The possibility became a

41. The Brisbane Courier, 26 Sep 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 25 Sep 1885.

42. Ibid., 28 Sep 1885.

43. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLVII (1885), 851.

44. The Brisbane Courier, 20 Oct. 1885.

45. The Queensland Times, 17 Nov 1885; sub-editorial.

46. The Brisbane Courier, 10 Oct 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 9 Oct 1885. The actual text of the telegrams is included in this report.

47. Ibid., 28 Nov 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 27 Nov 1885.

reality on 9 December 1885. The Dorunda had reached the Queensland coast with one passenger dead from cholera.

If the majority of those most intimately concerned had been lethargic before, they burst into great activity now. As The Brisbane Courier announced the arrival in what were, for those days, screaming headlines,⁴⁸ the Central Board of Health was meeting to try to cope with the emergency.⁴⁹ Their secretary, Dr. Hill Wray, who was also the health officer for the port of Brisbane, was kept incredibly busy preparing plans and suggestions for the Premier's consideration. Among these were proposals for seven days of quarantine for all ships from Batavia, although coloured labourers from the area were to be subjected to three times that period in detention; that immigrant ships should never again be permitted to call at Batavia; that Wray be given immediate assistance with the appointment of an assistant health officer; and that four male and four female nurses be put at his disposal as well.⁵⁰

The Premier, also acting with unwonted speed on a public health matter, at once proclaimed Batavia,⁵¹ provided Dr. Wray with his nurses,⁵² and hastily arranged the appointment of Dr. J.E. Usher to assist Wray.⁵³ Usher, who was surgeon superintendent of the Queensland immigration service, had already put his experience and expertise, gained through contact with cholera and allied tropical diseases while port officer at Karachi, at the government's disposal.⁵⁴ He was not the only

48. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Dec 1885.
49. Ibid., 12 Dec 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Dec 1885.
50. Wray to Premier, 16 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A447, in-letter no. 9496 of 1885. Wray had been accused of neglecting his duty, and of tardiness in answering calls for assistance, especially in his capacity as medical officer to the prisoners on St.Helena. One constant critic was The Queensland Figaro, see for example 3 Oct 1885. However the Premier considered Wray to be a good officer. If he had a weakness it was not as a medical man, but in the way he attended to his duties as secretary of the Central Board of Health. "The work of a secretary was not his forte". Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LIII (1887), 1554.
51. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXVII (1885), 2165, 17 Dec 1885.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., 19 Dec 1885.
54. J.E. Usher to Colonial Secretary, 11 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A447, in-letter no. 9355 of 1885.

one to volunteer his services in a time of grave emergency. For although some local bodies panicked, demanding appointments of medical officers of health which they had previously strenuously resisted on economic grounds,⁵⁵ and although people with relatives on board the stricken ship requested that healthy passengers should be removed by a specially despatched steamer, while the doomed were left to their fate,⁵⁶ a relatively large number of Queensland residents did show that courage in the face of danger which The Brisbane Courier had previously urged upon them.⁵⁷

Some of these offers were undoubtedly genuine, such as that from Dr. Porter of Colac, who quickly telegraphed his readiness to assist;⁵⁸ from Lieutenant Walton Drake, who offered his services "for the preservation of order and decency at Peel Island" during the unfortunate outbreak;⁵⁹ and even the submission of a certain G. Buckmaster, who, in offering to help, apprised the Colonial Secretary of his experiences with a cholera panic in foreign parts, and his own fearlessness in the face of his companions' deaths from cholera and yellow fever.⁶⁰ But it does appear that some approaches might have been made, not from nobility of soul, nor from concern for their fellow men, but from sheer inability to find alternative employment. Such, perhaps, was R.J.Dennis, late chief quartermaster of the vessel Gayundah.⁶¹ Impressed by the man's experience of cholera, and his knowledge of ship life, Griffith engaged him to work at the Peel Island quarantine station. However, on the morning of the day of the engagement "he drank too much and committed other irregularities, and was dismissed the next morning".⁶²

- 55. For example, John D.Gibson, Chairman of Divisional Board, Maytown to Colonial Secretary, 11 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A447, in-telegram no. 9385 of 1885. More often than not, these requests were refused. See marginal comment on above from Griffith - "not necessary to make special appointment", 15 Dec 1885.
- 56. C.Spry to Colonial Secretary, 11 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A447, in-letter no. 9416 of 1885.
- 57. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Sep 1885.
- 58. Dr. Porter to Colonial Secretary, 12 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A447, in-telegram no. 9439 of 1885.
- 59. Walton Drake to Colonial Secretary, 14 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A447, in-letter no. 9492 of 1885.
- 60. G.Buckmaster to Colonial Secretary, 12 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A448, in-letter no. 9540 of 1885.
- 61. R.J.Dennis to Colonial Secretary, 12 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A447, in-letter no. 9437 of 1885.
- 62. Marginal comment on above, 16 Dec 1885.



"BE CLEANLY AND FEAR NOT"

No. 17. Queensland Figaro, July to December, 1885.

If the government was prematurely congratulating itself on its swift action in Brisbane, a great deal of trouble was brewing in the north. The Dorunda had been quickly turned around in Cooktown, in spite of her record of extremely serious diarrhoeic cases, one of which, on the very evening of sailing, was to prove to be, not the milder diarrhoea as was supposed, but the deadly cholera. The ship had then sailed for Townsville, where, with the dreadful disease confirmed, it awaited the Premier's instructions. Since by then four persons had died, and sixteen more on board were very seriously ill with unmistakable symptoms of cholera,⁶³ it was hardly surprising that passengers were showing signs of panic. The people of Townsville were also distinctly fearful of possible consequences in their area, especially as the Queensland government seemed likely to set up a quarantine station for the reception of the Dorunda's passengers and crew on Magnetic Island.

This fear turned to complete dismay and indignation when it was learned that the health officer for the port, Dr. Thomas Ridgley, had actually been on board the vessel to examine the sick, and having returned to shore to order the Dorunda into quarantine, was moving freely about his business in the city. Townsville, from its Mayor down, immediately protested violently at such dangerous, "unwarranted" action,⁶⁴ and Ridgley was threatened with court action under the Quarantine Act.⁶⁵ However, The North Queensland Telegraph and Territorial Separationist, like its rival The Northern Miner, used the opportunity to champion its own long-held partisan views, as well as issuing grave warnings about the cholera. In The Telegraph's opinion Ridgley's behaviour, which was apparently condoned by the Premier, and the "monstrous shame of Townsville's unpreparedness" to deal with the cholera, were only to be expected. Both naturally resulted from northern "affairs being administered by foreigners", and were but another example of a "Southern Government's" complete unfitness to cope

63. Cumpston and McCallum, p.344.

64. The North Queensland Telegraph, 14 Dec 1885; sub editorial. See also The Brisbane Courier, 11 Dec 1885, and for copies of the numerous telegrams sent to the Colonial Secretary from the Mayor, private citizens and Dr. Ridgley see The Brisbane Courier, 12 Dec 1885.

65. Note from S. Griffith to Treasurer, 22 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 448, no.9667 of 1885.

with northern requirements.⁶⁶

Griffith was hampered by slow and inadequate telegraphic communications from Dr. Hickling, the surgeon-superintendent on the Dorunda, on the condition of the sick - a matter which would require explanation, since the press and ship's agents were constantly in touch - but he now came to a decision which was very unpopular in the capital. He decided, after consultation with Dr. Wray, but against the majority opinion of the Central Board of Health, to order the Dorunda to Brisbane, with all passengers on board.⁶⁷

The Brisbane City Council, which had so grossly neglected a large number of insanitary areas of the capital for so long, wasted no time now. The Mayor, the health committee of the council, members of parliament, and a number of citizens quickly formed a deputation to wait on the Premier on the evening of 11 December, urging him not to allow the Dorunda to proceed to Moreton Bay. The people of Brisbane, some of whom were showing signs of extreme fear, were convinced that the proper place for the treatment of cholera victims, and the quarantining of the whole ship, was Magnetic Island. To reinforce their position, the city council even solicited the help of the Central Board of Health, with whom they were more often than not at odds. The council urgently requested the board to use its influence to have the sailing orders for the Dorunda countermanded, so that the vessel could be "detained and the passengers landed at some more suitable place in the north".⁶⁸ At the same time, the Mayor and his health committee began to address themselves at last to the huge task of purifying Brisbane. The editor of The Brisbane Courier was also convinced that the government had blundered in ordering the Dorunda to Brisbane, not because he feared for the capital, but rather because he was concerned that the best means of saving the lives of passengers would be to land and treat them as soon as possible.⁶⁹

All of the protests were too late. The Dorunda had already left for Brisbane. In the Premier's opinion, the accommodation at Peel

66. The North Queensland Telegraph, 15 Dec 1885; main editorial.

67. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Dec 1885; minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Dec 1885. Dr. John Thomson abstained from voting, apparently favouring bringing the Dorunda to Moreton Bay. All other board members voted to keep the ship at Magnetic Island.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.; main editorial. See also Dr. Cunningham's opinion on this point, Within, pp. 178-79.

Island was not all that could be desired - indeed it could hardly be said that the buildings on Peel were adequate at all, and most of the passengers were accommodated in tents, while properly attended latrine facilities were almost entirely lacking.⁷⁰ However, facilities on Peel Island were vastly superior to the incompletely completed buildings on Magnetic Island. Moreover, should the Dorunda be held in the northern port, and cholera become established in tropical Townsville, Queensland would probably be in the position of a country like India which was never really free of the disease.⁷¹ The Premier may well have been correct in his assumptions, but The Brisbane Courier was also right in assessing the danger to ailing passengers. On the voyage to Brisbane in the cramped and fetid quarters occupied by the indented immigrants, five more persons succumbed to the cholera.

In the grave emergency, Griffith had exercised to the full his powers as minister in charge of public health, turning his considerable energy to the problem, but he did expect to receive the advice and support of his Central Board of Health on medical and scientific matters. Of special importance, and entirely within the province of the board, was the drawing up of a code of instructions for the treatment of cholera and the prevention of its spread. But the members could only rely on English experience, having nothing to offer but the precautions laid down in 1873 by John Simon, the medical officer to the English Local Government Board,⁷² and on 19 December 1885, regulations on these lines were gazetted.⁷³

Indeed, as the press of the colony was not slow to observe, the Central Board of Health was a very weak body, apparently incapable of acting quickly and positively when these qualities were called for.⁷⁴ Local government bodies, the other arm in the defence of the public health, were also feeble, lacking initiative, decisiveness, and money. The question of the central board's powers was raised again and again in this period, as the country floundered at the mercy of councils,

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- 70. Dr. Hickling to Colonial Secretary, 21 Jan 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A452, in-letter no.523 of 1886.
 - 71. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Dec 1885.
 - 72. The Queensland Times, 15 Dec 1885; main editorial.
 - 73. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXVII (1885), 2233.
 - 74. See for example The Brisbane Courier, 15 Dec 1885; main editorial The Queensland Times, 15 Dec 1885; editorial, The North Queensland Telegraph, 16 Dec 1885, and The Maryborough Chronicle, 16 Dec 1885; editorial.

boards and committees, and the call was made for the Premier to take the bold and imaginative step of appointing one competent individual who, "clothed with authority, and invested with full responsibility", could take complete control of the sanitary arrangements of the colony, with the support of the whole power of the government.⁷⁵ Like the request for greater powers from the sanitary conference the year before, this entreaty fell on deaf ears, and Queensland was not to achieve a competent medical head of a sub-department of public health until the passing of the Health Act of 1900.

But if the arrival of cholera had been an immense shock to Queensland - revealing weaknesses and underscoring huge inadequacies - it was not an unmixed disaster. Various local authorities, taking the view that the disease was nature's retribution for the breaking of her sanitary laws,⁷⁶ did begin definite programmes to improve sanitation. In Brisbane, six additional inspectors were employed for house-to-house inspection, disinfectants were bought in bulk, to be resold to the citizens at low prices, and temporarily, all drains were flushed, day and night. In the surrounding suburbs all other works were suspended, as men were put to cleansing shires and divisions thoroughly, gangs worked on opening stagnant watercourses, and medical officers and general inspectors were appointed to take charge of any cases of cholera which might occur.⁷⁷ Since these men dealt with any other medical and sanitary problems which arose, this was a vast improvement in the health position generally. The government, taking an unprecedented interest in the health of the people of the west, appointed Dr. M. Mathison to Aramac and Dr. W.S. Webb to Blackall to cope with any cholera threat in those areas.⁷⁸ And various newspapers throughout Queensland published complete supplements containing warnings about cholera, and suggestions for general sanitary improvements, keeping up that interest in public health matters which was a definite feature of this period, when the press stood, often almost alone, as an effective pressure group for improved sanitation.⁷⁹

75. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Dec 1885; main editorial.

76. The Maryborough Chronicle, 16 Dec 1885; editorial.

77. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Dec 1885.

78. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXVII (1885), 2235.

79. See for example special supplements in The Herberton Advertiser, 18 Dec 1885, and The Wide Bay and Burnett News, 19 Dec 1885.

In fact, as increasingly encouraging news was received from Peel Island, as the Premier was acting with energy and precision, and as the local bodies throughout the colony were also bestirring themselves, The Brisbane Courier was moved to observe that the cholera visitation, and the great cleansing which accompanied the threat, would actually save precious lives throughout Queensland.⁸⁰ Ironically, the favourable report on the state of Townsville came from Dr. Ridgley on 17 December 1885. Ridgley, whom the Townsville corporation still wished to sue,⁸¹ reported that the northern city was in a very healthy state, for the season of the year, and congratulated the government on keeping the "fell disease of cholera... out of the colony and Australasia".⁸²

By 24 December it seemed that Ridgley was correct, and that the course of the cholera had been stayed, for the quarantine news was reduced to a short paragraph, like any other item of minor interest,⁸³ although all of the Brisbane dailies gained the Premier's permission to receive full reports from Peel Island during the Christmas holiday break.⁸⁴ On Christmas Day 1885 an unheaded paragraph announced that all was well on the quarantine station, and on 16 January 1886, all of the passengers were released.⁸⁵ Of equal, if not greater importance, on 21 January 1886 the proclamation of all Queensland ports as being infected with cholera was revoked. Queensland's enforced isolation from the rest of Australia and the world, and her consequent loss of revenue from trade, was now at an end.⁸⁶

- 80. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Dec 1885; main editorial.
- 81. Under Colonial Secretary to Dr. Ridgley, 24 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A448, out-letter no. 3872 of 1885.
- 82. Thomas Ridgley to Colonial Secretary, 17 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A448, in-letter no. 448 of 1886.
- 83. There was still a large number of letters on the subject being published in the newspapers. See for example, Brisbane Courier, 21 Dec 1885; letter to editor from Kelvin Grove, Ibid., 22 Dec 1885; letter to editor from A.P.P., Ibid., 23 Dec 1885; letter to editor from Office Holder, and The Queensland Times, 19 Dec 1885; letter to editor from Dr. H.M. Lightoller, and Ibid.; letter to editor from William Haigh.
- 84. Editors of The Observer, The Telegraph and The Brisbane Courier to Premier, 22 Dec 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A448, in-letter no. 9690 of 1885.
- 85. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Jan 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 12 Jan 1886.
- 86. James Service, Victoria to Premier, 21 Jan 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A452, in-telegram no. 477 of 1886.

Dr. Hickling's Report on the Voyage of the Dorunda, which was presented on his release from quarantine, gave the tragic story of the journey down the Queensland coast, and incidentally provided an insight into the work of a busy ship's doctor under the special stress of a frightening epidemic.⁸⁷ Given the circumstances of the journey's long history of diarrhoeic cases, culminating in the devastating choleraic attacks, Hickling seems to have been pleased enough with the voyage, having nothing but praise for the captain and the ship's crew, and even for most of the passengers, especially with regard to their keeping "good heart" during their ordeal on Peel Island. His only complaints were of Ridgley's behaviour in boarding the ship in Townsville after he had been warned as to the nature of the disease; a delay of 24 hours in Moreton Bay awaiting orders to land on Peel Island, which kept the indented immigrants, who were the most exposed to the cholera, in their unsatisfactory, congested quarters; a brief reference to some poor food which had been delivered to the island; and an attack on one passenger whose enmity Hickling had incurred over the cholera incident. Hickling was especially grateful to one Queensland gentleman who, having failed to have his nephew plucked from the dangerous confines of the Dorunda, had subsequently supplied the quarantine station with several cows, which, besides keeping his nephew in good health, had been a tremendous boon to all of the detainees.⁸⁸

The surgeon-superintendent did not "report on the inadequacy of the accommodation on Peel Island", since he "believed that point to be well known to the government and improvements to be under consideration."⁸⁹ By March 1886 the government had indeed moved on this question. Plans had been drawn, tenders had been called, and one had been accepted on the recommendation of the Public Works Department, though not without some reluctance and positive penny-pinching on the part of Griffith.⁹⁰

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- 87. A good deal of the report is a justification of Hickling's apparent neglect of Thomas Doran, the first victim of cholera. The man reported ill at 10 am, was seen at 11 am, and again at 1 pm., after which the doctor was engaged in a rather difficult delivery of a child. Hickling saw the man again at 3.30 pm, which was at the first moment which he judged it safe to leave his woman patient, and stayed with Doran until 7.30 pm, when he died. Two of Doran's children died on the following day and were secretly buried at sea, since their mother, not unnaturally, was in a "frenzied state".
 - 88. The gentleman concerned was Mr. C. Spry.
 - 89. Dr. Hickling to Colonial Secretary, 21 Jan 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A453, in-letter no. 523 of 1886.
 - 90. Dr. Wray to Colonial Secretary, 8 Apr 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A465, in-letter no. 2811 of 1886. See also other letters and plans attached to this file and marginal comments thereon.

Interest in the Dorunda and the cholera did not die down, though the Premier, considering his immediate attention was no longer required, left the colony to undertake official business in the south. The charitable people of Queensland promoted a fund for those widowed and orphaned by the disease, which closed when donations stood at £209/4/10d. And the newspapers, noting that the course of this disease was unlike any other recorded choleraic epidemic, began to question the medical practitioners' assessment that it was true cholera.⁹¹ Whatever the disease, The Brisbane Courier was convinced that an exhaustive enquiry should be held as soon as the passengers were released, for "not only Queensland but the whole of Australia was really concerned with knowing if we were really within an ace of having this virulent plague imported to our colonies".⁹² On 20 January 1886, The Brisbane Courier repeated its call, and on 21 January, the government did appoint a board, consisting of Drs. Wray, Bancroft, Marks, and Thomson, with Charles A. Bernays as secretary, to enquire into the nature of the disease on board the Dorunda.⁹³

The board engaged in a large number of interviews and a good deal of correspondence, both within Australia and with Batavia,⁹⁴ and uncovered some stringent criticism of the government's handling of the Dorunda situation, most particularly with regard to Griffith's decision to bring the vessel to Brisbane. Dr. Cunningham, late surgeon-general of India, wrote of the incident :

There is no doubt whatever that the ship ought to have been brought to port as soon as possible and the passengers landed. Instead... the poor people were brought on to Brisbane. The consequence was that many of them were

- 91. Drs. Hickling, Ridgley, Wray and Paoli - Dr. Paoli had had considerable experience of cholera and had joined the Dorunda in Townsville to assist Hickling who was showing signs of exhaustion - all agreed that the disease was true Asiatic cholera. Cumpston and McCallum suggest that the description of symptoms given by the surgeon-superintendent leaves no doubt that this was so. See Cumpston and McCallum, pp.340-345.
- 92. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Jan 1886; main editorial.
- 93. Ibid., 22 Jan 1886.
- 94. See for example, Under Colonial Secretary to Dr. Wray, 10 Mar 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A458, in-letter no. 1815 of 1886, British Consul, Batavia to Colonial Secretary, 20 Jan 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A455, in-letter no. 1026 of 1886, and Under Colonial Secretary to British Consul, Batavia, 5 Feb 1886, Q.S.A. COL/G31, out-letter no. 384 of 1886.

attacked and died. I have no hesitation in saying that this was due to the inhuman proceeding of sending them on in the Dorunda. ⁹⁵

But if Griffith was attacked on this score, and for his overbearing attitude to his Central Board of Health,⁹⁶ he himself strongly criticised Hickling for not consulting the lately appointed health officer on Thursday Island over his doubtful diarrhoeic cases, especially as Batavia, and its coaling station, Tandjong Priok, were in the throes of a cholera epidemic. The Premier finally accepted Hickling's explanation, however, and his re-employment as a surgeon-superintendent on immigrant ships was left to the discretion of the agent-general in London.⁹⁷

Hickling was completely exonerated in the special board's careful, rather innocuous report, his efforts being described as "most praiseworthy", once he understood the nature of the disease that had invaded his ship, probably at Batavia. On this matter, although the board spent considerable time and effort in trying to pin-point the exact manner of entry, and the persons responsible, no precise information was unearthed. The board was very brief on the question of bringing the Dorunda to Brisbane, saying only that in that area, "there may be a difference of opinion", and indicating that Magnetic Island was ill-prepared and unequipped for such an emergency, while "the weather (there) was unpropitious". This amounted to a justification of Griffith's action.

The doctors were a good deal less than happy with the inspection undertaken by the health officer in the port of Cooktown, where the ship had been granted pratique and allowed to proceed to Townsville, with at least serious diarrhoeic, and possibly choleraic, cases already on board. In the board's opinion, the examination had not been

95. There is a whole series of correspondence between Dr.Cunningham and the Colonial Secretary, Dr.Hickling, and C. Lumley Hill, Member of Legislative Assembly. See for example, Dr.Cunningham to Colonial Secretary, 16 Mar 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A459, in-letter no. 2268 of 1886.

96. The Australasian Medical Journal attacked Griffith for bringing the ship down the coast against the majority decision of the Central Board of Health, for his miserly attitude on doctors' salaries, and for his general arrogance towards his medical advisers, the central board. See The Brisbane Courier, 28 Jan 1886.

97. The top letter of this file on the cholera question is - Queensland Government Office, London to Colonial Secretary, 16 Jul 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A478, in-letter no. 6552 of 1886.

"of that searching nature which the safety of the colony demands". Since this was one area in which the Central Board of Health had not been lax, having earlier endeavoured to impress on the Colonial Secretary the need for excellence in the Cooktown officer, the doctors, who were members of both boards, no doubt felt justified in bringing the point forward for special notice. Above all, the enquiry stressed the absolute necessity for establishing a quarantine station on or near Thursday Island, with sufficient cleared space for pitching tents open to free air currents, with an ample and well-arranged water supply, and conveniences for disinfecting clothing. Other suitable sites on the coast near Cooktown and Townsville should also be selected and fitted out. The board had no doubt that the disease on the Dorunda was true Asiatic cholera, and were equally in agreement that the exigencies of trade and coaling could offer no justification for the dangers to which the colonies would be exposed, if European immigrants were brought in contact with tropical diseases which were to be found among an Asian population.⁹⁸

Curiously enough, at the first Central Board of Health meeting held after the enquiry was completed, the secretary, Dr. Hill Wray, announced that they had no copies of the report, and that so far he had seen only what had been published in newspapers.⁹⁹ The matter was not therefore discussed, though the board did not neglect their inter-colonial duty and by May, all central boards of health throughout Australia had received and acknowledged the reports of the enquiry.¹⁰⁰

The Brisbane Courier professed itself well pleased with the report, agreeing with most of its findings, and, making the most of the opportunity, once more urged the government to establish "a thoroughly competent health officer on Thursday Island and a proper quarantine station there".¹⁰¹ Griffith escaped censure of any kind

98. "Dorunda Enquiry Report", Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, III(1886), 749-750.

99. This is rather amusing. When the board of enquiry first sat, Dr. Bancroft, the chairman, felt that newspaper reporters should not be present. They were allowed to remain only after the reporter had pointed out that The Brisbane Courier had been instrumental in having the enquiry brought about. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Jan 1886.

100. Ibid., 15 May 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 14 May 1886.

101. Ibid., 17 Apr 1886; sub editorial.

from the newspaper; indeed the Courier had earlier stoutly defended him against the Australasian Medical Journal's attacks, at the same time praising his energetic and competent handling of a tense situation.¹⁰²

The danger past, the Premier and the colony turned their attention to other matters, though sporadic interest was shown in cholera, as infrequent articles on the subject appeared in the press.¹⁰³ The dreaded disease was gone, but it was by no means forgotten. Certainly the Premier, who had shown a distinct parsimoniousness even at the height of the alarm, when discussing supply and commenting on the unusual expenditure for the year just passed, reminded his colleagues that "a good deal was spent on account of the cholera scare last year", and that he hoped that the disease would not return in 1887. "However, if it did, he could tell the committee that the government would spend the money whether it was voted or not".¹⁰⁴

There was no recurrence in 1887 - by then even Sumatra appears to have been free from the dread disease¹⁰⁵ - nor was Queensland visited by cholera in any other year. Apart from noting with surprise that Dr. Hickling of Dorunda fame was again working on immigrant ships, The Brisbane Courier confined itself to occasional articles on the subject of cholera until 1892, when the disease was again spreading dangerously in Europe.

But this time Queensland was determined to be ready. A special meeting of the Central Board of Health was called and chaired by the then Colonial Secretary, Horace Tozer. The minister presented the board with the measures being taken in Victoria to cope with any possible entry, reminding them that "uniform intercolonial action alone /would/ give the perfect security desired against the entrance of disease". Not only should intercolonial rivalries be laid aside in the interests of health Australia-wide, but also the rivalries and dissensions between the various boards and authorities and their

102. The Brisbane Courier, 17 Apr 1886. In the Courier's opinion, the tone adopted by the Medical Journal "will not help...its object... Laymen are apt to doubt the common sense of medical men. The article...will go some way to confirming that doubt".

103. See for example, Ibid., 15 May 1886 and 6 Sep 1886.

104. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, L (1886), 1129.

105. Consul for the Netherlands to Premier, 18 Jan 1887, Q.S.A. COL/A487, in-letter no. 597 of 1887.

employees, central and local, should lapse until all fear of infection passed.¹⁰⁶

Much more aware than in 1885, Queensland issued the proclamation on 15 September 1892 that every ship which arrived at any port in Queensland from the infected continent should be placed in quarantine. On the same day, the Colonial Secretary appointed no less than thirty-four medical officers of health to treat any persons who might be affected with cholera. Two of the doctors were to work in Brisbane, but the rest were spread throughout the whole colony.¹⁰⁷

There was one scare in 1893, the year of the last outbreak in Great Britain, when a mild form of cholera was reportedly prevalent in Herberton, but this proved to be a false alarm.¹⁰⁸ Queensland was not troubled again during the nineties and, by 1903, to the relief of government and citizens alike, the Commissioner of Public Health "announced that Smallpox and Cholera were diseases which were no longer to hang over us like the sword of Damocles".¹⁰⁹ Dr. Burnett Ham's assessment of the cholera situation was astute, and it proved to be accurate. In 1884, when deciding against recommending any provision for quarantine from the east, the New South Wales Sanitary Conference had predicted that the greatest danger to Australia would lie in the disease being introduced by ships passing through the Suez Canal with immigrants from Europe.¹¹⁰ Longmate points out that "for Great Britain and Western Europe as a whole, the end of the nineteenth century marked also the end of the cholera era".¹¹¹ With the area which provided Australia's main source of migrants safe from the cholera menace, the danger to Queensland was removed almost

106. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Sep 1892; sub editorial.

107. Queensland Government Gazette, LVII (1892), 115-116.

108. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1894, p.69.

109. President's Annual Report to Metropolitan Joint Board for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases, 6 Mar 1903, Q.S.A. COL/239, Rough Copy-unnumbered.

110. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Sep 1884; main editorial.

111. Longmate, p.231.

automatically.¹¹²

Queensland had been taught a difficult lesson in 1885, one which probably would never be wholly forgotten by the people who had been forced to learn it. Her trade was disrupted, her intimately-concerned Premier was drafted into the full-time service of the public health, and her revenue was depleted by the extra expenses involved in fending off the evil diseases of the old world which had threatened her shores. Regulations covering all three exotic diseases - plague, smallpox and cholera - were proclaimed from time to time, usually for periods of up to twelve months.¹¹³ And whenever cholera appeared in any European country, as it did in Russia in 1910, fears were stirred, and The Brisbane Courier began again to print articles and to issue warnings.¹¹⁴

For a disease which never actually gained a foothold in the country, nor claimed one victim on her own soil, cholera very greatly affected Queensland, and is of considerable importance in the history of her public health movement. It underlined the important role of the newspapers as an effective pressure group, and gave excellent illustrations of the working out of the sanitary idea, and its clash with the newer medical theories of the day. It showed Queensland's chief executive in action, and by proving that good will, energy and initiative are not enough where the direction of public health matters are concerned, foreshadowed the appointment of a competent medical man with proven administrative ability, who could ensure that effective public health standards would be established and maintained throughout the state. The coming of the cholera revealed the weaknesses of Queensland's health legislation - legislation which had only just been passed - at the same time showing up the powerlessness of its servants in the nineteenth century. The scare caused by the coming of this scourge was only one of the cases when the unwillingness of all

112. This record was broken early in 1977 when a woman living in Beenleigh, south Queensland contracted the disease. On 12 March 1977, the World Health Organization declared Australia an affected area and Brisbane an affected port. Brisbane was taken off the list on 15 March 1977. See for example, The Courier Mail, 10 Mar to 16 Mar 1977.

113. See for example, Secretary of Public Health Department to Colonial Secretary, 29 Sep 1908, Q.S.A. HOM/B19, in-letter no. 11120 of 1908.

114. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Jun 1910.

authorities concerned to spend sufficient money to effect a permanent cure was all too evident - in spite of the cry being bandied about everywhere, that "a nation's health /was/ a nation's wealth /and that/ it would be easy to show that imported epidemics /were/ more disastrous and more costly than armed invasions".¹¹⁵ And perhaps most importantly of all, cholera was one of the diseases which showed the growing tendency of Australians to unite to face problems affecting the whole continent, as faster communications removed what had once been "the tyranny of distance".

115. Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, III
(1885), 485.

Unlike some of the diseases dealt with in detail in this work, leprosy did not attack many people in Queensland. Its importance to the history of public health in this state lies not because of its widespread nature, but in the fact, that in spite of its low incidence, it caused endless hours of agonising for all health authorities, since the labelling of a leper victim was tantamount to bringing down a sentence of life imprisonment. It engendered violent disagreements within the medical profession, and it created an atmosphere of extreme fear and racial prejudice on an alarming scale, amongst the people of Queensland.

One of the most terrible diseases, leprosy is a chronic contagious illness brought about by infection with the lepra bacillus discovered by Hansen and Neisser in 1879. According to C.G. Lambie, leprosy was introduced to the northern parts of Queensland by the Chinese, who had also carried the disease to what were formerly Indo-China, Siam, and the Straits Settlements. There is no evidence that it was imported by whites.¹ Certainly this is not one of the ills brought into the colony of Queensland from Great Britain. Although there had been something over two hundred lazaret houses for the incarceration of lepers in England in mediaeval times, by the middle of the sixteenth century the disease there had been almost completely eradicated.²

It was in 1877 that Queensland's Central Board of Health first found it necessary to warn the government of the

danger run from the probable importation of the loathsome disease of leprosy, which is very prevalent amongst /the Chinese people/.

The neighbouring colony of Victoria has already had to encounter this danger, and for years past been obliged to form special "camps" in which to isolate the unhappy creatures found afflicted with it.

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1. C.G. Lambie, "The History of Leprosy", The Medical Journal of Australia, I (4 Jun 1938), p.955.
 2. Sir A. Newsholme, The Last Thirty Years in Public Health (London, 1936), p.134.

It is worthy of consideration whether special instructions, with plain descriptions of this disease, very unfamiliar to most practitioners, should not be supplied to each of the Health Officers of the Northern Ports. 3

The need for extreme caution seemed to be confirmed when it was reported on 26 September 1881, that there were three cases of leprosy among the Chinese at Cooktown.⁴ The necessity for "special instructions, with plain descriptions" to be issued to health officers throughout Queensland, was also clearly demonstrated, by the following incident. In spite of the assurances of Dr. Webb of Blackall that a sick Chinaman was not suffering from leprosy,⁵ the people of that town expelled the man, paying one of his fellow countrymen £25 to convey him via Bogantungan, to Rockhampton.⁶ As the unfortunate so-called leper was camped by the Bogantungan water reserve, which he was using for bathing, there was considerable agitation.⁷ Hugh McNeely, a railways medical officer based in the area, was convinced that the Chinaman did have leprosy,⁸ though his colleague, from Rockhampton, who was called in for a further consultation, was equally satisfied that he did not.⁹ In the meantime, the panicky Mayor of Rockhampton had telegraphed the Colonial Secretary to prevent the Chinaman being conveyed there,¹⁰ the man had been hounded from his refuge at the water hole,¹¹ and the railways had refused him carriage by train to Rockhampton in any case.¹²

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3. "Progress Report of the Central Board of Health for 1877", Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, III (1877), 1145.
 4. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1882, p.75. See R. Evans, K.Saunders and K. Cronin, Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination (Brookvale, 1975), p.306 for the fate of these men.
 5. Patrick Bowen, Police Sergeant, Bogantungan to Colonial Secretary, 25 Sep 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A370, in-telegram no. 4874 of 1883.
 6. John L.Adams, Chairman, Bogantungan Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary, 25 Sep 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A370, in-telegram no. 4871 of 1883.
 7. W.McIlwraith to T.McIlwraith/Colonial Secretary, 22 Sep 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A370, in-telegram no. 4870 of 1883.
 8. Police Magistrate, Bogantungan to Colonial Secretary, 24 Sep 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A370, in-telegram no. 4873 of 1883.
 9. W.F.Thurston to Colonial Secretary, 28 Sep 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A370, in-telegram no. 4921 of 1883.
 10. John Ferguson, Mayor of Rockhampton to Colonial Secretary, 25 Sep 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A370, in-telegram no. 4871 of 1883.
 11. Patrick Bowen to Colonial Secretary, 25 Sep 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A370, in-telegram no. 4874 of 1883.
 12. W.F.Thurston to Colonial Secretary, 4 Oct 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A370, in-telegram, no number given.

This sort of uncertainty among medical men was to continue. So was the harassment of persons, even if they were only suspected of having the disease.¹³ Sometimes, the mere fact of their being Chinese was sufficient to incite the local people and the authorities to act against them, just in case they did have "the Chinese disease".¹⁴ One such case occurred at the Palmer River goldfields, where some very poor Asiatics who "lived in hovels in the greatest filth" were caught bathing in pools in the river. They were hauled before the bench, fined twenty shillings, and ordered not to pollute the river again.¹⁵ There was no evidence to show that any of them was suffering from any disease. Again in Bundaberg, information retailed to the police magistrate about a supposed leper being harboured by the Chinese market gardeners there, proved to be a wild rumour;¹⁶ but, not before an immediate, thorough and ruthless search of all property belonging to the men had been made by both health officers and the police.¹⁷

This attitude from the public was hardly surprising. It was fed partly by the considered opinion of medical men, who sometimes displayed a very biased attitude, though in his address to the sanitary conference in Sydney Dr. Joseph Bancroft made some attempt to be fair.¹⁸

Leprosy...was introduced to the notice of the Conference by the Delegate of Queensland. He pointed out that Leprosy is a contagious disease, known in several parts of the world to attack white men living among leprous races or to whom contact with lepers is made possible by importation of the latter. Fortunately this disease appears to be contagious only after prolonged and continuous contiguity of the sick to the healthy; but it is at present an incurable disease, and hereditary. Its attack is slow and so insidious that persons already in the early stage of leprosy are not always distinguishable, it is

- 13. A great deal of detail on this hysterical fear of lepers, and the Chinese as the source of it, is given in Evans et.al., especially in Part 3, Chapters 1, 2 and 3.
- 14. The "Chinese disease" - leprosy - had been discovered amongst Chinese making cigars in San Francisco. The news of this added to the agitation in north and west Queensland.
- 15. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Nov 1884.
- 16. Robert Johnston, Police Magistrate to Colonial Secretary, 25 Mar 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A418, in-telegram no. 2013 of 1885.
- 17. Robert Johnston to Colonial Secretary, 25 Mar 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A418, in-telegram, filed under Ibid.
- 18. See Evans et.al. p.303 for Bancroft's later strictures (1892) on the introduction of leprosy by the Chinese, and the consequent spread of the disease through the agency of mosquitoes.

said, from healthy persons. The only way in which it could certainly be kept out of this country would be by forbidding certain races of men to enter, but this would be manifestly unjust, and only possible, indeed, because those races are distinguished by their colour from the whites. It would moreover lead to the exclusion of several races on account of the possible illness of a few individuals who, in many other parts of the world, are serviceable in humble capacities. All that can fairly and scientifically be done in this matter seems to be provided for by the 50th Resolution. Under it, all that is needful to ensure the absolute exclusion of this disease is improved methods of diagnosis, and to discovering them the attention of physicians who are qualified by their experience for this task is already directed. 19

There was one other way of partially removing the Chinese leprosy problem once it was detected, and the Queensland government made use of it from time to time. This was to get rid of certain offending leper victims permanently by sending them home to China. Where the recommendation of the medical attendant could be obtained, and often approval was a mere formality, this action - and the voucher to cover the cost of transport - was approved without hesitation.²⁰ The same neat solution to the problem was not possible with that other group "distinguished by their colour from the whites". When leprosy was said to be spreading among the aboriginal populations of Etheridge²¹ and Georgetown,²² there was considerable panic amongst the white population in the area. Since they could hardly get rid of the indigenes en masse, it was with relief that they heard that their black neighbours were suffering from erysipelas,²³ although it is possible that not a few of the neglected, underfed, abused aborigines had also contracted venereal disease. It does not seem to have occurred to the white settlers in

19. "The Australasian Sanitary Conference of Sydney, N.S.W., 1884", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1885), 488.
20. Police Magistrate, Cooktown to Colonial Secretary, 27 Jan 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A414, in-telegram no. 635 of 1885. When lepers were being banished either out of Australia or to remote lazarets, the funds do not seem to have been denied. The communication was almost always by telegram. No objections to the cost of telegrams were made, though the expense of telegraphic communication over the diphtheria epidemic in Mackay in 1913 was a matter for censure. See Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 15 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B42, in-letter no. 8398 of 1913. The letter concerns expenses in general and the considerable sum of £50.16.2 spent on telegrams alone.
21. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1889, p.71.
22. Evans, et.al., p.98.
23. Ibid.

north Queensland, that all of these diseases had become established among the natives of the country only after their own arrival.

Curiously enough, the fear felt by ordinary Queenslanders and the government's own lively conception of the dangers, did not prevent an attempt to recoup some of the expenses outlaid for the housing of lepers by one Queensland administration. In 1889, the Morehead government endeavoured to auction the Cooktown "leper's shelter", only to be roundly castigated by the northern press. Seizing the opportunity to put forward the rights of the north against the stubborn, ignorant perversities of southern officials - a chance which no self-respecting northern separatist would disregard²⁴ - The Cairns Post joined The Cooktown Independent in protesting against the sale.

Leprosy, that repulsive concomitant of an influx of the Chinese was to be shifted from the shores of Cooktown to an island afar off where there is more danger of tainting the air of heaven than communicating the loathsome disease to a closely settled population. But the Morehead government, who though on pleasure bent, are of a frugal mind, laboured under the delusion that the sale of the galvanised iron and fittings which had harboured the victims of this most repulsive of diseases would add a trifle to the revenue, and the auction was duly advertised, scoffed at by the Independent, ridiculed by the public, and naturally enough attended by noone.... The human brain would soon be lost in a maze of the wildest conjecture if it began to imagine whether the government thought that the lepers' shelter should form a nice summer house for the garden of the collector of customs, appropriate shelter for the playground of the state school, an annex to a cheap boarding house, or what.... What a/ novel idea of a cheap and easy method of spreading disease and death /is/ the sale of a leprous charnel house.

25

Again, in spite of the awareness of Queenslanders on the subject of leprosy, and the Central Board of Health's considerable preoccupation with the general Chinese menace to the health of the colony,²⁶ it was left to the New South Wales board to prepare a report on Leprosy in Australasia, based on information supplied by boards of health and other authorities in the various colonies.²⁷ In the following year, the Queensland Central Board of Health did act, preparing regulations for the

24. Within, pp. 172-73.

25. The Cairns Post, 15 Jun 1889; editorial.

26. Because of their methods of manuring fruit and vegetables. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Apr 1890; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 18 Apr 1890.

27. Within, p. 136. This is a similar case where the initiative for presenting a comprehensive report was taken by a southern health board.

treatment of persons affected by leprosy and for the prevention of the spread of that disease, in pursuance of the powers conferred on them by the Health Act of 1884. The regulations were very stringent, an indication of the great dread with which the whole population of Queensland viewed the disease. On being informed of the presence of any case or suspected case of leprosy in the colony, the Central Board of Health could

cause investigation to be made by two or more legally qualified medical practitioners, and upon being satisfied that such person is suffering from that disease, may order that such person be removed to and detained in such place or places as may be from time to time set apart for the isolation and treatment of persons suffering from leprosy, and any person so ordered who wilfully refuses or neglects forthwith to obey any such order or directions given by the Board, or escapes or attempts to escape from any such place of isolation (or lazaret), may, with such necessary force as the case may require, be removed or brought to any lazaret or other suitable place.

28

One of the worst problems for any leper victim was emphasised by the regulations - the terrible sentence of loneliness imposed because of the disease. Apart from any attendants who might be employed to care for and supervise the leper, no other person could enter the limits of the lazaret without the authority of the minister, the Central Board of Health, or the government medical officer. In the case of unfortunate coloured lepers, doomed to a life sentence on various inhospitable islands off the north Queensland coast,²⁹ even the food, medicine, clothing and other necessities which were to be provided under the 1891 regulations were not forthcoming. There seems to be little doubt that the government sent them to these almost uninhabitable outposts, only to let them die from neglect and starvation.³⁰

In spite of the apparent severity of the regulations, and the remarkably small number of lepers in Queensland, which was a matter

28. Queensland Government Gazette, LIII (1891), 1001.

29. Conditions on Dayman Island were notorious, as were those on Fitzroy and Friday Islands.

30. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXVI (1892), 49. See also Ibid., LXVII (1892), 239. Tozer, in introducing the leprosy bill, said "of course only periodical visits are paid to Dayman Island. I have no report of any recent visit....At the last examination there were only two lepers there, and I do not suppose there will be even one at the next examination". No thought or compassion seems to have been spared for the lonely last victim.

for congratulation,³¹ the government felt it necessary to take even stronger measures, and in 1892, a leprosy bill was introduced into the Queensland parliament. Its general principle was

to accomplish the segregation of lepers as we do with lunatics, since this was the only way that any community can rid itself of this loathsome, repulsive and unclean disease. ³²

The Colonial Secretary went so far as to suggest that such treatment was the most humane possible. Clean and hygienic surroundings, a wholesome diet, and intelligent medical treatment would be provided for white lepers, and in such circumstances, the separation from home and loved ones would scarcely be felt. In any case, the minister continued hardily, in the latter stages of the disease the victims would be only too glad to hide themselves from their fellows. Locking them away in a lazaret was really doing them a favour.³³

One of the main problems for the authorities would be taken care of under the proposed bill. The minister was fully cognisant of the latest overseas discoveries, but the difficulty was to understand the means of transmission. Whatever this might be - by contagion, by heredity, by infection, or by fetid air - the emphasis on segretion in the proposed legislation would protect the population in general from the ravages of the disease. To show that he really was au fait with modern developments, Tozer announced that he was awaiting the results of the Royal Commission on Leprosy, whose decision was shortly expected.³⁴ In the meantime, the minister took advice from Her Majesty's representative in Queensland, who had seen a great deal of leprosy in India and Jamaica. General Sir H.W. Norman's opinion - that there was no danger from ordinary contact with lepers, or even from habitual visits to the stricken - seems to have had little effect on Queenslanders. As Tozer noted, with some dismay, there was a great scare in the colony over the leprosy question, not only among private individuals, but also within government departments. He deplored the sensational paragraphs in the press, because these had aroused so much fear among wharf and ship employees, that a vast amount of trouble had been encountered in trying to convey unfortunate victims to the lazarets.³⁵

31. According to Tozer there were only five lepers in Queensland as at 11 April 1892 - both white and black. See Ibid.

32. Ibid., p.240.

33. Ibid., p.239.

34. Ibid., p.240.

35. Ibid.

This general anxiety seems to have communicated itself very strongly to several members of the Queensland parliament. So F.T. Brentnall, Member of the Legislative Council, who was probably not always in touch with the sentiments of the common man,³⁶ joined in the debate with a repetitiveness that should have made his sincerity obvious to anyone. Brentnall declared that

leprosy is not only a matter of public danger, but it is a matter of public alarm and public dread.... We have heard such conflicting testimonials as to the contagiousness of the disease that I find it difficult to come to a decision.... but on the question of public utility and public feeling with regard to this matter, I do not hesitate to say that opinion and feeling are strongly in favour of the legislature doing something to prevent the spread of a disease, which, whatever may be its real nature, is a matter of alarm and apprehension to the public mind. ³⁷

In the Legislative Assembly, the member for Maryborough had no difficulty at all in tracing the disease to its true source.

There is no doubt in the minds of many people that this disease emanated from Chinamen, and it behoves us one and all, and the authorities especially, to look after these hells or dens, or Chinese boarding-houses as they are called. ³⁸

Richard Hyne received very quick and positive endorsement for his view, as member after member rose to condemn the "abominably dirty and filthy and stinking" homes and habits of the Chinese in Queensland, and the consequent danger from their special disease to white residents in the colony. ³⁹

'There were some dissenting voices. Notable among them was that of Dr. W.F. Taylor. He was upset because the drafting and presentation of the bill was entirely the work of laymen, who had not even consulted the Central Board of Health. His chief concern was with the medical aspects of the bill, and the way in which the problems over the theories on contagion had been used for political purposes.

He was also interested in the fate of lepers already incarcerated on Dayman and Friday Islands. The doctor desired that these people should be treated as if they were suffering from disease, "and not as

36. Frederick Thomas Brentnall was chairman of directors of the Telegraph Newspaper Company, director of Queensland Insurance, Queensland Trustees, Queensland Deposit Bank and Building Company, director of Finney Isles and Company, Tartana Mines Ltd., and several other large companies.
37. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXVI (1892), 40-41.
38. Ibid., LXVII (1892), 240.
39. For example, see Ibid., p.241.

if they were mad dogs to be put out of the way to die".⁴⁰ The Central Board of Health had conscientiously enquired into conditions on Friday Island, as they had a right to do - wishing to know the proximity of the nearest health officer, how often he visited the leper colony, and what facilities were available to him when he did visit.⁴¹ Far from satisfying the board on these questions, the Colonial Secretary was still stalling by asking for what purpose that particular departmental information had been sought.⁴² It now appeared likely that board members would be placed in the invidious position of condemning these unfortunates to imprisonment for life, without the possibility of supervising the conditions in which they were kept.⁴³

Dr. Taylor was also deeply distressed that the leprosy bill allowed the liberty of a subject to hang, not on the pronouncement of two doctors as the Central Board of Health's 1891 regulations required, but on the diagnosis of one medical man who might never have seen a case of leprosy in his life.⁴⁴ In spite of this, the doctor concerned risked a fine of one hundred pounds if he failed to report his discovery.

This imposes a very heavy penalty on any doctor. He may suspect that a man is a leper; but knowing the dreadful consequence of reporting to that effect - that the man will be sent to the lazaret or deprived of his liberty, probably for life - he will hesitate before he makes a report.

45

It was on this question of the liberty of the individual that most of the opposition to the leprosy bill was to come, for it appeared that many of Queensland's politicians joined Dr. Taylor in doubting the powers of the colony's medical advisers to give consistently correct diagnoses, not necessarily through any fault of their own. Echoing Taylor in the lower house, John Hamilton supposed "that in Brisbane one medical man out of twenty would know a case of leprosy if he saw it". But at least in the city there was the chance of consultation, whereas

40. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXVI (1892), 46.

41. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 25 May 1892, Q.S.A. COL/A 698, in-letter no.6326 of 1892.

42. Marginal comment on above.

43. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXVI (1892), 46. In a sense, Tozer had answered some of the Central Board of Health's questions in the house. See Within, p.190, f.n.30.

44. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXVI (1892), 36.

45. Ibid., p.39.

in the bush there was only one medical man for hundreds of miles.⁴⁶ It was necessary therefore, in all cases, that specimens from supposed victims should be submitted for bacteriological examination.⁴⁷ Other parliamentarians agreed that such a course was essential, for as W.H. Wilson pointed out with some asperity, even where several medical opinions were available, "it never happened that all the doctors agreed".⁴⁸ But although considerable uneasiness was expressed by many in debate and in committee, and in spite of Taylor's warning that the final decision on a leprosy case lay, not with the trained doctors, but in the hands of the minister,⁴⁹ the Act received assent with only slight changes, on 20 July 1892. Such was the known fear of the population and of those who legislated to protect them.⁵⁰

Even with their powers extended under the Act, in practice the Queensland government did hesitate to banish suspects to lazarets without thorough examination, but their treatment of supposed victims was not less reprehensible for that. In some cases, coloured suspects were

confined for weeks in the very hearts of tropical towns, guarded and nursed by constables, sampled by local doctors for the benefit of Brisbane experts, and still kept under the same conditions when the connoisseurs of leprosy had condemned the victims.

51

In all cases where this happened, the suspects were reviled as a severe danger to the community, and as a disgusting hardship to the policemen concerned. And the sight of coloured victims, "handcuffed by both hands, heavily chained and guarded...like dogs" did not arouse

46. This was actually one of the important reasons for presenting the bill. The Colonial Secretary pointed out that it was very necessary for the bill to authorize one doctor to investigate a case "as there are places in the colony, like Herberton, where two medical men cannot be secured". Ibid., LXVII (1892), 239.

47. Ibid., p.242.

48. Ibid., LXVI (1892), 48.

49. Ibid., p.36.

50. Changes were mostly semantic. Incarceration on the certificate of one or more doctors was still possible, and the necessity for bacteriological examination was not written into any clause. The Act, without these definite instructions, would allow flexibility "in order to meet varying circumstances of the colony", according to the Chief Secretary, Sir Samuel Griffith. Ibid., LXVII (1892), 243.

51. The Cairns Post, 15 Oct 1892; main editorial.

pity for the sufferer, but fear, revulsion and contempt,⁵² which was encouraged by the radical press. Not only did these papers greatly exaggerate the incidence of leprosy - every day we have more deplorable proof that "this fell disease appears to have taken a firm hold on the continent"⁵³ - but they also laid the blame for the disease on all of the representatives of the coloured races in Queensland. Warning that widespread leprosy was the penalty Queenslanders had to pay for sanctioning the introduction of cheap alien labour, The Eagle claimed that by

permitting the scum of the sewers of the world, Afghans, Japanese, Chinese, Javanese, Malays, Coolies, and Polynesians to come to our shores, we are encouraging the propagation of this foul disease leprosy. How succeeding generations will curse us.... /b/ut for the apathy of the working classes, this monstrous sin could not be perpetrated. ⁵⁴

More considered opinion being put forward by medical men at this time suggested that while the community at large had a morbid fear of leprosy, the real and increasing danger to the public health lay in a disorder of which the general public was almost entirely ignorant - the ravages of cancer.⁵⁵

But meanwhile, the Queensland government did have a very real problem, for leprosy had indeed claimed some victims amongst the white population. Even before the leprosy bill had been brought before parliament, a young man Quigley, a native of Rockhampton, was proclaimed by five doctors to be a confirmed victim of the dread disease.⁵⁶ Some of the medical men confessed themselves puzzled as to the source of Quigley's infection, but Rockhampton's parliamentary representative had his own theories on the origin of the disease, and did not hesitate to voice them. Unfortunately for Quigley, and another Rockhampton suspect, a lad named Hemworth,

52. The Cairns Post, 15 Oct 1892; main editorial. This incident took place in Geraldton. The man was a Kanaka.
53. The Eagle, 16 Dec 1893. However, the writer also admitted that "Queensland is the proud possessor of two lepers".
54. Ibid.; The Fossicker's Notebook.
55. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Aug 1893; letter to editor from Samuel Kennedy, L.R.C.P., L.R.C.S., Edinburgh. Kennedy mentions, among other things, Dr. Hirschfeld's address to the Royal Society on the "Prevalence and rapid increase in cancer in the Australian colonies". Kennedy himself gave a lecture in Brisbane on 22 August 1893 entitled "The Alarming Increase in Cancer and the means of arresting its Progress". Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1894, p.67.
56. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXVII (1892), 243.

their parents resided near the old gaol where the Chinese leper was located many years ago, and I have no doubt that is where they have contracted the disease. I believe, to a certain extent, precautions were taken; but for a long while that Chinaman was not isolated as he should have been.... It must be twelve or fourteen years since that leper died, but he was located in a tent,... with only a two-railed fence separating him from the public; and on many occasions he was allowed to roam about as he liked. I think that will account for the leprosy of these two young men. 57

In fact, Hemworth had not contracted the disease, but in the following year, another Rockhampton victim did come to light in the shape of Patrick Molloy, otherwise known as MacDonnell.⁵⁸ On being, as Pugh's Queensland Almanac put it, "pronounced by the faculty to be suffering from leprosy",⁵⁹ the unfortunate Molloy was transferred to Dunwich to join Quigley in confinement.

By this time, the Central Board of Health was taking an active part in advising local medical men, when any doubts arose over the diagnosis of suspects. One suggestion acted on by the central board and by authorities on the periphery, was that police magistrates should take a series of photographs of suspects which could be sent to the board for examination, together with blood samples which were to be tested by the government bacteriologist.⁶⁰ But the board continued to run foul of the Colonial Secretary over the leprosy question, mainly because it was tied up with the matter of its own powers. Tozer took umbrage at almost any of their actions at this time. Certainly he was annoyed over the innocent but perhaps carelessly worded request for permission for Dr. W.F. Taylor to see any reports on leprosy which might be "lying in the Minister's office".⁶¹ Tozer was willing to allow Taylor access to the information, but resented the implication that it was lying about unregarded.⁶²

The central board and the minister were shortly to be inundated with problems with regard to leprosy which left no room for petty

57. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXVII (1892), 243.

58. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Nov 1894.

59. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1895, p.77.

60. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Mar 1894; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 9 Mar 1894.

61. Secretary, Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 17 Jan 1894, Q.S.A. COL/A759, in-letter no. 705 of 1894.

62. Tozer's marginal note on above. See also Within, pp.354-57.

quarrelling. The first arose from the findings of the Indian Commission on the disease. The commissioners had not reached a unanimous decision, but some at least believed that leprosy was scarcely infectious at all, and "that there was no necessity whatever for taking lepers from amongst their people and confining them as outlaws".⁶³ In the light of this, a sub-committee of members of the central board was formed to draw up new regulations for the treatment and prevention of leprosy, and these were forwarded to the Colonial Secretary following the board's 30 November meeting.⁶⁴

These hopeful views were to be used by the central board, with the instant approval of the Colonial Secretary, in an attempt to counter "popular feelings of wild alarm" which swept the capital,⁶⁵ as in succession a confirmed case was reported in a boy of eleven, living at Kangaroo Point and attending the Normal School,⁶⁶ a leprous Kanaka was detected at Toowong,⁶⁷ another Kanaka sufferer was discovered at Beenleigh,⁶⁸ a third in Mackay was suspected of having the disease,⁶⁹ and a white woman in Brisbane was found to be suffering from leprosy.⁷⁰

The left wing press had a field-day, maintaining the fears of Queenslanders at fever pitch,⁷¹ as they conducted their long-standing campaign against cheap imported, and very possibly leprous, labour. In contrast to these virulent, scurrilous press attacks, the Central Board of Health's attempts to restore calm to the people of the colony look very puny indeed. Their efforts were marred by differences of

- 63. The Brisbane Courier, 1 Nov 1894; Minutes of Central Board of Health. Dr. Little expounded at length on the findings of the Indian Commission protesting, as a medical man, "most strongly against the inhuman way in which we were dealing with lepers".
- 64. Ibid., 1 Dec 1894; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 30 Nov 1894.
- 65. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 28 Apr 1895, Q.S.A. COL/A792, in-letter no.4932 of 1895. The findings of the Indian Commission, couched in non-technical language, were actually approved for display in Court Houses only.
- 66. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1896, p.68. 12 March, 1895.
- 67. Ibid., 21 March, 1895.
- 68. Ibid., p.70. 28 April, 1895.
- 69. Ibid., p.72. 4 June, 1895.
- 70. Ibid., p.78. 28 September, 1895.
- 71. For a number of examples of attacks on the Chinese and other coloured races by The Boomerang, The Worker and other newspapers, see Evans et.al., pp.302-303.

opinion,⁷² and by their own admission that leprosy was known to be very prevalent amongst dark races.⁷³ This was hardly likely to inspire confidence, though one board member, Dr. Little, did suggest "that to blame the Chinese was a cruel slur....Because it was found amongst them does not say they introduced it".⁷⁴ The support given to the board by the Colonial Secretary both publicly in parliament,⁷⁵ and privately,⁷⁶ very possibly only confirmed the suspicions of many Queenslanders that this was a concerted attempt by vested interests to maintain a cheap labour supply, with the connivance of the doctors.⁷⁷

But the Colonial Secretary did not fully endorse all of the board's proposals. Purely in the interests of protecting "black people" from unwarranted attacks, the Central Board of Health recommended the "periodical examination of all coloured races and their quarters in Queensland",⁷⁸ in an effort to prove them free of disease and so allay suspicion. Tozer was unwilling to take the legislative steps involved in this further "interference with the liberty of the subject",⁷⁹ and no

- 72. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Mar 1895; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 15 Mar 1895. Dr. Bancroft, now deceased, had suggested that the disease might have been brought by the mosquito, but Dr. Little maintained that leprosy could not be inoculated.
- 73. Ibid., opinion of Drs. David Hardie, Little and Thomson.
- 74. Ibid.
- 75. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXIII (1895), 764-5.
- 76. See C.P. Perry to Colonial Secretary, N.D., Q.S.A. COL/A791, in-letter no. 9041 of 1895. Perry, who claimed to be very interested in the public health, wrote to the Colonial Secretary after attending a sale of unredeemed pledges at an auction mart in Queen Street, Brisbane. He retailed the story of one large blanket, brought into a pawn shop by a Chinaman. "A horrible stench emanated from the blanket which had been folded up without washing Possibly this blanket was never redeemed owing to some Chinese leper having slept in it. /Perry's italics/ The note from Tozer reads, "It has been conclusively proved that leprosy is not contagious and no known instance is recorded of any person having caught such from clothes. If the writer would read the report of the Father Damien commission such would modify his views concerning leprosy, as it has mine. I am not aware that the Chinese are more than usually prone to leprosy".
- 77. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Mar 1895; letter to editor from Hygiene.
- 78. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 23 Mar 1895, Q.S.A. COL/A791, in-letter no. 3428 of 1895.
- 79. The Brisbane Courier, 20 Mar 1895; letter to editor from S.B.P. criticizing Hygiene's letter mentioned above, and approving the Central Board of Health's moves.

action was taken.⁸⁰ Nor was the Colonial Secretary inclined to offer even "reasonable sums" for supposed cures for leprosy, since, as he pointed out to H.G. Molyneux of Melbourne, there were so few persons afflicted with the disease in Queensland.⁸¹

There were many members of parliament who did not agree with the minister, either on his calculation of the numbers involved, on his newly acquired ideas on segregation, or his rejection of the recommendations of the health board on periodical inspections for all coloured races.⁸² There were even those who suggested that the administration's attempts "to keep cases of leprosy quiet" were the real sources of the "unfounded panic", "exaggerations", and "scares". Calm official announcements instead of the spread of information by rumour and inuendo would have removed some fears.⁸³

The Central Board of Health was not much help in allaying public alarm. It still failed to reach any concerted opinion as to the source of known cases, its urgently needed revised regulations were delayed over minor matters,⁸⁴ and it was apparently unable to confirm leprosy in a patient, even after long, frequent, and painful examinations of supposed victims by both clinical and bacteriological means.⁸⁵ Fresh suspect cases continued to be brought before the board with similar results,⁸⁶ but it does appear that where there was the

80. Marginal note from Tozer to Chief Secretary on Colonial Secretary in-letter no. 3428 above.
81. H.G.Molyneux to Colonial Secretary, 5 Aug 1895, Q.S.A. COL/A795, in-letter no. 9502 of 1895.
82. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXIII (1895), 764-766.
83. Ibid., Messrs Turley, Browne, Fisher and McDonald all spoke during the supply debate on this matter.
84. See The Brisbane Courier, 4 May 1895, 18 May 1895, 1 Jun 1895, and 15 Jun 1895.
85. The board was particularly baffled by the Santo and Molloy cases. In Santo's case at least 50 samples of lymph exudate were taken - from Molloy 20. After all this "they had not sufficient evidence to enable them to express an opinion". Molloy was finally pronounced to be suffering from nerve tubercular leprosy. He was released from the leper station on Stradbroke, but not from Peel Island to which he was removed on the instancy of the Colonial Secretary and on the recommendation of the board of health. See Ibid., 20 Jul 1895; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 19 Jul 1895.
86. See The Brisbane Courier, 24 Aug 1895, for the review of the cases of John Wilde and Ra-re-Hossey. Both cases had taken an inordinately long time to decide.

least doubt, the central board refused to commit patients to a living death on the stations, while it seems to have done its best to "lessen the harshness of the restrictions imposed upon occupants of the lazaret".⁸⁷

The young woman leper who joined the colony during 1895,⁸⁸ caused another problem for the government - moral considerations necessitated that extra facilities, and an additional amount for salaries, be found. The government was urged not to stint supplies granted on this account, for as one sympathetic member of the Legislative Assembly, Samuel Grimes, pointed out, one of the great principles of public health was involved here.

The lepers...were not there through any fault of their own, but through misfortune....Those men were almost suffering an imprisonment for the good of the community, and every possible indulgence ought to be placed within their reach. 89

The minister was more than willing to comply with lepers' desires and needs, from the supplying of bagatelle tables, to sending green vegetables to the lazaret every Monday morning.⁹⁰ It is true that one request was denied - a request for liquor - but this was purely for the lepers' own good. In any case, the Home Secretary said, "he believed they preferred ginger ale"!⁹¹

One other gratification was forbidden. In 1897, Patrick Molloy requested permission to marry the female leper, a course which her friends were eager for him to take. Horace Tozer requested the central board to give a judgment on the affair, asking "that the discussion and action be not communicated to the press". The board did keep the matter secret, though the general public would probably have approved their decision, for they were "distinctly of the opinion that marriage between these two lepers should not be sanctioned by the state".⁹²

- 87. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Oct 1895; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 18 Oct 1895.
- 88. Ibid., 5 Oct 1895; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 4 Oct 1895. At first it was proposed that the woman should be sent to Sydney, but the New South Wales authorities refused to take her. Later arrangements were made to house the girl on Peel Island. See Ibid., 4 Jan 1896 and 20 Jul 1896, and Within, p.197.
- 89. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXV (1896), 798.
- 90. Ibid. Under questioning Tozer admitted that this was a new development, resulting from complaints about the food from the inmates.
- 91. Ibid.
- 92. Patrick Molloy to Colonial Secretary, 25 Mar 1897, Q.S.A. HOM/A9, in-letter no. 6972 of 1897, and marginal reply from the board.

The Central Board of Health soon had to deal with another much more grave and very nasty problem concerning the family of the boy leper who had been banished to Stradbroke Island, with his parents' easily-won consent, in 1895.⁹³ The difficulty with this case, as with all others concerning white lepers, had been the problem of tracking down the source of the infection, for as far as could be ascertained, the boy Walters had never been exposed to the disease. Had definite contacts with offending Chinese or some other acceptable means of dissemination been established, perhaps the disagreeable episodes which followed may have been avoided. Another method, which might have quelled the fuss, would have meant forbidding absolutely any visits by the boy's family and friends to Dunwich.

As it was, in November 1896, the central board received a letter from the Kangaroo Point state school committee which virtually asked them to sanction the banning of the lad's sister from the school. The central board, trying to preserve a balanced view, replied that "it would be cruel to refuse education to the family provided the usual certificate certifying freedom from the disease was produced."⁹⁴

This was far from being the end of the matter, and, once again at the root of the agitation was the medical practitioners' inability to give reasonable assurances on the matter of contagion. The Brisbane Courier, wishing to be fair to the family, but also making "some allowance...for the traditional horror with which the disease has been regarded", called on the Central Board of Health for "a clear indication as to the infectiousness of leprosy". At the same time, the paper begged those concerned with the Kangaroo Point state school not to deny untainted relatives of known lepers communal life, social privileges, and an education.⁹⁵

The Home Secretary also required an immediate opinion from the central board on this grave matter of the inconvenience and injury that would be meted out to lepers' relatives, through state interference with their liberty and rights.⁹⁶

93. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Mar 1895.

94. Ibid., 2 Nov 1896; Minutes of the Central Board of Health, 30 Oct 1896.

95. Ibid., 6 Feb 1897.

96. Ibid.; Minutes of the Central Board of Health, 5 Feb 1897.

The matter was not only grave, it was also urgent. At the prompting of the state school committee, the headmistress had already excluded the child, a "spirited action" which was applauded by some correspondents to The Brisbane Courier.⁹⁷ But the Central Board of Health, having reviewed the situation, reiterated its opinion that the child should be permitted to attend the school,⁹⁸ and Dr. Thomson reproached otherwise intelligent men who had made violent threats at lively public protest meetings.

It seemed to be thought that a very great danger existed.... There was no danger to be apprehended from members of the Lad's family associating with other children. He knew the ramifications of the families who would be effected by such a cruel and unkind act which would effect the population of the colony and Brisbane more than people would believe. It reminded him of the dark ages, of the time when witches were burnt...He was satisfied that a very foolish fear had arisen, and it did not reflect on the intelligence of the nineteenth century....He would have no hesitation in letting his own children attend the school.

On the question of allowing visitors into the lazaret, the central board decided to permit relatives and friends to speak to inmates from a buggy, without alighting. Later, arrangements for fencing the area would be made.⁹⁹

The Brisbane Courier welcomed the central board's clear decision on the question, which, it was happy to note, was unanimous for once. But the Courier did repeat its view that on the matter of public feeling about leprosy it was necessary for a good deal more understanding to be shown by those in authority, and especially by the board of health.

Doctors possibly have too little toleration for the ignorance of the general public in matters peculiar to their profession. But we are none the less bound, with the reiterated opinions of the Board before us, to lay stress on the fact that the agitation we refer to rests on a purely imaginary danger....We hope that after this concession /of refusing close contact of visitors and lepers at the lazaret/¹⁰⁰ we shall hear no more of protests.

This was a vain hope, for more public meetings, letters to newspapers, deputations to ministers, and other declarations of defiance were to be made, before the "parents' fuss" died down. But gradually, numbers attending meetings dwindled, and the incident, if not forgotten, was at

97. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Feb 1897, and 17 Feb 1897; letter to editor from A. Alder.

98. Ibid., 20 Feb 1897; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 19 Feb 1897.

99. Ibid..

100. Ibid., 23 Feb 1897; sub editorial.

least no longer allowed to poison the lives of the untainted victims of the fearful disease.¹⁰¹

Damaging and bitter as the Kangaroo Point state school campaign had been, it was as nothing in comparison with the continuing attacks against the coloured races - particularly the "yellow fellows".¹⁰² The Labor Party's election campaigns, for example, took the form of an "appeal to unreasoning passion" against the Chinese as the bearers of leprosy. This, thundered The Brisbane Courier, was "nothing short of wickedness,... and an outrage of common humanity".¹⁰³ The party's tactics had been perfectly legitimate, countered The Patriot.

The cry of leprosy was introduced into the campaign from facts.... We have all along agreed that leprosy is a horrible thing, and we do not think it is absurd to write as if it was spreading amongst us like a pestilence. It would be too late then to strike at the cause of the pestilence. The Labour Party required prevention, and justifiably used the leprosy cry to expose one of the evils to which the country is subjected... by the too great preponderance of alien races....It is not unlikely that one or two syphiloids were mistaken for lepers...but this is fair in political war.

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The popular press went further, actually seeking out and exposing lepers. The Patriot unearthed a Kanaka, who "on their own say so" was leprous, and demanded that the police "dig this mass of corruption out of his den and maroon him",¹⁰⁵ and The Street reporter sallied forth on an inspection of the horrors of the Chinese dens in the capital city of "Leper Land".

The scene was not only repulsive, it was hideous. Two of the Chinese had that form of leprosy that is known as anaesthetic. They had no pain, but their fingers were simply "dropping" away...dropping away...joint by joint...The others had the tubercular form of leprosy...the so-called leonine form.... The Street does not want to cause alarm....It simply applied to the authorities and asked if these cases were unknown...and was assured they were known, but there is no necessity for "creating a scare".

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101. See especially the public meeting held to discuss,not only the problem of leprosy, but also the alleged great courtesy of ministers. Ibid., 14 Apr 1897.

102. The Patriot, 17 Jun 1899.

103. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Mar 1899.

104. The Patriot, 8 Apr 1899; sub editorial.

105. Ibid., 9 Sep 1899.

106. The Street, 29 Jan 1898.This paper asserted that it had previously "stuck up for Queensland",which hated the label "Leper Land",but after their visit to the Horrors of Leprous Slums,they had changed their mind about the worth of the colony.

Private communications between governments carried on this theme, that in the official estimate the "scares" and dangers from coloured immigrants were highly exaggerated. When the Premier of Western Australia urgently requested that Queensland's immediate plans on Chinese immigration should be communicated to him, the Premier Hugh Nelson replied that the question was under consideration, but no precipitate action was likely. In his view, the Chinese in Queensland at that time were not objectionable, for any reason.¹⁰⁷

Unfortunately, the destruction of state records has meant that satisfactory information on the prevalence of leprosy, and the magnitude of the problem in Queensland is not available for the years up to 1910.¹⁰⁸ Figures revealed from time to time do tend to show that leprosy was on the increase,¹⁰⁹ though almost certainly not to the extent claimed by The Worker, which reported that at least one hundred lepers, all coloured, were incarcerated on Friday Island, with eleven whites being held on Stradbroke Island in 1898.¹¹⁰ But under the pressure of these press attacks, the Queensland Home Secretary, James Robert Dickson, who held office briefly from March to October of that year, was very sensitive to questioning, though he felt that "the stigma attempted to be thrown on Queensland of having a large number of lepers was undeserved". This was especially so, when the comparative figures for leprosy in Queensland and New South Wales were examined.¹¹¹

107. J. Forrest, Premier of Western Australia to Hugh M. Nelson, 10 Nov 1897, Q.S.A. HOM/A 14, in-telegram no.14400 of 1897, and Nelson's reply of 11 Nov 1897.
108. C. Cook, The Epidemiology of Leprosy in Australia (Department of Health Service Publication No.38, 1927), p.74.
109. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1899), 92.
Cases of leprosy reported from 30 Jun 1898 to 1 Jul 1899.
No. of cases : 22
Districts Involved : Ayr 1, Brisbane 2, Bundaberg 1, Cairns 1, Charleville 1, Cooktown 1, Childers 1, Geraldton 1, Ingham 1, Isisford 1, Mackay 9, Nambour 1, Townsville 1.
Nationalities of Victims : English 3, Danish 1, Queenslander 1, Chinese 1, Aboriginal 2, Pacific Islanders 14.
110. The Worker, 28 May 1898. This article reproduced one from The Adelaide Weekly Herald. It reported the visit of two South Australian parliamentarians to the lazaret at Dunwich, and resulted in heated denials from the Home Secretary. For reports see The Brisbane Courier, 8 Jun 1898.
111. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXIX (1898), 543.

Relatively little change, either in attitudes or actions came with the new century. Differences which were notable, very often did not reflect any credit on the governments in power or the people of Queensland. Cases of leprosy were still to be found in various centres throughout the colony,¹¹² indeed, as Francis Kenna, the member for Bowen, pointed out during the 1903 supply debate, a perusal of the bacteriological institute's report showed, that an alarmingly increased number of leprosy specimens had been dealt with during that year.¹¹³ Fortunately not all of the specimens tested were positive, and most of the fifteen proven cases were aborigines and coloured aliens. Nevertheless, such a spread of that fearful disease filled Kenna with a dread which was certainly not unfounded,¹¹⁴ as the even higher figures for the following year were to prove.

TABULAR STATEMENT OF CASES OF LEPROSY RECORDED IN THE STATE OF QUEENSLAND FROM 1ST JULY, 1904, TO
30TH JUNE, 1905.

Initials.	Sex.	Age.	Race or Nationality.	Occupation.	Form or Type.	Previous Duration of Illness.	Assigned Place of Residence.	Date of Registration.	Died.	Remaining.
1. B.W. ...	M.	...	Kanaka ...	Labourer ...	Tubercular	3 years ...	Mount Cotton, near Brisbane	22-7-04	...	Yes
2. A.D. ...	F.	31	Australian (Q.)	Housewife ...	Nerve ...	Early stage	Taringa, near Brisbane	14-10-04	16-7-05	...
3. D.B. ...	M.	29	do	Shearer ...	Tubercular	2½ years ...	Roina ...	7-11-04	...	Yes
4. H.B. ...	M.	61	English ...	Farmer ...	do ...	6 months ...	Townsville ...	4-10-04	...	do
5. D.P. ...	M.	...	Kanaka ...	do ...	Nerve	Mulggrave ...	22-9-04	...	do
6. Y. ...	M.	32	do	Plantation labourer	Tubercular	...	Geraldton ...	26-10-04	...	do
7. M. ...	M.	...	do	do ...	do	Nelson	26-5-05	...
8. W. ...	M.	...	do	do ...	do	Buderim Mountain	26-10-04	...	Yes
9. N. ...	M.	...	do	do ...	do	Mulggrave ...	26-10-04	...	do
10. T.C. ...	M.	...	do	...	do	Goodwood, near Bundaberg	26-10-04	...	do
11. W.G.G. ...	M.	50	do	Agricultural labourer	Nervo	Buderim Mountain	26-10-04	11-11-04	...
12. O.Y.N. ...	F.	35	do	Labourer ...	Tubercular	Some years	Childers ...	26-10-04	...	Yes
13. T.M. ...	M.	24	Aboriginal ...	do ...	do	Myora, near Dunwich	26-10-04	...	do
14. P. ...	M.	50	Kanaka ...	do ...	do ...	3 years ...	Ayr	do
15. M. ...	M.	...	do	do ...	do	Bundaberg ...	21-12-04	...	do
16. Q. ...	M.	40	do	do ...	do	Geraldton	17-2-05	do
17. J.L. ...	M.	32	do	Farm labourer	do ...	Some years	Geraldton ...	17-2-05	...	do
18. C. ...	M.	25	Aboriginal ...	Black tracker	do	Tate River ...	1-2-05	...	do
19. A.H. ...	F.	78	Irish ...	Boarding-house keeper	do	Gayndah ...	13-5-05	...	do

112. Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, I (1900), 190.
113. "Appendix B of the Bacteriological Institute Report". Thirty specimens had been examined over the whole year. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1903), 175.
114. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCI (1903), 458.
115. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1905), 141.

In the early 1900's, unrest over the leprosy problem was still very evident in Queensland, though bubonic plague had taken the limelight as far as the Department of Public Health was concerned. Complaints continued to be made about coloured victims wandering about the countryside at will.¹¹⁶ Indignation and uproar followed the discovery that, early in 1905, no less than three supposed lepers were at liberty in Cairns. All of them proved, on further examination, to be true cases of leprosy. The worst case, a man who had been "allowed" to live with his countrymen in Chinatown, was obliging enough to leave this vale of tears with despatch, and the police were able to report that "owing to the ablutions used, and precautions taken with the burial, there was no danger of any future evil effects".¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, the tardiness of government action did not escape the Cairns local authorities, including the fact that in spite of the council's early and frequent protests and warnings about his condition, the Chinaman had died four days before the medical officer's official notification of suspected leprosy had reached the Home Secretary's office.

Even more alarm was felt over the other two cases. One, a black trooper Charlie, was declared a leper by the Central Board of Health on 26 January 1905, but was still "allowed to mingle with children in this town for some time afterwards".¹¹⁸ Another victim, a white man named Costello, was permitted to live in his sister's house, "mixing with people in the town unhindered". Costello was certainly an embarrassment to the government, for having been permitted this privilege while his case was under review, he had "cleared out" for parts unknown.¹¹⁹ Not unnaturally, the Mayor of Cairns, Charles McKenzie, "demanded" immediate action for the protection of his community.¹²⁰

In an effort to defuse an explosive situation, The Brisbane Courier sought an explanation for the government's apparent failure to isolate supposed leper victims from the minister and the health

116. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1900), 25. This particular instance concerned an aboriginal woman in Etheridge.

117. Memorandum attached to Town Clerk, Cairns to Home Secretary, 18 Feb 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A 863, in-letter no.2279 of 1905.

118. Ibid.

119. Ibid. Costello was eventually located and conveyed to the lazaret.

120. Mayor of Cairns to Home Secretary, 16 Feb 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A 863, in-telegram no.2035 of 1905.

commissioner Dr. Ham. The doctor fell back on the findings of the Indian Leprosy Commission, suggesting that the extent to which leprosy was contagious or inoculable was "exceedingly small". Furthermore, there was no provision for isolating a person under the Act, on the mere suspicion that he was a leper. The Home Secretary, Peter Airey, simply declared that all the public controversy over the matter had been based on information that was "entirely inaccurate".¹²¹

The episode degenerated into yet another sparring match between local authorities in the north and the central government. The aggrieved Cairns council questioned whether the department's correspondence was "consistent with the courtesy which is due from a Government department to a Local Authority".¹²² The under secretary of the offending department ended the matter by "again asseverating" his previous statements, and concluding that no good purpose would be served by further correspondence.¹²³

In comparison with the Cairns affair, the case of the Indian hawker in Roma stands out in amusing relief. Upon discovery, and pending advice and definite instructions, the supposed victim was immediately detained.¹²⁴ Since he showed some external symptoms of the disease,¹²⁵ further tests, including clinical examinations by the medical officer Dr. A.A. Doyle in consultation with a private medical practitioner, Dr. Ernest Sheaf of Roma, and bacteriological tests were ordered.¹²⁶ In the meantime, the suspect's condition had improved to such an extent that Dr. Doyle began to regret his detention. Doyle gives this light-hearted account of an incident which could not have been very amusing for the central figure, Pier Moi. After relating his early suspicions, Dr. Doyle continued.

Thereupon I waited upon the Police Magistrate here and sought his advice as to the best place to locate the man, pending such time as I had arrived at some definite conclusion. I

- 121. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Mar 1905.
- 122. Town Clerk, Cairns to Home Secretary, 4 Apr 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A863, in-letter no. 4567 of 1905.
- 123. Under Secretary of Home Department to Town Clerk, Cairns, 4 May 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A863, in-letter no. 4567 of 1905.
- 124. Police Inspector, Roma to Commissioner of Police, 14 Dec 1901, Q.S.A. COL/A844, in-telegram no. 1513 of 1901.
- 125. Dr. A.A. Doyle to Police Magistrate, 16 Dec 1901, Q.S.A. COL/A844, in-letter no. 19840 of 1901.
- 126. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 17 Jan 1901, Q.S.A. COL/A844, in-letter no. 798 of 1901.

pointed out that my ideas were purely tentative and unformed.... I had no notion that our short unimportant interview was to be the means of raising an official whirlwind of unknown dimensions. In ten minutes an energetic constable was on my premises guarding the astonished and harmless Pier Moi. Then followed the Police Inspector, eager for information. A second constable hovered round ready for any emergencies. The surrounding inhabitants stood on their door steps in galvanized expectancy, whilst the street traffic ceased and I myself became overwhelmed with the sense of the awful commotion I had unwittingly raised. Meanwhile the Police Magistrate was hysterically despatching the news to the Board of Health, and a couple of days later I was commanded to obtain...serum...to be sent to the Bacteriologist for examination. Sir, in the States anaesthetic lepers follow their daily avocation unmolested, and in South Africa lepers are segregated certainly, but their existence causes no commotion, even though they be loose....Meanwhile, as a result of the daily examination, I concluded that the man is not a leper, though he is a liar, not perhaps intentionally. His difficulty of speech and understanding hampers him, and he is ever ready to agree with suggestions.... The areas of milk white paleness are, I now learn, due to his working amongst prickly pear...causing loss of pigment. Such Sir, is the history of the very tame, unsensational case of Pier Moi, concerning which I shall be delighted to meet Dr. Sheaf in consultation should you deem it necessary.

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The Home Secretary did not deem it necessary,¹²⁸ and the matter was dropped. But in spite of the doctor's levity, or perhaps because of it, the incident highlights the blind, unreasoning panic which broke out in any Queensland town, when the cry of leprosy was raised.

Some of the other more unpleasant aspects in the history of leprosy in Queensland, recurred with weary repetitiveness until 1914. Increasingly, murmurs of discontent about conditions, food, and treatment in the lazarets began to reach the capital during this period.¹²⁹ For instance, although the same disease made them all captives for the sake of the public good, the white lepers at Stradbroke Island "deputationized" the Home Secretary during his visit there, objecting to the presence of the unfortunate coloured lepers who were awaiting transport to Friday Island. The demand for the removal of the Chinese and other lepers was made, even though "their quarters were 30 yards away from those of the white patients".¹³⁰

127. Report of A.A. Doyle to Under Secretary, Home Department, 24 Jan 1902, Q.S.A. COL/A844, in-letter no. 1300 of 1902.

128. Peter Airey's marginal comment on the above report.

129. Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, I (1900), 190.

130. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCIII (1904), 1091.

During the following year, a protracted correspondence took place on the Friday Island patients' complaints over the supply of salt meat, before the government finally agreed to arrangements to forward a quantity of fresh meat to the island occasionally.¹³¹ After the comparative freedom granted to the inmates on Stradbroke under Dr. Stockwell, the restrictions placed on them by the new superintendent after 1906 were a severe blow, which brought protests from the unfortunate "prisoners".¹³² Even worse was to follow. As early as 1904 the government was calling for a review of the costs per leper at the Stradbroke and Friday Island institutions,¹³³ with the intention of cutting expenditure to an absolute minimum. The then medical superintendent, Dr. Stockwell, protested that "no doubt there will be considerable discontent if the new dietary scale is approved".¹³⁴ The Central Board of Health's emphatic opinion was that "whatever saving is to be effected in the expenditure upon lazarets should not be at the expense of the dietary", and that the "proposed scale is quite inadequate",¹³⁵ but the Home Secretary was determined to cut expenses in spite of opposition.

By 1906, he had the willing cooperation of Dr. Row, the acting medical superintendent at Dunwich. Apparently operating on the principle that "if any would /or could/ not work, neither should he eat",¹³⁶ Row

131. Leper Lazaret, Friday Island to Under Secretary, Home Department. See correspondence under various dates during 1905 under Q.S.A. COL/A865, in-letter no. 9353 of 1905. At least no leper was left alone on Friday Island, as some had been on Dayman. Also, Friday Island lepers no longer had to cook and look after themselves. An attendant and a cook had been provided. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCIII (1904), 1091.

132. See Dr. Row to Home Secretary in margin of P. Smythe to Home Secretary, 22 Mar 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A870, in-letter no. 4072 of 1906. Smythe had asked the Home Secretary - "If I buy a horse and feed it at my own expence can I have one here at the lazarette. I hope you will say yes, as it will pass away many weary hours for me". Row considered that a dangerous precedent would be created if Smythe's request were granted, and informed the Home Secretary that he was tightening security generally.

133. Analysis of the cost per leper in Stradbroke and Friday Islands, N.D., Q.S.A. COL/A871, in-letter no. 12396 of 1904. This report was received in the department on 16 Sep 1904.

134. Dr. Stockwell to Home Secretary, 5 Oct 1904, Q.S.A. COL/A871, in-letter no. 13215 of 1904.

135. Secretary, Central Board of Health to Under Secretary, Home Secretary's Department, 27 Oct 1904, Q.S.A. COL/A871, in-letter no. 14034 of 1904.

136. The Bible, Thessalonians II, iii, 10.

drew up a new scale of diet for the inmates of Dunwich which made "differences...in the ration of Bread and meat (2 ozs) between the employed and unemployed". Lepers were to have fruit "occasionally, say 2 or 3 times a week", and "eggs laid by Lazaret fowls when available".¹³⁷ The Central Board of Health again protested at the government's niggardliness, which, in its view, would further undermine the general health of the lepers.¹³⁸ In the house, the radical Vincent Lesina deplored the "scandalous piece of parsimony" which reduced the dietary scale of lepers "whose freedom was sacrificed... in the interests of the community".¹³⁹ He was joined by the conservative Robert Philp, in pleading for a little extra expenditure to make the last few years of the lepers' lives more comfortable. Home Secretary, Peter Airey, was adamant, because it suited him. The scale had been fixed by the medical superintendent in whose control the matter lay. No extra "comforts" would be supplied without Dr. Row's consent.¹⁴⁰

Very large changes were made in the following year when a new lazaret was set up at Peel Island. The health commissioner Dr. Ham announced that each patient was to have separate accommodation, women were, of course, to be secluded from the men, and just as importantly, the coloured inmates, who had all been transferred to Peel Island from the north, were to be separated from the whites. The new arrangement promised both improvements in facilities and comforts, and unique opportunities for a systematic and scientific study of the disease.¹⁴¹

Such an optimistic appraisal of the move hardly seems to have been borne out in fact. There was no medical man resident at the station, and the journey to the lazaret from Dunwich alone took 3½ to 4 hours. The extra medical duties undertaken by Dr. Row, "so as to cut down expenses as much as possible and thus save the Government a considerable outlay",¹⁴² would hardly allow time for "a systematic and

137. Acting Medical Superintendent Row to Home Secretary, 19 Apr 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A871, in-letter no. 5104 of 1906.

138. Central Board of Health to Home Secretary, 26 Jun 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A871, filed under in-letter no. 5104 of 1906.

139. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XC VIII (1906), 1604.

140. Ibid. As a consequence of his many strictures, Row was extremely unpopular with the lepers. A flood of complaints finally led to an enquiry. See Queensland Parliamentary Papers, I (1908), 321-2.

141. Ibid., II (1907), 232.

142. Dr. Row to Under secretary, Home Department, 23 Sep 1907, Q.S.A. COL/A890, in-letter no. 10223 of 1907.

scientific study of the disease". As to the facilities at the new lazaret, Mr. J.G. Macdonald, who was deputed by the Home Secretary to enquire into lepers' complaints about their medical treatment, clothing, the bad quality and shortage of food, and the doctor's censorship of their mail, found most of the claims not proven. But he did consider that the housing was inadequate, though his main concern was the close proximity of the male and female wards, and the mixing of the sexes which resulted. Macdonald feared that this laxness could lead to "grave scandal... at any time". It was also unsatisfactory that white lepers were able to forgather with the coloureds, many of whom had been prompted to bring complaints before the Home Secretary, at the instigation, and in imitation of, the attitude of the white lepers.¹⁴³

When in 1910, there was a proposal made to solve the sex problem for good by housing the female lepers on a property "Myora" near Dunwich, a vigorous outcry from residents and other vested interests resulted.¹⁴⁴ The matter was settled by Dr. J.S.C. Elkington who was then Queensland Public Health Commissioner. In Elkington's opinion

to establish a lazaret at "Myora" would... surely be a costly way of adding to the grave danger to the public health which is already created by the present system of dealing with leprosy in Queensland.... The place is entirely unsuitable and undesirable for the purpose of a lazaret, and I recommend that the project of so using it be abandoned.

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As far as Elkington was concerned, no really satisfactory solution to the leprosy problem would be reached until the Commonwealth government took overall strict control of quarantining and other arrangements Australia-wide.¹⁴⁶ From mid-1910 onwards, the question of handing over the care of lepers became a matter of negotiation between the Commonwealth and the state, in the persons of the Home Secretary John George Appel, and Dr. Norris, the Director of Federal Quarantine.¹⁴⁷ The process was very long drawn out. The Commonwealth authorities had assumed control of about one hundred and sixty acres on Peel Island, including the lazaret,

143. "Report made by Mr. J.G. Macdonald into Complaints made against the Administration of the Lazaret, Peel Island", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, I (1908), 321-322.

144. See for example, The Brisbane Courier, 6 Apr 1910; letter to editor from T.W., and 13 Apr 1910; letter to editor from W.J.D.

145. Ibid., 19 May 1910.

146. Ibid.

147. Ibid., 10 Jun 1910.

under the Federal Quarantine Act in December 1910, but this proclamation did not interfere with the maintenance and management of the leper station which was still under the control of the state government.¹⁴⁸

Matters were much the same at the end of 1911, although the requirements of federal quarantine arrangements had led to much stricter control over the ingress and egress of visitors to the lazaret, as Elkington had predicted they would.¹⁴⁹ In January 1912, the Public Health Commissioner apprised The Brisbane Courier that matters between the two governments were almost completed,¹⁵⁰ and that the transfer of the whole administration would only be a matter of a little time.¹⁵¹ Elkington was somewhat premature in his statement. Final arrangements had still not been completed as late as 1914, by which time Elkington himself was in the Commonwealth health service, and Dr. J.I. Moore had become Commissioner of Public Health in his stead. The Queensland health department was anxious for the matter to be completed, because control was clumsy and inefficient,¹⁵² but matters continued as they were until well after 1914, the Queensland Public Health Commissioner having control over the lazaret, while the government medical officer regularly visited and reported on the unfortunates there.¹⁵³

The value of any "scientific" experiments undertaken on the leprosy problem up to 1914 in Queensland is very difficult to judge, partly because the records are so sparse. Some attempts to fight the disease were made by the mid-1890's. The then superintendent of the Dunwich lazaret, Dr. Maloney, reported to the Central Board of Health that he had set a dietary scale, "one of the most important features of leprosy treatment", on the broadest and most liberal lines, to improve the lepers' general health. Maloney had also tried the internal and

148. The Brisbane Courier, 17 Dec 1910.

149. Ibid., 28 Nov 1911.

150. Ibid., 27 Jan 1912.

151. Ibid., 1 Feb 1912.

152. Health Department to Home Secretary, 7 Jan 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B44, in-letter no. 228 of 1914.

153. See regular reports of the commissioner up to the 1920's. See also Health Department to Home Secretary, 11 May 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B44, in-letter no. 4082 of 1914 and subsequent no. 4941 of 1914.

external use of chaulmoogra oil,¹⁵⁴ but when he found, after a very short time, that the patients were unwilling to persevere with the treatment, he abandoned it. The trial period had been too short for him to make any personal observations on the action of the treatment.¹⁵⁵

No such optimism is apparent in the report of 1898. No mention is made of attempts to interest any of the eleven patients in undertaking any course of treatment, and the description of the "incurable" disease and its effects on the "debilitated" patients whose general health was more or less hopelessly undermined, is depressing in the extreme.¹⁵⁶

Even after the appointment of the health commissioner under the 1900 Health Act, only passing reference was made to leprosy in annual reports. In 1904, Dr. Ashburton Thompson, the President of the Department of Public Health in New South Wales, did use some information on the history of Queensland leper patients, in his Report on Leprosy in Australia to the Berlin International Congress on the disease. The stimulus of the conference and general scientific interest led to a large amount of research being conducted overseas. This apparently bore fruit by 1905, culminating in the work of Captain Rost of the Indian medical service. Rost claimed to have grown the leprosy bacillus, and to have treated the disease successfully by inoculating patients with "Leprolin". Small doses of the treatment were obtained for Queensland as soon as possible, and one patient underwent the injections. No noticeable improvement was discerned in the man by Dr. Ham, the lazaret superintendent, or other doctors, although the patient proclaimed himself somewhat better, and both he and his companions began to clamour for regular inoculations. Arrangements were made for the bacteriological institute to manufacture the serum,¹⁵⁷ and excited questions were asked in parliament. The Home Secretary was unwilling to commit himself any further than Dr. Ham had done. "Only time would tell if the relief would be permanent or whether the remedy would effect a cure".¹⁵⁸

154. Chaulmoogra oil is derived from a plant which is native to Burma, where it has been long used as a remedy for chronic skin diseases. For long, the derivatives from the oil were the only drugs found efficacious in the treatment of leprosy.

155. The Brisbane Courier, 23 May 1896; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 22 May 1896.

156. Report on the Lazaret, Dunwich, 30 Jul 1898, Q.S.A. HOM/A12, in-letter no. 10172 of 1898.

157. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1905), 141.

158. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCVI (1905), 1324.

Unfortunately for the hopeful lepers of Dunwich, time told a very sad story indeed. Exhaustive investigations into Dr. Rost's work by his collaborator Colonel Semple, found no evidence of the development of leprosy bacilli. C.J. Pound, the government bacteriologist, who had previously made experiments similar to those of Rost with almost identical results, announced that "rumours concerning the discovery and preparation of Leprolin were not confirmed on further experiments being made".¹⁵⁹

Lepers at the new lazaret at Peel Island were forced back to the use of chaulmoogra oil, which appeared to make considerable improvement in the patients, if they could be persuaded to persevere with the treatment.¹⁶⁰ During the following year, Dr. Row noted some further successes with the oil on all of his patients, including those transferred from Friday Island.¹⁶¹ Like Maloney in 1896, Row found that the "great nausea" caused by the internal use of the oil made it difficult to induce the patients to continue with the treatment for any length of time.

One patient, Thomas Morton, a half-caste aboriginal has persevered with it with praiseworthy effort for some considerable time - three years - with the result that there is a marked improvement in his condition which I trust and believe will continue.

Row was also making experiments with Guaiacol and a preparation called Ichthyol, and even more importantly, was trying to discover the best method of administering these drugs. As far as the leprous sores were concerned, he had prepared several ointments, in an effort to establish a successful lotion.¹⁶²

159. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1906), 212. Pound pledged himself to continue the investigation "as opportunity affords".

160. Ibid., II (1907), 232.

161. Ibid., II (1908), 280. The Friday Island lepers were in a very bad state on arrival. They had terrible sores, and were in a filthy condition. Row to Home Secretary, 5 Aug 1907, Q.S.A. COL/A 881, in-letter no.8624 of 1907. See also Within, p.209, f.n.131.

162. Report of the Lazaret, Peel Island for the half year ending 31st December, 1907, Q.S.A. COL/A 889, in-letter no.5110 of 1907.

RETURN SHOWING THE NUMBER OF LEPERS ON THE REGISTER IN THE STATE DURING
THE YEAR 1907, AND NUMBER SEGREGATED AT THE LAZARET, PEEL ISLAND,
MORETON BAY, 1907.

No.	Chronological No Reg'd. History, &c.	Name.	Sex.	Age.	Race or Nationality.	Occupation.	Form or Type.	Previous Duration of Illness.	Assigned Place of Residence.	Date of Segregation.	Died.	Remaining in Lazaret.	
1	20	P.R.S.	M.	22	Queenslander	Not stated	Nodular	Not stated	Brisbane	22-9-08	..	1	
2	26	O.	F.	33	Polyesian	Household duties	do	do	Mackay	4-8-09	20-2-08	1	
3	30	G.S.	M.	40	Queenslander	Shearer	do	do	Unity	30-1-00	9-11-07	1	
4	31	O.B.	F.	15	do	Not stated	Mixed	do	Townsville	6-6-02	..	1	
5	32	D.	M.	40	Aboriginal	Stockman	Nodular	do	Hockhampton	22-10-03	..	1	
6	33	R.W.	M.	73	English	Pullock-driver	do	do	Dunwich	21-11-03	..	1	
7	34	J.J.F.	M.	27	Queenslander	Farmer	do	do	Cairns	23-12-03	..	1	
8	36	R.V.D.	F.	42	N. S. Wales	Household duties	do	do	Mackay	13-4-04	..	1	
9	37	B.W.	M.	34	Polyesian	Labourer	do	do	Bundaberg	22-7-04	..	1	
10	39	D.E.B.	M.	32	Queenslander	Shearer	do	do	Kona	7-11-04	..	1	
11	42	M.	M.	29	Polyesian	Labourer	do	do	Bundaberg	8-9-05	..	1	
12	43	J.B.	M.	30	do	do	do	do	do	8-9-05	..	1	
13	44	G.	M.	47	do	do	do	do	do	18-10-05	..	1	
14	46	P.	M.	37	Aboriginal	Station hand	Mixed	do	do	18-10-05	..	1	
15	47	I.L.	M.	26	Polyesian	Labourer	do	do	Cairns	16-12-05	26-3-07	1	
16	48	P.T.	M.	62	Italian	Tobacco-planter	Mixed	do	Mackay	1-3-06	..	1	
17	60	C.	M.	29	Polyesian	Labourer	Nodular	do	Mackay	1-3-06	..	1	
18	51	L.T.	M.	60	do	do	Nerve	do	Cairns	1-3-06	..	1	
19	53	A.G.	M.	35	Chinese	do	Mixed	do	Ayr	1-3-06	..	1	
20	54	A.	M.	43	Cingalese	Cook	do	do	Geraldton	1-3-06	..	1	
21	55	A.J.C.	M.	16	Queenslander	do	Nodular	do	Normanton	8-5-06	..	1	
22	57	H.K.	M.	46	Chinese	Blacksmith	Mixed	do	Brisbane	11-6-06	..	1	
23	58	H.L.	M.	30	Polyesian	Labourer	Nodular	do	Mackay	26-7-06	..	1	
24	59	C.W.	M.	66	Chinese	do	do	Hockhampton	3-11-06	..	1		
25	60	M.	M.	29	Polyesian	Labourer	Mixed	do	Brisbane	16-11-06	..	1	
26	63	J.S.	M.	22	do	do	Nodular	do	Bundaberg	21-1-07	..	1	
27	64	T.	M.	25	do	do	do	do	Brisbane	21-1-07	..	1	
28	65	B.	M.	30	do	do	do	do	Bundaberg	18-2-07	6-12-07	1	
29	66	M.	M.	35	do	do	do	do	do	18-2-07	..	1	
30	67	J.K.	M.	40	do	do	do	do	do	28-11-04	24-8-07	1	
31	68	C.E.	M.	44	do	do	do	8 or 9 years	Mackay	May, '03	..	1	
32	69	J.O.	M.	38	do	do	do	2 months	Johnstone River	Feb., '04	..	1	
33	70	J.T.	M.	33	do	do	do	1 year	Mackay	Feb., '04	19-5-08	1	
34	71	D.P.	M.	49	do	do	do	2 years	Cairns	Nov., '04	..	1	
35	72	J.	M.	43	do	do	do	do	Townsville	Dec., '02	..	1	
36	73	Q.	M.	52	do	do	do	do	Herbert River	15-5-03	13-12-07	1	
37	74	B.S.	M.	36	do	do	do	do	Thursday Island	June, '02	..	1	
38	75	B.H.	M.	49	do	do	do	do	do	Oct., '06	..	1	
39	76	S.S.	M.	26	do	do	do	do	Thursday Island	24-12-03	..	1	
40	77	N.	M.	25	do	do	do	9 or 10 years	Mackay	2-6-09	9-8-07	1	
41	78	P.	M.	32	Aboriginal	do	do	do	Not stated	Geraldton	19-3-06	..	1
42	79	J.L.	M.	38	Polyesian	do	do	do	do	Johnstone River	Mar., '05	..	1
43	80	P.	M.	28	do	do	do	do	do	May, '04	..	1	
44	81	F.	M.	39	do	do	do	do	do	June, '04	..	1	
45	82	T.	M.	42	do	do	Nerve	6 months	Mackay	7-2-00	..	1	
46	83	Q.	M.	39	do	do	Nodular	Not stated	Johnstone River	10-4-05	..	1	
47	84	N.	M.	37	do	do	do	do	Cairns	23-11-04	15-7-08	1	
48	85	A.J.M.	F.	35	do	Household duties	do	2 years	Childers	Nov., '04	..	1	
49	86	A.D.	M.	50	Chinese	Gardener	do	Not stated	Geraldton	2-6-09	5-8-07	1	
50	87	J.M.	M.	40	Polyesian	Labourer	do	do	Townsville	17-11-01	..	1	
51	88	T.M.	M.	27	Aboriginal	do	do	do	Stradbroke Island	4-10-04	..	1	
52	89	Y.	M.	35	Polyesian	do	do	do	Friday Island	23-11-04	..	1	
53	90	S.W.	M.	47	do	Labourer	Mixed	do	Townsville	15-5-03	..	1	
54	91	A.	F.	25	Aboriginal	House-wife	Nodular	do	Norfolk Island	7-2-00	..	1	
55	92	P.L.	M.	34	Polyesian	Labourer	do	2 years ago	Herbert River	25-7-07	..	1	
56	93	C.	M.	40	do	do	do	Not stated	Cairns	25-7-07	..	1	
57	94	M.	M.	35	do	do	do	18 months	do	25-7-07	..	1	
58	95	J.E.	M.	56	do	do	do	1 year	Townsville	25-7-07	..	1	
59	96	P.L.L.	M.	40	do	do	do	do	Cairns	25-7-07	..	1	
60	97	N.	M.	40	do	do	do	3 years	Mackay	25-7-07	..	1	
61	98	C.	M.	32	do	do	do	do	Cairns	25-7-07	..	1	
62	99	M.	M.	30	do	do	do	do	do	25-7-07	..	1	
63	100	R.	M.	60	do	do	do	do	do	25-7-07	..	1	
64	101	W.	M.	45	do	do	do	do	do	25-7-07	..	1	
65	102	T.	M.	30	do	do	do	do	do	25-7-07	..	1	
66	103	F.G.	M.	26	Queenslander	Stockman	do	do	Cairns	25-7-07	..	1	
67	104	H.F.	M.	19	do	Former	do	do	do	25-7-07	..	1	
68	105	P.M.	F.	21	Indigenous	do	do	4 years	Charter Towers	25-7-07	..	1	
69	106	N.M.	F.	22	do	do	do	6 or 7 years	do	25-7-07	..	1	
70	107	C.S.	M.	35	do	Tailor	do	Not stated	Bundaberg	12-8-07	..	1	
71	108	M.	M.	37	Polyesian	Labourer	do	do	Cairns	23-11-04	..	1	

In spite of this, the Commissioner of Public Health concluded that little real research work had been undertaken, the transfer to Peel Island notwithstanding, and it was decided to try the newly acclaimed Nastin treatment at the lazaret.¹⁶⁴ This treatment was to cause very considerable trouble amongst the patients, which had nothing to do with whether or not it was effective medicinally.¹⁶⁵ Dr. Row was convinced that patients were building too much hope upon the treatment, which he feared would "not be nearly as efficacious as many believed".¹⁶⁶ The chief health officer of New South Wales was also anxious to evaluate Queensland's experience with the use of Nastin, on which such great hopes were placed.¹⁶⁷ In fact, the Nastin treatment did prove to be a failure at Peel Island, as it had in the much larger experiment in British Guiana.¹⁶⁸

Once again Queensland lepers went back onto the chaulmoogra treatment, but this time a purified oil - anti-leprol - was obtained at the suggestion of Dr. Anton Breinl, Director of the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine. Though the unpleasant side effects still remained, the effectiveness of the treatment seemed to be proven.¹⁶⁹ Many of the Peel Island inmates took anti-leprol in conjunction with the Guaiacol treatment, which Linford Row had initiated. Indeed, Row's article in the Australasian Medical Gazette for January 1910, on his experiments in the treatment of leprosy by hypodermic injections of the bactericidal drug Guaiacol, was hailed as a very considerable achievement by the Queensland press.¹⁷⁰ The drug was not new, but the use of the

- 164. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1908), 280.
- 165. Row returned temporarily to the mental asylum at Goodna and the Nastin treatment was delayed. Many complaints about the non-treatment, the way in which the Nastin was to be administered, and about Dr. Row himself were directed to the Home Secretary at this time. See for example, 13 Inmates of Lazarette, Peel Island to Home Secretary, 27 Feb 1909, Q.S.A. COL/A903, in-letter no. 2611 of 1909, and subsequent correspondence.
- 166. Linford Row to Under Secretary, Home Secretary's Department, 15 Apr 1909, Q.S.A. COL/A903, in-letter no. 4406 of 1909. See also The Brisbane Courier, 14 Jan 1909, for a description of the very large practical tests being made by Professor Deycke, the proponent of the treatment, in a 600 bed leprosy hospital in British Guiana.
- 167. Health Department to Home Secretary, 5 Apr 1909, Q.S.A. HOM/B22, in-letter no. 3990 of 1909.
- 168. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1911), 9.
- 169. Ibid. Medical men held this opinion of the purified esters of this oil until the mid-1940's when sulfone drugs began to be widely used.
- 170. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Feb 1910.

treatment was introduced by Row in 1908, and tested over two years at the Queensland lazaret. The Courier was anxious that credit for the original tests should go to Linford Row, and to Queensland.¹⁷¹

Only one other aspect of Queensland's "scientific" experiments remains to be discussed. The problem of how leprosy was transmitted had been a bugbear for the Central Board of Health and the central government, since the introduction of the disease. The puzzle remained unsolved and the source of bitter debate throughout the whole time under review, and well beyond. Many leading medical authorities believed implicitly that the disease was communicable, and even those who on many occasions claimed that it was not, still held to the principle of segregation of victims, both in the interests of the general public, and of those of the sufferers themselves.¹⁷²

Many other theories abounded. The idea put forward by Dr. Bancroft in 1892, that the disease was spread by mosquitoes,¹⁷³ was still apparently acceptable to Linford Row, the Queensland "specialist" in the disease in 1907. Certainly Row suggested in that year, that at Peel Island,

I have to run a much more considerable risk than in the past of contracting the disease myself, owing to the fact that the New Lazaret swarms with Mosquitos which was not the case at the Old Lazaret.¹⁷⁴

This view was entirely rejected by Burnett Ham, though no less an authority than Dr. W.J. Goodhue, the medical superintendent of the Molokai leper settlement on the Hawaiian Islands, was still adhering to this opinion. Goodhue also brought the "novel charge" of spreading leprosy against the common bed-bug.¹⁷⁵ Difficulties facing the early twentieth century medical men of Queensland over this question can be understood to a certain extent, when it is realised that C.Cook, M.B.,

171. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Feb 1910.

172. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1905), 141.

173. Evans et. al., p.303.

174. Dr. Row to Under Secretary, Home Secretary's Department, 23 Sep 1907, Q.S.A. COL/A890, in-letter no. 6317 of 1907. Row was making a special plea for an increase in salary in this letter, and lists a number of reasons in justification of which the mosquito danger is only one, but it does seem to have been a genuine belief on his part.

175. Robert H. Lawson to Under Secretary, Home Secretary's Department, 25 Oct 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A875, in-letter no. 12715 of 1906.

Ch.M. (Sydney), D.T.M. & H., staff member of the Commonwealth Department of Health, could seriously propose in 1927, that "the bed-bug is still suspected of playing some part in the role of vector".¹⁷⁶

The disease of leprosy was never to claim many victims in Queensland. At its height, in the period up to 1914, only upwards of seventy persons were affected with the disease at any one time. Yet, as Dr. John Thomson of the Central Board of Health warned, because of this disease Queenslanders were in danger of reverting to the dark ages and the law of the jungle.¹⁷⁷ They were not peculiar in this. In almost all cultures, emotional loathing and rejection has resulted in the excommunication of lepers. The difference in Queensland was that the rejection took on such blatantly racist tones.

The incidence of the disease had other important effects, apart from the medical arguments it aroused. Not the least of these were the political problems which were involved. The greater number of the people most affected by leprosy were, personally, politically unimportant. Yet the difficulties stemming from the attempted containment of the disease, presented governments with some of the most sensitive issues of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The great controversies of the liberty of the individual, and the necessity or otherwise for state intervention, were fought out here. Moreover, since leprosy, like many other public health problems, underlined the differences between governments and local authorities, and state and Commonwealth administrations, the pros and cons of centralism, with the attendant bitterness which that question can generate, were also implicated.

176. Cook, p.10.

177. The Brisbane Courier, 20 Feb 1897; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 19 Feb 1897.

Smallpox in its severer forms is fatal to a large proportion of the victims it attacks, and is one of the most highly infectious of all known communicable diseases. It was one of the terrible exotic scourges which made its appearance in ships reaching the Queensland coast during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Smallpox was to claim only a handful of sufferers amongst the resident population. But early fear of the disease was so great, that Queensland's first Public Health Act of 1872 was hurriedly added to the statute book to enable the government "to deal with the formidable disease of smallpox in the event of its breaking out in the colony, as there was a possibility of its doing".¹ Later, amending bills were also proposed, because of this disease.

Modern observers have pointed out that whereas the other great pestilences of the era - bubonic plague, typhoid, typhus, cholera and yellow fever - have all diminished with improvements to sanitation and hygiene, these advances have not affected the prevalence of smallpox.² This particular was overlooked entirely by the people living through the period. As the nineteenth century progressed, the arrival of any infected vessel stirred up strident cries for immediate sanitary improvements from the public, the press, and the central health authorities. These outbursts were important in keeping the need for cleanliness and for better drainage and sewage disposal before the central and local government bodies, but the story of smallpox in Queensland has much more significance than a mere demand for better sanitation. It is quite clearly recognised today, that the only effective means of preventing smallpox is by vaccination. As early as 1860, all of the Australian colonies, except New South Wales and Queensland, had accepted this method as a useful preventive measure, and had enacted legislation for compulsory vaccination.³ The attitudes and tactics of the Queensland government in flirting with the idea of

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1. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 595.
 2. Dr. A.H. Humphry, in The Health of Man in Australian Society, Vol.I, p.64.
 3. Professor E. Ford, "Australia and the Great Plagues", address to the Sydney University Engineering Club, 20 Oct 1953.

vaccination, to the extent of appointing public vaccinators without ever giving way to medical pressure for compulsory vaccination, form an important part of the smallpox story.

Of equal significance, was Queensland's acceptance of the efficacy of quarantine in keeping the disease outside her borders. In fact, quarantine was to prove very effective, in spite of the many inefficiencies which attended it. When the system broke down, it was not so much through a failure to screen overseas immigrants properly, as through the difficulties experienced on an interstate basis. Fears of an invasion of smallpox from the south were to engender unprecedented anger and bitterness between the two Australian states which had not only neglected to protect their citizens compulsorily by the accepted scientific means, but which had failed to carry out adequate interstate quarantine arrangements as well.

One of the earliest ships to bring smallpox victims to Queensland, and to be quarantined as a result, was the Hannah More which arrived in Brisbane on 11 March 1865.⁴ The press of the capital showed little interest in the event. Obviously they were well satisfied that the existing quarantine arrangements would protect Queensland's shores. It was equally plain that their main concern was with Brisbane's unpaved streets, which were either choking with dust or obstructed by mire, with backyards reeking with filth and stench, with inadequate water supplies, and almost total lack of drainage.⁵

Queensland's first Central Board of Health, which was appointed on 8 April of that same year, did not depart from this already well-worn theme. The board's first report to parliament contained no mention at all of smallpox,⁶ and neither the health bill prepared by the board, nor the parliamentary debate on it, referred to the disease.⁷

By 1871, when the immigrant ship the Shakespeare arrived in

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- 4. Minutes of Executive Council, 29 Mar 1865, Q.S.A. EXE/E 11, 65/16.
 - 5. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Apr 1865. See also comment in The North Australian, 12 Jan 1865; editorial.
 - 6. "Board of Health Report", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1865), 1313-20.
 - 7. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, (1865), 378-81, and 649.

Queensland with six cases of smallpox on board,⁸ the population of the colony had become much more alive to the problem. The British government, through its Colonial Secretary, the Earl of Kimberley, had circularized all colonies, warning of the dangers of a possible smallpox invasion.⁹ The Brisbane Courier took up the matter at once, expanding on the circular and explaining the virtues of vaccination. Even if people were unfortunate enough to contract the disease after vaccination, lack of scarring and lesser virulence of the disease would be the rewards of the preventive treatment.¹⁰

All of the Courier's readers were not convinced of the unalloyed benefits of vaccination. One correspondent "P", brought up the question which was to exercise the minds of medical men to a considerable extent in the future. "P" wrote

I don't much believe in Vaccination, that is I think there are great evils arising from the use of impure lymph. I want to know what guarantee I have if I get my child vaccinated by the Government Officer that it may not have introduced with the vaccine other diseases, the result of which it is painful to contemplate. I think a little more information would be beneficial. 11

Medical opinion then being expressed did little to calm such lay fears, as prominent doctors adhered to traditional sanitary methods for the prevention of all diseases, and rarely discussed the vaccination question publicly. For instance, Dr. K. Cannan, the first president of the newly formed Queensland Medical Society, in deliberating on the possible arrival of smallpox and other exotic diseases on the Queensland coast, seemed content enough with "our quarantine laws /which/ protect us from the introduction of pestilence from abroad".¹² His main concern was that any diseases which might slip through the cordon of quarantine should not be "encouraged" and "perpetuated" by "the accumulation of faecal matter in cesspools which exist in the premises of every habitation in this city".¹³

Dr. O'Doherty, in attempting to persuade the Queensland parliament to legislate for public health in 1872,¹⁴ used the approach of smallpox,

8. Cumpston, History of Smallpox, p.85.

9. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Mar 1871.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 14 Jul 1871; letter to editor from P.

12. Ibid., 8 May 1871; Inaugural address to Queensland Medical Society by Dr. K. Cannan.

13. Ibid.

14. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 596.

that "most threatening" and "most contagious" of diseases, as a very effective weapon against the attacks of his parliamentary opponents, who had overridden his even more comprehensive measure of the previous year.¹⁵ O'Doherty's hand was greatly strengthened by the discovery of two distinct cases of smallpox which broke out in Sydney, immediately before the introduction of the health bill,¹⁶ and the Act received assent on 12 August 1872.¹⁷ Even so, O'Doherty was very far from seeking provisions to deal with smallpox through the universal vaccination of Queenslanders. His Act was much more general. He wished to see the appointment of a sanitary board to act as advisers to the government, with power to compel the cleansing of houses, lodging houses, backyards and streets.¹⁸

With the Act passed, and the Sydney problem dealt with through successfully carried out emergency quarantine measures,¹⁹ Queensland fears over smallpox were quelled for some considerable time. Only the Central Board of Health appointed under the 1872 Act remained concerned about the possibility of a smallpox outbreak. They included a clause stressing the "absolute necessity" for vaccination in their proposed health act amendment bill of 1874, pointing out that there were officers appointed by the government to perform vaccinations, and that although the operation was free, very few people availed themselves of the service.²⁰ This amendment bill was doomed to failure,²¹ even though a large majority of members agreed on the necessity for strengthening central board powers to remove "plague spots". Most Queensland parliamentarians found the seventh clause which dealt with vaccination objectionable, many fearing that the board "proposed to make vaccination compulsory". The principles of laissez-faire were still firmly entrenched in the colony, and members certainly objected to any hint of coercion.²²

15. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 597.

16. Ibid., p.560. O'Doherty introduced the bill the next day. See also Executive Council Minutes, 11 Jul 1872, Q.S.A. EXE/E 38, p.252 regarding the submission of the health bill to Council and the immediate implementation of the 1863 Quarantine Act.

17. Queensland Government Gazette, XIII (1872), 1263.

18. Ibid., pp.1264-65.

19. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 560, and f.n.16 above. The quarantine restrictions were to extend to all Queensland ports.

20. Ibid., XVII (1874), 936.

21. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1874), 381.

22. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XVII (1874), 937-38.

The government and people of Queensland were jolted from their complacency when, early in 1877, no less than three ships carrying smallpox-stricken passengers reached the coast.²³ Then it became

a matter of public notoriety that the colony was threatened with smallpox; the greatest anxiety prevailed, not only here but in the neighbouring colonies; and the government were bound to take the strongest possible steps to prevent the outbreak of that disease, and to allay public anxiety. ²⁴

R.M. Stewart, who held the post of Colonial Secretary briefly in the Thorn and Douglas ministries, anxiously called the Central Board of Health together to discuss the smallpox problem, as evil reports of the Queensland mail steamer Brisbane reached the capital. Although it had already proved inadequate,²⁵ the 1872 Health Act was put to immediate use, each of the northern ports being proclaimed, and local health boards being organised to deal with expected difficulties, under the direction of the Central Board of Health. Official sanction for vaccination was also forthcoming. A competent medical officer was authorized to act as public vaccinator in every town proclaimed,²⁶ while the Central Board of Health had "no hesitation in advising parents and guardians to have all the young people provided with the indelible brand of the vaccine mark".²⁷

Because of this sudden official interest in the virtues of vaccination, one very serious problem attended this particular emergency. The government which had refrained from insisting on inoculation, had naturally enough, neglected to build up any large reserves of vaccine lymph. An immediate intercolonial search for reliable vaccine was undertaken, and abundant supplies of "excellent" lymph were obtained from Melbourne, to be distributed where needed throughout the colony. Vaccination, the Central Board of Health, was happy to report, was "being very widely carried out /no/ cases being attended with a bad result".²⁸

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- 23. They were the Brisbane, which reached Keppel Bay in March, the Thales, which was near Cooktown in March, and the Kate, which reached Brisbane in April. Colonial Secretary to Health Office Brisbane, 7 Apr 1877, Q.S.A. COL/ 440, out-letter no.794 of 1877, and attached unnumbered copies.
 - 24. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXIII (1877), 73.
 - 25. Another health act amendment bill was brought forward in 1877, but was discharged before the second reading.
 - 26. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Jan 1877; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 3 Jan 1877.
 - 27. "Progress Report of the Central Board of Health", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1877), 1145.
 - 28. Ibid.

The central board dealt with another important aspect of smallpox control in their progress report to parliament in 1877. New arrivals from China, who had already attracted the odium of being carriers of leprosy,²⁹ also posed peculiar problems with regard to smallpox. Consequently the board offered special advice which contained a nice mixture of science and hard common sense.

We consider the Government would be justified in requiring every Chinese immigrant to be vaccinated whilst undergoing their sixteen days' detention; and we venture to suggest it with the purpose of being an additional protection to the health of the colony. A small fee might be charged in each case. 30

The government was not over-anxious to encourage the Central Board of Health's encroachment into any area of quarantine control, except in an advisory capacity, at that particular time. Certain colonial secretaries had been put to some inconvenience through the central board's interference in these affairs,³¹ and in 1874, the government had actually rejected the board's contention that it should have the powers of a board of quarantine, acting directly under the minister.³²

At the same time, the government fully accepted the absolute necessity for strengthening quarantine procedures in the light of the 1877 emergency.³³ The burst of interest in the preventive value of vaccination had certainly not blinded the Colonial Secretary to the virtues of the older stand-by. One of the most important results of the 1877 incidents, which were complicated when the Thales was disabled off

29. Especially in the colony of Victoria. See Within, p.186.

30. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1877), 1145.

31. See Within, pp.97-98. After the public revelation of the incident recorded there, the house was divided as to whether Dr. Challinor or the central board were correct in their judgement. The Colonial Secretary, William Miles, thought Challinor "had a peculiar temper", "was as stubborn as a mule", and that his obstinacy should not be tolerated any longer. But the majority of members felt that Challinor was justified in his action, that the central board should not have interfered, and that any minister who "submitted to the castigations of this troublesome subordinate /was/... unworthy of his position". Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXIV (1877), 1352.

32. See Ibid., p.1146, and Ibid., XVII (1874), 937.

33. Dr. Cumpston, in his official history of smallpox in Australia, does not even mention the problems of 1877. Apparently relying on the Australian Medical Journal for his information, he skips from 1871 to 1879 in detailing smallpox scares in Queensland. Cumpston, History of Smallpox, p.85.

the north Queensland coast,³⁴ involved an order in council amending and consolidating the existing quarantine regulations, to enable the government to deal promptly with any smallpox emergency.³⁵

The two important questions of quarantine and vaccination were kept before the public of Queensland during 1878, by parliamentary debate on yet another health act amendment bill. Under this, the government intended to give the Central Board of Health increased powers over vaccination, in order to provide for the more efficient management of the procedure. But once again the board's proposal to render vaccination compulsory was rejected. The Premier, John Douglas, did not think "that public sentiment would justify us in coming to such a conclusion".³⁶

The government also proposed to give the central board increased powers over the actual organisation of quarantine under the amendment bill.³⁷ This temporary departure from the 1874 position was not appreciated by Brisbane's health officer, Dr. Challinor, who had already maintained a collision course with the Central Board of Health.³⁸ Challinor protested against the bestowal of any new, extensive powers on an irresponsible board, which was "not legally liable for the maladministration of its functions".³⁹ Challinor also commented on another matter connected with quarantine, which had arisen after the arrival of a minute from Dr. Seaton, the chief medical officer

34. The Thales, from Hong Kong, was disabled near the Endeavour River with smallpox on board. A special area of land with beaches stretching seven miles between the salt swamp and the mountains was proclaimed a lazaret on 30 March 1877. See unnumbered attachments to Colonial Secretary to Health Officer, Brisbane, 7 Apr 1877, Q.S.A. COL/ 440, out-letter no.794 of 1877.

35. Queensland Government Gazette, XX (1877), 1033.

36. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXV (1878), 66-67. For a press comment see The Brisbane Courier, 10 May 1878; main editorial.

37. The government soon returned to its former position with regard to the central board and quarantine services. See for example, Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 20 Aug 1881, Q.S.A. COL/A 319, in-letter no.3671 of 1881, in which the central board made adverse comments on the health officer's routine in examining ships. The Colonial Secretary, A.H. Palmer, commented in the margin: "I cannot see what the Central Board of Health have to do with this matter".

38. Within, p.224, f.n.31.

39. Challinor to Colonial Secretary, 11 May 1878, Q.S.A. COL/A 257, in-letter no.1766 of 1878.

of the Imperial Local Government Board.⁴⁰ Seaton's minute advocated the British system of medical inspection to replace the time-consuming and expensive process of quarantine. Challinor pointed out the utmost foolhardiness of Queensland's relying on such a scheme, in the absence of the highly organised sanitary authorities which obtained in Great Britain. The situation was made infinitely more dangerous by the colony's very close proximity to the Asian ports, which harboured exotic diseases of all kinds, and by the short travelling time between Asia and the north Queensland coast. Indicating that current medical opinion estimated the latent period for smallpox to be sixteen days, Challinor reminded the Colonial Secretary that the voyage from Singapore to Thursday Island took only twelve days, to Cooktown fourteen, Townsville sixteen, Bowen seventeen days, Keppel Bay eighteen, and Moreton Bay twenty-one days. Under these circumstances, it was quite possible for the disease to enter the colony, undetected by any health officer or ship's surgeon.⁴¹

The central board, which had appointed a special sub-committee to examine Dr. Seaton's report, did not quarrel with Challinor on the score of the perils imposed on the colony through the conquering of the "tyranny of distance". The board was not unsympathetic to British aims, but warned the Colonial Secretary that

whilst... your Committee urge that the quarantine law of this country may be very safely and judiciously modified in the direction of this medical inspection,... they are not prepared to advocate so sweeping a change.... It must be borne in mind that, as yet, we have happily succeeded in preventing some of the most formidable of these contagious and infectious diseases from finding a footing on this continent: cholera, smallpox and typhus fever have appeared more than once at our doors, but by the aid of our stringent quarantine laws we have succeeded in driving them off. In reference to these diseases, we consider it would be desirable to adhere to the strict letter of our quarantine laws.

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The Douglas government favoured an "approach more nearly to that /system/ in the mother country" - always allowing for exceptions to be made should smallpox-ridden ships approach the coast - because this would

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- 40. "Minute of Dr. Seaton", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1878), 457. See also Within, pp.162-63, for The Brisbane Courier's 1883 comment on the British medical inspection system.
 - 41. "Re Dr. Seaton's Report and action taken thereon by the Central Board of Health", Dr. Challinor to Colonial Secretary, 11 May 1878, Q.S.A. COL/A 257, in-letter no.1766 of 1878.
 - 42. "Report of Board on Dr. Seaton's Minute, re Quarantine and Medical Inspection", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1878), 455.

reduce the interruptions to trade and consequent loss of income which quarantine occasioned.⁴³ But in the end, the 1878 health bill failed to pass into law,⁴⁴ and proposals regarding quarantine and vaccination lapsed with it.⁴⁵

In 1881, after a short lull when general sanitary matters consumed whatever attention was paid to the question of public health, and smallpox raised no interest either publicly or among the members of the Central Board of Health,⁴⁶ another outbreak of the disease in Sydney

had an awakening effect on the guardians of the public health, indeed upon the population generally in Queensland.... Fear is a wholesome principle and like other national instincts is designed to play a part in protecting the welfare of individuals and society. The "scare" at present occasioned by the appearance of a dreadful disease... will not be without its beneficial results if it lead to a thorough purgation of unclean places in cities and towns, and if the recognised amelioration, if not prevention, by vaccination be generally adopted. ⁴⁷

The Central Board of Health was galvanised into action. A room was immediately placed at the disposal of the government medical officer as a dispensary for public vaccination,⁴⁸ and board members also persuaded the Brisbane Local Board of Health to provide a special isolation ward in Victoria Park, for the accommodation of any possible smallpox patients.⁴⁹

- 43. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXV (1878), 66-67.
- 44. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1878), 18.
- 45. There was another attempt to amend the 1872 Health Act in 1879. Only very brief reference was made to Central Board of Health action to prevent the Chinese bringing in smallpox during the parliamentary debate. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXVIII (1879), 409.
- 46. See for example, "Central Board of Health, 1879 Progress Report", in Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1880), 1503-4, which contains no mention of smallpox. See also a short article in The Lancet of January 1880, which comments on a piece published in The Queenslander by "An Old Practitioner". "An Old Practitioner" asserted that the practice of vaccination in Queensland had fallen into disuse, and that "quarantine arrangements may be relied upon to keep smallpox out, if their strictness is not meddled with". The Lancet was astonished at this attitude, suggesting that an unvaccinated population would be decimated should smallpox gain a hold. "Queensland would do well to place her public vaccination arrangements upon a sound basis, and endeavour to carry out systematically and continuously the vaccination of her people". The Lancet, 31 Jan 1880, p.180.
- 47. The Queensland Times, 14 Jul 1881; sub editorial.
- 48. Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 9 Jul 1881, Q.S.A. COL/A 317, in-letter no.3002 of 1881.
- 49. The Brisbane Courier, 22 Jul 1881.

The usual calls for

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our civic authorities... to take at least a few ordinary
precautionary steps... to remove the most disgusting nuisances,...
the vile effluvia and... the putrid bodies of animals... in the
face of the smallpox scare

were made by both the colony's newspapers and their readers. Under the pressure of the smallpox emergency, one ingenious Queenslander, Frederick Scott, turned his hand to inventing a "portable smallpox hospital" for the use of one or more patients.

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These will make it possible to cause all nature's ejectments
and the air that passes through the room to go through fire
before they reach the outside air. An ambulance could
easily be constructed on the same principle.

But during 1881, by far the greatest interest was concentrated on the benefits of vaccination. Prejudices against injection had persisted, in spite of increasing official support, because of the possibility of noxious contagion from lymph obtained through the human subject.⁵² Successful experiments carried out with calf lymph in Europe, led to the use of the new vaccine in England for the first time at St. Mary Abbots, Kensington, the lymph being obtained from Holland.⁵³ Members of the medical profession in the southern colonies in Australia soon turned their attention, with considerable success, to that source of lymph, and Queensland medical men were urged by The Queensland Times both to investigate the new vaccine and to encourage widespread vaccination.⁵⁴ Campaigns to create an educated public opinion with

50. See for example, The Queensland Times, 14 Jul 1881, 23 Jul 1881, and 8 Sep 1881; main editorial, and The Brisbane Courier, 21 Jul 1881. The quotation is taken from The Queensland Times, 9 Jul 1881; letter to editor from Sanitas.

51. Ibid., 23 Jun 1881; letter to editor from Frederick Scott. Scott had also invented a patent air closet which was on sale in Queensland. See Within, pp.118-19.

52. "Arm to arm" vaccination was practised at first. The method was introduced to Britain from Turkey in 1721. Many deaths resulted from this method, and there was also the risk that syphilis and other diseases might be transferred from one person to another. "Arm to arm" vaccination was forbidden by law in England in 1840. Until experiments took place on the continent with the much safer calf lymph, material for injection was usually obtained from vesicles of persons recently vaccinated, and to a small extent from cows suffering from cowpox.

53. Frazer, p.172. The government calf lymph establishment was set up in London in 1880, but did not issue lymph officially until 1881.

54. The Queensland Times, 8 Sep 1881; main editorial.

regard to sanitary matters, and to popularize vaccination, were also undertaken by various New South Wales and Victorian Health Societies, one of the most prominent being the Australian Health Society. Based in Melbourne, but as its name imported, being a nation-wide organisation with branch societies in the various colonies, the Australian Health Society published a number of useful and eye-catching health tracts, some of which were used effectively in Queensland.⁵⁵

Local boards of health in cities and towns proclaimed in Queensland, because of the possibility of a smallpox invasion, began to petition the central government as never before for new fever hospital accommodation, suitable vehicles for the conveyance of patients to hospital, the proper and thorough inspection of vessels in port, and above all, for the government to take steps to ensure that lymph was available for vaccination.⁵⁶ The government itself decided on the appointment of medical officers in various far-flung parts of Queensland, because

it was felt that in consequence of the present outbreak of Smallpox in the Colonies it is very desirable that every district should have a recognised Public Vaccinator, and as it is impossible to tell how soon Queensland may be visited with this loathsome disease, that all precautionary measures should at once be taken.

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Unfortunately for some local health boards, their own appointment under the 1872 Health Act, and the provision of health officers as government vaccinators, did not automatically mean the smooth conduct of the work. The Cooktown Local Board of Health, for example, contacted the Colonial Secretary's office in some distress, drawing attention to the particular need for vaccination in their very vulnerable area, and the desirability of providing the officer concerned, Dr. Mohs, with all facilities.⁵⁸ Mohs was disinclined to accept orders or advice from the

- 55. The Australian Health Society had a large number of tracts printed. Some of the more effective were on the evils of bad smells, the Sanitary Alphabet, and one on smallpox and vaccination, copies of which are apparently no longer available. The Queensland Times records that four thousand of the smallpox pamphlets were distributed throughout Australia by the Melbourne Central Board of Health. Ibid., 20 Oct 1881; main editorial.
- 56. Secretary, Local Board of Health, Rockhampton to Colonial Secretary, 18 Jun 1881, Q.S.A. COL/A 315, in-letter no.2645 of 1881.
- 57. This particular record concerns the appointment of Dr. Swayne at Springsure. Colonial Secretary to Dr. Swayne, 31 Jul 1881, Q.S.A. COL/A 319, filed under in-letter no.3511 of 1881.
- 58. Local Board of Health, Cooktown to Colonial Secretary, 6 Sep 1881, Q.S.A. COL/A 324, filed with in-letter no.4690 of 1881.

The Sanitary Alphabet.

15-JUL-1906

A s soon as you're up, shake blankets and sheet ;
B etter be without shoes than sit with wet feet ;
C hildren, if healthy, are active, not still ;
D amp beds and damp clothes will both make you ill.
E at slowly, and always chew your food well ;
F reshen the air in the house where you dwell.
G arments must never be made to be tight ;
H omes will be healthy if airy and light.
I f you wish to be well, as you do I've no doubt,
J ust open the windows before you go out ;
K eep your rooms always tidy and clean,
L et dust on the furniture never be seen.
M uch illness is caused by the want of pure air,
N ow to open your windows be ever your care ;
O ld rags and old rubbish should never be kept,
P eople should see that their floors are well swept.
Q uick movements in children are healthy and right ;
R emember the young cannot thrive without light.
S oap and rough towels are good for the skin ;
T emperance favours the body within.
U se your nose to find out if there be a bad drain,
V ery sad are the fevers that come in its train.
W alk as much as you can without feeling fatigue,
X erxes could walk for full many a league.
Y our health is your wealth, which your wisdom must
keep ;
Z eal will help a good cause, and the good you will reap.

AUSTRALIAN HEALTH SOCIETY.

Melbourne, September, 1881.

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No. 18. Australian Health Society Tract, September, 1881.

Cooktown board, rejecting "any interference in /his/ private practice and in /his/ duty as Health Officer".⁵⁹ The government supported the Cooktown Local Board of Health, after it had warned that Mohs was neglecting vaccinations.⁶⁰ But if the doctor is to be believed, the department itself was also at fault. The lymph did not arrive in Cooktown until 7 October 1881, after Mohs had put in several applications for the stuff, having previously obtained his lymph privately from Sydney.⁶¹

Public interest in smallpox, in vaccination, and in quarantine continued throughout the eighties in Queensland, particularly when infected vessels, or outbreaks of the disease in the south, threatened the health of the colony. The arrival in Sydney of a smallpox-ship from Fiji caused a considerable scare in Brisbane;⁶² but when the mail steamer, the Duke of Westminster, put into Moreton Bay with some passengers and the ship's surgeon infected with the disease, there was great alarm. Pausing only to attack the health officer at Keppel Bay - wrongly as it turned out - for not boarding the Duke of Westminster and consequently for failing to detect the disease in Dr. Woodward,⁶³ The Brisbane Courier went on to emphasize the weaknesses of the Queensland quarantine system, and the value of vaccination in the face of such inadequacies. A very indignant Courier editor declared that

if the colony had escaped infection, it was by a sheer stroke of good luck. The fault which originally exposed us to the danger lay not as we supposed, with the Health Officer at Rockhampton, but with the Department.⁶⁴ The rule we find is that a steamer arriving at the Northern port is there inspected and then passes down as a coasting steamer with no further visits from Health Officers. This provision is manifestly inadequate.... Now we repeat, the colony owes to sheer accident its escape from a serious and widespread outbreak of smallpox. There is good reason to complain of the manner in which the authorities charged with the preservation of the public health perform their duties. When a "scare" sets in, they display prodigious energy, but when it abates, they seem

- 59. Health Officer, Cooktown to Colonial Secretary, 26 Sep 1881, filed under Ibid.
- 60. A marginal comment on the above letter states that "Mohs must work with the Board."
- 61. Dr. Mohs to Under Colonial Secretary, 21 Oct 1881, Q.S.A. COL/A 324, in-letter no.4690 of 1881. Mohs was still declining to take orders from the local board of health at this time.
- 62. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Jul 1883, and 1 Aug 1883; main editorial.
- 63. Ibid., 29 Aug 1883.
- 64. The department of the Colonial Secretary controlled quarantine arrangements.

to go comfortably to sleep. This colony is peculiarly liable to infection. Steamers constantly touch here which have been in Asia or the Indian archipelago, where virulent smallpox is... rife. And yet we have good reason to fear that the health inspection, in most, if not all cases, is performed in a very careless and perfunctory manner. It could hardly be otherwise. There is a constant and not unnatural resistance by shipowners and agents to inspection which might entail on them the costly delay of quarantine.... It is not merely in the precautions to keep out the disease that the authorities are chargeable with carelessness, but also in the equally important precautions to minimize its effects should it unfortunately break out. The value of vaccination is universally admitted by intelligent men. If ever any scientific fact was established by an overwhelming body of testimony, it is the efficacy of vaccination as a safeguard against smallpox.... If vaccination were universal in this community, the outbreak of smallpox here would be a no more serious affair than a common epidemic of measles. 65

The Courier's anxious reminder that quarantine was an insufficient barrier against smallpox, was reinforced by a long letter to the editor on the Duke of Westminster incident from Dr. J. Ashburton Thompson, a medical man then employed in the Queensland government service, who was destined to become chief medical adviser to the government of New South Wales. Ashburton Thompson wrote that since smallpox in its early stages would escape the notice of even a shrewd observer, the limitations of the powers and the true scope of quarantine, had to be grasped by both the government and the people of Queensland. Ashburton Thompson asserted that

quarantine cannot prevent the importation of disease. It can only limit the number of infected centres.... It is... clear that quarantine can only be a part, and a part of inferior value, in a general scheme of preventive medicine.... In short, there is no... royal road to public health.... and a country in which there is no compulsory vaccination may well dread the importation of smallpox. 66

One very important exponent of vaccination, who had already borne all of these matters in mind, was Dr. Hugh Bell of the Central Board of

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- 65. The Brisbane Courier, 31 Aug 1883; main editorial. In fact the government announced an extraordinary proclamation of the Duke of Westminster on 29 Aug 1883. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXIII (1883), 617.
 - 66. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Sep 1883; letter to editor from J. Ashburton Thompson, M.D. (Brux), San. Sci. Cert. (Cambridge).

Health.⁶⁷ Early in 1883, before the Duke of Westminster scare had arisen, Bell urged the central board to bring in the universal adoption /of vaccination/ to prevent as far as possible the spread of smallpox, should we be so unfortunate as to have it introduced amongst us, our line of coast and trade rendering us peculiarly liable to this. 68

The Central Board of Health discussed this motion briefly at their March meeting, but spent far more time considering Bell's other suggestion, that all coloured races should be compulsorily vaccinated. But although this idea was fully supported by Colonial Secretary McIlwraith, no definite decision was made.⁶⁹

Bell persisted with his motion at the April meeting of the Central Board of Health. His chances of success were slim. He had failed to draw up any comprehensive statement in connection with his suggestions on vaccination, as he had been asked to do.⁷⁰ Even more importantly, the Queensland-wide scheme envisaged by him had, as its most conspicuous feature, the use of unqualified persons as vaccinators.

67. Dr. Hugh Bell is an important figure in the history of Queensland's public health movement. He was a convinced sanitarian, having produced a model dry earth closet. But Bell was by no means a traditionalist. He illustrates the struggle between opposites, "the miasmatic theory" and the theory of contagium animatum - "that increasingly important element in late nineteenth century public health, the co-existence of energetic sanitarianism with the emergence of the germ theory". A discussion on this conflict within the medical profession itself appears in Margaret Pelling, "The Reality of Anticontagionism - Theories of Epidemic Disease in the Early Nineteenth Century", in The Society for the Social History of Medicine, Bulletin No.17, 1976, p.5.
68. The Brisbane Courier, 10 Feb 1883; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 8 Feb 1883.
69. McIlwraith chaired this central board meeting. He took particular care to assure the board that his championship of the idea of vaccination of coolies and Kanakas was not motivated by racial prejudice. He stressed that British immigrants, for the most part, were covered by the British Vaccination Acts of 1853, 1867 and 1871, and therefore presented no danger to Queensland. In taking this position, he overlooked the fact that vaccination did not give permanent immunity, unless followed by booster injections. Large numbers of English families neglected this precaution. On the other hand, McIlwraith correctly pointed out that Asians had no vaccination protection in their own countries, where smallpox was very prevalent. Ibid., 10 Mar 1883; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 9 Mar 1883.
70. Ibid., 14 Apr 1883; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 13 Apr 1883.

Without this provision, complete vaccination throughout the immense area of the colony could not be effected; but the other medical men on the board were decidedly against any such scheme, except in a grave emergency.⁷¹

Another stumbling-block to the proper protection of Brisbane residents through vaccination in the 1883 emergency, was the failure to advertise the name and whereabouts of the public vaccinator for the capital. Once again it was newspaper agitation which revealed this government negligence. On 29 August 1883, Charles Birkbeck, signing himself "An Anxious Enquirer", forwarded a letter to The Brisbane Courier requesting information about vaccination arrangements. The Brisbane Courier did not publish the letter, but did begin investigations. Two days later it announced that it had tracked down the medical man, but questioned how many colonists knew who he was, or where he was to be found.⁷² Birkbeck, apparently somewhat put out that The Courier had not only failed to publish his correspondence, but had also neglected to name the doctor and his location, again addressed himself to the editor on 8 September 1883. Whereupon The Courier published his second letter, praised his initiative, and revealed Dr. Marks as the public vaccinator, a fact which was "apparently a state secret, only to be discovered by assiduous search".⁷³

The arrangements for vaccination themselves were also cumbrous and off-putting to say the least. Vaccinations were carried out "whenever necessary" at the police court. Any person desirous of having the operation performed had to notify the police. The fee charged was 2/6d., but this was returned to patients on their visiting the public vaccinator for re-examination. Dr. Marks, who retailed this information to The Brisbane Courier, seemed surprised that "for some time past there /had/ been no applicants".⁷⁴

- 71. The Telegraph, 20 Oct 1883. This article is an exact copy of a paper read by Dr. Bell at the Central Board of Health meeting held on 12 October 1883. Besides setting out his plan for vaccination, and the board's antagonism towards it, Bell attacked the central board for its poor showing during the Duke of Westminster emergency. It "seems to have been met in a practical and efficient manner creditable to all parties concerned and thoroughly successful, but without the aid of the Queensland Central Board of Health".
- 72. The Brisbane Courier took up the question on 29 August 1883, and again on 31 Aug 1883; main editorial.
- 73. Ibid., 8 Sep 1883; letter to editor from Charles E. Birkbeck and Note from the Editor following.
- 74. Ibid., 10 Sep 1883.

A far larger and long-continuing problem concerned the supply of proper and effective lymph. For a number of years, the Central Board of Health had experienced difficulties with lymph mixed with blood, and with lymph which looked perfect, but which was quite ineffectual when injected.⁷⁵ The board refused to pay for this material, further reducing lymph supplies from one particular large producer.⁷⁶ When Dr. Hugh Bell, public vaccinator for the whole of Queensland during the 1883 emergency, was on his northern and western tour of the colony,⁷⁷ he met with similar difficulties. Of one thousand tubes of vaccine lymph supplied in Townsville, "much had to be destroyed... as unfit to use", though an excellent start had been made on the vaccination programme.⁷⁸ Bell's answer to the lymph problem was the "setting up of a Central Vaccination and Lymph Establishment", a project in whose formation Bell expressed himself "happy to assist".⁷⁹

The government did nothing in this matter immediately, and the problems associated with obtaining a pure lymph supply inhibited vaccination programmes for many years. Doctors in various parts of Queensland found it utterly impossible to get supplies of fresh lymph, as outbreaks of the disease in the southern colonies in succeeding years resulted in corresponding alarm and desire for preventive measures throughout Queensland. Brisbane parents, who were anxious to have their children vaccinated, searched in vain for doctors properly

- 75. Dr. Benjafield to Colonial Secretary, 8 Apr 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 358, in-letter no.1841 of 1883, and copies of letters for 1881 and 1882 attached.
- 76. See marginal comment on in-letter no.4211 of 1881 and no.1841 of 1883. Benjafield contended that his lymph was good, and that the central board should pay as Victoria, South Australia, and New Zealand had continued to order and to pay for large quantities of his lymph.
- 77. Dr. Hugh Bell, Public Vaccinator for Queensland, to Colonial Secretary, 3 Sep 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 367, in-letter no.4455 of 1883.
- 78. Dr. H. Bell to Colonial Secretary, 27 Apr 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 359, in-letter no.2114 of 1883. Bell was in Townsville for seven weeks and vaccinated 150 children. He also began to request payment for the operation from the government at the rate of 2/6d. per head.
- 79. Dr. H. Bell to Colonial Secretary, 3 Sep 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 367, in-letter no.4455 of 1883, Bell's italics. Bell also printed a pamphlet Suggestions in Vaccinations. Apparently this was done at his own expense. There was no request for remuneration, and the pamphlet is marked "With Dr. Hugh Bell's compliments". The tract gives clear instructions for vaccinators, with small illustrations of the way scratches were to be made, as well as information about taking and storing the lymph. Enclosure in in-letter no.4455 of 1883, as above.

equipped to undertake the operation.⁸⁰ Even in very sensitive areas along the north Queensland coast, which were proclaimed from time to time under the Health Act because of smallpox in the south,⁸¹ government medical officers petitioned without success for fresh, pure lymph supplies.⁸² Doctors in equally vulnerable railway towns on the New South Wales-Queensland border experienced similar frustrations, as frightened residents eagerly sought vaccination.⁸³ Brisbane had no pure lymph supplies to send, and apparently made no attempts to procure any.⁸⁴ This government apathy was the more regrettable in view of earlier pronouncements of prominent medical practitioners made at the Australian Sanitary Conference held in Sydney in 1884. The colonial delegates to that conference unanimously accepted the efficacy of properly carried out vaccination to contain smallpox.⁸⁵

As late as February 1888, the difficulty faced by Queensland medical practitioners in keeping up a supply of reliable lymph was labelled by Dr. W.F. Taylor as the "greatest, if not the only drawback to vaccination being freely resorted to".⁸⁶ Harking back to Dr. Hugh Bell's 1883 suggestion that a Queensland lymph institute be established to provide pure material, and to make the area independent of southern

- 80. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Aug 1884; letter to editor from An Anxious Father, and news items in Ibid., 28 Aug 1884, 8 Sep 1884, and 9 Sep 1884.
- 81. Medical Officer, Rockhampton to Colonial Secretary, 5 Nov 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 408, in-letter no.7852 of 1884.
- 82. See for example, Dr. Thurston, Rockhampton to Colonial Secretary, 6 Jun 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 392, in-telegram no.4043 of 1884, and the same, 12 Jun 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 392, in-telegram no.4202 of 1884.
- 83. Medical Officer, Goondiwindi to Colonial Secretary, 14 Sep 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 482, in-letter no.7252 of 1886.
- 84. Dr. Hobbs to Colonial Secretary, 24 Sep 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 482, in-letter no.7428 of 1886. "There is no pure lymph in Brisbane, that I am aware of". The Colonial Secretary's marginal direction was "Inform Goondiwindi accordingly". Border towns also tried to get railway carriages fumigated as another method of containing smallpox - again without success. See Chairman, Divisional Board, Stanthorpe to Colonial Secretary, 2 Dec 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 408, in-letter no.8469 of 1884.
- 85. "The Australian Sanitary Conference of Sydney, N.S.W., 1884", Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, III (1885), 490-494. Stress was laid on the necessity for the operation to be carried out by qualified medical men, for the lymph to produce the proper reaction in the patient, and on the need for re-vaccination.
- 86. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Feb 1888; letter to editor from W.F. Taylor. Taylor did not favour a compulsory vaccination system.

supplies,⁸⁷ Dr. Taylor again urged the government to deal with this problem which was rendered urgent by a smallpox crisis in Darwin. The Chief Secretary, Samuel Griffith, carelessly allowed the opportunity to pass, leaving Queensland ill-prepared for any smallpox emergency, which Taylor was now convinced could not be far off.⁸⁸ In the following year, the Central Board of Health "discovered that they had nothing to do with vaccination". From that time on, until a Queensland supply centre was set up, all communications offering to supply calf lymph received by the central board were to be referred to the Colonial Secretary.⁸⁹ But by the end of 1889, in view of further alarms and telegrams from southern boards of health, the Queensland central board resolved to recommend to the Colonial Secretary that a public vaccinator be appointed, that he "be paid by fee, and that the public be notified of the time and place of such vaccinations".⁹⁰

During the 1880's the Central Board of Health did manage to take one important step, which foreshadowed the later developments which were to embrace the schools in a concerted effort to improve the public health of Queenslanders.⁹¹ In 1884, on the motion of Dr. John Thomson, the board resolved to get in touch with the Secretary for Public Instruction

with a view to his bringing the necessity for general vaccination under the notice of all teachers at our state schools, the teachers to point out to all the children under their care, the great advantage to be derived from vaccination. It was held that in this way children would be prevailed upon to willingly submit themselves for vaccination, and that the matter being thus prominently brought under the notice of the parents, they would not shrink from the duty.⁹²

Smallpox scares occupied the health authorities of the various colonies from time to time, during the remainder of the century, and there was a considerable degree of intercolonial cooperation in the

87. Within, p.234.

88. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Feb 1888; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 10 Feb 1888.

89. Ibid., 10 Mar 1889; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 9 Mar 1889.

90. Ibid., 30 Nov 1889; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 29 Nov 1889.

91. The most important development to this end was the setting up of a school medical inspection service under Dr. Eleanor Bourne on 1 January 1911.

92. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Dec 1884; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 12 Dec 1884.

notification of the disease, and in the exchange of knowledge and experiences, when outbreaks did occur.⁹³ As far as Queensland was concerned, the arrival, in any part of Australia, of ships carrying smallpox continued to present valuable propaganda material for the pro-vaccinationists. One grossly overcrowded German migrant ship, the Preussen, in which smallpox had spread very rapidly indeed, and from which the ship's engineer had deserted in Melbourne,⁹⁴ brought a rash of hostile newspaper comment, as well as admonitions to vaccinate. The efficacy of the network of quarantine stations, which had been established Australia-wide to protect the whole continent, was brought into question because of the Preussen outbreak, as authorities in Albany, Western Australia, were accused of not recognising the disease, and of allowing it to get out of hand.⁹⁵ The Colonist in Maryborough was quick to take up the story of "this death ship" which was a special danger to Queenslanders, by "reason of climate and positions". Queensland was doubly unfortunate, according to The Colonist, in having a government which professed

to legislate for our social needs, but /which/ to their shame,...
do nothing, and our voluminous code of statute law is still
minus a Vaccination Act. 96

The Queensland Figaro, which could always be relied on to attack established authority, and to provide comic relief in doing so, also joined in the argument over the Preussen, and put a scornful finger on the central problem concerning vaccination in Queensland.

- 93. The usual procedure was an exchange of telegrams at premier level. See for example, James Service, Premier of Victoria to Premier of Queensland, 6 Jan 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 411, in-telegram no.105 of 1885.
- 94. The Brisbane Courier, 1 Jan 1887.
- 95. Ibid., 7 Jan 1887; sub editorial. See also Premier, New South Wales to Premier Queensland, 7 Jan 1887, Q.S.A. COL/A 485, in-telegram no.164 of 1887, about the quarantining of the ship in Sydney. The passengers were in quarantine in Melbourne.
- 96. The Colonist, 15 Jan 1887; main editorial.

The plague cloud threat darkens and darkens, it spreads and spreads over the horizon. The storm itself hasn't burst yet, but things look uncommonly like a blow down.... They've got smallpox at Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney. Quarantining is keeping the various dangers in check, but what assurance have we that they won't dodge in and jump on us. We haven't any assurance. Some unforeseen circumstances might disturb calculations and start disease and death on a tour through our continent.... The apathy of our government in the face of this fearful possibility is what appals me.... There is no vaccination and very little sanitation. Manure depots poison the air, Chinese dens are pest houses ready to hand.... Yet there is nothing to mind about smallpox if the government is wise.... Health is a mere question of intelligence.... Suppose smallpox breaks out in the Valley in the morning, Red Hill in the afternoon, and at night at Woolloongabba.... I suppose I will trot off with a host of everybodys to the health office. What good will it do me? "Vaccinate me please", I will say to the fat salaried clerk, or perhaps to the fat salaried gentlemen who run things. "Can't, Old Man. No lymph and nowhere to get it," I shall be told. What is this but criminal neglect, but inviting the wholesale slaughter of those who depend on this broken reed government.... The divine discovery that knocked the teeth down Mr. Smallpox's throat is barred from us by Griffithian neglect. Shouldn't we be up and doing? Oughtn't we to sweep out and roll our sleeves up while we have time? If smallpox comes it will be worthwhile to be in a position to laugh at it. And smallpox is coming. Either sooner or later, as communication with Europe and America increases, it is bound to come. Let us be ready.

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Discussion on all aspects of a possible smallpox invasion, including vaccination, was widened still further as other newspapers took up the question of the Chinese and other coloured races as carriers of the disease. Ever since Dr. Hugh Bell and Thomas McIlwraith had revived the question of compulsory vaccination for non-white immigrants in 1883,⁹⁸ the idea had simmered in the minds of Queenslanders. In June 1886, Dr. Joseph Bancroft expressed a strong opinion in favour of a vaccination programme for all coloureds entering Queensland.⁹⁹ John McMaster emphasised the particular perils posed by the Chinese during the debate on the Health Act Amendment Act of 1886.¹⁰⁰ And on 17 September 1886, after receiving an urgent letter on the recruitment of coloured labour for the sugar plantations from areas where smallpox was

97. The Queensland Figaro, 15 Jan 1887; editorial.

98. It was first raised in 1877 by the Central Board of Health. Within, p.224.

99. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Jun 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Jun 1886.

100. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIX (1886), 742.

rife,¹⁰¹ the Central Board of Health notified the government that

as regards vaccinating all coloured labour before landing in the Colony, the Board are unanimous in the opinion that the Government should legislate on the subject at an early date, and they would most respectfully urge upon you to bring in a short Act to deal with the matter.

It is a well-known fact that smallpox is endemic in Japan, China, and the Straits Settlements, and so long as the natives of these countries are permitted to land in Queensland without any restrictions, the Colony will be in danger of the dread disease.

102

Samuel Walker Griffith, unable to concur with McIlwraith and the Central Board of Health on this and many other issues, was not prepared to advise his government to take this step,¹⁰³ and the flow of unvaccinated, and often illegal, immigrants continued unimpeded by any official barriers against the smallpox health risk.¹⁰⁴ The problem was exacerbated as newspapers became increasingly afraid that "smallpox might come stealthily into the colony" across the unwatched Northern Territory border, since it had been discovered that the Chinese were using this overland route into Queensland to avoid payment of the Queensland poll tax.¹⁰⁵ When Darwin was revealed to be "simply a breeding ground for all sorts of diseases.... with the infected Chinamen coming from Port Darwin to Queensland",¹⁰⁶ the central board was convinced that the government should "take all necessary precautions to prevent it /smallpox/ extending to Queensland".¹⁰⁷ Pressed for further details on a scheme

101. C.H. Clarkson, Polynesian Hospital Mackay to Central Board of Health, 13 May 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 480, unnumbered in-letter of 1886.
102. Central Board of Health to Chief Secretary, 17 Sep 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 480, in-letter no.7188 of 1886. See also Central Board to Chief Secretary, 9 Aug 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A 480, in-letter no.6225 of 1886.
103. Under Colonial Secretary to Central Board of Health, 16 Aug 1886, Q.S.A. COL/G 36, out-letter no.2755 of 1886. The reply to in-letter no.7188 of 17 September 1886 simply acknowledges its receipt. Under Colonial Secretary to Central Board, 22 Sep 1886, Q.S.A. COL/G 36, out-letter no.3207 of 1886.
104. There were other restrictions however. The Pacific Island Labourers Act was repealed in 1885, to take effect after 1890, though this was reversed in 1892 by an Extension Act. There were other evidences of racial feeling for health and other reasons. Anti-Chinese riots took place in Charters Towers and Mackay in October-November 1886, and there were anti-Chinese demonstrations in Brisbane in July 1887.
105. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Aug 1887; sub editorial.
106. Ibid., 11 Feb 1888; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 10 Feb 1888.
107. Copy of resolution passed by Central Board of Health on 10 February 1888, attached to Medical Inspector on S.S. Moyne to Colonial Secretary, 21 Mar 1888, Q.S.A. COL/A 539, in-telegram no.2509 of 1888.

for the protection of the colony, the board could only suggest the employment of patrols along the border,¹⁰⁸ an idea which was merely acknowledged by the Colonial Secretary's office.¹⁰⁹

If the central board had been unable to persuade the government to legislate for compulsory vaccination, or even to establish their own lymph supply, it did, in time, manage to start preparations on a place to receive possible Queensland smallpox victims. The earliest patients, who contracted the disease within Queensland waters, were accommodated in special areas on quarantine stations with varying degrees of success. For instance, in 1883, when the Duke of Westminster brought its complement of victims to Moreton Bay,¹¹⁰ there was considerable unrest amongst the quarantined but unaffected passengers. Bland newspaper reports that "every provision has been made for the comfort and safety of the quarantined immigrants",¹¹¹ were strenuously denied by the detainees. "A Peel Island Correspondent" drew a graphic picture of life at Peel Island for The Telegraph readers, and at least one of the points made in that article - the complaint that the doctor moved freely between victims and the well immigrants - was officially confirmed by the Duke of Westminster's agents.¹¹²

The landing place can only be called a jetty by courtesy. Single women occupy the first building from the "jetty".... Each woman has a sack and a pair of blankets. These are laid on the floor and a rough table placed in the centre.... Five other similar places containing the married couples... form the town of Peel.... On the brow of the hill about two hundred yards from the town are seventeen tents (so-called), which appear to have been the first efforts of weaving by machinery judging by the number of holes in them.

108. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 20 Mar 1888, Q.S.A. COL/A 539, in-letter no.2542 of 1888.

109. Marginal note on in-letter no.2542 above.

110. Peel Island was declared a quarantine station for the smallpox victims and for all contacts on 29 August 1883. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXIII (1883), 618. The victims were actually held on tiny, nearby Bird Island.

111. The Brisbane Courier, 31 Aug 1883.

112. Agent for Gibbs Bright to Colonial Secretary, 31 Aug 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 367, in-letter no.4433 of 1883. The government seems to have been somewhat unsympathetic in other directions. A telegram from Dr. Woodward's wife anxiously enquiring as to his condition apparently went unanswered. Fanny Woodward to Under Colonial Secretary, 31 Aug 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 367, in-telegram no.4438 of 1883. Marginal comment is simply AWAY, and there is nothing in the out-letter book to indicate that a reply was sent.

Food. Could an epicure feel a twinge of discontent at the ample, varied menu of last Sunday. I leave your readers to judge. Three-quarters of a small pannikin of tea, and a small quantity of porridge with a roll and a ship's biscuit.... Midnight, the scene changed. Ten hungry men with glistening eyes and in silence are devouring small beach oysters.... That reminds me that the "experienced" medical officer who has charge here has only one suit, and that he visits the smallpox patients without an overall, and then goes about among the emigrants of our island that is at present without contagion. 113

The Brisbane Courier, while still reporting that "the passengers were comfortably put up and all the immigrants were well and contented",¹¹⁴ was also publishing letters which contradicted its own reports.

It is creditable as far as the buildings are concerned, but the tents are eminently unsuitable... so rotten and holey are they.... The immigrants.... are all agreed that they are inadequately fed, that to satisfy the cravings of hunger they have eaten snakes, that several have been seriously ill from eating poisonous crabs, that I have seen strong men at midnight devouring small oysters urged by hunger. 115

If this accommodation was found to be sadly inadequate, at least desperation ensured that it was available. Isolation wards within the colony for the expected Queensland victims were slower to materialize. The scare of 1881 had led to temporary arrangements being made in Victoria Park, by an agreement between the Local and Central Boards of Health,¹¹⁶ but in 1885, when "any outbreak or introduction of smallpox ... was a matter of very great urgency", the central board failed to extract a ruling on the possession and use of that cottage, either from the Park trustees, or from the Colonial Secretary's office.¹¹⁷ The situation was complicated by the passing of the Health Act of 1884, which caused the local boards of health to disappear completely.¹¹⁸ This forced the central board to deal with a Brisbane City Council which was definitely "against a hospital of that character being allowed in a public park",¹¹⁹ and a government which "did not care to undertake the

113. The Telegraph, 8 Sep 1883.

114. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Sep 1883.

115. Ibid., 8 Sep 1883; letter to editor from Semper Idem.

116. Within, p.227.

117. The Brisbane Courier, 24 Jan 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 23 Jan 1885. The letters from Hill Wray to the department requesting the handing over of the cottage were read at this meeting.

118. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1884), 1442.

119. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Feb 1885; Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 24 Feb 1885.

fitting up of... the proposed cottage".¹²⁰ The council suggested that a hulk on the river would be a more suitable arrangement, and an agreeable central board sought advice on plans and specifications for such a ship from the health authorities in Sydney, who had already provided and outfitted the appropriately named Faraway, to act as an isolation ward for smallpox victims in that colony.¹²¹

Dr. Hill Wray's discovery that the ship's doctor had not reported the presence of smallpox on board the Waroonga, lent urgency to the situation as far as the central board was concerned.¹²² At its June meeting, the board called on the still-dallying government to provide a hulk at once, and decided on a deputation to the Premier to speed up the matter.¹²³ Apparently successful at last, the board learned that Premier Griffith had granted it the use of a small coal hulk, rejoicing in the name Jemima, which could be fitted up as a smallpox hospital,¹²⁴ once the war scare was over.¹²⁵ Over a month later, the central board had not even inspected the Jemima which was still full of coal.¹²⁶

The situation was finally resolved when the barque Beatrice was purchased for £1,500.¹²⁷ She was to be used as a smallpox hulk, and to be anchored in the river off Lytton.¹²⁸ Shortly afterwards, a fresh

- 120. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Mar 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 27 Mar 1885. The government clung to the cottage idea however, retaining it as late as July 1885, pending other definite arrangements. Ibid., 4 Jul 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 3 Jul 1885.
- 121. Ibid., 28 Feb 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 27 Feb 1885.
- 122. Dr. Wray, Secretary Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 5 May 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 426, in-letter no.3347 of 1885, and Ship's Surgeon, Waroonga to Colonial Secretary, 2 Jun 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 426, in-letter no.4035 of 1885, offering an explanation which was finally accepted. Another ship also caused a scare. The Oceanien was found to have smallpox on board for the second time, having been in Australian waters and discharging passengers for some time. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Aug 1885; sub editorial.
- 123. Ibid., 6 Jun 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 5 Jun 1885.
- 124. Ibid., 4 Jul 1885. From the beginning Dr. Wray complained that the Jemima was too small.
- 125. Presumably the war scare refers to the 1885 Sudan campaign.
- 126. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 17 Aug 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 434, in-letter no.6071 of 1885. Marginal comment - "Coal will be taken out of her shortly".
- 127. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1886, p.100.
- 128. The Brisbane Courier, 26 Sep 1885; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 25 Sep 1885.

outbreak of smallpox in New South Wales, not only damaged Queensland trade by closing the ports of Brisbane, Maryborough and Rockhampton to vessels from that colony,¹²⁹ but brought the threat of an outbreak of the disease even closer to Queensland, justifying the central board's pressure for isolation accommodation, at least in their own eyes.¹³⁰

The mere purchase of the smallpox hulk failed to satisfy the central board, the politicians, and the public. One thorny problem was the perennial one of costs. The comparatively small annual grant proposed when the Beatrice first appeared on the estimates was challenged by Albert Norton, both on the grounds of its size, and because it "was anticipated to be a continual charge".¹³¹ Far more immediately important from a Central Board of Health point of view, was whether the Beatrice was fit for service, as she might be required to be ready for use "at a moment's notice".¹³² The best promise which could be extracted from Colonial Secretary B.B. Moreton, was an offer to "partly furnish her... if wanted".¹³³

The positioning of the Beatrice, should she be in use, presented the authorities with another emotionally-charged problem. The central board was of the opinion that the hulk should be moored in the Garden Reach of the Brisbane River to facilitate the boarding of patients, and in line with British and European practice, which not uncommonly situated smallpox hospitals in the heart of large cities.¹³⁴ But fears of a public outcry swayed the balance in favour of Lytton as the mooring place - the only position to win Griffith's seal of approval.¹³⁵

Queensland was kept well-informed through reports on vaccination

- 129. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1885), 1071.
- 130. Howard Smith Agents to Colonial Secretary, 29 Sep 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A 439, in-letter no.7266 of 1885.
- 131. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LIII (1887), 1255. The amount for 1887-88 was £200 to cover the cost of maintenance and the salary of a caretaker.
- 132. Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 14 Feb 1887, Q.S.A. COL/A 489, in-letter no.1296 of 1887.
- 133. Moreton's marginal comment of 15 February 1887 on ibid.
- 134. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Feb 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Feb 1887.
- 135. A second marginal notation on Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 14 Feb 1887, Q.S.A. COL/A 489, in-letter no. 1296 of 1887.

and various other aspects of smallpox from the south during the early 1890's.¹³⁶ But other diseases, notably, typhoid, scarlet fever, and epidemic influenza were the immediate concerns of Queensland health authorities during this period.¹³⁷ In 1892, shocked Queensland journals announced the return of smallpox to Australia,¹³⁸ mainly through the agency of the infected steamer Oroya.¹³⁹ But there was real alarm when it was learned that a quarantine official resident in Queensland, a man named Ives, had actually developed the disease after contact with one of the Oroya passengers.¹⁴⁰ The victim was immediately isolated at the quarantine station, and the disease was contained, though Ives's life was forfeit.¹⁴¹ But the dire prognostications of the central board had come true, and it now busied itself with producing regulations for the treatment of persons affected with smallpox, and for preventing the spread of that disease¹⁴² - measures which, according to The Brisbane Courier, were extremely repressive and rightly so.¹⁴³

- 136. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Apr 1890; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 18 Apr 1890.
- 137. Leprosy and other diseases could be included here, but influenza was especially prevalent during 1890. A special meeting of the Central Board of Health was held to discuss the problem on 16 January 1890. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 17 Jan 1890, Q.S.A. COL/A 604, in-letter no.547 of 1890. A special report on the incidence of the disease was later submitted to the government. "Epidemic Influenza in Queensland", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, III (1890), 697. As late as November 1891, the containing of influenza was taking up a considerable amount of the central board's time. See for example The Brisbane Courier, 14 Nov 1891; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 13 Nov 1891, when a circular was drawn up to apprise Queenslanders of the symptoms and methods of dealing with the fever.
- 138. See for example, Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1893, pp.61 and 63, and The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jul 1892, 7 Jul 1892, 18 Jul 1892, 3 Aug 1892 and 5 Dec 1892, and The Queensland Punch, 6 Aug 1892.
- 139. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1893, p.61.
- 140. Cumpston, History of Smallpox, p.75. See also The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jul 1892; main editorial, which contains Dr. John Thomson's comments to the Medico-Ethical Society on this first case of smallpox contracted within Queensland.
- 141. Ibid., 5 Jul 1892. Ives had been vaccinated. Doctors took the curious attitude, in view of his eventual death, that "he would have been attacked by the disease in a much more violent manner!" had he not been vaccinated.
- 142. Queensland Government Gazette, LVI (1892), 559-560.
- 143. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jul 1892; main editorial.

In the face of this genuine emergency, the lymph supply in Brisbane was discovered to be disastrously low, a matter which the Colonial Secretary, Horace Tozer, showed every sign of remedying with the establishment of a bacteriological laboratory in Brisbane.¹⁴⁴ Tozer was encouraged in this scheme by a deputation from the Medico-Ethical Society which suggested that the outlay for the necessary appliances would only be about £200. Once again, a real problem for the Colonial Secretary was the recurring annual expense.¹⁴⁵ But the great stumbling block in 1892, was the grave financial situation already facing the colony, which was to reach its peak in the depression of the following year.

Dr. Cumpston, in his official history of the disease in Australia, suggests that

for a brief period, vaccine lymph was cultivated on calves in Brisbane during the year 1892, several calves being inoculated by Dr. Hirschfeld, Honorary Bacteriologist to the Brisbane Hospital. The government of the day however did not continue this work and it lapsed.¹⁴⁶

However, it would appear that by far the greatest amount of lymph used in the increased vaccination programmes of 1892 came from the southern colonies, particularly Victoria. Certainly this is the impression to be gained from the minutes of a further special Central Board of Health meeting held on Saturday afternoon 23 June 1892, when the hardships entailed in the quarantining of passengers, the difficulties caused by the absence of a compulsory vaccination act, and the problems of maintaining an adequate lymph supply, were discussed at very great length.¹⁴⁷ The biggest drawback, which Dr. Wray pointed out, was that the government had "no power to vaccinate the people unless they agreed to it". But as Dr. Taylor retorted it would have been an easy matter to have an adequate lymph supply,

144. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jul 1892; main editorial, and Ibid., 23 Jun 1892; Minutes of special Central Board of Health meeting, 22 Jun 1892. This urgent meeting was held to discuss the arrival of the smallpox-infected ship the Bunyinyong. Ironically, on the previous day, The Brisbane Courier had announced that medical men had "smallpox under control". Ibid., 22 Jun 1892; sub editorial.
145. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jul 1892.
146. Cumpston, History of Smallpox, p.140.
147. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Jun 1892; Minutes of a special meeting of Central Board of Health, 23 Jun 1892. See also Ibid., 1 Jul 1892, about Melbourne lymph supply arrangements.

to be kept in readiness, by proper instructions being given by the government. He had repeatedly urged the necessity of some action in the Legislative Council... so that the government could not plead ignorance of the present position. The disease could be thoroughly stamped out by efficient vaccination.

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With the government at bay under this trenchant attack from leading medical members of the Central Board of Health, and from passengers incarcerated in the quarantine station,¹⁴⁹ the search for a scapegoat began. It ended with an action being brought against the captain of the Oroya, who had allegedly failed in his duty to prevent the spread of contagious diseases on a merchant ship, but to the government's disappointment, the case was dismissed on technical grounds.¹⁵⁰ An official enquiry into quarantine station conditions, which were alleged to have caused Ives's illness, was held by Dr. Hill Wray in his capacity as government medical officer sitting with the under colonial secretary, W.E. Parry Okeden, as a civil service board.

The enquiry "completely vindicated" the actions of most of the government officers, though it did suggest that those attending smallpox victims should be isolated from ordinary passengers. In the board's view, the main trouble stemmed from the demands of the shipping company that passengers should pay for supplies, while they were confined in quarantine.

That medicines and provisions should be supplied by the government appeals to commonsense.... They perfect the machinery for arresting infection on the threshold, and they save us from the imputation of selfishness in burdening private individuals for the public good.

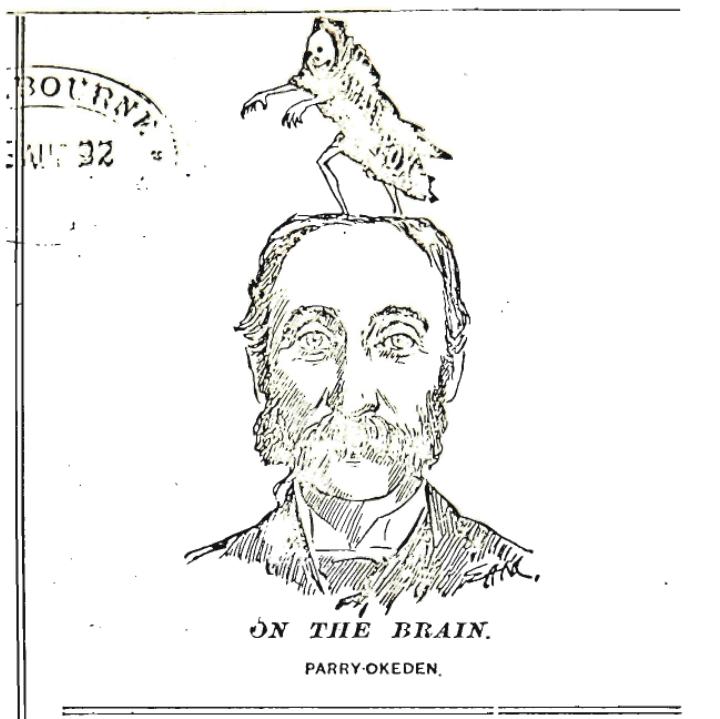
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148. The Brisbane Courier, 1 Jul 1892.

149. There were a great many letters of complaint sent to The Brisbane Courier. See for example issues of 1 Jul, 2 Jul, 7 Jul, and 14 Jul 1892, for complaining letters from persons unnamed, and 4 Jul 1892; letter to editor from R. Rendle. See also Ibid., 2 Jul 1892; main editorial, which "takes up the cry of the quarantined" - the discomfited, the frustrated, the irritated and those in pecuniary difficulties. Apart from this, all unaffected passengers on Peel Island attended a protest meeting on 30 June 1892, to draw up a petition to the governor. This petition concerned the shipping company's demand that quarantined passengers should pay for food and medicines, and urged "that the expenses incurred, being, for the protection of the public of Queensland, /should/ be borne by the government". Ibid., 1 Jul 1892.

150. Ibid., 28 Jul 1892. The case was brought under an English shipping act of 1850.

151. Ibid., 26 Aug 1892.



The Queensland Punch, 6 August, 1892.

The real irony of the 1892 affair was the panic over what to do with the "supposedly" infected Kanaka Jimmy Berry, alias Harry,¹⁵² and the condition of the smallpox hulk Beatrice. A very sick Harry had arrived in Brisbane from Cleveland on 23 July 1892. He visited a boarding house in Mary Street, went to the immigration depot and to the Brisbane hospital, where his case was diagnosed as smallpox - all by public transport. This necessitated huge cleaning-up operations, authorised by the Central Board of Health. Harry's Cleveland quarters, two railway carriages - "just in case" - the boarding house and immigration depot, an omnibus, and the clothes of numerous casual contacts,

152. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1893, p.63. See also Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXVIII (1892), 1540-41 for a discussion as to whether or not this Kanaka had smallpox. The hospital superintendent and several other doctors pronounced the man infected, but some doubt remained. In any case, he survived the ordeal. The Brisbane Courier, 26 Jul 1892.

not to speak of Harry, were fumigated.¹⁵³ Those people who had been in closer communication with the afflicted Kanaka were detained in their own homes under police guard.

The Beatrice which was to be ready "if wanted", was found, after inspection by Captain J. Mackay, to be quite unfit for isolation duties. "The services of six or eight men would be needed to tow her down the river... and she was leaking through her decks".¹⁵⁴ To the disgust of the Central Board of Health, Harry and five of his compatriots had to be conveyed by spring van to some hastily erected tents in Victoria Park. They were encircled with large amounts of barbed wire and "guarded by a cordon of police and men belonging to the permanent defence force", while the spring van and horse retired into quarantine.¹⁵⁵

The fiasco did have one positive outcome. The Colonial Secretary, the Central Board of Health, and representatives of twelve local authorities from as far away as Beenleigh, met to discuss the provision of a "central place of isolation" for the victims of severe epidemics. No immediate decisions were reached, indeed the conference resulted in more questions being raised than solved. But the first faltering steps had been taken towards that "proper isolation" of patients, which was

153. It was not until 1898 that regulations for disinfecting cabs, litters and all forms of transport were drawn up by the Central Board of Health because of the high incidence of a number of diseases. Heading the list was smallpox. See Central Board of Health to Home Secretary, 12 Sep 1898, Q.S.A. COL/A 827, in-letter no.11607 of 1898. The City Ambulance and Transport Brigade objected to the idea, The City Ambulance and Transport Brigade to Home Secretary, 12 Sep 1898, Q.S.A. COL/A 827, in-letter no.11630 and 22 Sep 1892, letter no.12025 of 1898, which to a large degree rested on the provision of a fumigating chamber by the local authorities. Since this did not eventuate, the matter of complete fumigation was left in abeyance for the time. Tozer's marginal note on Central Board of Health to Home Secretary, 29 Nov 1898 Q.S.A. COL/A 827, in-letter no.14661 of 1898. See also The Brisbane Courier, 27 Aug 1898; sub editorial, for the method in use by the ambulance and hospital staff.
154. Later, when it was ascertained that the Beatrice would cost £300 for repairs and a great deal of continual maintenance, the Colonial Secretary and the Central Board of Health decided to scrap the idea of a floating smallpox hospital and to spend the money on improving the Peel Island quarantine station instead. Ibid., 13 May 1893; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 12 May 1893.
155. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Jul 1892; Minutes of special Saturday meeting of the Central Board of Health, 23 Jul 1892, and a great deal of general reporting. In spite of the elaborate precautions, one of the Kanakas evaded the cordon and could not be traced.

to become an absolute necessity with the coming of the bubonic plague.¹⁵⁶

"In consequence of no result having accrued from the conference", and following another "very formidable" outbreak of smallpox, this time in Western Australia, the Central Board of Health renewed its efforts on behalf of a smallpox hospital, and the provision of a sufficiency of lymph. Far from hiding behind the immunity which distance might have been expected to provide, the board was only too conscious that

owing to the facility of communication between Perth
and this colony, the danger is imminent.

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Queensland escaped any ravages from smallpox at that time, but further scares did occur throughout the 1890's, as outbreaks of the disease appeared in ships off the Queensland or Australian coast,¹⁵⁸ in Adelaide,¹⁵⁹ in Darlinghurst, Sydney,¹⁶⁰ and in German New Guinea.¹⁶¹ Throughout this period the Central Board of Health did not cease to call for the establishment of a vaccine institute and compulsory

- 156. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Dec 1892; Minutes of special meeting of Central Board of Health, the Colonial Secretary and local authorities, 2 Dec 1892. The Colonial Secretary announced that the meeting was something of a mistake on the part of one of his subordinates. He had intended the local authorities to meet alone in the first instance. As far as isolation hospitals were concerned, even in England few positive steps towards their provision had been taken until a special act was passed in 1893. Even then these hospitals were small, there were too many of them, and they were "expensive and relatively inefficient". Newsholme, p.36, and Frazer, p.288. See also Hon. Dr. Campbell, M.L.C., "The People's Health", S.A. Register, January, 1898, p.7.
- 157. Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 24 Apr 1893, Q.S.A. COL/A 732, in-letter no.4656 of 1893.
- 158. The Brisbane Courier, 30 Jan 1893. This was on the Taiyuan at Thursday Island. This vessel offended again in 1894 when smallpox was discovered in her off Cooktown. Refusal by the Queensland government to allow the sick man quarantine on Peel Island was alleged to have caused his death in Sydney, and led to strong protests from the New South Wales authorities. Ibid., 16 May 1894. Another affected ship was the Australia. Ibid., 13 May 1893; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 12 May 1893.
- 159. Ibid., 10 May 1893.
- 160. Ibid., 26 Oct 1893.
- 161. Proclamation of Wm. McGregor, Lieutenant Governor of British New Guinea, 4 Aug 1896, filed under Governor of Queensland to Home Secretary, 21 Oct 1896, Q.S.A. COL/A 811, in-letter no.16571 of 1896.

vaccination,¹⁶² nor did it fail to underline the difficulties of securing regular supplies of fresh calf lymph of good quality from the traditional sources in the southern colonies.¹⁶³ In 1897, the central board, with the approval of the Colonial Secretary, seemed to have set up a satisfactory working arrangement with the Pasteur Institute in Sydney,¹⁶⁴ though reports about the ineffectualness of the lymph, from Dr. Garde, the health officer in Toowoomba, and Dr. John Thomson, raised doubts about even this supply.¹⁶⁵

It was the arrival of the Duke of Buckingham at Thursday Island which created a new interest.¹⁶⁶ Shortly before this disease-ridden ship made her appearance en route from the infected port of Batavia, medical representatives from all of the mainland colonies had met to discuss and draw up uniform quarantine regulations, which were later adopted by four of the Premiers.¹⁶⁷ With the advent of the Duke of Buckingham these new regulations were implemented for the first time.¹⁶⁸ Long before the achievement of federation, the government of Queensland looked to one who was officially known as a "Federal Medical Officer" stationed on Thursday Island to be responsible for the protection of

162. The Brisbane Courier, 17 Apr 1893; sub editorial. Although plenty of publicity attended Dr. K.I. O'Doherty's appointment as public vaccinator in 1895, Brisbane people were apathetic and few took advantage of the service. Ibid., 8 Jul 1896.
163. Ibid., 1 Jun 1895; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 31 May 1895, and Ibid., 28 Mar 1896; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 27 Mar 1896.
164. Pasteur Institute, Sydney to Central Board of Health, 1 Jun 1897, Q.S.A. COL/A 817, in-letter no.8517 of 1897 and attachments.
165. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Oct 1897; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 22 Oct 1897. See also Ibid., 5 Nov 1898; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 4 Nov 1898, for further complaints about the state of the lymph. Some of the lymph came from New Zealand.
166. For the considerable press coverage, see for instance Ibid., 27 Nov, 28 Nov, 30 Nov, 1 Dec, 2 Dec, 3 Dec, and 4 Dec 1896.
167. "Proceedings of the Australasian Quarantine Conference of Melbourne, Victoria, 1896", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1896), 1007-21. New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland and Victoria accepted the resolutions, subject to some modifications, at the Conference of Premiers in Sydney. Ibid., p.1021.
168. At the special meeting called by the Colonial Secretary to discuss the Buckingham incident, special emphasis was placed on this being the "first instance under the regulations". The Brisbane Courier, 19 Nov 1896; Minutes of special meeting of Central Board of Health, 18 Nov 1896.

the colony from the dreaded smallpox.¹⁶⁹ But the Central Board of Health reminded the Home Secretary, that under the rules of the Intercolonial Medical Conference, it was Queensland's responsibility to supply lymph to that federal quarantine station.¹⁷⁰

In spite of this obvious dependence on a strengthened quarantine system, the whole issue of compulsory vaccination came up again during the discussion on the health bill of 1900.¹⁷¹ In a pre-debate editorial, The Brisbane Courier, while expecting the provision to be opposed, suggested that the idea of compulsorily vaccinating all persons in areas where the proposed act was in force, including infants within six months of birth, was a most reasonable one. The Courier argued that it is "infinitely better to have this instrument at hand in an emergency than to rush to legislation when it is too late".¹⁷²

The Labor member for South Brisbane, Joseph Henry Lewis Turley, did not agree. In a very long, very well received speech,¹⁷³ Turley, who had armed himself with a great many facts and figures on the state of compulsory vaccination in England and the continent, asserted that in its Rip Van Winkle fashion, the government had gone to sleep for a number of years, and had failed to understand what was going on outside its own little world.

In no English-speaking country to-day dare the Government put the provisions of the Vaccination Act in force. Yet the Minister tells us that it is necessary in Queensland, where we have never suffered from an epidemic of smallpox.

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Enlivening his speech with references to the horrific possibilities of

- 169. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Nov 1896. Regulations 3 and 14 were invoked by Horace Tozer, making the federal officer responsible for all notifications to all colonies, for the exhaustive inspection of the ship, and for the thorough fumigation of all mails. "Resolutions of Quarantine Conference", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1896), 1021.
- 170. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Nov 1898; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 18 Nov 1898.
- 171. Twelve clauses - 130-142 - dealt with this question and with smallpox generally.
- 172. Ibid., 7 Aug 1900; main editorial.
- 173. For the acclaim and support for Turley see Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 234-35, 243, and 245. The speech was made on 7 August 1900.
- 174. Ibid., p.230.

inexpert vaccination which, he claimed, could cause erysipelas, syphilis or tuberculosis,¹⁷⁵ Turley declared that above all, he would certainly defend the freedom of individual choice. He would endeavour, as far as he could,

to see that there is some little liberty left to the people of this colony who wish to protect their children, if they think proper, from the possible ill effects of vaccination or inoculation in any shape.

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Turley had an excellent chance of carrying the house with him through his appeal to this sentiment, for it was the rock on which every previous attempt to bring in compulsory vaccination had foundered. Moreover, the "conscience clause" which had been added to the British Vaccination Act of 1898 to accommodate those parents who were unwilling to submit their children to vaccination, and to placate public antagonism to compulsion, could only add weight to his argument.¹⁷⁷

In an effort to preserve the compulsory section of the clause, without which they considered proper protection could not be afforded to Queensland, a deputation of medical men met the Home Secretary. They urged that calf lymph only should be used in the colony to overcome Turley's objections.¹⁷⁸ But Justin Foxton found the protests irresistible. The amendments to the bill dealing with smallpox and vaccination were so extensive, that the whole of the subdivision concerned had to be reprinted.¹⁷⁹

After further consideration and some additional alterations proposed by Turley, the new section, including an escape clause, which in effect permitted vaccination to remain voluntary, was passed by the

175. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 232. The possibilities certainly existed when arm to arm vaccination was performed, but as The Brisbane Courier pointed out on the following day, this argument lost its force if glycerinated calf lymph was used, as it was in England. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Aug 1900; sub editorial.

176. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 234.

177. Cartwright, pp.90-91. See also The Brisbane Courier, 8 Aug 1900; sub editorial, where an excellent explanation of the contemporary British position is given.

178. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Aug 1900; Deputation of medical men to Home Secretary with important suggested alterations to the health bill, 13 Aug 1900. See also Minute Book of the Queensland Branch of the British Medical Association for 1900, pp.182-84.

179. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Aug 1900; sub editorial. See also Ibid., 8 Sep 1900; letter to editor from ZYX of Warwick, opposing compulsory vaccination.

Assembly.¹⁸⁰ Some Legislative Council members had reservations on the conscience clause,¹⁸¹ but the upper house as a whole expressed the familiar feelings on compulsion, and the new subdivision was approved. The colonists had preserved their reputation as inheritors of the British love of freedom of choice, but the scene had been set for fresh alarms in the early 1900's.

Queensland apparently started the new, hopeful federal era quite well-equipped. The reliable Dr. Kevin I. O'Doherty, who had held the post since 1895, was reappointed public vaccinator for 1901,¹⁸² and it appears that the Hastings Vaccine Institution in New Zealand had become the dependable source of at least some of the vaccine lymph used in the state.¹⁸³ Although the news of smallpox outbreaks in the south was far from reassuring, The Brisbane Courier consoled its readers that

/i/t is a good thing that the creation of the Commonwealth should be practically coincident with the present outbreak of plague and smallpox, and that the necessity for one comprehensive scheme for quarantine should present itself at the time when it is possible.

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The Courier was somewhat premature in its reckoning on this occasion. The possibility of a joint effort was certainly there, though the performance was as yet not in sight, and the Home Secretary had no idea when a federal government takeover was likely.¹⁸⁵ But in any case, the Queensland authorities took major precautions unilaterally, with the introduction of stringent regulations for the notification of infectious diseases, and the immediate isolation of infected vessels or premises. The exotic scourges of plague, smallpox and cholera headed the list of notifiable diseases.¹⁸⁶ At the same time, prominent Australian medical men active in the field of public health, including Queensland's newly appointed Health Commissioner, Dr. Burnett Ham, continued to treat

180. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 642-45.

181. Particularly Dr. Marks.

182. Ibid., LXXXV (1900), 1476.

183. Vaccine Institution, Hastings to Home Secretary, 6 Aug 1903, Q.S.A. COL/A 853, in-letter no.10023 of 1903, and attached bundle of receipts.

184. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Jun 1901; sub editorial.

185. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIX (1902), 714.

186. "The Infectious Diseases Regulations of 1901", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1901), 1667-71. These regulations were reintroduced from time to time "in any emergency". See for example, "The Plague, Smallpox, and Cholera Regulations of 1903", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, I (1903), 181-85.

quarantine, smallpox and vaccination as important matters for discussion at the Interstate Medical Congress held in Hobart in 1901.¹⁸⁷

It was as well that they did. The presence of smallpox in London in 1902, necessitated a special meeting of the Central Board of Health to decide what measures should be taken to protect Queensland from an invasion of the disease, through "passengers, seamen, clothing or other goods" passing between this special and privileged trading partner and the state.¹⁸⁸ Then smallpox reappeared in Launceston in 1903, compelling the proclamation of Tasmania by Queensland as an "infected place",¹⁸⁹ though curiously enough, a short time later, the government felt justified in dispensing with the services of the public vaccinator, despite protests that "they might at any time be attacked with an epidemic of smallpox".¹⁹⁰ In 1907, a renewed interest in vaccination prompted Dr. Burnett Ham to suggest that Herbert Chesson be appointed as public vaccinator, and, bowing to public pressure, the new Premier, William Kidston, approved the move.¹⁹¹

The long freedom from any close brushes with the disease ended in 1908. In the first incident, a vessel carrying cases of smallpox was only permitted to approach Port Archer for signalling purposes, and caused no concern.¹⁹² But the Changsha, which had reported smallpox in Manila, and which was carrying a large complement of Chinese crew and Japanese passengers, was a very different matter. It was the subject

- 187. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 7 Apr 1902, Q.S.A. COL/A 845, in-letter no.5619 of 1902.
- 188. The Brisbane Courier, 17 Feb 1902.
- 189. B. Burnett Ham to Under Secretary Home Department, 25 Jan 1903, Q.S.A. COL/A 858, in-letter no.8271 of 1903.
- 190. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCI (1903), 465, supply debate. The Premier, Robert Philp, gave no reason for this action, merely saying that "there was no need for a public vaccinator". Presumably the need for thrift gave Philp grounds for his action.
- 191. Department of Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 16 Jan 1907, Q.S.A. COL/A 891, in-letter no.569 of 1907 and marginal comment. Increasing numbers seeking vaccination prompted Frederick William Woolrabe, who was Deputy Commissioner of Public Health, to seek a post as public vaccinator also. This was permitted as part of his official duties, but carried no extra remuneration. F.W. Woolrabe to Under Secretary Home Department, 11 Jul 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 891, in-letter no.8427 of 1908 and marginal comment by Ham.
- 192. Gibbs Bright & Co. to Home Secretary, 14 Apr 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 888, in-letter no.4819 of 1908.

of a frenzied telegraphic exchange between Dr. B. Burnett Ham and Drs. Humphry and Wassell, as the vessel proceeded down the Queensland coast.¹⁹³ As a result some earnest reports were made on the expeditious vaccination of the passengers and crew,¹⁹⁴ some ten Japanese passengers and thirteen Chinese were quarantined on Thursday and Magnetic Islands respectively,¹⁹⁵ and the Townsville police made an inspection of the facilities and conditions at the Magnetic Island quarantine station.¹⁹⁶ As well as incarcerating this considerable number of coloured passengers and crew at the remotest possible quarantine stations, the health authorities placed a further four passengers - two Europeans and two Chinese - in quarantine at Colmslie, at the mouth of the Brisbane River.¹⁹⁷

After a rather doubtful start, the Queensland health authorities could congratulate themselves on the successful handling of the Changsha affair. All mail and cargo were carefully fumigated on landing,¹⁹⁸ and all passengers were eventually released from their various places of seclusion, safe and well.¹⁹⁹ Above all, the dreaded disease had not been permitted to wreak havoc on the population of Queensland. Moreover, it seems clear that a precedent had been set as far as "alien" passengers were concerned. When the Empire reached Thursday Island in the following year, after landing a smallpox patient at Timor, eleven coloured passengers were quarantined. But after fumigation and vaccinations had been performed, the Europeans were permitted to sail to Sydney under the

193. There was a series of telegrams and urgent telegrams sent between 17 September and 24 September 1908. Copies are attached to a resume of the affair, "Smallpox", Case on S.S. Shangsha /also spelt Changsha/ undated and attached to Wassell to Under Secretary Home Department, 17 Sep 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 894, in-telegram no. 3088 of 1908.
194. Humphry to Ham, 21 Sep 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 894, in-telegram no. 3121 of 1908.
195. Ham to Wassell, 24 Sep 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 894, copy of unnumbered out-telegram regarding Thursday Island, and Humphry to Ham, 21 Sep 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 894, in-letter no. 11067 of 1908, about Magnetic Island.
196. Police Report on Magnetic Island Quarantine Station to Home Secretary, 1 Oct 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 894, in-letter no. 11606 of 1908.
197. Dr. F.W. Woolrabe to Commissioner of Public Health, 24 Sep 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 894, in-letter no. 3300 of 1908.
198. Ibid.
199. Telegrams to Home Secretary from Thursday and Magnetic Islands, 26 Sep 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 894, unnumbered copies, and Woolrabe to Burnett Ham, 28 Sep 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A 894, in-letter no. 11190 of 1908.

Yellow Flag, without further imposition.²⁰⁰

Shortly before the Changsha's arrival, another development took place which set up a position which was to continue until the Commonwealth government took over quarantine as a federal affair. On 22 July 1908, the Controller General of Customs and Excise requested that quarantine stations and lazarets be handed over to the Commonwealth, and that the Queensland Commissioner of Public Health be appointed quarantine officer for the state.²⁰¹ Almost one year later, after frank and full discussions had taken place at a Quarantine Conference in Melbourne,²⁰² and after communications from the Australian Prime Minister on the Quarantine Act of 1909,²⁰³ the Queensland government was pleased to announce that medical officers at twelve posts throughout the state, Drs. Ham and Woolrabe, and a number of fumigators and other employees at quarantine stations, were approved to perform "certain duties in connection with Quarantine for the Commonwealth".²⁰⁴ The federal government was to reimburse the state at fixed rates to cover the services rendered by its officers.²⁰⁵ During the 1910 supply debate, the Home Secretary told the house that no appropriation was asked for quarantine, "that

- 200. A series of telegrams from Wassell and Humphry to the Commissioner of Public Health filed under Q.S.A. COL/A 901, telegram no.5921 of 1909. This incident is important for another reason which cannot be discussed in detail here. Over a period, friction had developed between doctors on the periphery and the Department of Public Health over the payment of overtime for fumigation work, the boarding of stricken vessels and so on. See for example, précis of correspondence between Dr. Humphry, Health Officer, Townsville and the Health Department filed under Q.S.A. COL/A 897, in-letter no.1128 of 1908, and Humphry to Under Secretary Home Department, 11 Jan 1909, Q.S.A. COL/A 897, in-letter no.593 of 1909. The Empire caused further difficulties for Humphry, after which the commissioner curtly informed him that his opinion "as to his legal duty" was of no consequence as far as Ham was concerned, and that Humphry "must take his instructions from me". Marginal comment by Commissioner of Public Health on Humphry to Under Secretary Home Department, 13 Apr 1909, Q.S.A. COL/A 901, urgent in-telegram no.4414 of 1909. Humphry was not the only doctor involved. See also Dr. Voss /Rockhampton/ to Commissioner of Public Health, 26 Mar 1909, Q.S.A. COL/A 903, in-letter no.7252 of 1909 and attachments.
- 201. Controller General of Customs and Excise to Home Secretary, 22 Jul 1908, Q.S.A. HOM/B 19, in-letter no.9001 of 1908.
- 202. Report of Dr. Ham on Quarantine Conference, 10 Mar 1909, Q.S.A. HOM/B 22, in-letter no.2963 of 1909.
- 203. Commonwealth Prime Minister to Home Secretary, 9 Jun 1909, Q.S.A. HOM/B 22, in-letter no.6862 of 1909.
- 204. Queensland Government Gazette, XCIII (1909), 68 - 8 July 1909. My italics.
- 205. Under Secretary Home Department to Health Department, 23 Mar 1910, Q.S.A. B.C. Register 1910 to 1912, letter no.3282 of 1910.

matter having been taken over by the Federal Government",²⁰⁶ but in fact, this was not done until 23 December 1912.²⁰⁷

For despite further discussion, and an early official visit to Queensland by the Commonwealth Director of Quarantine Dr. Norris,²⁰⁸ a great deal of reorganisation of the various states' machinery was essential before a smooth federal takeover was possible,²⁰⁹ and Queensland still had to deal with smallpox incidents as they arose. One very important step was taken with this end in view. Worried about the vulnerability of Queensland coastal towns to a smallpox invasion from visiting ships, the incoming Commissioner of Public Health Dr. J.S.C. Elkington brought to ministerial attention the "urgent desirability of establishing depots of active vaccine lymph at certain main coastal towns".²¹⁰ Later in that same year, after he had undertaken a long and detailed tour of north Queensland,²¹¹ Elkington was able to reveal that arrangements had been made to place vaccine lymph in cold storage at the principal ports, and that the venture had been undertaken "on a co-operative basis between State and Commonwealth".²¹²

The Commissioner for Public Health continued to stress the dangers from the north during 1911, pointing out that widespread smallpox outbreaks had taken place in Dutch New Guinea, and in the Aru Islands, which lay "within the jurisdiction of Queensland". A fast steamer could easily bring an afflicted but undetected smallpox sufferer into

- 206. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XVII (1910), 2184.
- 207. Commissioner of Public Health's "Annual Report", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, (1913), 9. See also Within, p.212.
- 208. Norris came early to Queensland because of Dr. Ham's resignation as commissioner and his imminent departure for Victoria.
- 209. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Jul 1909, and Ibid., 9 Oct 1911; sub editorial.
- 210. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 1 Mar 1910, Q.S.A. HOM/B 24, in-letter no.2468 of 1910.
- 211. Copy of Report on Tour of Inspection in Tropical Queensland by the Commissioner of Public Health, 22 Aug 1910, attached to Commissioner of Public Health to Under Secretary, Home Department, 5 Sep 1910, Q.S.A. HOM/J 69, in-letter no.9930 of 1910.
- 212. "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1910), 384.

Queensland coastal waters, or even as far as Brisbane, "before the expiration of his incubation period".²¹³ Indeed from an epidemic standpoint, Queensland was "sitting over a volcano".²¹⁴

Grave fears were held as this possibility became a reality in September 1911, when smallpox was discovered on the Van Linschoten in Sydney.²¹⁵ The vessel had called at Brisbane, and a number of Queenslanders had had dealings with the passengers, mostly in an official capacity. Up to thirty representatives of shipping firms and waterside workers were rounded up, vaccinated, and placed in quarantine as a precautionary measure,²¹⁶ and the provisions of the Plague, Smallpox, and Cholera Regulations were hastily reactivated.²¹⁷ The Home Secretary, John George Appel, was able to assure the community that the Department of Public Health was in control, but he did regret Queensland's unvaccinated state in this emergency, and declared that the government would "have to consider the question of making vaccination compulsory."²¹⁸

Despite this ministerial statement, compulsory vaccination was not written into the proposed health act amendment bill of 1911, and no discussion on this point took place during the very long-drawn-out debate which continued from August to December of that year.²¹⁹ But in direct response to Elkington's pronouncement on endemic smallpox in areas to Queensland's north,²²⁰ the government decided, as "a highly important", very urgent matter, to establish a northern sub-office of

213. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1911), 3-4.

214. Copy of Report on Tour of Inspection in Tropical Queensland by the Commissioner of Public Health, 22 Aug 1910, attached to Commissioner of Public Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 5 Sep 1910, Q.S.A. HOM/J 69, in-letter no.9930 of 1910.

215. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Sep 1911. For another example of a similar incident on the Yawata Maru, see the Commissioner of Public Health's "Annual Report", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1912), 5.

216. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Sep 1911. See also Ibid., 12 Sep 1911.

217. "The Plague, Smallpox, and Cholera Regulations of 1911", Queensland Government Gazette, XCVII (1911), 723, dated 9 Sep 1911.

218. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Sep 1911.

219. See the appropriate sections of Queensland Parliamentary Debates, volumes CVIII, CIX, and CX (1911-12).

220. Ibid., CX (1911-12), 2586, ministerial statement during the supply debate of 1911. Elkington had begun to pressure for a northern sub-office almost from the date of his appointment, and certainly after he had undertaken the northern tour.

the Department of Public Health in Townsville, under the supervision of Dr. James Booth-Clarkson.²²¹

During the following year, there was sustained interest in smallpox in Queensland as increasing numbers of ships passing down the coast reported the disease on board.²²² In view of the inadequacy and defectiveness of quarantine accommodation, the "chronic starvation" of funds for maintenance, and the failure of the federal government to complete the takeover of existing facilities and the erection of new ones, the federal Director of Quarantine, Dr. Norris, warned against the whole nation's

unique and invidious position in its attitude towards "vaccination". It is unquestionably the worst protected civilized community in the world as far as personal protection by vaccination is concerned.... /T/his unsatisfactory position is ascribed to popular ignorance of the nature and ravages of smallpox, and to prejudice against vaccination.

223

Norris's report in the federal sphere was reinforced by the evidence of Dr. B. Burnett Ham, now head of the health department of Victoria,²²⁴ to a parliamentary committee in that state. Dr. Ham emphasised that there was no guarantee of "holding" smallpox, if Australians relied

221. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, CX (1911-12), 2586. For an assessment of Booth Clarkson's qualifications and experience see The Brisbane Courier, 27 Oct 1911. Of course the office was concerned with far more than smallpox. In its first report the sub-department reported that the sanitary condition of northern towns was the biggest worry, while diphtheria was the disease giving the most concern. "Report of Medical Inspector, North Queensland", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1912), 1037-38.
222. The same steamers crop up regularly as infected ships on the eastern run. See for example, The Brisbane Courier, 23 Jan 1912 - the Empire, The Brisbane Courier and The Observer, 7, 8, 10 May 1912 - the Changsha, Ibid., 25 and 30 May 1912 - the Yawata Maru, and Ibid., the Taiyuan, Ibid., 8 Jul 1912 - the Prinz Sigismund, and Ibid., 12 Aug 1912 - the Montoro.
223. The Brisbane Courier, 1 May 1912; sub editorial. See also Ibid., 12 Dec 1912. The Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, announced in August 1912 that the real reason for delay had been the difficulty in finding suitable sites in the northern Queensland ports, and that the problem was then resolved. Adequate provision had been made in the Commonwealth estimates, and the work would proceed without delay. Ibid., 29 Aug 1912.
224. "Blue Book", Victorian Parliamentary Papers, III (1910), 1233.

on isolation and quarantine alone.... Smallpox was
... a loathsome disease... and explosive in spread....
He thought vaccination should be brought in for all. 225

The citizens of Queensland were not greatly impressed by these dicta.

With smallpox knocking at our very doors, the same weary old arguments against vaccination that Jenner combated over a hundred years ago, clothed even in the same words, and backed by the same appeals to old wives' remedies, appear in the Press of today. 226

But the majority of Queenslanders were not averse to their northern coloured neighbours being compulsorily vaccinated for the protection of the mainland, though the Anti-Vaccination League protested with vigour. 227

Since smallpox was once again rife in New Guinea and the Arus, a new "external line of defence" was thrown up by the Queensland Department of Health,²²⁸ and "the vaccination of every man, woman and child on all the islands" in the Torres Strait took place.²²⁹ The Commonwealth was committed to the undertaking to the extent that it supplied the lymph for the northern tour - but at a cost of £20 to Queensland.²³⁰ Later in 1912, a very real fear on the part of the Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, over the high incidence of smallpox in Papua and the consequent threat to Queensland, led to another vaccination programme. Once again, the campaign was directed against non-Europeans - this time with the enforced

- 225. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Aug 1912.
- 226. The Commissioner of Public Health's "Annual Report", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1913), 3.
- 227. National Anti-Vaccination League to Chief Secretary of Queensland, Q.S.A. HOM/B 40, in-letter no.10878 of 1912, protesting about the compulsory vaccination by Queensland.
- 228. The Commissioner of Public Health's "Annual Report", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1912), 4.
- 229. C. Cato, Unpublished Memoirs, p.12. Cato was an inspector in the Queensland health department, having followed Dr. Elkington from Tasmania. He exaggerates the numbers reached. Elkington calculated that only 71% of the islanders were vaccinated owing to the absence of a number of young adult males employed on the pearl luggers. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1912), 1044.
- 230. Director of Quarantine to Home Secretary through the Health Department, 14 Mar 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B 40, in-letter no.3553 of 1912. Marginal note approved 27 Mar 1912. See also Report of Commissioner of Public Health on Vaccination of Torres Strait islanders to Home Secretary, 25 Jun 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B 40, in-letter no.8263 of 1912.

vaccination of all Papuans employed on Thursday Island.²³¹

At about the same time, "an important new move was made with federal quarantine".²³² At the state's request, Dr. Elkington was relieved of its oversight because of increased Queensland health department duties. Dr. J.H.L. Cumpston of Melbourne assumed control in his place, and "the administration of /sea/ quarantine transferred wholly to the staff of the Federal Quarantine Bureau".²³³ It was unfortunate therefore, that when the real dangers presented themselves, they came not from the Asian north, but from Vancouver, Canada, via Sydney, New South Wales.²³⁴

On 2 July 1913, The Brisbane Courier first began its reports of an outbreak of what was considered to be mild, but genuine smallpox, amongst girls working in a clothing factory at Redfern, New South Wales.²³⁵ Reaction in Queensland was very swift indeed. The Commissioner of Public Health made an urgent request for one thousand doses of vaccine, which was approved immediately by the minister.²³⁶ Over the next ten days another six thousand tubes of the stuff were asked for and granted;²³⁷

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- 231. Commonwealth Prime Minister to Home Secretary, 19 Dec 1912, Q.S.A. HOM/B 40, in-letter no.14542 of 1912, and 27 Dec 1912 Q.S.A. HOM/B 40, in-letter no.14812 of 1912.
 - 232. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Dec 1912.
 - 233. Commissioner of Public Health's "Annual Report", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1913), 15.
 - 234. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jul 1913. The first case probably occurred about 12 April after a girl had contact with the crew of a ship from Vancouver where there was a mild outbreak of smallpox. Various ships with smallpox on board did arrive in north Australian waters during this period but were dealt with satisfactorily. See for example, Ibid., 15 Jan 1913, the Mataran, and Ibid., 25 Feb 1913, the Eastern.
 - 235. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Jul 1913. Detailed reports and letters to editor filled several columns almost daily until November 1913, when a medical conference held in Melbourne signalled the lifting of a quarantine embargo on Sydney. Ibid., 20 Nov 1913; sub editorial.
 - 236. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 3 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.7766 of 1913. Approved in ministerial memo, 3 Jul 1913.
 - 237. Health Department to Home Secretary, 8 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.7991 of 1913, for 2000 tubes, and Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 10 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.8111 of 1913, for 4000 tubes. One thousand tubes cost £50.

but such was the sudden demand for vaccination, that a general authority to purchase lymph "as required" was later approved.²³⁸ Seizing the opportunity presented by the "considerable alarm throughout all Australia",²³⁹ Dr. Elkington assumed the mantle of the old Central Board of Health. He, and his department, began to agitate for the immediate establishment of a vaccine plant, to be set up to conform with plans already approved by the Works Department, at the relatively low cost of £650. But John George Appel, also running true to form, suggested an unsatisfactory conjunction with the Department of Agriculture and Stock at Yeerongpilly, in the interests of thrift.²⁴⁰ This idea was rejected by the Health Department as a permanent plan.²⁴¹ But it did press "on with the preparation of vaccine on the stock experimental farm at Yeerongpilly", at the height of the emergency, and as southern supplies of lymph dried up or proved unsatisfactory.²⁴²

In the meantime, both Commonwealth and state authorities busied themselves with the outbreak. Dr. Cumpston was summoned to Sydney by the federal minister for customs, so "that the Commonwealth should be represented on the spot".²⁴³ In an effort to confine the disease to New South Wales, the federal bureau supervised rail as well as sea traffic, requiring an official certificate of vaccination before any ticket was issued for interstate travel.²⁴⁴ This was a matter of great importance to Queensland in view of the considerable numbers of passengers crossing the Queensland-New South Wales border at Wallangarra and Coolangatta. The federal government also proclaimed Sydney as an

238. Health Department to Home Secretary, 21 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.8644 of 1913.

239. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Jul 1913.

240. Secretary, Health Department to Home Secretary, 10 Oct 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.11848 of 1913, and minister's marginal comment.

241. Health Department to Home Secretary, 4 Nov 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.12701 of 1913.

242. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Jul 1913. See also Health Department to Home Secretary, 13 Feb 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.1148 of 1914 and subsequent 16 Apr 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.3297 of 1914. The work was placed in the hands of Dr. Harris, Director of the Laboratory of Microbiology and Pathology, though conditions of manufacture were primitive and an improvement in the potency and keeping qualities of the lymph "was expected when conditions improve". "Commissioner of Public Health's Report", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1914), 6 and 18.

243. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Jul 1913.

244. Ibid., 5 Jul 1913.

infected port, an action appreciated by the other states, but greatly resented by New South Wales Premier Holman, who assured his interstate colleagues that "state officers... will not allow contacts or suspects to go anywhere outside their own state".²⁴⁵

In Queensland few chances were taken. Inspectors were despatched to Wallangarra and Tweed Heads to examine vaccination certificates and to issue surveillance forms, and officers in the police and railway departments were pressed into supervisory service as well.²⁴⁶ Officials in charge of any areas where Queenslanders were compulsorily herded together, particularly in gaols,²⁴⁷ aboriginal reserves,²⁴⁸ orphanages and asylums,²⁴⁹ and in government offices,²⁵⁰ asked for, and received, permission to vaccinate those under their control. In Brisbane, authorities arranged for public vaccination to take place in a central hall three times daily, and once on Sunday.²⁵¹ Colmslie was readied for the immediate reception of smallpox victims or contacts,²⁵² the epidemic regulations were again invoked,²⁵³ and arrangements for vaccinations were made in various important or vulnerable centres

- 245. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Jul 1913. The Prime Minister categorised Holman's outburst as "rather unfortunate". Ibid., 8 Jul 1913. In his work on Holman as Labor leader in New South Wales, Evatt does not even mention the smallpox epidemic which did, apparently, assume considerable importance in the Premier's eyes, not least in the question of commonwealth and state responsibility and power. H.V. Evatt, Australian Labour Leader (Sydney, 1945).
- 246. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Jul 1913.
- 247. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 7 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.7949 of 1913.
- 248. Deputy Chief Protector of Aborigines to Home Secretary, 9 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.8070 of 1913.
- 249. Magdalen Asylum, Wooloowin to Home Secretary, 19 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.8624 of 1913.
- 250. Secretary, Health Department to Home Secretary, 7 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.7989 of 1913.
- 251. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Jul 1913. This was the Drill Hall, Adelaide Street. Cato also records that a large marquee was erected in Adelaide Street near the present Anzac Park for the reception of those requiring vaccination. Cato, p.14.
- 252. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Jul 1913.
- 253. "The Plague, Smallpox, and Cholera Regulations of 1913", Queensland Government Gazette, CI (1913), 47-48.

throughout the state.²⁵⁴

Inevitably the question of compulsory vaccination of Queenslanders was raised again.²⁵⁵ For even though citizens, who had previously eschewed the operation, now demanded its protection in such numbers that "the services of the police had to be requisitioned" to maintain order amongst the "unwieldy" crowds, "only about 30,000 people were vaccinated in this State out of a population of 625,555, i.e., less than 5%."²⁵⁶

This being so, it was a matter of the utmost gravity when the Queensland Commissioner of Public Health discovered a distinct lack of cooperation being offered by the New South Wales railways authorities. Contrary to federal quarantine regulations, unvaccinated passengers were being issued with tickets, necessitating "drastic action" by, and extra expense for Queensland, as all persons concerned were interned in Colmslie.²⁵⁷ Real alarm resulted from the discovery of a suspicious case in Toowoomba,²⁵⁸ and others in Ipswich, Mackay,²⁵⁹ and Brisbane²⁶⁰ - five confirmed in all.²⁶¹ But patients were successfully isolated, all contacts were vaccinated, and fortunately, because of the mildness of the attacks, no patients died and the disease was contained.²⁶²

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- 254. Some of the towns involved were Ipswich, Stanthorpe, Normanton, Townsville and Toowoomba. See for example Minister's memo on Stanthorpe, 9 Aug 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, letter no.9501 of 1913. In this town, which is very close to the New South Wales border, persons unable to pay for vaccination were to be done without cost. See also Cato, p.14.
 - 255. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 24 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.8793 of 1913. On 25 July 1913 the Home Secretary advised The Brisbane Courier that the government had not considered compulsory vaccination. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Jul 1913.
 - 256. Commissioner of Public Health's "Annual Report", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1914), 6.
 - 257. The Brisbane Courier, 17 Jul 1913. The people concerned faced prosecution and were "charged with the cost of their maintenance while in quarantine".
 - 258. Ibid., 19 Jul 1913.
 - 259. Ibid., and Ibid., 24 Jul 1913.
 - 260. Ibid., 27 Jul 1913.
 - 261. Ibid., 5 Aug 1913; sub editorial.
 - 262. Commissioner of Public Health's "Annual Report", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1914), 6. In the opinion of the Courier Queensland had "proceeded through the smallpox scare with very good fortune". The Brisbane Courier, 5 Aug 1913; sub editorial.

Though fresh cases were announced almost daily from Sydney until November 1913, there was little to report from Queensland, and as early as 29 August, the numbers of applicants for vaccination were so small, that the drill hall was closed in the afternoon.²⁶³ By the middle of September, vaccination had "almost ceased".²⁶⁴

Considerable animosity against New South Wales had been engendered over the disease, both in Commonwealth and Queensland circles, because it was felt that as Holman had not "placed an embargo on the disease in his own state",²⁶⁵ he had permitted his fellow Australians to be attacked. To add to that grievance, the total cost of the scare to Queensland had been sizable, both medically and commercially. It included the cost of lymph, the expense of inspecting passengers from Sydney,²⁶⁶ the outlay on two extra nurses needed for public vaccination,²⁶⁷ the charge for medical consultations,²⁶⁸ the engagement of two extra medical men on a temporary basis,²⁶⁹ the hiring of isolation tents from the Commonwealth, and the reimbursement of local authority expenses.²⁷⁰ At the Smallpox Conference held in Melbourne to discuss the outbreak with its medical and commercial repercussions,²⁷¹ the loss in trade and revenue was treated as a matter of very considerable importance by the medical men attending. Indeed, this aspect weighed so heavily with the health authorities that prohibitions against Sydney were lifted in

- 263. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Aug 1913.
- 264. Ibid., 17 Sep 1913.
- 265. Ibid., 14 Oct 1913. Prime Minister Cook's opinion.
- 266. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 10 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.8109 of 1913.
- 267. Secretary, Department of Health to Home Secretary, 8 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.8110 of 1913.
- 268. For example, Police Magistrate, Croydon to Home Secretary, 15 Aug 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.9711 of 1913, regarding Dr. Taylor's consultation in Normanton.
- 269. Secretary, Department of Health to Home Secretary, 22 Jul 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.8688 of 1913.
- 270. Honourable J. Cook, Prime Minister to Chief Secretary Queensland, 7 Mar 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.2180 of 1914.
- 271. Chief Secretary to Home Secretary, 31 Oct 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.12519 of 1913. See also Report of J.I. Moore, Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 24 Nov 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.13335 of 1913.

November 1913, and full trading was restored,²⁷² with the provision that the New South Wales government should appoint officers, to enforce and carry out stipulated conditions.²⁷³

A further outbreak of smallpox in New South Wales in 1914 taxed relations between Queensland and that state almost to breaking point. Not only were even more considerable expenses entailed, but once again, Queensland health authorities reported the failure of the New South Wales government and its railways department to enforce border quarantine regulations.²⁷⁴ As well as this, a number of passengers on the Canberra and Ulysses from Sydney could not produce certificates of declaration,²⁷⁵ while the whole crew of the Tasman, and a large number of passengers, had no undertakings regarding smallpox.²⁷⁶ The New South Wales authorities had also been remiss in not reporting a case of smallpox in Glen Innes,²⁷⁷ a spot too close to the Queensland border for comfort.

Already pushed beyond tolerance, following the reported discovery of a few suspect smallpox cases in Queensland,²⁷⁸ the administration appealed to the Commonwealth authorities for help in dealing with New South Wales intransigence. Cumpston records that after the receipt of a Queensland request for federal interference, the New South Wales health department officers were deputed to act under the Commonwealth

- 272. J.I. Moore to Home Secretary, 19 Nov 1913, Q.S.A. HOM/B 42, in-letter no.13227 of 1913.
- 273. Commissioner of Public Health's "Annual Report", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1914), 6.
- 274. Health Department to Home Secretary, 24 Apr 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.3551 of 1914, and Health Department to Home Secretary, 22 Jun 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.5258 of 1914, again complaints about Wallangarra and Tweed Heads.
- 275. Health Department to Home Secretary, 16 Jun 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.5071 of 1914.
- 276. Health Department to Home Secretary, 22 Jun 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.5337 of 1914 and subsequent of 25 Jun 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.5376 of 1914 regarding the Cooma.
- 277. Health Department to Home Secretary, 11 Jun 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.4912 of 1914.
- 278. Honourable A.H. Barlow to Home Secretary, 27 May 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B 44, in-letter no.9488 of 1914. It is by no means certain that Barlow's information was accurate. Dr. Moore reports that five Queensland cases overall contracted the disease in fully confirmed cases. Commissioner of Public Health's "Annual Report", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1914), 6.

Quarantine Act, though a senior Commonwealth quarantine officer was "stationed in Sydney... specially to keep in touch with the progress of the epidemic and the methods of State control".²⁷⁹

By strenuous effort in an emergency situation, with a fair degree of luck, and still clinging largely to its unvaccinated state,²⁸⁰ Queensland emerged practically unscathed from all of its smallpox scares up to 1914. The enormity of that escape can be calculated by a comparison of Queensland's five diagnosed cases with Sydney's 1,296 cases during the fiscal year 1913-14.²⁸¹ Yet despite its small inroad, smallpox exerted a considerable influence on Queensland thinking. Its approach was directly responsible for the passing of the first Health Act, and fear of its endemic state among Queensland's northern neighbours was the catalyst which led to the establishment of the important northern branch of the health department. On the other hand, the medical means of immunity had been available to the public of Queensland for the whole of the 1859 to 1914 period, but had been stubbornly refused, together with medical advice faithfully tendered, but consistently ignored.

279. J.H.L. Cumpston, "The Health of the People - A study in federalism", being an unpublished manuscript used with the permission of the Librarian, National Library, Canberra, p.53.

280. See for example, Commissioner of Public Health's "Annual Report", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1915), 305, where the doctor reports that requests for vaccination had "practically dropped into abeyance".

281. Ibid., II (1914), 6.

9 - THE FIRST PLAGUE

YEAR - 1900

Undoubtedly, the most frightful disease to invade Queensland in the period up to 1914 was the bubonic plague - a disease of rats conveyed by the agency of the rat flea to man, for whom the affliction is acute and highly fatal. F.F. Cartwright suggests that from British and European experiences dating from the fourteenth century, when the pestilence became endemic in northern Europe, "fear of plague was entirely justified".¹ Even Shrewsbury, who in his excellent history of the disease in the British Isles has done much to correct the misconceptions perpetuated by historians who have greatly exaggerated the numbers of people ravaged by "the Great Pestilence",² uses such dramatic words as "woeful", "erratic and unpredictable" therefore "greatly feared", "malignant", "raging", and "violent" to describe the disease.

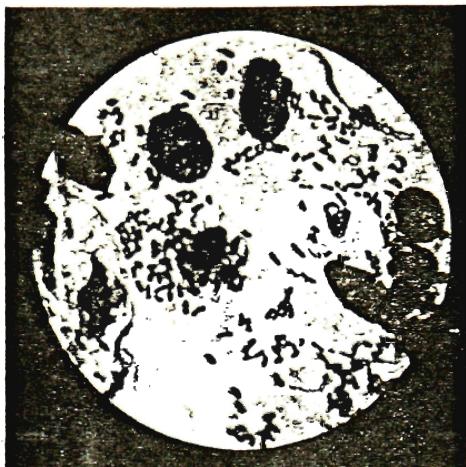
The plague had abandoned its old stamping-ground in London and England by the end of the seventeenth century because

the development of the all-sea trade between Europe and India,... abolished... the "rodent pipe-line" for the transit of P._{asteurella}/ pestis from its Indian homeland. 3

In other words, the western hemisphere was saved from the plague by the "elimination of the risk of exposure".⁴ But the disease had not been eradicated from the east. When the old scourge broke out in epidemic proportions in Hong Kong, India, Japan and Russia, in the last seven years of the nineteenth century, the new fast ships plying their trade on the eastern routes, easily brought the disease within striking distance of Queensland.

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1. Cartwright, p.69.
 2. J.F.D. Shrewsbury, A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles (Cambridge, 1970), pp.3 and 478. See also Thomas McKeown, The Modern Rise of Population (London, 1976), p.69.
 3. Shrewsbury, pp.485-86. Cartwright, on the other hand, suggests that plague in the rats themselves eventually killed so many of the hosts that the fleas died out, since they can only exist on a living rat. Cartwright, pp.73-74. This does not account for the plague's continued existence in India and other parts of the east.
 4. McKeown, p.88.

Some good things emerged from the frightening pandemic. Working independently, Shibasaburo Kitasato and Alexandre Yersin discovered the plague bacillus in 1894, the year in which the disease reached Canton and Hong Kong, causing over 90,000 deaths. Shortly afterwards,



ORIGIN OF THE BLACK DEATH

Bacillus pestis in the human spleen, a microbe which is carried by rats.

working in Hong Kong, Yersin demonstrated the identity of the human and rat plague, and in 1897 in Formosa, Ogata Masanori found the plague bacilli in the fleas of plague-ridden rats. In the following year, Dr. P.L.G. Simond gave proof of the transmission of the bubonic plague by fleas, although "the intermediate place of the flea as vector was not fully worked out until 1905".⁵

Despite this proviso, it is clear that from the mid-1890's onwards, enough was known of the disease to indicate that any fight to eradicate it would provide an object lesson in the power of sanitation. But absolute prevention is better than cure, and all of the Australian colonies had a means of protecting themselves from the entry of dreaded exotic diseases, which was far better than fighting them when they had gained a foothold. The foreign press might mock the panic in Australia, where the authorities were "notoriously particular in these matters",⁶ and had closed ports and stopped trade with the afflicted Hong Kong.⁶ Outsiders might see this as an unnecessary procedure in view of the length of the journey from that part of Asia to Australia.⁷ But

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- 5. Cartwright, p.71, and Garrison, pp.862 and 864.
 - 6. The Queensland authorities had declared Hong Kong an infected port on receipt of the plague outbreak news. The proclamation was rescinded in October 1894 on the advice of the Central Board of Health. The Brisbane Courier, 6 Oct 1894; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 5 Oct 1894.
 - 7. Ibid., 15 Jun 1894; sub editorial, with quotations from the Hong Kong Daily Press, 10 May 1894.

The Brisbane Courier contended that

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that is a safe sort of notoriety, and we may trust our medical authorities and governments to do whatever will give the maximum of protection.

The government,⁹ the health authorities,¹⁰ and the press¹¹ continued to keep a close watch on developments in India and other parts of Asia and Africa, while the British Secretary of State for Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, offered advice on coping with cholera, yellow fever and the plague, from experience gained in dealing with infectious diseases in the ports of the United Kingdom.¹² The Brisbane Courier particularly stressed the Lancet's warning that bubonic plague was "a filth disease". Though the paper felt no cause for alarm, it did urge that

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there will be nothing lost by caution, and we get anew the lesson that cleanliness is next to Godliness.

The Central Board of Health, with considerable prescience, began communications with their colleagues in the other colonies on the means of exterminating rats,¹⁴ and in December 1899, when bubonic plague was confirmed in New Caledonia,¹⁵ the member for Rockhampton North, James Charles Stewart, asked pertinent questions on the state of Queensland's preparedness to deal with the plague.¹⁶

This was a matter of paramount importance in view of Dr. Ashburton Thompson's

8. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Jun 1894; sub editorial.
9. Hugh Nelson, Premier of Queensland to Home Secretary, 5 Feb 1897, Q.S.A. COL/A813, in-telegram no.1613 of 1897, from Hobart where Nelson was consulting his fellow premiers on this and other problems.
10. Government Medical Officer, Brisbane to Home Secretary, 6 Feb 1897, Q.S.A. COL/A813,in-letter no.1712 of 1897,Central Board of Health to Home Secretary,8 Feb 1897,Q.S.A. COL/A813,in-letter no.1719 of 1897, and Central Board of Health to Under Secretary Home Department,3 May 1899, Q.S.A. COL/A830,in-letter no.6045 of 1899.
11. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Jan 1897; main editorial, Ibid., 11 Nov 1898, and Ibid., 24 Nov 1898.
12. Circular from Joseph Chamberlain sending copies of regulations, printed in Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, IV (1897) 1209.
13. The Brisbane Courier, 21 Jan 1897; main editorial.
14. Ibid., 3 Dec 1898; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 2 Dec 1898.
15. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1900, p.73, 28 Dec 1899.
16. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIII (1899), 1595. All the Chief Secretary, James Robert Dickson, proposed on 27 December 1899 was the proclamation of New Caledonia as an infected port.

alarming confession that if the plague were to break out in New South Wales the authorities would be totally unprepared. Over a year ago, the urgent representation of the Board of Health caused expressions of fear from the people lest the government should sanction the presence of bacilli in Sydney. The government of the day shared that view, and consequently the proposal to obtain the prophylactic against the plague was abandoned.

Dr. Thompson warned that heavy demands for the prophylactic from the laboratory in Bombay, where the stuff was made, would certainly slow down or even entirely cut off supplies to Australia. This would be extremely unfortunate should the plague reach this country. Of victims not inoculated 70% to 80% died, but this was generally reversed if the prophylactic had been administered. Nurses and doctors working with possible plague patients would be in grave danger, if inoculation were withheld.¹⁷

Australians did not have long to wait for the dreaded disease to break out in their own country.¹⁸ On 13 January 1900, two cases of plague were reported in Adelaide.¹⁹ This was followed by the discovery of victims in Sydney, and the declaration of the capital of New South Wales as an infected port.²⁰ The first case in Queensland occurred at Rockhampton on the S.S. Burwah on 16 April 1900,²¹ and eleven days later the first Brisbane casualty was detected.²²

17. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Dec and 29 Dec 1899. Dr. Ashburton Thompson assured contemporaries that if the bacillus was available, the material was easy enough to produce. In Queensland, the Yersin-Roux serum, obtained at first from the Pasteur Institute, Paris, and then from the Lister Preventive Institute in London, was used. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1907), 144.
18. For early warnings from the Courier's correspondents that the plague was on Queensland's doorstep see for example The Brisbane Courier, 1 Jan 1900; letter to editor from A Wanderer, Ibid., 8 Jan 1900; letter to editor from Caution, and Ibid., 11 Jan 1900; letter to editor from G. Sandford Jackson, M.B. Ch.B.
19. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1901, p.64, and The Brisbane Courier, 15 Jan 1900; sub editorial. There was some doubt as to whether these cases were true plague. The Bulletin pooh-poohed the idea, but doctors in Adelaide and Queensland were convinced. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Jan 1900; letter to editor from Hartley Dixon, Physician etc.
20. Extract from Central Board of Health to Home Secretary, 29 Nov 1900, Q.S.A. COL/A 839, in-letter no.18303 of 1900 and attachments going back to letter from Premier of New South Wales to Premier of Queensland, 30 Mar 1900.
21. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1901, p.94.
22. Ibid., p.66.

By this time, frantic communications had taken place both by telegram and letter between the principal cities as yet unaffected by the disease - Melbourne and Brisbane. Regulations designed especially to prevent the landing of rats from ships were hastily exchanged and implemented.²³ At a special meeting, the Central Board of Health debated the wisdom of allowing any steamers to load or unload at the city wharves, but even in this emergency, the claims of trade and commerce were taken into account, and to prevent "inconvenience and dislocation" in business circles, the Melbourne precautions were accepted.²⁴ The government also arranged for Dr. Hill Wray to proceed to Sydney and Melbourne, to examine at first hand "the symptoms of bubonic plague and sanitary matters in connection with shipping".²⁵

Some confusion as to the transmission of the disease was obvious from the type of advice being forwarded to Queensland from Great Britain, and from the discussions which took place at the Venice International Sanitary Conference and the Australian Intercolonial Medical Congress. Noone doubted the danger from rats, and authorities were advised to give these creatures and the "accumulations of filth where they could gather",²⁶ speedy attention. But the Berlin Imperial Health Office, whose conclusions were circulated to all British colonies, suggested that the illness "most frequently occurs by contact; next by coughing,.. /and/ infection by means of dust may ensue". Nevertheless, the Germans did underline the danger from the fleas which infest rats.²⁷

The work undertaken later by Drs. John Ashburton Thompson, Frank Tidswell and B. Burnett Ham was of considerable importance in establishing the rat-flea hypothesis already advanced by Simond in

- 23. Home Secretary, Victoria to Under Secretary, Home Department Brisbane, 7 Mar 1900, Q.S.A. COL/A 835, in-letter no.3527 of 1900 and attachments.
- 24. URGENT letter from Central Board of Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 13 Mar 1900, Q.S.A. COL/A 835, in-letter no.3640 of 1900.
- 25. Chief Secretary's Office to Home Secretary's Department, 25 Apr 1900, Q.S.A. COL/A 835, in-letter no.5911 of 1900 and Wray's reply 27 Apr 1900, Q.S.A. COL/A 835, in-letter no.5981 attached. One of the problems in dealing with exotic diseases is the lack of experience with diagnosis.
- 26. "Publications of the Berlin Imperial Health Office dealing with Bubonic Plague", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, V (1900), 1146. See also "Melbourne Plague Convention, forwarded to Chief Secretary, Queensland, 11 April 1900", Q.S.A. COL/286, in-letter no.18018 of 1900.
- 27. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, V (1900), 1146-47.

1898,²⁸ and firmly held by some medical men dealing with the early plague victims in Australia.²⁹ But at the beginning of the plague scare, the controversy over the alleged dangers from rats was given prominence in local and national journals. Sarcastic paragraphs and cartoons appeared weekly in The Bulletin, which listed the "comic accessories" which surrounded the doctors' handling of the early plague victims in Adelaide and Sydney, and jeered at the precautions.

And this at the end of the 19th century, is the sort of science represented by a costly Government department manned by picked graduates of the local Varsity! Rats!!

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In Brisbane, the local authorities and The Brisbane Courier and its readers felt that the largest effort should be concentrated, not on rat catching, but on the cleaning of drains, gully holes, and back-yards, together with the very free use of carbolic acid. Racist feelings were well to the fore, as the habits and environment of coloured immigrants were castigated for providing the best conditions for bubonic plague to find its natural home.³¹ Particularly vigorous attention was to be paid to "those parts of the municipality frequented by Chinese and other Asiatics",³² and to the schools "where a considerable number of coloured aliens' children attend".³³ In the north, the condemnation of conditions and solutions offered were even more rigorous and repressive. The Mackay Chronicle demanded that

- 28. Ford, "Australia and the Great Plague", no page numbers. See also Within, p.269.
- 29. The Brisbane Courier, 26 Jan 1900; Minutes of special meeting of Central Board of Health, 25 Jan 1900. The full text of the Sydney Board of Health telegram to the Brisbane board is included here. The Sydney doctors had found "visible evidence that the patient was inoculated by a flea".
- 30. The Bulletin, 3 Feb 1900. Further facetious pars followed. For instance in Ibid., 17 Feb 1900. "The police are said to be on the trail of the flea which caused bubonic plague in Sydney and believe they have a clue..." The Bulletin was convinced that the real danger stemmed from the lack of proper care with plague "specimens".
- 31. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Jan 1900; sub editorial.
- 32. Ibid., 11 Jan 1900; letter to editor from G. Sandford Jackson, Ibid.; main editorial, Ibid., 16 Jan 1900; long article labelled "Preventive Action in Queensland", Ibid., 18 Jan 1900, Ibid.; letters to editor from West Ward and J.A. Hicklin, and Ibid., 19 Jan 1900; sub editorial.
- 33. Ibid., 24 Jan 1900; letter to editor from M.L.A. South Brisbane. By the end of February the Courier was calling for a campaign against rats.

the authorities retain /the Kanakas/ on the plantations where they work, forbidding movement therefrom without passes duly signed.... Bathing on the part of Polynesians should be enforced.

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If Queenslanders were uncertain about some aspects of the causes of plague, they were unanimous about one thing - a concerted effort was needed to deal with a threat of this scale. No demur was heard from ratepayers, or from the various local authorities concerned, when the Home Secretary, Justin Foxton, used the relevant clause of the 1884 Health Act to place practically the whole of the metropolitan area under one body for health purposes - the Metropolitan Joint Board for the Prevention of Epidemic Diseases. In the north of the colony also, the request was made that whatever

the Government ha/d/ secured in the south should be continued in the north, so that it may become a common defence.

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What was called into question was the efficacy of the 1884 Health Act and the position of the Central Board of Health appointed under that Act, both vis-a-vis the joint board, and also with regard to all local authorities, the general population of Queensland, and the central government itself.

The Health Act, in effect, holds the government liable for oversight and initiative.... which means if the Home Secretary as the minister responsible is careless or foolish, the Board of Health may become worse than useless.... The Board of Health is dependent upon the Home Secretary. Its recommendations may or may not be heeded.... An inspector may not be appointed, nor a defiant local body be dealt with unless the minister agrees.... This concentration of power is full of possibilities both for good and evil. Mr. Foxton has illustrated the good by constituting a joint authority. He may illustrate the evil by resting on his oars. If he ignores the Board of Health in a crisis like the present, it will continue helpless while superintending the operation of the Health Act. The Board was intended by Parliament to be both hands and head to the Government in matters of health; and now is the time to equip it with the necessary power, so that not only the joint authority, but all local bodies, may be under supervision.

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- 34. The Mackay Chronicle, 4 Mar 1900.
 - 35. Ibid. See also R.H. Robinson, For My Country (Brisbane, 1957), p.120, Dr. Hill Wray to Under Secretary Home Department, 6 Mar 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 286, in-letter no.3301 of 1900, and Within, p.341.
 - 36. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Mar 1900; sub editorial. The Courier had already questioned the board's powers under the Health Act. Ibid., 25 Jan 1900; sub editorial.

THIS IS THE TAIL OF A RAT THAT BROUGHT
THE PLAGUE
TO SYDNEY



This is the cat that killed the rat
that brought the plague
to Sydney.

This is the babe that
hugged the cat that



killed the rat
that brought
the plague
to Sydney



This is the maid that
wheeled the babe that
hugged the cat that caught the
rat that brought the
plague to Sydney.

DRAWN BY
HOP'S UNDERSTUDY

This is the man that kissed
the maid that
wheeled the babe that
hugged the cat that etc.

To the Editor of the Evening News

Sir.—As Dr Thompson, chief of the Health Department, has announced the disease of the bubonic germs in rats, one thing is now certain, that dogs and cats will become the chief vehicles of transmission to man, not only because of their disposition to hunt and kill rats, but also because many of them feed on the dead rats, and because dogs and cats are often found surfing round rat holes and among straw where rats have been. All flogging of dogs and cats should for the present cease. Certainly, all children found nursing and kissing cats and dogs should be reprimanded. Very great cleanliness must now become the order of the day. If the authorities established public dog baths, this would be much more beneficial than chasing rats.

J. PUTTIE, V.S.



This is the RAT that
brought the
PLAQUE
to SYDNEY

This is the Priest
that buried the
man that etc.



It was becoming increasingly obvious, even at the beginning of this plague year, that frictions between boards were the order of the day, and that the much needed cooperation was nowhere to be found.³⁷

Even if the secret of prompt, collaborative effort could have been discovered, another ingredient was necessary if a successful campaign were to be mounted. What the colony needed was a large injection of funds. The government was willing to advance the money in the first instance, but the united authorities had to agree to go on raising the necessary amounts by precept.³⁸ This in itself was to cause endless problems for the future.

The difficulties began to multiply almost at once. One of the first of the large costs of the plague year was the provision of a properly equipped disinfecting chamber, which the Brisbane City Council had previously refused point-blank to buy.³⁹ This new emergency had already assumed such proportions that the government and the local authorities decided to throw monetary caution to the winds, and to purchase the largest possible Reck Disinfecting Apparatus immediately.⁴⁰ Alas, "the best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley". There was no Reck disinfecter to be had in Australia, and although a cable was sent immediately to Copenhagen, the colony faced an import delay of at least four months.⁴¹ The government did manage one success, though not in time to prevent Brisbane being declared an infected port.⁴²

37. Ibid., 28 Feb 1900; sub editorial, and Metropolitan Joint Board for the Prevention of Epidemic Diseases to Home Secretary, 16 Mar 1900, Q.S.A. COL/A 835, in-letter no.3839 of 1900, complaining that it was not kept informed on plague regulations and other matters by the Central Board of Health.

38. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Feb 1900.

39. In the smallpox emergency of 1892. See Within, p.248, f.n.153.

40. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Feb 1900.

41. Ibid., 5 Mar 1900. See also Dr. Hill Wray to Chief Secretary, 14 Mar 1900, Q.S.A. COL/286, in-letter no.2989 of 1900 asking for additional disinfectors for Pinkenba, Townsville and Thursday Island, and Wray to Home Secretary, 2 Apr 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 286, in-letter no.5177 of 1900, enclosing a large plan of the disinfecting chamber preferred.

42. Melbourne regarded Brisbane as an infected port from 7 March 1900, although no official notification had been received, and although the Central Board of Health protested that no "human being here has in any way become infected". The Brisbane Courier, 8 Mar 1900.

Dr. H.T.S. Bell was despatched to Wallangarra to inspect train travellers from Sydney and to remove suspects to an isolated place where they could be dealt with properly.⁴³ As for the Brisbane City Council, five new subinspectors were appointed to patrol the wharves from dawn to dusk to watch for rats,⁴⁴ while several local councils in and around Brisbane, acting on Central Board of Health advice, entered upon a crusade against the rats, offering 2/- a dozen for them, and safely cremating the dead bodies at the Gas Works.⁴⁵ This bonanza for the local small fry was short-lived. On 7 March 1900, the Brisbane and South Brisbane councils and the Booroodabin Divisional Board withdrew the offer of the reward, because it was feared that unsupervised handling of rats by children could spread, rather than contain, disease.⁴⁶

On the very next day, some of Brisbane's worst fears were confirmed when C.J. Pound, the government bacteriologist, discovered the plague bacillus in rats found in Brisbane.⁴⁷ The alarm had broken out at last,⁴⁸ and the race to obtain the prophylactic began - too late as usual as "Rats! Look Ahead!" complained.⁴⁹ In fact, the vaccine was due to arrive in Brisbane the following night.⁵⁰

Other provisions were made at once. The Home Secretary gave orders for one "suspect" tent to be erected in Victoria Park. This was done immediately, but just as quickly objections from nearby residents poured in.⁵¹ The Central Board of Health issued new recommendations covering

43. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Mar 1900.

44. Ibid., 8 Mar 1900.

45. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1901, p.93.

46. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Mar 1900. But see Ibid., 12 Mar 1900; letter to editor from Pro Bono Publico, who suggested that the bonus for the collection of rats should not be removed, but should be doubled or trebled.

47. Ibid., 9 Mar 1900.

48. Earlier The Brisbane Courier had suggested that patriotic feeling engendered by the outbreak of the Boer War had counteracted panic over the plague so that Brisbanites were "taking the plague /news from Sydney/ quietly and in a commonsense fashion". Ibid., 7 Mar 1900; sub editorial.

49. Ibid., 9 Mar 1900; letter to editor from Rats! Look Ahead! See also Ibid.; letters to editor from E. Sandford Jackson and Kubberdah.

50. Ibid., 10 Mar 1900.

51. Ibid. Foxton tried to allay fears by assuring the public that "the plague is contagious not infectious, so that there is no danger from the site selected." But see, T.A. Bond, Secretary, Trustees Victoria Park to Home Secretary, 22 Mar 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 239, in-letter no.4108 of 1900.

the quarantine station at Peel Island, the furnishing of the "observation hospital" in Victoria Park, the isolation of suspicious cases, the inoculation of officials dealing with the plague, and the detention of steamers from infected ports at Pinkenba.⁵² The Home Secretary readily agreed to the submissions,⁵³ but it was not long before shipping interests began to protest at the Pinkenba arrangements.⁵⁴

The very real alarm which erupted in the capital at this early stage, unnecessarily as it turned out, is illustrated by an incident on board the S.S. Burwah which had just arrived in Brisbane from the north. The confusion and lack of preparedness for any emergency situation is also underlined. The captain, fearing that a sick sailor had the plague, called on the Honourable Dr. W.F. Taylor to examine the patient. But Taylor, sticking carefully to the conventions, directed him to the correct authority, either the health officer, Dr. Hill Wray or Dr. Wilton Love, the secretary of the Central Board of Health. As Wray was at Dunwich, Love communicated with the Home Secretary. Another doctor, who had had plague experience in Hong Kong, was deputed to study the case at 2 p.m. that same day. The collector of customs and the commissioner of police were alerted, and a cordon was thrown around the vessel. Meanwhile, a very anxious secretary of the Seaman's Union, fearful for his members confined on the "death ship", called in Dr. O'Doherty. This gentleman apparently felt that this was no time to uphold protocol. He examined the sailor at once, and pronounced him to be suffering from rheumatism, not plague, a diagnosis confirmed by Dr. Mayne at the Brisbane hospital to which the sufferer was removed. When the correct officials, Dr. Wilton W.R. Love and the expert, Dr. F. Wilson, arrived on board at the due time, the police guard had been withdrawn and the patient had flown.⁵⁵

52. Central Board of Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 9 Mar 1900, Q.S.A. COL/286, in-letter no.3439 of 1900. Pinkenba wharves are near the mouth of the Brisbane River. The railway station is nine miles from the city.

53. Foxton's marginal comment on Ibid.

54. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Mar 1900.

55. Ibid., 10 Mar 1900.



RATS AS CURRENCY.

1

No. 20. The Bulletin, 17 March, 1900.

Yet the Burwah affair was "a blessing in disguise", which spurred local councils to renewed cleansing efforts,⁵⁶ though the most immediately obvious outcome was increased dissension between the authorities charged with guarding the public health. The joint local board was officially constituted "in business" by the Home Secretary, and a medical officer, the experienced Dr. F. Wilson, and a secretary, Ernest Harpur, were appointed to serve the board.⁵⁷ The board judged Victoria Park unsuitable as the site for an isolation ward,⁵⁸ a decision hotly contended by the Central Board of Health, which won a temporary victory on this issue.⁵⁹ On the other hand, the Metropolitan Joint Board so deprecated the dislocation of trade and the consequent damage to the economy threatened by the central board's Pinkenba resolution,⁶⁰ that the health body agreed, under protest, to waive its recommendations.⁶¹

Matters were certainly not improved, when a deputation to the Home Secretary from the combined local councils sought clarification on the question of central government subsidies and local government contributions. Although some representatives were satisfied with the arrangement, which divided the cost of dealing with the plague on the

56. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Mar 1900; letter to editor from Cleanly. A huge number of letters on the plague were published at this stage in the Courier. Only a few examples are given here. Ibid., 10 Mar 1900; letter to editor from George Comyn, D.P. Lucas, and Observer, Ibid., 14 Mar 1900; letter to editor from Bubonic Plague and Rats, Ibid., 15 Mar 1900; letter to editor from E.W. Kerr Scott, M.B., Ibid., 16 Mar 1900; letter to editor from Phosphor, Ibid., 23 Mar 1900; letter to editor from Resident and W.H., Ibid., 2 Apr 1900; letter to editor from W.F. Taylor, M.D., D.P.H., Ibid., 3 Apr 1900; letter to editor from Thomas P. Lucas, Ibid., 4 Apr 1900; letter to editor from Sanitas, and Ibid., 11 Apr 1900; letter to editor from Rats, Fleas and Bubonic Plague.
57. Ibid., 12 Mar 1900; Minutes of first meeting of Metropolitan Joint Board for the Prevention of Epidemic Diseases - Justin Foxton in attendance, 11 Mar 1900. Dr. Wilson accepted the position on a temporary basis only. Ibid., 13 Mar 1900. An even larger board embracing further authorities was gazetted on 19 April 1900. Queensland Government Gazette, LXXIII (1900), 1131.
58. This was a long-time attitude of the Brisbane City Council which had refused permission for a smallpox hospital in the park. Within, p.241.
59. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Mar 1900; Minutes of special meeting of Central Board of Health, 12 Mar 1900. The erection of tents proceeded, and nursing staff was chosen. But see also Harpur to Under Secretary Home Department, 14 Mar 1900, Q.S.A. COL/286, in-letter no.3768 of 1900 detailing a number of public protests over the Victoria Park Site.
60. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Mar 1900; Minutes of Metropolitan Joint Board.
61. Ibid., 13 Mar 1900; Minutes of Central Board of Health.

basis of population,⁶² others were concerned about the curious fact elicited by discussion

that so long as a local authority was able to raise its share of the general rates, it would receive /government/ endowment, whereas if its share was so large as to compel a health rate, it would have to bear the whole burden.

The Brisbane Courier felt that it was

impossible to believe that so glaring an anomaly will be perpetuated.... Any levy required to serve the local joint authority should be debarred.

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One issue, on which "Mr. Foxton was specially clear, not to say emphatic", caused particular "irritation and offence" to the local bodies. This was the relative positions of the Central Board of Health and the Metropolitan Joint Board. For although the combined local bodies were obviously going to be responsible for the raising of funds, they were to have "no say at all" in their disbursal. Rather, members of the Metropolitan Joint Board were to hold themselves ready at all times

to carry out the instructions of the Central Board of Health,... and were not, either separately or jointly, to set their opinion in medical matters against the Board, or complain of the expense involved.

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The Metropolitan Joint Board extracted only one crumb of comfort from the meeting with Foxton, and even this was a tentative suggestion - that plague suspects should be placed, not in Victoria Park, but on a hulk in the river.⁶⁵

There can be no doubt as to the community's interest in the widely publicised differences between the health boards, or its concern with the plague itself, and the efforts being made to prepare for it. Both are attested to by sarcastic and sometimes despairing letters to the

62. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Mar 1900; Home Secretary's Speech to members of the Local Government Association on board the Lucinda, 7 Mar 1900. The population figures and contribution rates are listed here.
63. Ibid., 16 Mar 1900; sub editorial.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid. It did occur to the Central Board of Health that Peel Island might be used, but Dr. Hill Wray judged that the place was completely unsuitable. Hill Wray to Under Secretary Home Department, 13 Mar 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 286, in-letter no.3776 of 1900.

press,⁶⁶ and by the enthusiasm and interest shown by the large crowd which packed the School of Arts, to hear Dr. Wilson's public lecture on the plague.⁶⁷

Neither was there any question as to the general relief which attended the Home Secretary's announcement that he had purchased "Cairncross", a large property near Bulimba, made available to the government by the Honourable A.J. Thynne. It "embrace/d" a considerable area between the main road and the river", and could accommodate forty to fifty patients, in addition to the necessary attendants. Its only drawbacks were a very large natural swamp,⁶⁸ its distance from town,⁶⁹ and the usual rash of complaints, deputations, and public protest meetings from nearby residents.⁷⁰

In a burst of enthusiasm, the government also undertook to aid the Metropolitan Joint Board by equipping the hospital

as far as buildings /were/ concerned, and to pay half of the salaries connected with the institution.

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But the drainage and sanitary work trenches were so much the province of local government, that the Home Secretary left all of these arrangements to the joint board.⁷² With the "Cairncross" decision, which signalled the official abandonment of Victoria Park as a place for an infectious diseases hospital, the sensibilities of the local government board can be said to have triumphed over that "body of

66. Within, p.276, f.n. 51 and p.278, f.n.59.
67. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Mar 1900.
68. Ibid., 31 Mar 1900, 3 Apr 1900, 4 Apr 1900; sub editorial, and copy of Harpur to Under Secretary Home Department, 31 Mar 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 286, in-letter no.4614 of 1900.
69. Only Dr. Love mentioned this and even he admitted that it suited most people and most local authorities perfectly, since "the general public had strong objections to this". /a suspect or plague hospital close to town/. The Brisbane Courier, 31 Mar 1900.
70. Ibid., 3 Apr 1900. "It was a most preposterous thing to plant in the midst of a thriving suburb what must be a pest and fever breeding hospital". Later Foxton refused to receive a deputation from the Balmoral Divisional Board, which averred that the government had treated the locality "shabbily". Ibid., 7 Apr 1900.
71. Ibid., 10 Apr 1900, and Home Secretary to Joint Board and Central Board of Health, 11 Apr 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 286, unnumbered memorandum of 1900, and marginal comment.
72. The Brisbane Courier, 10 Apr 1900.

experts",⁷³ their rivals at the Central Board of Health.

Only one dark cloud seemed to remain on the eve of the discovery of Queensland's first plague victim. The Brisbane Courier regretted that

some people still refuse seriously the fact that rats and bubonic plague must be fought together.... Fun has been made of the fuss regarding rats.... We are told that the rats are scavengers, and to reduce their number too greatly will reduce nature's balance.... Authorities here seem to have abandoned any serious attempts to reduce their numbers.... /But plague experts'⁷⁴ advice to wage war upon rats is as emphatic as it is worthy of adoption.... Cleansing is not enough.... The imperative duty is to kill the rats. ⁷⁴

Unfortunately, it was not only the eradication of rats - for which Dr. Taylor offered the sensible advice that "a dozen or so professional rat catchers would be a much better importation than a plague expert"⁷⁵ - which confronted the authorities when plague first made its appearance in Brisbane. Despite Foxton's early enthusiasm for "Cairncross", or Colmslie as it became known, neither he, nor the Board of Health, nor Dr. E.T. Wynne, who had been attached to the Metropolitan Joint Board to advise the Home Secretary on the requirements for the hospital,⁷⁶ had done anything of much practical value. Town water supplies had not yet been laid on to the property.⁷⁷ Nor did it have adequate laundry, bathing, cooking or heating facilities, let alone renovated and properly equipped hospital wards.⁷⁸ Swift communications with Colmslie were ensured by the installation of a telephone system late in April,⁷⁹ but when the actual plague emergency arose, patients had to be accommodated in tents erected on the property.⁸⁰

- 73. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Mar 1900; Report of Metropolitan Joint Board for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases to Home Secretary, 15 Mar 1900.
- 74. Ibid., 12 Apr 1900; sub editorial.
- 75. Ibid., 18 Apr 1900; letter to editor from Dr. W.F. Taylor.
- 76. Harpur to Home Secretary, 1 Apr 1900, Q.S.A. COL/286, in-letter no.5504 of 1900.
- 77. At this stage supplies had only reached Galloway's Hill which is more than a mile away from Colmslie.
- 78. Dr. F. Wilson to President Metropolitan Conjoint Board, 17 Apr 1900, Q.S.A. COL/286, unnumbered copy of in-letter of 1900, and The Brisbane Courier, 18 Apr 1900; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 17 Apr 1900.
- 79. Superintendent of Telegraphs to Under Secretary Home Department, 24 Apr 1900, Q.S.A. COL/239, in-letter no.5845 of 1900.
- 80. Dr. David Wield to Dr. Hare, 6 May 1900, Q.S.A. COL/239, in-letter no.6481 of 1900.



THE BUBONIC PLAGUE—WASH AND PRAY!

No. 21. The Bulletin, 14 April, 1900. .

Justin Foxton, in attempting to reconcile his "duty to the community... with his duty to... protect the Treasury", had ignored Wynne's advice, and had tried to furnish Colmslie as economically and as slowly as possible.⁸¹ Frugality is normally creditable in a statesman, thundered The Brisbane Courier. But in the climate of the plague year 1900, when

with unreadiness would have come such a panic that money would have been poured out like water,

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Foxton's parsimony looked like crass "inability to grapple with an emergency in the right spirit",⁸³ although his decision to second Dr. J.E. Hare, Inspector of Charitable Institutions to advise him on "necessities to make the hospital complete", promised improvements for the future.⁸⁴

Nor did the Central Board of Health escape rebuke. In its continuing battle with the Metropolitan Joint Board, the central board carried correctness to ridiculous lengths, refusing to meet Dr. Wynne except at its own invitation and on its own terms,⁸⁵ and insisting on censuring the doctor for the tardiness for which the board and its own permanent chairman, the Home Secretary, certainly bore the greatest blame. Small wonder that Wynne, harassed from all sides, "was in a mind to 'chuck' the whole thing",⁸⁶ or that The Brisbane Courier, dismayed at the confusion and lack of cooperation exhibited by all bodies responsible for the health matters in Queensland,⁸⁷ made an impassioned plea for the amendment of the Health Act, and for the bestowal of executive powers on a greatly strengthened Central Board of Health.⁸⁸

81. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Apr 1900; main editorial.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. Marginal comment by Foxton, 23 Apr 1900, on Harpur to Under Secretary Home Department, 23 Apr 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 286, in-letter no.5710 of 1900.

85. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Apr 1900; letter to editor from E.T. Wynne.

86. Ibid., 18 Apr 1900; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 17 Apr 1900 - defence of Wynne by Dr. Connolly in the face of Theodore Unmack's severe criticism. Wynne did resign and refused to reconsider his withdrawal. Ibid., 23 Apr 1900; letter to editor from E.T. Wynne.

87. The Courier wrote this piece in response to a letter from E. Sandford Jackson, who deplored the divisive nature of health authorities' wrangles. Ibid., 20 Apr 1900; letter to editor from Dr. E. Sandford Jackson.

88. Ibid.; main editorial.



SOME PLAGUEY MATTERS.

No. 22. The Bulletin, 28 April, 1900.

These requests were followed by many more specific demands for a concentration of authority in one set of hands - preferably those of a professional chairman of the central board, who could take his place alongside the southern colonies' experts.⁸⁹ But the advice fell on deaf ears, and Queensland authorities were, as usual, caught napping when a plague victim was found in South Brisbane. The Metropolitan Joint Board seemed "eager to play its part", but its action was "doubtful and spasmodic". Ships began to carry both plague victims and infected rats down the Queensland coast, and wharves presented "so many doors to let in trouble".⁹⁰ Drs. Bancroft and Love, who were now charged with attending to any plague patients after the resignations of both Drs. Wynne and Wilson,⁹¹ had only just been inoculated and were too ill to deal with the disease.⁹² To add to the confusion, the arrival of the first patient at Colmslie before all of the work had been done, precipitated a strike among the workmen, further holding up the provision of much needed facilities there.⁹³ Vainly do the Home Secretary and the Mayor of Brisbane sit up until two in the morning trying to deal with the emergency, admonished The Brisbane Courier.

The public would be better pleased if the experts were equipped to deal with the matter.... Events have presented a complete condemnation of defective machinery.... Mr. Foxton as head of the Police Department and as chief of Local Government has his hands full without attempting to fight the plague. What is required now is that he should be given a live, vigorous Board of Health to do what, after all, would be enough for a department by itself.

94.

- 89. The Brisbane Courier, 24 Apr 1900; letter to editor from Dr. David Hardie. See also Harpur to Under Secretary Home Department, 20 Mar 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 286, in-letter no.3911 of 1900, calling for the appointment of a plague expert to take charge overall and subsequent of 5 Apr 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 286, in-letter no.4955 of 1900. The first call for the year for an expert of this kind to take up a permanent position of head of a health department was made by the Central Board of Health. The Brisbane Courier, 6 Feb 1900.
- 90. Ibid., 28 Apr 1900; sub editorial.
- 91. Ibid., 28 Apr 1900. The Courier felt that these rapid resignations were a disgrace which highlighted general dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the plague emergency.
- 92. Ibid., 30 Apr 1900; sub editorial.
- 93. Ibid.. See also Dr. David Wield to Dr. Hare, 6 May 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 239, in-letter no.6481 of 1900.
- 94. The Brisbane Courier, 1 May 1900; sub editorial.

Constant calls on the same lines followed,⁹⁵ as the government hurriedly published regulations to deal with bubonic plague.⁹⁶ The city was covered with large yellow posters carrying messages in big red letters, which screamed the need for forceful exertions against rats, and promised the free distribution of poison.⁹⁷

The Brisbane Courier reinforced the posters' message with urgent appeals for the removal of filth,⁹⁸ and members of the Brisbane Citizens' Vigilance Committee applied themselves to unearthing "dwellings of a character which are quite unfit for human habitation, especially in view of the threatened spread of bubonic plague".⁹⁹ No premises required more attention than the government owned and operated court houses, watch-houses, cells and outhouses, which abounded in filth, untrapped drains, and innumerable rat-holes, and which the clerk of petty sessions assumed would take "someone a few weeks" to cleanse, stop up and fumigate.¹⁰⁰

Two other very real problems were revealed. The first was that as no fresh cases of plague were detected in Brisbane in mid-1900, even aware citizens were lulled into false security, and became, according to the

judgement of a contemporary and prominent medical man,...
callous and indifferent.... and unaware that there was
/continuing/ danger.

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The other difficulty arose from the refusal of a great many people in the capital, both lay and medical, to believe that bubonic plague was actually in Australia. In spite of the work of C.J. Pound in isolating the plague bacillus both in rats and in the human victims, and despite

95. The Brisbane Courier, 16 May 1900; sub editorial, Ibid., 17 May 1900; sub editorial, and Ibid., 26 May 1900; sub editorial.

96. "Regulations of the Central Board of Health for the Treatment of Persons affected with Bubonic Plague and for Preventing the Spread of that Disease", Queensland Government Gazette, LXXIII (1900), 1421-30, 19 May 1900.

97. These posters were the work of Drs. Hare, Bancroft and Love. The Brisbane Courier, 17 May 1900.

98. Ibid., 10 May 1900.

99. Secretary, Citizens' Vigilance Committee, 2 Jun 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 239, in-letter no.8360 of 1900.

100. Clerk of Petty Sessions to Police Magistrate, 9 May 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 239, in-letter no.6712 of 1900, and subsequent of 14 May 1900, in-letter no.7047 of 1900.

101. The Brisbane Courier, 17 May 1900.

Table No. XIV.—*continued.*

CAUSES OF DEATHS IN QUEENSLAND during the YEAR 1900, arranged in order of degree of FATALITY

CAUSE OF DEATH.	No. of Deaths, Males and Females, Registered from each Cause.		Total Deaths from each Cause in 1900.	Total Deaths from each Cause in 1899.	Increase or -Decrease in 1900.	CAUSE OF DEATH.	No. of Deaths, Males and Females, Registered from each Cause.		Total Deaths from each Cause in 1900.	Total Deaths from each Cause in 1899.	Increase or -Decrease in 1900.
	Males.	Females.					Males.	Females.			
Ovarian Disease ...	5	5	5	7	-2	Lupus ...	1	1	2	3	-1
Diseases of Uterus and Vagina ...	5	6	6	6	-1	Fenophigus ...	1	1	2	2	-2
Arthritis ...	3	2	5	11	-6	Gored by Horned Animal ...	1	1	2	2	-2
Kick from Horse ...	5	1	5	4	-1	Suicide (Suffocation) ...	2	2	1	1	-1
Navel Haemorrhage ...	1	4	5	6	-1	Hæmorrhage ...	1	1	2	1	-1
Dropsy ...	3	2	5	3	-2	Impenetrable Anus ...	1	1	1	1	0
Cerebro Spinal Fever ...	2	2	4	6	-2	Chorea ...	1	1	1	1	0
Gout ...	4	1	4	1	-3	Laryngitis Stridulus ...	1	1	1	1	0
Purpura, Haemorrhagic Diphtheria ...	2	2	4	7	-3	Senile Gangrene ...	1	1	1	1	0
Laryngitis ...	2	2	4	12	-8	Phlebitis ...	1	1	1	1	0
Calculus ...	4	—	4	3	-1	Varicose Veins ...	—	1	1	1	0
Necrosis ...	3	1	4	3	-1	Emphysema ...	—	1	1	2	-2
Carbuncle, Boil, &c. ...	3	1	4	6	-2	Ascites ...	—	1	1	3	-2
Bite of Venomous Reptile or Insect ...	3	1	4	5	-1	Diseases of Lymphatic System ...	1	—	1	2	-1
Surgical Operation ...	2	2	4	3	-1	Brachiocele ...	—	1	1	4	-3
Rickets ...	—	3	3	1	-2	Suppression of Urine ...	1	—	1	2	-1
Leukemia ...	3	—	3	4	-1	Hæmaturia ...	—	1	1	1	0
Hæmaturia ...	—	1	3	2	-1	Disorders of Menstruation ...	—	1	1	1	0
Stricture, or Strangulation of Intestine ...	1	—	3	3	—	Perineal Abscess ...	—	1	1	1	0
Diseases of Spleen ...	1	2	3	—	3	Diseases of Testes, Penis, Scrotum, &c. ...	—	1	1	4	-3
Addison's Disease ...	1	—	3	1	-2	Ostitis ...	—	1	1	1	0
Uremia ...	—	3	3	3	—	Other Diseases of Organs of Leconition ...	—	1	1	5	-4
Other Mining Accidents ...	3	—	3	10	-7	Other Diseases of Integu- mentary System ...	—	1	1	2	-1
Murder by Coloured Per- sons other than Aborigines ...	3	—	3	1	-2	Blood Poisoning (accident) ...	1	—	1	2	-1
Manslaughter ...	3	—	3	4	-1	Killed by Lightning ...	1	—	1	1	0
Cleft Palate, Harelip ...	1	1	2	5	-3	Murder (by aborigines) ...	—	1	1	1	0
Epistaxis and Disease of the Nose ...	2	—	2	—	2	Abscess ...	—	1	1	1	0
Ophthalmia and Disease of the Eye ...	2	—	2	1	1	Fits (unspecified) ...	—	1	1	1	0
Melena ...	—	2	2	2	—	Sudden (cause not ascer- tained) ...	—	1	1	1	0
Periostitis ...	—	2	2	4	-2	Deaths from Causes in 1899 not occurring in 1900 ...	—	—	51	-51	0
Phlegmon ...	—	1	1	1	—	TOTAL 3,678	2,060	5,717	6,144	-397

No. 23. "Appendix to Registrar-General's Report, 1900",
 Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly,
 II (1901), 17.

Table No. XIV.

CAUSES OF DEATHS in QUEENSLAND during the YEAR 1900, arranged in order of degree of FATALITY.

CAUSE OF DEATH.	No. of Deaths Males and Females Registered from each Cause.			Total Deaths from each Cause in 1900.	Increase or - Decrease in 1900.	CAUSE OF DEATH.	No. of Deaths Males and Females Registered from each Cause.			Total Deaths from each Cause in 1900.	Increase or - Decrease in 1900.
	Males	Females	Total Deaths from each Cause in 1900.				Males	Females	Total Deaths from each Cause in 1900.		
Phthisis	209	128	427	427	+ 20	Rheumatism	15	6	21	19	- 2
Enteritis	172	185	357	341	- 16	Dyspepsia	13	5	21	30	- 9
Pneumonia	231	103	334	297	- 37	Anæmia	11	9	20	40	- 20
Cancer	130	99	229	213	- 14	Atrophy	13	7	20	8	- 12
Diarrhoea	121	80	201	194	- 7	Tetanus Traumatic ...	16	3	19	14	- 5
Endocarditis and Valvular Disease ...	131	61	198	240	- 42	Poison (Suicide) ...	13	6	19	17	- 2
Premature Birth ...	124	74	198	217	- 19	Delirium Tremens ...	15	3	18	10	- 8
Other Diseases of Circu- latory System ...	111	48	159	160	- 1	Softening of Brain ...	10	8	18	24	- 6
Convulsions ...	87	63	150	179	- 29	Cholera (English) ...	11	6	17	18	- 1
Bright's Disease ...	91	57	148	127	- 21	Inury, General Paralysis of Insane ...	13	4	17	13	- 4
Typhoid or Enteric Fever	94	42	136	129	- 13	Paraplegia, Disease of Spinal Cord ...	16	1	17	20	- 3
Bronchitis ...	74	57	131	171	- 40	Syphilis	5	11	16	25	- 9
Dysentery ...	98	19	117	101	- 16	Hernia	11	5	16	15	- 1
Apoply ...	63	42	105	110	- 5	Other Diseases, Urinary System ...	6	8	14	12	- 2
Drowning (Accident) ...	92	9	101	319	- 248	Puerperal Convulsions	14	14	8	- 6
Senile Decay ...	52	32	84	60	- 24	Scalds	10	4	14	14	- ...
Whooping Cough ...	33	49	73	128	- 55	Suffocation (Accident) ...	9	5	14	9	- 5
Other Tubercular, Scrofula	55	18	73	50	- 7	Killed on Railway ...	14	...	14	13	- 1
Dentition ...	42	26	68	79	- 11	Drowning (Suicide) ...	10	4	14	12	- 2
Want of Breast Milk ...	29	32	61	44	- 17	Diabetes Mellitus ...	9	4	13	16	- 3
Inflammation of the Brain or its Membranes ...	30	31	61	63	- 2	Spina Bifida ...	9	4	13	4	- 9
Influenza, Coryza, Catarrh	35	25	60	44	- 16	Paralysis Agitans ...	10	3	13	3	- 10
Fall from Horse ...	55	1	56	49	- 7	Suicide (Cut, Stab, &c.) ...	11	2	13	12	- 1
Tubes Mesenterica ...	39	16	55	74	- 19	Injury at Birth ...	9	3	12	9	- 3
Hypertrophy of Heart ...	34	19	53	21	- 32	Scarlet Fever ...	5	6	11	59	- 48
Chronic Alcoholism ...	40	9	49	46	- 3	Simple and Illdefined Fever ...	9	2	11	12	- 1
Disease of Stomach ...	21	28	49	52	- 3	Erysipelas ...	2	9	11	12	- 1
Other Diseases of Liver ...	26	23	49	32	- 17	Rheumatic Fever ...	4	7	11	8	- 3
Bubonic Plague ...	38	19	48	48	-	Cyanosis ...	7	4	11	10	- 1
Diphtheria ...	23	25	48	82	- 34	Caisson Disease ...	11	...	11	6	- 5
Cirrhosis of Liver ...	39	9	48	44	- 4	Croup ...	4	7	11	12	- 1
Peritonitis ...	18	25	43	31	- 12	Killed by Falling Tree or other Substance ...	11	...	11	22	- 11
Burns (Accident) ...	11	22	43	37	- 6	Other Constitutional Diseases ...	10	...	10	12	- 2
Old Age ...	28	12	40	22	- 18	Flooding	10	10	7	- 3
Vehicle Accident ...	29	10	39	43	- 4	Cellulitis ...	8	2	10	5	- 5
Epilepsy ...	22	16	38	38	-	Gunshot Wounds (Acci- dent) ...	10	...	10	16	- 6
Herpoptelia, Brain Par- alysis ...	19	18	37	46	- 9	Killed by an Explosion ...	10	...	10	1	- 9
Acute Nephritis ...	24	13	37	46	- 9	Killed by Fall of Earth (Mining) ...	10	...	10	8	- 2
Privation ...	35	...	35	18	- 17	Killed by Machinery ...	9	1	10	4	- 6
Other Diseases, Nervous System ...	20	15	35	31	- 4	Suicide (Hanging) ...	7	3	10	18	- 8
Aneurism ...	33	2	35	49	- 14	Gonorrhœa, Stricture of Urethra ...	9	...	9	12	- 3
Pyæmias, Septicæmia	15	18	33	45	- 12	Pericarditis ...	9	...	9	4	- 5
Syncope ...	22	11	33	34	- 1	Embolism ...	6	3	9	4	- 5
Benign Fever ...	23	8	31	24	- 7	Gallstones ...	2	7	9	5	- 4
Tubercular Meningitis (Acute Hydrocephalus)	19	12	31	26	- 5	Other Diseases of Digestive System ...	6	3	9	14	- 3
Killed by a Fall ...	25	6	31	30	- 1	Other Diseases from Animal Parasites ...	4	4	8	11	- 3
Other Congenital Defects	17	12	29	31	- 2	Intussusception of Intestine ...	4	4	8	9	- 1
Idiopathic Tetanus ...	15	14	29	17	- 12	Placenta Praevia	8	8	7	- 1
Asthma ...	19	10	29	17	- 12	Murder (by Whites) ...	4	4	8	12	- 4
Ileus, Obstruction of Intes- tines ...	19	10	29	30	- 1	Measles ...	4	3	7	116	- 109
Debility ...	18	11	29	55	- 26	Dengue Fever ...	4	3	7	10	- 3
Other Diseases of Respira- tory System ...	22	6	28	35	- 7	Puerperal Fever	7	7	2	- 5
Other Ill-defined or Un- specified ...	19	9	28	19	- 9	Sore Throat, Quinsy ...	4	3	7	14	- 7
Sunstroke and Heat Apo- plexia ...	17	10	27	33	- 6	Ulceration of Intestine ...	1	6	7	8	- 1
Atelectasis ...	12	14	26	14	- 12	Abortion, Miscarriage ...	7	7	4	3	- 3
Gunshot Wounds (Suicide)	25	1	26	20	- 6	Suicide, Otherwise Un- specified ...	4	3	7	1	- 6
Pleurisy ...	20	5	25	13	- 12	Thrush ...	3	3	6	7	- 1
Disease of Bladder and Prostate ...	23	1	24	33	- 9	Opium, Abuse of ...	6	...	6	5	- 1
Other Accidents of Child- birth	23	23	29	- 6	Angina Pectoris ...	3	3	6	4	- 2
Fractures, Contusions (Ac- cident) ...	20	3	23	9	- 14	Hydatid Disease ...	3	2	5	5	- ...
Beri Beri ...	22	...	22	...	*22	Otitis, Otorrhœa ...	3	2	5	7	- 2
Poison (Accident) ...	13	9	22	20	- 2	Thrombosis ...	4	1	5	2	- 3
						Stomatitis, Noma ...	2	3	5	6	- 1

The Lancet's assumption that the disease found in Queensland was plague, some medical men insisted that the illness "only exists here in unhealthy imaginations".¹⁰²

Such illusions of safety were shattered when the plague broke out again in July 1900, when acrimonious differences of opinion on the action taken by the Metropolitan Joint Board and the Central Board of Health led to renewed pleas for a single health authority capable of giving definite directions and practical services.¹⁰³ Added to the general confusion was the monetary burden of fighting the plague. Though local government authorities raised their rates perilously high, they still saw their funds "swallowed by the insatiable plague monster", which made protracted, immoderate, and quite unexpected demands, and left nothing for the ordinary work of their districts. The emergency of the plague was leading to nothing less than the strangulation of local government,¹⁰⁴ and on these grounds various local authorities felt justified in refusing to pay plague precepts.¹⁰⁵ The destruction of local government was a concept quite unacceptable to transplanted Britons, whose ideas of basic freedom were founded, to a large extent, on the rights, privileges and obligations of these political units. An immediate injection of an extra £5,000 was granted by the Treasury to fight the plague,¹⁰⁶ though Ernest Harpur, on behalf of the Metropolitan Joint Board, was still complaining that "no final decision

102. The Brisbane Courier, 29 May 1900; sub editorial.

103. Ibid., 5 Jul 1900; main editorial. By this time, according to the Courier, there had been 61 cases of plague in the colony - 30 fatal, 18 discharged as cured, and 13 remaining under treatment. But see "Appendix to Registrar-General's Forty-first Annual Report on the Vital Statistics of Queensland for the year ended 31st December 1900", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1901), facing this page, showing the total number of deaths from bubonic plague for the whole of 1900 to be 48.

104. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Jul 1900; main editorial, and Ibid., general reporting on the deputation of local bodies to the Home Secretary on the issue of plague expenses. See also The Telegraph, 13 Jul 1900.

105. Harpur to Under Secretary Home Department, 16 Aug 1900, Q.S.A. COL/286, in-letter no.12720 of 1900.

106. Under Secretary Treasury Department to Under Secretary Home Department, 18 Jul 1900, Q.S.A. COL/238, in-letter no.11134 of 1900. At this time Colmslie was costing £40 a week to run. Two-thirds of this was contributed by the government. The Brisbane Courier, 31 Jul 1900. See also statement of total expenditure of Metropolitan Joint Board up to 31 July 1900, attached to Harpur to Under Secretary Home Department, 16 Aug 1900, Q.S.A. COL/286, in-letter no.12720 of 1900.

ha/d/ been arrived at by the Government in regard to the request of
the deputation", as late as 16 August 1900.¹⁰⁷

At the same time as these difficulties were occurring in the south of the colony, central and northern coastal towns were, if anything, struggling with even more adverse conditions. Certainly that was the opinion of residents of these cities. They were very vocal in criticism of "fruitful hotbeds of fever", as reports hit the press that the "dreadful scourge bubonic plague" had made its appearance in Australia.¹⁰⁸ Their fears were echoed in much stronger terms by Dr. A. Jefferis Turner, the health officer appointed to oversee plague affairs in northern and central Queensland, on the recommendation of the Home Secretary's personal adviser in the emergency, Dr. J.E. Hare.¹⁰⁹

Even after Jefferis Turner had ordered a clean-up of Rockhampton in the wake of a fatal plague outbreak there, he had to report the presence of "numerous" rats and a considerable amount of "accessible rat-food" lying about in the city, owing to the continued failure of the Rockhampton Epidemic Joint Board to provide for house-to-house collection of kitchen scraps.¹¹⁰ Therefore, it was hardly surprising that the "epidemic /in Rockhampton/" proved more serious than anywhere

107. See Harpur's letter no.12720 as above f.n. 106. The Treasury made further special allotments as the year progressed. For example, Under Secretary Treasury to Under Secretary Home Department, 17 Oct 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 239, in-letter no.16111 of 1900, and subsequent of 19 Dec 1900, in-letter no.18975 of 1900. In each case a further £3,000 was involved.
108. The Maryborough Chronicle, 17 Jan 1900; letter to editor from Prevention. See also The Wide Bay and Burnett News, 15 Mar 1900. The Maryborough Chronicle, 2 Jul 1900, and The Mackay Chronicle, 6 Aug 1900; editorial.
109. Wilton W.R. Love to Under Secretary Home Department, 5 May 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 243, in-letter no.6464 of 1900, J.E. Hare's unnumbered memo to Foxton of 27 April 1900, which is really an excellent reference for Turner - it classes him as "the only suitable Queenslander", "a good clinician and an expert bacteriologist" - and other attachments on salary and other matters. In January 1900, Turner had signified his willingness to assist C.J. Pound with bacteriological investigations on the plague, an offer gratefully accepted. A. Jefferis Turner to Central Board of Health, 26 Jan 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, in-letter no.1330 of 1900 and marginal comment. Turner held a Doctorate of Medicine from London and was a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons.
110. Final Report of A. Jefferis Turner to Rockhampton Joint Board, 4 Jul 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, in-letter no.10770 of 1900.

in Queensland".¹¹¹

The sanitary situation was equally bad in Townsville, where the risks were greatly aggravated by the failure to register deaths and issue certificates - laxity which was "dangerous to the public safety, and specially dangerous during a plague epidemic".¹¹² Moreover, the plague regulations with regard to shipping had been "very imperfectly observed" in that port.¹¹³ Ships had not been fumigated,¹¹⁴ the Mayor of Townsville, though fully informed of this slackness, had permitted offenders to "break these regulations with impunity",¹¹⁵ and no one had been deputed to patrol the wharves in search of rats.¹¹⁶ This appeared to be a clear instance of the claims of trade and commerce having priority over precautions to preserve the nation's health.

Frustrated, extremely busy,¹¹⁷ and justifiably angry with those who consistently failed to carry out his sensible directions and the government's gazetted regulations,¹¹⁸ the doctor turned to the Central Board of Health, in the absense of one supreme medical overseer who could enforce the acceptance of such counsel. As Turner complained to the board

- 111. President, Rockhampton Joint Board to Home Secretary, 6 Jul 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 243, in-telegram no.8351 of 1900, and marginal comment by Foxton on Turner to Under Secretary Home Department, 7 Jul 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 243, in-telegram no.8446 of 1900.
- 112. Dr. A. Jefferis Turner to Secretary Central Board of Health, 21 Jul 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, in-letter no.11871 of 1900, p.2.
- 113. Ibid., p.3.
- 114. Ibid.
- 115. Ibid.
- 116. Ibid.
- 117. Turner was in tremendous demand up and down the Queensland coast. He spent considerable periods in Townsville, Rockhampton and Gladstone, and also visited Port Douglas, Cardwell, Geraldton and Mackay. A very large number of telegrams, letters and reports passed between him and the Home Secretary's office. One particularly hectic schedule is recorded in Turner to Home Secretary, 21 Jul 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, in-telegram no.11207 of 1900.
- 118. Turner was "caused much surprise" and "considerable annoyance" when a confidential report to the Central Board of Health incorporating some of this material, and a "delicate question of administration" touching a quarantine matter, was published in the press. Jefferis Turner to Home Secretary, 8 Sep 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 243, in-letter no. 14139 of 1900.

it is no exaggeration to say, that the protection of those ports in Queensland, which have been hitherto uninfected, depends on the efficient and uninterrupted performance of these fumigations. The plague has been spread from port to port by means of infected rats carried by the steamers; and there is no reason to doubt that if these regulations had been put into force at all Australian ports during the past six months Queensland would have escaped the epidemic altogether.

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Turner had some consolation. The Central Board of Health, acting on this information, and with the permission of the Home Secretary, tightened regulations for ships proceeding down the Queensland coast,¹²⁰ though at the same time they relaxed their vigilance on the New South Wales border at Wallangarra.¹²¹ But on the whole, experiences during this plague year, both in northern and southern Queensland, underlined the points which The Brisbane Courier had been making for some time. The often misdirected or confused conduct of the fight against the plague, the relatively ineffective attempts to deal with persistent pockets of insanitation, the destruction of rats in the north, in the capital, and in some of the largest southern Queensland towns,¹²² the constant

119. A. Jefferis Turner to Secretary, Central Board of Health, 21 Jul 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, in-letter no.11871 of 1900, p.6. See also A. Jefferis Turner to local manager, Australian Steam Navigation Co., 21 Jul 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, unnumbered out-letter of 1900.
120. Central Board of Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 3 Aug 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, filed under in-letter no.11871 of 1900, and subsequent telegrams to Health Officers at Townsville and Rockhampton, 4 Aug 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, out-telegrams no.6590 of 1900.
121. Marginal comment from Foxton on Central Board letter above f.n.120, and Under Secretary Home Department to Dr. Bell, 4 Aug 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, out-telegram no.6589 of 1900. This decision can also be traced to Turner's contention, also held by some other medical men, that inland towns were in little danger from the plague which, on the whole, was rat-borne on ships. Turner to Home Secretary, no date, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, in-telegram no.9971 of 1900.
122. See for example The Brisbane Courier, 22 Jan 1900; sub editorial, Ibid., 10 Feb 1900, Ibid., 15 Feb 1900, Ibid., 16 Mar 1900; letter to editor from A Sufferer, and Ibid., 4 Apr 1900, which is a long article giving a Courier representative's impression of several unsavoury areas in a number of Brisbane suburbs and the city itself, The Queensland Times, 10 Mar 1900; editorial, Ibid., 24 Mar 1900; sub editorial, Ibid., 5 Apr 1900; sub editorial, Ibid., 19 Apr 1900, Ibid., 21 Apr 1900; main editorial. But see also Report of Metropolitan Joint Board to Under Secretary Home Department, 24 Jul 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 286, in-letter no.11569 of 1900, reporting on the successful inspection of a number of insanitary areas and the destruction of a good many condemned properties and large numbers of rats.

wrangling between boards charged with the protection of the public health, and the unedifying, publicly-aired differences which arose between doctors on both medical treatment and the question of powers,¹²³ had together become so obvious and so dangerous to the well-being of the colony that they could no longer be ignored. In introducing the second reading of a new and very far-reaching health bill on 2 August 1900, the Honourable J.F.G. Foxton was

quite sure that the events which have occurred in our midst in connection with health matters owing to the presence amongst us of the bubonic plague render it unnecessary for me to offer any apology for the prominence I give this measure.

124

But the debate on the bill dragged on until well into November 1900, while the plague continued its attack in Charters Towers, where the character of the epidemic was revealed as being very different from that in the south,¹²⁵ in Ipswich,¹²⁶ and other towns in Queensland. Medical men and hospital authorities persisted in bandying words on isolation methods and the treatment of victims,¹²⁷ and a very virulent

123. See for example A. Jefferis Turner to Home Secretary, 24 Aug 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, in-letter no.15316 of 1900, Confidential Report of A. Jefferis Turner to Central Board of Health, 30 Sep 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, unnumbered in-letter of 1900, A. Jefferis Turner to Home Secretary, 6 Oct 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, unnumbered in-letter of 1900, A. Jefferis Turner to Home Secretary, 15 Oct 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, in-letter no.16262 of 1900, The Townsville Daily Bulletin, 16 Aug 1900, Ibid., 20 Aug 1900, The Townsville Evening Star, 17 Oct 1900, The Townsville Daily Bulletin, 18 Oct 1900; letter to editor from W. Cockerill, Jun., Ibid., general reporting, The Queensland Times, 1 May 1900; letter to editor from J.A. Cameron, M.B., and Ibid., 8 May 1900; letters to editor from Drs. Albert Dunlop, Roderick Macdonald, and J.A. Cameron, and The Brisbane Courier, 20 Sep 1900, on the question of the relative powers of Dr. A. Jefferis Turner and Dr. Linford Row in Townsville, in deciding on the disposal of plague patients in quarantine.
124. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 223.
125. A. Jefferis Turner to Central Board of Health, 30 Sep 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, unnumbered letter of 1900. See also Joint Health Committee, Charters Towers to Home Secretary's Office, 14 Dec 1900, Q.S.A. COL/A841, in-letter no.7596 of 1901, and subsequent seeking reimbursement for money expended on bubonic plague in Charters Towers.
126. The Queensland Times, 1 May 1900.
127. Dr. Linford Row to Home Secretary, 1 Aug 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, in-telegram no.11668 of 1900, Dr. E. Humphry to Under Secretary Home Department, 1 Aug 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, in-telegram no.11674 of 1900, Dr. M. Bacot to Honourable R. Philp, 2 Aug 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, unnumbered in-telegram of 1900, and Secretary, Townsville Hospital to Home Secretary, 3 Aug 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 238, in-telegram no.11873 of 1900.

RETURN for FIVE YEARS showing the NUMBER of DEATHS from some of the principal Causes in the order of their Degree of Fatality in 1900; also their Proportion per 10,000 of the TOTAL Deaths and per 100,000 of the MEAN POPULATION respectively for each of the Years 1896-1900.

Most Common Cause of Death.	1896.			1897.			1898.			1899.			1900.		
	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 100,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 100,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 100,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 100,000 of the Mean Population.	Number of Deaths.	Proportion per 10,000 of Total Deaths.	Proportion per 100,000 of the Mean Population.
Phthisis ...	444	787	95	418	771	87	421	674	85	407	662	80	427	743	87
Enteritis ...	248	439	53	256	472	53	340	545	69	341	555	67	357	621	73
Pneumonia ...	377	668	81	331	610	69	362	580	73	297	483	58	334	581	68
Cancer ...	183	324	39	187	345	39	229	367	46	248	396	48	229	398	47
Diarrhoea ...	25	505	61	291	537	61	227	364	46	194	316	38	201	350	41
Endocarditis and Valvular Disease	129	333	43	192	354	40	196	314	40	240	391	47	198	345	40
Premature Birth ...	197	349	42	205	378	43	199	319	40	217	353	43	198	345	40
Other diseases Circulatory System	160	283	34	158	291	33	148	237	30	160	260	31	159	277	32
Convulsions ...	199	353	43	178	328	37	180	288	37	179	291	35	150	261	31
Bright's Disease ...	92	164	20	95	175	20	113	181	23	127	207	25	148	258	30
Typhoid or Enteric Fever	130	230	28	183	337	38	149	239	30	149	242	29	136	237	28
Bronchitis ...	163	289	35	163	301	34	188	301	38	171	278	34	131	228	27
Dysentery ...	90	159	16	64	118	13	97	155	20	101	164	20	117	204	24
Apoplexy ...	82	145	18	106	195	22	104	167	21	110	179	22	105	183	21
Drowning (Accident)	159	282	34	101	186	21	127	203	26	349	568	69	102	177	21
Scrofula Dency ...	64	113	14	72	133	15	73	117	15	60	98	12	84	146	17
Whooping Cough ...	65	115	14	42	77	9	146	284	30	128	208	25	73	127	15
Other Tubercular — Serofula	88	156	19	67	124	14	84	185	17	80	130	16	73	127	15
Dentition ...	107	190	23	75	138	16	88	141	18	79	129	16	65	118	14
Want of Breast-milk	50	89	11	43	79	9	43	69	9	44	72	9	61	106	12
Inflammation of the Brain or its Membranes	83	147	18	60	111	12	66	106	13	63	103	12	61	106	12
Influenza, Coryza, Catarrh	79	140	17	29	53	6	262	420	53	44	72	9	60	104	12
Tubes Mesenterica	53	94	11	54	100	11	66	106	13	74	120	15	55	96	11
Disease of Stomach	54	96	12	33	61	7	55	85	11	52	85	10	49	85	10
Diphtheria ...	31	55	7	42	77	9	70	112	14	82	133	16	48	84	10
Hemiplegia, Brain Paralysis	44	78	9	36	66	8	35	56	7	46	75	9	37	64	7
Aneurism ...	42	74	9	33	61	7	31	50	6	49	80	10	35	61	7
Debility ...	44	78	9	50	92	10	67	107	14	55	90	11	29	50	6
Scarlet Fever ...	1	2	87	140	18	59	96	12	11	19	2
Measles	138	221	28	116	189	23	7	12	1
Total Deaths of all Causes	5,645	...	5,423	...	6,243	...	6,144	...	5,747	...					
Mean Population of each Year	...	466,364	...	478,440	...	492,602	...	508,864	...	490,325					

128. "Registrar-General's Forty-First Annual Report on the Vital Statistics of Queensland for the year ended 31st December 1900", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1901), 1357.

type of plague was found in rats captured in Queen Street, George Street, Petrie Bight, Spring Hill and Petrie Terrace, Brisbane, necessitating sharp words from the Central Board of Health to the Metropolitan Joint Board on the need for vigilance.¹²⁹ What the colony clearly needed, as the plague year drew to its weary close, and the Central Board of Health calculated its grim figures of 139 confirmed cases of plague,¹³⁰ was promised by the Health Act of 1900.¹³¹ This provided for the appointment of a commissioner of public health who would become the permanent head of a health department - an administrative body constituted under the Act, to initiate policy and direct health affairs for the whole of Queensland.

The state of Queensland was to be visited by the plague again as the new century advanced. But under the direction of a man with proper powers and adequate machinery at his disposal, and subject only to ministerial oversight and the availability of funds, Queensland would never again flounder in a grave plague emergency, in quite the same way as it had done in 1900.

129. C.J. Pound to Under Secretary Home Department, 15 Sep 1900, Q.S.A. COL/ 239, in-letter no.14399 of 1900, and marginal comment from Foxton, 18 Sep 1900, and the Secretary, Central Board of Health, 20 Sep 1900.
130. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Dec 1900; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 27 Dec 1900. Unfortunately, no accurate figures are available on the number of Queenslanders who contracted the disease in 1900, or whether they were affected in the April or July outbreak. The Registrar-General's normal report for the year does not mention bubonic plague, (see table Within, p.290), and the figures in his appendix - 48 deaths - do not tally with the Central Board of Health's claim that out of 139 cases, 57 were fatal. Another different set of figures appears in "Queensland Department of Public Health Report on Plague in Queensland, 1900-1907 by B. Burnett Ham, M.D., M.R.C.S., D.P.H. (Camb.)", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1907), 62-63. Total recorded cases, 136. Deaths, 57. Ibid., p.63. Pressure of executive work and deficient organisation, during the first plague year, "militated against keeping any reliable detailed accounts". Ibid., p.95.
131. "The Health Act of 1900", Queensland Government Gazette, II (1900), 1467 ff.

10 - THE EARLY STRUGGLE FOR
HEALTH LEGISLATION

Discussing the evolution of public health administration in Australia, J.H.L. Cumpston has asserted that from 1859 to 1880, "no development occurred" in Queensland, and consequently there is "almost nothing to record".¹ It is true that any action taken in this period was tentative and singularly unsuccessful, but in the years before the passing of the relatively effective Health Act of 1884, there were always some Queenslanders with a most lively appreciation that the admitted salubrity of Queensland's climate was no guarantee of immunity from disease and death.² In this period, legislative attempts were made to protect the colonists from the conditions which, according to the prevailing miasmatic theory, caused these evils.

Before the separation of Queensland from New South Wales in 1859, the protection of the public water supplies from filth and rubbish, the regulations respecting the slaughtering of animals for food, the cleansing of streets, and the removal of nightsoil - all aspects of the protection of the public health - were dealt with under the Police (Towns) Acts.³ Later still, in 1858, municipal councils were made responsible for local community health under the Municipalities Act. This entailed the "abatement of and removal of nuisances, the regulation of the meat trade and of markets generally, the control of noisome or offensive trades... and the implementation of sound sanitary measures",⁴ all matters which required attention, if the "disgraceful nuisances in existence" in Brisbane were to be dealt

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1. J.H.L. Cumpston, "The Evolution of Public Health Administration in Australia", in The Medical Journal of Australia, Feb 1932, p.196.
 2. Newspaper and learned journal articles and official documents promoted Queensland's climate as "salubrious, and very favorable to the European constitution". See for example, Dr. F.J. Barton, "On Climate", 30 Aug 1860, in Transactions of the Philosophical Society of Queensland, 1859 to 1872 (Brisbane, 1872), p.6, and "Registrar-General's Report for 1864", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1865), 1313.
 3. See for example, Police (Towns) Act, 11 Victoria No.44, 15 Jun 1848, in Alexander Oliver, The Statutes of Practical Utility, Colonial and Imperial, in Force in New South Wales, Vol.II, (Sydney, 1879), pp.1717-1740.
 4. Laverty, p.182.

with effectively.⁵ Both groups of acts were modelled on British legislation, and followed the English tradition that local communities were responsible for local needs.

That these precursors of any true public health acts were unsuccessful in their objectives, is borne out by adverse and increasing criticism of environmental pollution and the apparently attendant fevers which plagued Queenslanders. This criticism appeared in the daily press,⁶ in official correspondence,⁷ and in successive reports to parliament by Queensland's Registrar-General. Indeed, in his second annual report, F.O. Darvall was already indicating his own awareness of the need for central government action in the important area of the public health.

The civilization of States may to a certain extent be estimated and measured by the value its citizens attach to human life.... the progressive increase in the value attached to it is evidenced... by the numerous laws enacted to restrain or entirely forbid the pursuit of occupations injurious to health; until at last it is recognised to be the duty of Government to protect its subjects as far as possible from the insidious attacks of disease, equally as from the assaults of crime, or from accidents.... and that State which best does this, is the first in the race of civilization....

Although this colony - blessed with a healthy climate, and as yet possessing only a scattered population in the full enjoyment of all the necessities and most of the luxuries of life - may not yet require the enactment of Sanatory Laws, there is still little doubt that as population increases they will become necessary.

8

In 1864, after a year of "unusually great mortality", a seriously worried Darvall was pointing out the scandalously high and rising death rate amongst Queensland's children under five years. A comparison with the figures for Great Britain revealed the shameful truth that the mortality in Queensland was 0.85 per cent higher than that in England.

5. The Moreton Bay Courier, 27 Oct 1858; editorial.
6. These were very numerous indeed, but see for example, Ibid., 16 Mar 1859 and 22 Oct 1861, and The Brisbane Courier, 18 Mar 1863, and 29 Nov 1864; main editorial.
7. This was also frequent. Reports and letters were particularly caustic when nuisances also caused the devaluation of property. See for example Surveyor-General to Mayor of Brisbane, 13 Apr 1860, Q.S.A. Letter Book No.1, out-letter no.465 of 1860, and previous no.416 of 20 Mar 1860.
8. "Second Annual Report on Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1861), 445.

Causes of Death	Number of Deaths Registered in 1863	Proportional number from each Cause to 1,000 Deaths from All Causes, in Queensland, in 1863.	Proportional number from each Cause to 1,000 Deaths from All Causes, in England, in 1859.
Atrophy, Debility, and Marasmus	90	71	64
Drowning (accident)	76	60	6
Convulsions	75	59	60
Phthisis (consumption)	68	53	115
Croup	63	49	18
Dysentery	61	48	3
Diarrhoea	58	45	42
Scarlatina, and "Fever" ...	39	31	46
Typhus, Gastric, and Typhoid Fever	36	28	36
Diphtheria...	34	27	22
Teething	33	26	9
Heart Disease	30	24	37
Dropsy	21	16	19
Fractures and Contusions (accident)	21	16	13
Premature Birth	18	14	17
Hydrocephalus	13	10	17
Thrush	12	9	3

Every person examining the preceding table of deaths below various ages, must be struck with the large proportion of deaths of children; to enable this important subject to be more thoroughly investigated, I have prepared the following tables of deaths of children.

DEATHS OF CHILDREN

District.	1862			1863		
	Below 2 years.	2 and under 5 years.	Total below 5 years.	Below 2 years.	2 and under 5 years.	Total below 5 years.
Brisbane	126	37	163	232	51	283
Dalby	18	2	20	17	2	19
Drayton	15	3	18	26	13	39
Ipswich	42	5	47	62	18	80
Kennedy	4	2	6	4	2	6
Port Curtis	1	...	1	2	2	4
Taroom	3	...	3	9	1	10
Warwick	11	4	15	18	7	25
Wide Bay	15	2	17	20	8	28
Condamine, Goondiwindi, Mount Abundance, and Surat Banana, Broad Sound, Peak Downs, Princhester, Rockhampton, and Springsure)	10	2	12	6	3	9
Gayndah and Nanango	40	6	46	80	31	111
TOTAL	11	3	14	12	2	14
	296	66	362	488	140	628

9. "Fourth Annual Report on Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths", in Ibid., (1864), 891.

If the margin seemed small, Darvall reminded parliament that the actual situations in the two countries were radically different. In contrast to Queensland's immunity from pauperism, sparse population, abundance of fresh and wholesome food and healthy climate, England had pauperism, the miseries of destitution, filthy, crowded dwellings, and dark, evil-smelling towns. When these conditions were taken into account, "it would make the difference in the mortality of the two countries far greater",¹⁰ to the disadvantage of Queensland. The main causes of the high death rate in Queensland towns were bad drainage and inefficient or non-existent scavenging, while the rural areas suffered from the prevalence of diseases peculiar to newly occupied and undrained districts, and the difficulty of obtaining medical assistance.¹¹ In an emotional conclusion to his report, Darvall appealed to the government to stem the numbers of victims sacrificed annually to bad drainage and evil smells, by bringing in

those sanatory regulations and appliances which experience, in older communities, has shown to be so effective, and which, even in this beautiful climate, we cannot dispense with.

12

The Brisbane Courier was quick to take up the message of the Registrar-General's report. The burden of editorial comment at that time was directed, not so much towards the government in a call for new legislation, but towards the Brisbane City Council, in an attempt to prod that body into acting vigorously on the Municipalities Act already in existence - to arouse the councillors from the "stolid unconcern manifested by them".¹³

In the meantime, the Queensland government took some steps to preserve the health of Queenslanders, by what was to become a continuing attempt to deal with the public health problem; that is, by the exclusion of exotic diseases from the colony through the consolidation of

10. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1861), 893. Other Australian colonies were troubled by similar sanitary problems and by high infant mortality in this same period. See for example, a Melbourne comment on the high death rate of infants in Victoria, The Melbourne Age, 28 Nov 1864.
11. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1864), 893.
12. Ibid.
13. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Sep 1864; editorial, and Ibid., 29 Sep 1864; editorial. Earlier in 1864, the council had openly declared itself to be "the conservator of public health". See Ibid., 1 Feb 1864; Minutes of Brisbane City Council.

quarantine regulations.¹⁴ In 1864, one of the medical practitioner members of the Legislative Assembly, Henry Challinor, displayed that degree of awareness of the need for legislation to preserve the community's health, which was to typify the professional members of both houses of parliament in Queensland. Challinor was attempting for the second time, with the support of the Premier, R.G.W. Herbert, to push a subdivision of land bill through the Legislative Assembly. The proposed legislation aimed at the prevention of "injury to the morals of society", and the provision of "proper ventilation and cleanliness",¹⁵ by prescribing a reasonable distance between one house and another.¹⁶ As Herbert indicated to the bill's opponents, who took a stand largely on economic grounds, it was "a purely sanitary measure",¹⁷ which should not be objectionable to anyone. Yet shortly afterwards, that same government was under stringent attack from The Brisbane Courier, as it proceeded with the sale of valuable land in the heart of Brisbane in lots as small as four and three-quarter perches. This exceptional action, which flew in the face of the government's own arguments on the Subdivision of Lands Act, was described by the Courier's editor as "most unpardonable", "disgraceful", and "a crying shame".¹⁸ It was also an indication that the well-being of the colonial treasury was paramount as far as the government was concerned.¹⁹

Despite this abandonment of principle in the interest of economic gain, the government was deeply concerned about the high death rate amongst the infant native-born - those to whom Queensland ultimately had to look for her future development and prosperity - and about the grossly insanitary conditions which were obvious on every hand. It gave practical proof of its anxiety in February 1865, when the Executive Council decided to establish a central board of health.¹⁹

- 14. Queensland Government Gazette, IV (1863), 785. This aspect of disease prevention will not be dealt with again in this section. For further discussion see the sections on "Cholera" and "Smallpox".
- 15. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, I (1864), 181. The bill was passed on 31 Aug 1864. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1864), 291.
- 16. Ibid.
- 17. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Dec 1864; editorial.
- 18. Ibid. Newspapers continued to make spirited attacks on this issue. See for example, Ibid., 11 Nov 1865; editorial, and The North Australian, 12 Jan 1865; editorial.
- 19. Executive Council Minutes, 17 Feb 1865, Q.S.A. EXE/E 11, 65/9F.

The attention of this board was to be

in the first instance directed to the preparation of and report upon a Health of Towns Act framed upon principles similar to those incorporated in like Acts in England. 20

The new Central Board of Health was appointed on 8 April 1865,²¹ to the delight of The Brisbane Courier.²² It set to work at once, quickly producing a report which dealt with the general sanitary problems of the paving of streets, the removal of refuse, the construction and ventilation of buildings, the supply of sufficient and wholesome water for public purposes and domestic use, and the tremendous problem of sewage disposal.²³ One other immediate problem, which emphasises the basic reason for the board's appointment, was discussed. Considering the "excessive" infant mortality, the board decided that it was

doubtless owing to the great scarcity and consequent high price of milk - the natural food of infants for the first two years of existence - and the substitution of animal food which is much cheaper; hence the great prevalence of diarrhoea and its calamitous results. 24

The board suggested a solution - the opening up of various tramways to facilitate the carriage of milk from the rural areas to the people of Brisbane.²⁵ They also settled on the health measure best calculated to meet the needs of Queensland. It was a mixture of the Health Act of Victoria, itself based almost entirely on a British act,

- 20. Executive Council Minutes, 17 Feb 1865, Q.S.A. EXE/E 11, 65/9F.
- 21. The first central board reflected the practical side of nineteenth century British interest in correcting sanitary problems. It was composed of the Colonial Secretary, Colonial Architect, Commissioner of Police, Engineer for Harbours and Rivers, President of the Medical Board, and the Health Officer, who was to act as secretary to the board. Queensland Government Gazette, VI (1865), 313.
- 22. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Apr 1865; main editorial.
- 23. "Board of Health Report", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1865), 1313.
- 24. Ibid., 1314.
- 25. Ibid. For an adverse criticism which suggested that the tramway proposals were "Utopian and beyond the means... of the Colony", see The Brisbane Courier, 30 Jun 1865; editorial. However, the central board's proposal is probably another instance of the influence of the British experience. From 1845 onwards, a considerable amount of milk was being brought to London by rail, and by 1865-66, the emphasis was on the railway milk trade in England, as environmentally aware Englishmen became anxious to obtain milk produced in "country" cowsheds which were not surrounded by the dirt and filth of cities and towns. P.J. Atkins, "London's intra-urban milk supply circa 1790-1914", Institute of British Geographers, Transactions, New Series, Vol.2, No.3, 1977, p.391.

and several clauses of the General Police and Improvement (Scotland) Act of 1862, the English Lodging House Act, and the English Nuisance and Disease Prevention Act.²⁶ The proposed health bill of 1865, "A bill to make provision for improving the Sanitary condition of Towns and Populous places", was introduced to the Legislative Assembly on 30 May, by the Colonial Secretary, R.G.W. Herbert. The minister did not claim that the measure was perfect, but was convinced that to postpone its enactment would be dangerous to the health of the people of Brisbane, Rockhampton, and certain other large towns. The bill, which provided for the appointment of central and local boards of health, was based on the municipal system then in force, and its success was dependent on the "cordial co-operation of the municipalities, which we have a right to expect".²⁷ But, recognising the sensibilities of local government to any incursion from the centre, and the considerable support for this view in the community,²⁸ Herbert stressed that the powers of municipalities would not be interfered with, and in some cases these powers would be strengthened.²⁹

The point which the Colonial Secretary did not explain, but one which did not escape the notice of James Taylor, the member for Western Downs, was the question of costs. Taylor rejected the bill, not only because local jealousies demanded that he oppose the special benefits designed for Brisbane and Rockhampton, but also because he objected to the extra rate involved to pay for health boards, and for the sanitary improvements these boards were sure to initiate.³⁰ But for the most part, the Legislative Assembly welcomed the bill. All other speakers during the second reading debate, Dr. Challinor prominent among them,³¹ supported the measure.

In spite of this, the bill failed to reach the statute book, being discharged from the paper on Herbert's motion on 7 September 1865.³²

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- 26. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1865), 1313.
 - 27. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, II (1865), 378.
 - 28. This problem was similar, though more severe, in Great Britain. See H.J. Beales, "The New Poor Law", History Vol. XV, 1931, p.786.
 - 29. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, II (1865), 380.
 - 30. Ibid., p.381.
 - 31. Ibid..
 - 32. Ibid., p.649.

Curiously, the Colonial Secretary who had warned against the perils of rejecting the bill, now

felt that it was not a measure which was immediately required /although/.... he believed the time would come when such a measure would be found very necessary.

33

According to that astute contemporary observer, the editor of the Courier, it was not difficult to assess the reasons for the shelving of the bill. Writing shortly after its demise, he suggested that the Herbert government was simply "frightfully dilatory" about health matters, and had allowed the bill to be set aside time and time again in the interests of more pressing business.³⁴ After longer reflection, the editor was severely critical of both government and bill, and, by implication, of the Central Board of Health.

Among what were facetiously termed the "slaughtered innocents" at the close of the last session of parliament was the Health Bill.... Its premature decease was subject for very little lamentation.... It was in every respect a most impracticable measure.... introduced /because of/ the promise made at the beginning of the session.... /But/ the time has long since passed when the neglect of ordinary precautions to ward off the attack of an epidemic can be considered with impunity....

Should fever accept the tempting invitation which is held out to it on all sides and fully develop itself, what other result could be expected than the rapid depopulation of the city. Without appearing in the character of alarmists, we are justified in laying down the above proposition, the truth of which is incontestable. The necessity of taking the best means of preventing such an undesirable catastrophe must recommend itself. The Government have not chosen to move in the matter. The Corporation are financially unable to do so.

35

As well as government apathy over the health bill, there were practical considerations. Clearly the costs of public health were

33. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, II (1865), 649.

34. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Sep 1865; editorial. This attitude was prevalent in all of the colonies. For example, Alexander Robertson says of Victoria, such reforms are "surrounded with difficulties. The apathy with which the public have regarded the subject, and the almost contemptuous indifference with which our legislators have treated it, are truly astonishing". Alexander Robertson, "Medical Reform", Victorian Pamphlets, Vol.IX, 1858, p.1.

35. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Nov 1865; editorial.

high,³⁶ and in 1865 Queensland faced an increasingly grave economic situation. As Coghlan and Ewing point out

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a period of extravagant outlay on public works was followed in 1865 by a depression which interfered seriously with the progress of the colony.

To make matters worse, since 1857 Queensland had been subject to prolonged periods of drought, which had seriously reduced the earning capacity of some of the colony's top income earners, the graziers and big farmers.³⁸ If the government had not already been aware of its responsibility to provide good economic management of available funds before all else, it was forcefully reminded of its duty by a petition from the carcass butchers resident in the city and suburbs of Brisbane. Although this quite influential group of businessmen professed themselves

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willing and anxious... for the preservation of cleanliness and the abatement of nuisances, they fail/ed/ to see the necessity that exist/ed/ to inflict upon them, a great pecuniary loss and inconvenience, as well as to the public generally.

Given this public and government unwillingness to accept large expenditure in a very difficult year, the Registrar-General's report, which was reasonably optimistic, presented the government with a very slight, but legitimate excuse, for dropping the 1865 health bill. The Registrar-General revealed that there was some advance in the birth rate of the colony,⁴⁰ and that although infant mortality was still decidedly high, it showed a "satisfactory" improvement over the 1863 figures.⁴¹ But on the whole, the report gave the government no cause

36. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, II (1865), 378. Robert Mackenzie, the in-coming Colonial Secretary, considered that Herbert's chief objection to the 1865 bill was the expense entailed in implementing it. Ibid., III (1866), 294. But Bruce Knox suggests that "the modern-minded Herbert was impressed with the need for urban cleanliness and for powers to control epidemics.... The ambitions of his Health Bill were considerable, but their chances of success were slim, not least because Herbert laid emphasis upon the need to leave the execution of its provisions chiefly to municipalities". Knox, p.210.
37. T.A. Coghlan and T.T. Ewing, The Progress of Australasia in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1903), p.180.
38. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Nov 1865; editorial.
39. "Health Bill (Petition from Carcass Butchers of Brisbane)", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1865), 1321.
40. "Fifth Annual Report of Registration of Births, Marriages, and Deaths", Ibid., 864.
41. Ibid., p.867.

to feel complacent.⁴²

During the summer months of the following year, when prevalent odours alarmed that self-appointed champion of the public health The Brisbane Courier, the editor began to regret the "killing" of the 1865 health bill, fervently hoping that a similar measure would be brought before the new parliamentary session.⁴³ He was joined by Brisbane alderman J.A. Thompson,⁴⁴ who formulated advanced ideas on the sewerage of Brisbane, and also proposed a city council deputation to the Colonial Secretary Robert Mackenzie on the twin problems of public health legislation and a sewerage bill.⁴⁵

Mackenzie "considered the expense of looking after the health of towns a very legitimate one;... an expenditure that could not long be avoided".⁴⁶ He responded quickly to the agitation, and by May 1866, a comprehensive health bill, which "had undergone many judicious additions

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- 42. "Fifth Annual Report of Registration of Births, Marriages, and Deaths", Ibid., p.869. The report concluded that the mortality rates for all ages in Queensland were "neither so satisfactory nor so decided".
 - 43. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Feb 1866; editorial.
 - 44. Thompson was a reluctant candidate for aldermanship in 1866, but felt that he "should not shrink from any position which my fellow citizens feel that I ought to fill". He fought the election for North Ward on a public health platform. Ibid., 24 Jan 1866; letter to editor from J.W. Thompson. Once elected he was not only active within the council in proposing health reforms, but was also an interested correspondent to The Brisbane Courier. See for example, Ibid., 2 Jun 1866; letter to editor from J.W.T.
 - 45. Ibid., 6 Mar 1866; editorial. This was a very unsettled period in Queensland political history. The Macalister ministry was in power from 1 February 1866 to 20 July 1866, and from 7 August 1866 to 15 August 1867. For the short period of less than one month between these terms, the Herbert ministry was in power. On 15 August 1867, the Mackenzie ministry came to power and remained in office until 25 November 1868. However, there was considerable continuity as far as the personnel of the ministries was concerned. See D.B. Waterson, A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament 1860-1929 (Canberra, 1972), for details.
 - 46. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, III (1866), 294. In taking this stand Mackenzie was following the lead of pressure groups, like the British and Foreign Medico-Chirurgical Society which, as early as the 1840's, had claimed that "one broad principle may be safely enunciated in respect of sanitary economics - that it costs more money to create disease than to prevent it". Quoted in Briggs, Victorian Cities, p.21.

and amplifications", was before the house.⁴⁷ The 1866 proposal again provided for the establishment of a central board of health in Brisbane, and local boards to work in other parts of the colony. It proposed that registrations of deaths within the colony be made only by health officers with a medical certificate,⁴⁸ and contained some provisions for the regulation of buildings. Slaughterhouses were not neglected, and common lodging houses, which were always regarded as potential pest centres, featured prominently. Clauses to enable the control of burial grounds, because of their connection with the currently-held miasmatic theory of diseases transmission, were also included. Nor did the Colonial Secretary ignore the importance of pure food, though the editor of the Courier felt strongly, that a great deal more attention might have been paid to the important question of deliberate food adulteration.⁴⁹

In the end, the 1866 proposal met the fate of its predecessor, despite a very gloomy report from the Registrar-General. Brisbane, in particular, had a very bad record in the sensitive child death rate area.

Whichever way we look at the subject, the result is the same - that a large increase is apparent in the mortality of children. In the Registration District of Brisbane, the most populous in the colony, we see that the mortality of children below five years of age has in one year almost doubled; - the respective numbers being, in 1864, 285; in 1865, 451! In Drayton and Toowoomba, the numbers are in 1864, 31; in 1865, 65: actually more than double. These figures speak for themselves, in unmistakeable language.

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In spite of the obvious need for action, definite and important objections were raised to the 1866 measure. Some of them were to become permanent features of Queensland's public health story. The main criticism was the bill's tendency to centralization. Functions to be

47. The Brisbane Courier, 3 May 1866; editorial. This was followed shortly afterwards - 29 June 1866 - by a Sewerage Commissioners Bill, which was "intended to be merely a rider to the Health Bill." Queensland Parliamentary Debates, III (1866), 463. Unfortunately this bill was discharged from the paper on 1 October 1866.
48. Ibid., pp.294-96. This clause was strongly opposed by some members, mainly on the grounds that it threatened the rights of the individual. Members confessed that they were "very much surprised to see a clause of such a description smuggled into the Bill", and that this was "the most objectionable feature of the Bill". There were also protests from outside the house. A number of petitions was sent to parliament, in particular, one from Dr. William Smith, of Toowoomba, who protested the "infringement of the liberty of the subject" through this clause, as well as the financial "injury". Ibid., p.295.
49. The Brisbane Courier, 3 May 1866; editorial.
50. "Sixth Annual Report on Registration of Births, Marriages, and Deaths", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1866), 1259. The report was presented on 21 August 1866, thirteen days after Macalister took office.

conferred on a central board of health impinged upon the dearly-held right of municipal and town council autonomy. Not only would the proposed health board transgress within the province of local authority, but there was also the threat of central dispensation of funds, the source of which was local rates and taxes. Another area of dispute was the amount of discretion, with regard to duties, given to officers of either local or central boards. This, in the opinion of some observers, could actually redound to the detriment of the public health. The bill was also criticised because it did "not take advantage of the new discoveries of science".⁵¹

To cap all other objections, economic problems continued to dog Queensland. The failure of the Agra and Masterman Bank deprived the government of a stipulated advance of £100,000, which was to have been used for developmental programmes in the still infant colony. Despite a brave government assertion that public works would continue to be carried out,⁵²

efforts to restore the financial position were not successful and the whole colony began to feel the repercussions.... Money obtained by the sale of Treasury bonds remaining after the pressing creditors of the Government had been satisfied was quite insufficient for the purposes of government, and much against its will, the Ministry was compelled to stop public works.⁵³

Given this situation, it is most likely that even had the 1866 bill reached the statute book, it would have remained a dead letter.

The following year was to see yet another attempt to introduce a sanitary measure of a rather different kind. Strangely enough, Western Wood, who had vigorously defended certain vested interests against "a very short Bill of a sanitary nature" directed against filthy slaughter-houses,⁵⁴ was in the forefront in presenting a bill for the prevention

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- 51. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, III (1866), 295, and The Brisbane Courier, 7 Jun 1866; editorial.
 - 52. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1866), 951-52.
 - 53. J. Pearson, "Social Services in Queensland", unpublished B.A. Honours thesis, University of Queensland, 1953, pp.35-36.
 - 54. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, III (1866), 115. There was considerable objection to this measure, many members being unable to "see why, if the inhabitants of a town chose to be dirty, the Ministry should step in to prevent them". But governments were not entirely oblivious to the health needs of the community, even in this politically unstable, economically unsound period. See for example "Report from the Select Committee on the Hospitals of the Colony", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1866), 1613-16, Trustees of lying-hospital to Colonial Secretary, 15 Sep 1866, Q.S.A. COL/A 83, in-letter no.2565 of 1866, and "Appendix B to Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on Hospitals of the Colony", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1866), 1670-72.

of contagious diseases to the Queensland Legislative Council.⁵⁵ Wood had not undergone conversion to become a sanitarian-reformer. He was simply shepherding through a bill desired by one of the most well-established interests of all - the army medical department of the Australian contingent of the British army.⁵⁶ But the Executive Council, while desiring "to cooperate with the military authorities in a cordial spirit", had no wild enthusiasm for the enactment of a law which would entail considerable expenditure,⁵⁷ and which concerned only one company of the line stationed in Brisbane. The government would have preferred to see the proposed act put to the test first in Sydney and Melbourne,⁵⁸ and the bill was allowed to lapse with the dissolution of parliament.

Wood was quickly on the attack again in the spring session of the new parliament, championing the cause of the bill which was designed to prevent the spread of venereal diseases by the arrest and enforced vaginal examination of any woman suspected of being a prostitute, and her incarceration in a lock hospital should she be found to be infected. He did not want to be "very mealy-mouthed", though he "hardly liked to say much about" the bill.⁵⁹ But he and his like-minded colleagues overrode the objections of those members who thought the measure "beastly"⁶⁰ and "un-English",⁶¹ a bill which proposed extreme sexual discrimination,⁶² and which would provide for a medical man to fill "an obnoxious, an intolerable, a disgraceful office in the public service of Queensland".⁶³

Medical members of both houses, scorning inhibitions, joined forces to defend the bill, impressing members with the dangers of neglecting

- 55. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, IV (1867), 127.
- 56. Senior Medical Officer, Australian Colonies to Major of Brigade, Troops in Australian Colonies, 20 Mar 1867, enclosed in Brigadier-General of troops in Australia to Governor of Queensland, 20 Mar 1867, Q.S.A. GOV/A 2, p.129. See also E. Barclay, "Queensland's Contagious Diseases Act, 1868", Queensland Heritage, Vol.2, No.10, May 1974, p.28.
- 57. The expense would result from special management requirements, a special hospital, and a special system of quarantine. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, V (1867), 148.
- 58. Executive Council Minutes, 24 Apr 1867, Q.S.A. EXE/E 15, 67/25K.
- 59. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, V (1867), 184.
- 60. Ibid., p.471.
- 61. Ibid., p.420.
- 62. C.A. Bernays, Queensland Politics during sixty years: 1859-1919 (Brisbane, 1919), p.16.
- 63. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, V (1867), 420.

"those particular diseases" which were not only common among prostitutes,⁶⁴ but which could detrimentally effect the whole race.

But when the great interests involved were taken into consideration, and that the Bill was framed for the prevention of a loathsome disease which was liable to be transmitted from generation to generation, and to produce a puny and sickly population, he thought the Legislature should hesitate before they refused to take steps to check its spread. Honorable members had no conception of the number of cases in existence in... Brisbane. During the past twelve months the increase had been frightful and the ravages... something to deplore.

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Dr. Challinor was also very anxious to see the bill pass into law, proclaiming that any medical man would support the measure, while Dr. O'Doherty used scare tactics in an attempt to persuade the house. According to him, immigrants from the old world had brought a particularly virulent species of contagious disease into Queensland

that was rapidly infecting every young man in the colony. He had no hesitation in stating that at this moment, there was stalking about in the town as frightful a form of venereal disease as there was in the world. It was stalking abroad amongst those unfortunate females, unseen and unknown to those who had dealings with them, or to any one.... Those unfortunate women were walking centres of the most frightful disease to which the human body could be subject.

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Though the doctors agreed that the legislation "could not... prevent the dissemination of the vice" which led to the disease, a matter of immense concern to not a few parliamentarians and some extremely vocal pressure groups outside parliament, they did feel that a contagious diseases act was essential "for the protection of the innocent".⁶⁷ Despite a vigorous anti-contagious diseases bill campaign, which was waged by correspondents to the Brisbane press,⁶⁸ and the stubborn, "fruitless and vexatious" opposition of those members of parliament who

64. There was reluctance to name the diseases. One, gonorrhoea, appears only once in the Act itself. Queensland Government Gazette, (1868), 92.

65. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, V (1867), 148. Speech of Dr. W. Hobbs in the Legislative Council.

66. Ibid., p.471. Speech of Dr. K.I. O'Doherty in the Legislative Assembly.

67. Ibid., speech of Dr. Challinor in the Legislative Assembly.

68. See for example, these letters to the editor of The Brisbane Courier, 22 Oct 1867; letter to editor from A Citizen, 23 Oct 1867; letters to editor from ***, H.P., and A.B.C., 13 Jan 1868; letter to editor from Wm. Brookes, 14 Jan 1868; letter to editor from Veritas. The Brisbane Courier which was to wage a very vigorous campaign strongly supporting the Act in the future, was strangely silent at the time of the original debate.

"could not support the Bill... in any shape whatever",⁶⁹ an Act for the Prevention of Contagious Diseases received assent on 5 February 1868.⁷⁰

The parliament of Queensland had achieved its first piece of purely sanitary legislation.

It was a contentious Act, one which was to arouse the most bitter opposition from within and outside parliament, right up to 1914 and beyond.⁷¹ By that time, the representatives of the medical profession, who had been its chief defenders, were convinced that the Act, as it was administered in Queensland, was "totally ineffective",⁷² and that no valid reason could be urged in favour of continuing its operation.⁷³ In spite of this, the Act remained on the statute book. It is still there.⁷⁴

For the next few years, Queensland suffered from monumental sanitary problems which the press kept before the notice of the public;⁷⁵ there was a fair degree of concern over water supplies, especially if they were connected with some profitable industry;⁷⁶ running battles ensued over the Contagious Diseases Act;⁷⁷ there was a pleased interest in the comparatively optimistic Registrar-General's reports, with their messages

- 69. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, VI (1868), 854-55.
- 70. Queensland Government Gazette, XII (1868), 89.
- 71. It is impossible to trace the vicissitudes of the battle to try to repeal the Contagious Diseases Act in this thesis. For some details see R. Evans, "'Soiled Doves': Prostitution and Society in Colonial Queensland", Hecate, Vol. I, No. 2, July 1975, and E. Barclay, "Queensland's Contagious Diseases Act 1868", Queensland Heritage, Vol. 2, No. 10, May 1974 and Vol. 3, No. 1, Nov 1974.
- 72. Commissioner of Public Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 2 Sep 1907, Q.S.A. COL/A 934, in-letter no. 10380 of 1907.
- 73. Commissioner of Public Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 17 Aug 1911, Q.S.A. COL/A 934, in-letter no. 7759 of 1911.
- 74. Only the preamble to the Act has been changed, and that only slightly.
- 75. See for example, The Brisbane Courier, 2 Feb 1869, Ibid., 30 Mar 1870, Mayor of Brisbane to Colonial Secretary, 27 Sep 1870, Q.S.A. COL/A 148, in-letter no. 2682 of 1870, The Brisbane Courier, 13 Jul 1869; letter to editor from Still Alive; Ibid., 26 Jul 1869; letter to editor from Ignoramus, Ibid.; letter to editor from Resident.
- 76. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, IX (1869), 59-67.
- 77. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Mar 1869, Queensland Parliamentary Debates, VIII (1868-9), 249, and The Brisbane Courier, 30 Aug 1870; letter to editor from G.

of statistically-backed improvements;⁷⁸ a Waterway Construction Act for Brisbane was passed;⁷⁹ parliament was constantly considering - and being eluded by - some efficient and effective way of dealing with human wastes;⁸⁰ proper regard was paid to the provision of a qualified public analyst and a laboratory in which he could work;⁸¹ and there were stirrings of fear over smallpox.⁸² Nevertheless, no attempt was made to get a public health bill through parliament.

But by 1871, there was new interest in the various reforms and advances which were taking place in Europe and Britain,⁸³ not least those connected with scientific and medical discoveries and experience. Popular attention seems to have been aroused in April 1870 by a letter to the Courier. In this correspondence "S" complained that

there is not sufficient information given through the press of this colony on the progress of science... and there is some astonishment in the minds of those who live at a distance and are debarred the privilege of consulting the periodicals in which /scientific matters/ are noticed... that the germ theory is fast gaining ground. 84

Certainly, following this letter, an increasing number of articles were published on sewage farms,⁸⁵ on the question of the water supply and sanitation,⁸⁶ and on the prevention and cure of zymotic or infectious

78. The Brisbane Courier, 1 Dec 1869; editorial, and Ibid., 26 Dec 1870; editorial. Mortality amongst small children was still the cause of great regret. Ibid., 8 May 1871.
79. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XI (1870), 214-15.
80. "Despatch respecting The Dry Earth System", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1871-1872), 813-26.
81. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, IX (1869), 360-61, and The Brisbane Courier, 28 Jun 1869; letter to editor from Joseph Bancroft. The emphasis in the parliamentary debate was on soils and minerals, though water was also to be examined for impurities.
82. Ibid., 6 Feb 1869; letter to editor from O.P.Q., and Ibid., 13 Feb 1869; letter to editor from Brisbane.
83. At this time there was some pressure to give the franchise to women. The question which came before the Queensland parliament in April 1871, was linked, through the actions of Miss Faithful, Miss Martineau and Miss Nightingale, with the battle against the Contagious Diseases Act. In Queensland, some parliamentarians most opposed to the Contagious Diseases Act - for example W.H. Walsh - also set their faces against the vote for women. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIII (1871), 42-43 and 45-46, The Brisbane Courier, 12 Apr 1871; letter to editor from A.M., and Ibid., 22 Apr 1871; letter to editor from Gyaecian.
84. Ibid., 14 Apr 1870; letter to editor from S.
85. See for example, The Australasian, 26 Mar 1870, and The Brisbane Courier, 13 Apr 1870, and Ibid., 26 Aug 1870.
86. Ibid., 15 Sep 1870; letter to editor from Householder.

diseases.⁸⁷ Early in the new year, the Brisbane City Council determined to prevent at least one source of disease dissemination⁸⁸ - the very prevalent practice of throwing dead animals in the streets of the capital, "where they putrified and caused an intolerable stench". The council's inspector of nuisances was authorised to announce a reward for information leading to the conviction of offenders. Evidently the fear of neighbourhood spy rings willing to exchange intelligence for cash was more effective than persuasion, because shortly afterwards The Brisbane Courier was able to report that "the evil was greatly abated".⁸⁹ In April 1871, the newly-formed Queensland Medical Society entered the field. The society issued stern warnings on "insanitary conditions" and "noxious agents" which

are the frightful means of pestilence's devastating spread. At present they are predisposing and determining causes of numerous disorders, especially during infancy and childhood, which, if struggled through too frequently, precede a sickly period of puberty, impaired manhood, and premature decay.

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Perhaps encouraged by this renewed interest in sanitary affairs, and certainly influenced by the possibility of the importation of smallpox to the colony, Dr. K.I. O'Doherty introduced an ill-fated health bill to the Legislative Assembly, on 26 April 1871. The measure did not even reach the second reading,⁹¹ and though it was reintroduced on

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- 87. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Nov 1870. There was special interest in the reports of the meetings of the British Association in Liverpool, England, at which Thomas Huxley and John Tyndall were the "great lights".
 - 88. Ibid. In doing this, the council was defying the scientists and clinging to the miasmatic theory of disease propagation.
 - 89. Ibid., 19 Jan 1871. At the same time private firms were geared to perform scavenging duties, as this advertisement testifies, Ibid., 11 Oct 1871.

Nightman! Nightman!!
and Chimneysweeper.

W. Allen, Edward and Adelaide Streets
is prepared to EMPTY
Water closets, cesspools and remove
rubbish of all kinds on the shortest
notice, keeping a proper cart for the
occasion.

FURNITURE carefully removed
by SPRING VAN.

N.B. Any orders sent to the
above address will meet
with punctual attendance.

- 90. Ibid., 8 May 1871; report of inaugural meeting of the Queensland Medical Society, held 21 April 1871.
- 91. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1871), 42.

1 May,⁹² no further mention was made of it until the doctor broached the subject in the house again in 1872.⁹³

Even so, Queenslanders were becoming increasingly aware that some government action was necessary, if their health were to be protected. Fears about the utter disregard of the public health shown by food manufacturers, who deliberately adulterated their products, were quite widespread. Official control, the expense of which would be "trifling in comparison with the advantages which are to be secured", was demanded.⁹⁴ Attention was drawn to "one-roomed humpies without the necessary out-offices", which were springing up in various parts of Brisbane to threaten hitherto salubrious areas in a manner "unnecessary to point out to anyone who has a nose on his face". Unfortunately, as this particular correspondent pointed out, "the offence to the olfactory organs... /was/... the least part of the mischief, there being no provision made for drainage".⁹⁵ Inured as Brisbane citizens were to insanitary conditions and unpleasant odours, complaints about all sorts of abominable filth continued to reach The Brisbane Courier throughout the year.⁹⁶ Some noxious smells, like those emanating from the North Quay area and the principal streets of the capital, were alleged to be of such immense proportions as to "poison the atmosphere for nearly a mile around".⁹⁷ The realities of putrid accumulations and repulsive

- 92. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1871), 54.
- 93. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 595. There is no mention of the bill in debate, and no leader or obvious reference in the Courier.
- 94. For a sample of the correspondence on adulteration, particularly on the alleged chief mischief-maker alum, see The Brisbane Courier, 7 Sep 1871; letter to editor from Anti-Alum, Ibid., 9 Sep 1871; letter to editor from A Long Experienced Baker, and Ibid., 11 Sep 1871; letter to editor from A Parent. At the same time, medical men were showing considerable concern over food values, the necessity for "a great deal of education to teach people to distinguish unwholesome from wholesome food", and adulteration, which "of all crimes... should be punished most unmercifully and vehemently". See especially, Andrew Ross, M.D., Jottings on Vitality (Sydney, 1872), pp.13-14.
- 95. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Jun 1871; letter to editor from Sanator. Some opposed reform. "Cosmopolitan" considered the provision of sanitation in Brisbane satisfactory and expensive enough already. Ibid., 16 Jun 1871; letter to editor from Cosmopolitan.
- 96. See for example Ibid., 17 May 1871; letter to editor from B.W. and Ibid., 25 Sep 1871; letter to editor from Sufferer.
- 97. Ibid., 7 Oct 1871; letter to editor from One of the Sufferers.

odours were confirmed by the Brisbane city general inspector's report,⁹⁸ while the council's apparent inability to enforce its own regulations was humiliatingly evident.⁹⁹

Yet in spite of the all-too-obvious problems and inadequacies, the health of Queenslanders actually seemed to be improving. The Registrar-General's report for 1871 was remarkably satisfactory, revealing the death rate to be less than it had been in any year since the separation of the colony from New South Wales.¹⁰⁰ Given the prevailing conditions, Registrar-General Henry Scott was "unable to put forward any reason for the improvement".¹⁰¹ But in the light of his findings, it is extremely unlikely that Dr. O'Doherty's health bill of 1872 would have reached the statute book, had it not been for the publicity attending the possible introduction of smallpox during 1871, and the actual outbreak of the disease in Sydney on 10 July 1872.¹⁰²

Aided by the resulting morbid colonial fears, and fully supported by the Colonial Secretary,¹⁰³ O'Doherty, now the lone medical member of the house, urged the health bill upon his colleagues, since

there was not at the disposal of the Government at the present moment, any single instrument or organisation by which they could meet the attack of the disease. 104

At the same time, he appealed to the patriotic pride of the colony's representatives, pointing out that Queensland was failing to keep abreast with the Motherland and her sister colonies in the public health field. The British parliament had passed a Public Health Act in 1848,

- 98. The Brisbane Courier, 30 Jan 1872, and Ibid., 9 Apr 1872; reports of the Brisbane City Council's general inspector on sanitary conditions.
- 99. Ibid., 9 Apr 1872. "The bye-law regulating the matter... has as yet no legal force.... This subject calls for immediate attention". See also Ibid., 22 Oct 1872; main editorial, which alleged that the Municipal Institutions Act "remains a dead letter".
- 100. "Registrar-General's Report for 1871", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, (1871-2), 661. Unfortunately there were still disproportionate numbers of child deaths.
- 101. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Nov 1871.
- 102. This was certainly the view of Dr. W. Hobbs, Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 694.
- 103. Minutes of Executive Council, 11 Jul 1872, Q.S.A. EXE/E26, 72/28.
- 104. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 596.

and in "all other colonies there was a Health Act such as the one he proposed in existence".¹⁰⁵ True, the English and colonial acts applied only when proclaimed, but they were symptomatic of

a general movement for extending the sphere of internal administration and of multiplying the supervisory powers and positive duties of the State in relation to its citizens.¹⁰⁶

There was nothing original about O'Doherty's bill, as he freely admitted. He had considered the acts of the neighbouring colonies, but had turned to a Canadian health measure, as the one most suited to Queensland conditions, and had "copied as far as practicable word for word, from that Act".¹⁰⁷

The main feature of the bill was the appointment of a central board of health, which would act as the adviser to the government on all sanitary matters, and which would "work in perfect harmony with the Colonial Secretary who would be its Chairman".¹⁰⁸ O'Doherty suggested that this board should be an honorary one, though "if the House thought fit, they could pay it".¹⁰⁹ The proposed central board would extend its operations throughout the whole of Queensland, only when necessary, only with the cooperation of the local authorities, and with the utmost simplicity, through the appointment of local boards of health.¹¹⁰

Of no less importance was the proclamatory nature of the proposed act. With an eye to placating those members who were sure to resist the bill on economic grounds, O'Doherty explained that the act would be put in force only when "disease was found to be actually in a district".¹¹¹

105. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 596.

106. J. Redlich and F.W. Hirst, Local Government in England, Vol.1, (London, 1903), p.137.

107. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 595. O'Doherty followed the Canadians so closely that the words "Act to Amend the Health Laws" appears in the Queensland Act. Queensland Government Gazette, XIII (1872), 1263. Dr. Hobbs indicated that "he had not discovered any laws which the Bill could amend", but the title of the bill was not changed.

108. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 596. The inability of the various central boards and their Colonial Secretary chairmen to achieve harmonious relations was a prominent feature of Queensland's public health history during the nineteenth century.

109. Ibid.

110. Ibid., p.597.

111. Ibid.

Expenses entailed by the central board of health would have to be defrayed out of parliamentary appropriations, but the outlays of local boards would be the responsibility of municipal or shire authorities.¹¹²

Thoroughly alarmed by the threat of a smallpox invasion, the Colonial Secretary, Arthur Palmer, appealed to members "not to pick out any clauses which they might think would interfere with the liberty of the subject",¹¹³ one of the major obstacles to the passage of earlier health legislation proposals. In the Legislative Council, the debate was correspondingly forthright. Henry Bates Fitz's fears that the health bill would "outrageously violate" municipal autonomy, were overridden at once by the President of the Council. Sir Maurice O'Connell considered that the great dangers from disease importation, which had accompanied the "more speedy communication Queensland now enjoyed with the older portions of the world", fully justified central board powers of interference, be they with individual, or with local government freedoms.¹¹⁴ Dr. William Hobbs thoroughly agreed. His criticism of the bill was more stringent, though more constructive, than any other offered. Rebuking the legislature for its previous "very great indifference" to health matters, Hobbs nevertheless regretted the "peculiar" object of the 1872 bill. The preservation of the public health of the country should be a matter for permanent concern, not something to be proclaimed by the governor in council only when formidable disease threatened. The central board of health should be constantly on the alert, not called together merely at the discretion of, and "at such times as the Colonial Secretary may appoint".¹¹⁵ Hobbs felt that the bill had some serious omissions, and needed considerable amendment. It was an "instalment", albeit a useful one, a mere precaution towards the preservation of the public health. It was only a temporary measure to meet an outbreak of disease; therefore much could not be expected from it.¹¹⁶

Despite its shortcomings, the bill was rushed through both houses, very largely on account of the immediate smallpox scare. But it also received considerable support, because "very malignant diseases /which/

112. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 695.

113. Ibid., p.610.

114. Ibid., p.696.

115. Queensland Government Gazette, XIII (1872), 1264.

116. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 695.

"threatened to be attended by very serious results" had already broken out in various far-flung towns and villages throughout the colony.¹¹⁷ Government attention had been directed to the plight of these communities, but the lack of effective legislation inhibited relief efforts. For this reason, representatives of some peripheral electorates "trusted that there would be no delay in passing the proposed Bill".¹¹⁸

Queensland's first Public Health Act received assent on 12 August 1872.¹¹⁹ As Hobbs had predicted, experience was to prove the measure a frail thing. It gave the central board of health, yet to be appointed, power to issue regulations under certain conditions,¹²⁰ and provided for penalties to be imposed for wilful obstruction of officers appointed under the Act.¹²¹ But, in practice, it had no real teeth.

The seven appointees to the new Central Board of Health - four of them medical men¹²² - were chosen fairly quickly,¹²³ and Queenslanders waited expectantly for health improvements. It was not long before public complaints about the uselessness of the Act, and the board's lack of action, began to make their appearance. An outbreak of scarlatina in the capital in October 1872 seemed to "Alpha" to be an excellent reason for the proclamation of the Health Act, and some speedy attention from the Central Board of Health - but nothing was done.¹²⁴ Even worse, the inadequacies and inefficiencies of the Municipalities Act, which the 1872 Health Act might have been expected to eradicate, were not overcome, so that under the new law, Brisbane was as filthy and germ-ridden as before.¹²⁵ "Cholera Morbus" also referred the Central Board of Health

117. See for example concern over towns like Stanthorpe. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 610.

118. Ibid., speech of Mr. MacDevitt, member for Kennedy.

119. Its passage had been very swift indeed. The Executive Council approved it, and O'Doherty introduced it on 11 July 1872.

120. Queensland Government Gazette, XIII (1872), 1264. The Health Act of 1872, 36 Vic. No.14, Clause 9.

121. Ibid., pp.1265-1267, Clauses 10 and 14.

122. This was two more than was required under the Act. Ibid., p.1264.

123. Their names were gazetted on 27 September 1872. Ibid., p.1566. See also Colonial Secretary to Central Board of Health, 31 Dec 1872, Q.S.A. COL/A 176, out-letter no.2377 of 1872.

124. The Brisbane Courier, 21 Oct 1872; letter to editor from Alpha.

125. Ibid., 22 Oct 1872; main editorial. The Brisbane City Council was busily calling for a new Municipal Act granting greater powers at this time, but the Courier asked "What use has been made of those /Acts/ already available?" Ibid., 8 Nov 1872; main editorial.

to "choked drains" and "filthy stagnant pools", and "urged the Central Board of Health... at once to set about the duties entrusted to them".¹²⁶

The board did not get down to practicalities until early in 1873, but that was hardly its fault. The legislation required that members should meet and act only at the minister's discretion, and it was not until 31 December 1872, that Arthur Palmer directed the Queensland Central Board of Health to commence work. It was to draw up rules of conduct, make a statistical analysis of Queensland's birth and death figures for the previous five years, and publish regulations covering all aspects of sanitation and the exigencies of malignant epidemic outbreaks. Most importantly, the board was to make arrangements for "efficient sanatory Inspection".¹²⁷

The board's regulations and its instructions for the guidance of local boards of health were finally published on 23 May 1873,¹²⁸ but the central board was more interested and more concerned than this apparent tardiness would indicate. Certainly it was alarmed enough "on account of the increase of endemic and epidemic diseases in the District of Brisbane arising from... remediable causes", to petition the government on 1 May 1873, for the proclamation of the Health Act in the capital. The board was supported by the registered medical practitioners of Brisbane, who forwarded a second petition to the government to the same effect,¹²⁹ but the government did nothing. The central board wrote again on 8 May, requesting immediate action on their petition,¹³⁰ and Brisbane was at last proclaimed on 17 May 1873.¹³¹

The very real weaknesses of the 1872 Health Act became apparent immediately. On the one hand, the central health authority was faced

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- 126. The Brisbane Courier, 20 Nov 1872; letter to editor from Cholera Morbus.
 - 127. Colonial Secretary to Central Board of Health, 31 Dec 1872, Q.S.A. COL/A 176, out-letter no.2377 of 1872.
 - 128. Queensland Government Gazette, XIV (1873), 826-28.
 - 129. Petition from Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 1 May 1873, Q.S.A. COL/A 188, enclosure in in-letter no.2388 of 1873. A second petition from the registered medical practitioners is also enclosed. This petition is undated.
 - 130. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 8 May 1873, Q.S.A. COL/A 188, in-letter no.2388.
 - 131. Queensland Government Gazette, XIV (1873), 800. The capital was proclaimed again on 15 November 1873. Ibid., p.1895, and Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 3 Nov 1873, Q.S.A. COL/A 186, in-letter no.1908 of 1873.

with intolerable delays which posed potential threats to the health of the nation. On the other, the wording of the Act itself inhibited any anticipatory action for disease prevention by the central board.

The proclamation of Brisbane in May 1873 required the municipal council to set up a local board of health, financed from local funds. Claiming that "the revenue of the Brisbane Corporation is scarcely in so flourishing a condition at present as to admit of any fresh demand, to a serious extent, being made upon its resources",¹³² the Brisbane City Council declined to appoint any such board, unless the expenses of working were borne by the government of Queensland. This demand seemed reasonable enough to Brisbane aldermen and ratepayers. Brisbane was the principal port for the whole colony, and the city was therefore more liable to suffer from epidemic diseases than any other municipality: and freedom from diseases was dependent, in the council's view, on the provision of a proper system of drainage - an undertaking quite beyond the financial capabilities of the corporation.¹³³

Early in July, the city council offered to appoint a local board of health on these conditions. But the central board threatened legal action under the 1872 legislation, if a local board was not appointed on or before 11 July 1873.¹³⁴ Still the council procrastinated, debating the issue in its legislative committee, in the presence of Dr. K.I. O'Doherty,¹³⁵ who was finally goaded into writing a very long letter to the press.

O'Doherty explained the leading features of the recent legislation, and the financial arrangements of the Act. He maintained that the very latest advice on public health matters received from Great Britain and the older colonies, had been incorporated into Queensland's Health Act. He revealed the horrendous results of the Central Board of Health's investigation into the colony's mortality tables, commencing with the year 1867.

132. The Brisbane Courier, 19 May 1873.

133. Ibid., 17 Jun 1873. Report of the Improvement Committee of Brisbane City Council, printed in full. The mayor, town clerk and city surveyor, and Dr. O'Doherty and Charles Lilley had pressed for government assistance for a proper system of drainage. Ibid., 19 and 20 May 1873 and Ibid., 22 May 1873; main editorial.

134. Letter from Arthur Rawlins to Brisbane City Council, 5 July 1875. This correspondence is not available in the Queensland State Archives. Fortunately, The Brisbane Courier, recognising the importance of the exchange, printed all the letters written on this matter in full. See Ibid., 15 Jul 1873.

135. Ibid., 29 Jul 1873.

Such a rate of mortality, especially among young children of tender age, although lamentable to think of in a young colony, of which the children may well be considered the life blood, is in no way to be wondered at if we take the trouble to walk through the streets at night and inhale for hours the foul atmosphere such children are doomed to breathe.

The Central Board of Health... did not hesitate to recommend the Government to proclaim the city.... The Government however hesitated to act without further warrant, which they received in the form of a memorial signed by every duly qualified medical man practising in Brisbane.... The Government of course no longer hesitated.... The municipal body, seemingly unaware of everything that the Parliament, the Government, and the Central Board of Health have been doing, refuse to do their part in the good work.... It must... be made plain to them that in doing so they are upholding a system which necessarily entails a wholesale slaughter of our children, and imminent danger as well to their own precious lives.

136.

The debate was now in the public arena, and The Brisbane Courier eagerly entered the lists. The editor emphasised that, like every municipal council world-wide, the Brisbane corporation was backed by property interests. These "tenementary property owners" invariably resisted strenuously, any approach of the tyranny of having to sacrifice the rights of private property, in the interests of public sanitation enforced by law.¹³⁷ Yet the

liberty of the subject does not include the liberty of one man to poison his neighbour with foul smells, or injure his health by carelessness or greed.

The Brisbane Courier might have felt some sympathy with the financially hard-pressed council had it not been for the fact that the municipal body had consistently neglected its first duty - to "take effectual means to protect the health of its inhabitants".¹³⁸

"A Bohemian" added his ironic comments to the argument.

136. The Brisbane Courier, 31 Jul 1873; letter to editor from Dr. K.I. O'Doherty.

137. Asa Briggs contends that in the nineteenth century "the most effective argument for sanitary reform was that it would actually save money in the long run, not squander it". Briggs, Victorian Cities, p.2. This possibility had not been grasped by Brisbane property owners and ratepayers in 1873. A similar attitude had obtained among British landlords and cottage ratepayers, who banded together in an attempt to prevent the introduction of various public health and local government acts, thereby slowing down the rate of sanitary progress in that country. See for example, Finer, p.501.

138. The Brisbane Courier, 1 Aug 1873; editorial.

I am glad to see the City Council making a firm stand against the Central Board of Health and their newfangled notions. A pretty thing indeed if aldermen are to trouble their heads about stinks and go poking into back-yards and gutters to secure the observance of what people call sanitary laws! The next thing I suppose will be to ask them to become nightmen. Suppose four or five hundred babies are really killed off year by year by bad smells, are there not others come to take their places? And if a fever should break out and sweep away a number of adults - are there not plenty who would be spared?... The Municipal Council have something better to employ their energies than in poking about to see that the streets are properly drained, and all disagreeable smells kept down. 139

An overwhelming number of aldermen continued to withstand the appointment of a local board of health, even though the threat of the increased incidence of epidemic diseases grew alarmingly with the approach of the hot summer months. The city fathers claimed that such an appointment "relegated the council" to the position of rate-raiser for an irresponsible board"; that it was the proposal of "doctors who ought not to be allowed to tyrannise over them"; and that "ratepayers would not submit to further taxes". The opposition was so deep-drawn and so vehement, that these objections were still being raised after the council had received the city solicitor's opinion that any writ of mandamus issued by the Central Board of Health under the Health Act, could not be successfully resisted, and that it would be best for the council to appoint a local board at once.¹⁴⁰

In a last ditch stand, the aldermen decided to call a public meeting of ratepayers to consider the matter, declaring that they would not vote for a local board, unless instructed to do so by that meeting.¹⁴¹ It was poorly attended,¹⁴² and in the face of obvious public apathy, the first Brisbane Local Board of Health was appointed at a hurriedly called extraordinary municipal council meeting.¹⁴³ Further difficulties arose

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- 139. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Aug 1873; letter to editor from A Bohemian.
 - 140. On 21 August 1873 a show cause application was made to the Supreme Court against the Brisbane City Council over the local board issue. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1874, p.88, and The Brisbane Courier, 22 Aug 1873. See also Redlich and Hirst, Vol.II, pp.366-67, for an explanation of the workings of mandamus in British courts.
 - 141. The Brisbane Courier, 22 Aug 1873.
 - 142. Ibid., 6 Sep 1873. The opening of the meeting was delayed in the vain hope of an influx of late arrivals, but only fifty people were present.
 - 143. Ibid., 9 Sep 1873.

as some appointed members refused to act.¹⁴⁴ But by mid-September, Brisbane had a working Local Board of Health which, according to The Brisbane Courier, was "marked... by an evident determination... to carry out vigorously the duties undertaken".¹⁴⁵ Unfortunately, contemporaries could detect no improvement in the sanitary state of the capital, and complaints continued to flood into all three bodies now concerned with the public health.¹⁴⁶

As for the Health Act itself, the apprehensions expressed by many Queenslanders when O'Doherty first introduced his legislation, now seemed justified. The objections of anti-centralist parliamentarians, who had opposed the Act because "very serious" and "too great powers" would be conferred on the Central Board of Health to enable it to "interfere even with municipalities",¹⁴⁷ appeared to be vindicated by the enforced appointment of Brisbane's first Local Board of Health. The worst fears of the Brisbane council were certainly confirmed, when, on 20 October 1873, a bill for £36.11.6 to cover law charges, was presented by the city solicitor. The bulk of the fee had been incurred by the Local Board of Health in checking the legality and enforceability of their regulations.¹⁴⁸ Extra expenses continued to mount as the council general inspector, who had carried out some work at the direction of the local board, requested remuneration from the council for these duties, which "entailed considerable extra work".¹⁴⁹

- 144. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Sep 1873. The first meeting of the board was a farce since three members refused to attend. "A Bohemian" marked the occasion with another facetious letter to the Courier. Ibid.
- 145. Ibid., 17 Sep 1873. None of the local board members was a council alderman in 1873, but each had already served at least one term as mayor of Brisbane. The only "professional" on the board was W. Apjohn, the council's general inspector of nuisances. See Brewer and Dunn, for details of aldermen and mayors of Brisbane up to 1924.
- 146. See for example Ibid., 7 Oct 1873; general reporting, Ibid., 22 Oct 1873; letter to editor from Oxygen, Ibid., 9 Dec 1873; letter to Local Board of Health from L.A. Bernays, Acclimatization Society about illegal manure dumping.
- 147. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XIV (1872), 610 and 696.
- 148. The Brisbane Courier, 21 Oct 1873. See also Ibid., 17 Sep and 24 Sep 1873.
- 149. Ibid., 18 Nov 1873. In self-defence, the council refused to allow the local board to use the city surveyor to inspect new buildings and drainage, claiming that this officer was fully employed within his own department. Ibid., 9 Dec 1873. The full text of the correspondence between the Local Board of Health and the council on this important matter of staff use is recorded in this issue of The Brisbane Courier.

Those who had claimed that the 1872 Health Act did not go far enough in dealing with Queensland's monumental health problems, also had the doubtful satisfaction of seeing their prognostications come true.¹⁵⁰ The Central Board of Health had been subjected to the annoyance and frustration of the government's reluctance to act quickly on the advice of its health experts,¹⁵¹ and the Brisbane City Council's shilly-shallying when the Act was finally proclaimed. The board soon discovered that the Act itself was a stumbling-block to the forestalling of any possible outbreak of disease. During the latter half of 1873, the central board received a number of complaints about "nuisances injurious to health" from the neighbourhoods of Milton and Breakfast Creek. These were accompanied by urgent requests for the appointment of local boards of health,¹⁵² but the Attorney-General ruled against the issuing of proclamations under the terms of the Act,¹⁵³ which precluded preventive action. The application of a cure was not permitted until the disease actually appeared.

Given the unsatisfactory health legislation, the constant, urgent, and wasteful necessity of reproclaiming the capital,¹⁵⁴ the "thoroughly polluted" state of the city,¹⁵⁵ the consequent very high infant mortality

150. Notably Dr. Hobbs. Medical members of the Central Board of Health very quickly realised the very circumscribed nature of their powers, and began to press for executive powers.
151. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 22 Sep 1873, Q.S.A. COL/A 185, in-letter no.1661 of 1873, in which the central board urged the provision of an extra fever ward as existing wards were "grossly overcrowded". The government replied that no new buildings were to be erected, but "should emergency arise it will be provided for". Marginal comment on above, 25 Sep 1873.
152. The complaints were fulsome and numerous, and the requests for local boards even included the names of would-be members. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 6 Oct 1873, Q.S.A. COL/A 186, in-letter no.1752 of 1873, and Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 3 Nov 1873, Q.S.A. COL/A 186, in-letter no.1907 of 1873.
153. The opinion of the Attorney-General was sent to the Central Board on 17 November 1873. It was based on Section I of the Act.
154. See Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 9 May 1874, Q.S.A. COL/A 194, in-letter no.962, and Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 28 Oct 1874, Q.S.A. COL/A 199, in-letter no. 2211 of 1874. The Milton and Breakfast Creek situation was so serious by December 1874, that the two areas were proclaimed as from 11 January 1875. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 6 Dec 1874, Q.S.A. COL/A 201, in-letter no.2528 of 1874, and marginal comment re actual proclamation.
155. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Sep 1874; editorial.

rate,¹⁵⁶ and the Brisbane Local Board of Health's declaration that it was "completely unable to abate nuisances of certain kinds",¹⁵⁷ it is hardly surprising that by early July 1874, the Central Board of Health had drafted amending health legislation.¹⁵⁸ It is astonishing that by 16 July of that same year, the bill, which had qualified government approval, and which was favourably commented on in the committee of the whole, had been discharged from the paper.¹⁵⁹

The rejection of the amendment bill was based on parliament's reluctance to place wide taxing powers in the hands of the Central Board of Health.¹⁶⁰ Members also objected to an irresponsible board's being given wide-ranging controls over the inspection of public boarding houses, and the detection and prevention of the adulteration of foods, drinks, drugs, and medicines.¹⁶¹ The final blow to the bill was the central board's attempt to introduce compulsory vaccination against smallpox. Even those members favourably disposed towards the bill were unable to stomach this blatant attack on individual freedom.¹⁶²

Evidence of the inefficiency of the Queensland Health Act

- 156. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Sep 1874; editorial.
- 157. Part of the local board's self-confessed impotence arose from the dispute over the funding of their projects. In the city solicitor's opinion, the payment of local board expenses could not be successfully resisted by council, but the aldermen strongly desired a more subject local board, to try to curb what they saw as excessive outlays. Council feeling ran so high that a deputation waited on the Colonial Secretary, Arthur Macalister, asking him to disband the local board entirely. He refused to do this, but agreed to allow the council to appoint a board "more amenable to its wishes". The resulting board, appointed on 3 December 1874, consisted of the Mayor, James Swan, and five sitting aldermen. Its membership was approved by the Central Board of Health. For details see The Brisbane Courier, 16 May, 2 Sep, 22 Sep, 3 Nov, 6 Nov, 4 Dec 1874, and 5 Nov 1874; letter to editor from Health.
- 158. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XVII (1874), 936. In introducing the bill, Secretary for Public Works, Thomas McIlwraith, asserted that the original Health Act was "a very excellent measure", "had worked... very satisfactorily, and was calculated to be of very great benefit".
- 159. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1874), 341 and 381.
- 160. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XVII (1874), 936. The government had never approved this clause of the bill.
- 161. Ibid., p.937. William Bailey, who particularly objected to these clauses was the son of a medical practitioner, and a failed medical student.
- 162. Arthur Palmer, under whose government the 1872 Act was passed, thought the new bill was "badly wanted", but strongly opposed compulsory vaccination. Ibid., p.938.

continued to mount during 1875. Members of the Central Board of Health repeated their complaint that although the legislation was being proclaimed in various centres throughout the colony, "valuable time was lost before the Act was fairly brought into operation".¹⁶³ During heated debate on the 1875 Brisbane drainage bill - a piece of sanitary legislation which did reach the statute book¹⁶⁴ - bitter attacks were made in both houses of parliament on the 1872 Health Act, the Central and Local Boards of Health, and the Brisbane City Council. All of these bodies were accused of actually "preventing the improvement of the sanitary condition of Brisbane",¹⁶⁵ by allowing the existence of "what had been termed 'stink pots'".¹⁶⁶ Members professed themselves shocked by a "heavy death rate which had been something frightful",¹⁶⁷ and the representative for Brisbane, Robert Stewart, having consulted medical authorities, warned that the mortality "was very likely to greatly increase".¹⁶⁸ Stewart was convinced that "the recently appointed Local/Board of Health had something to do with it, as, since it had been established, the city had been in a far worse state than it was before".¹⁶⁹ The member for Fortitude Valley agreed. Francis Beattie

believed that this unhealthiness had been greatly accelerated by the Health Act that had been put in force. A more pernicious system, he believed, had never been in existence than that at present in force in Brisbane.¹⁷⁰

In the face of this criticism, the government simply resorted to proclamations of the capital under the already discredited Health Act, which had raised the ire of parliamentarians and citizens alike.¹⁷¹

163. Particularly in fever-ridden Maryborough. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 6 Mar 1876, Q.S.A. COL/A 219, in-letter no. 575 of 1876. This letter stood in lieu of a central board report. No reports had been published to this date, though called for under the 1872 Health Act.

164. Queensland Government Gazette, II (1875), 1451.

165. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XVIII (1875), 599. Speech of H.G. Simpson in the Legislative Council.

166. Ibid., p.481. Speech of W.H. Groom, member for Drayton and Toowoomba

167. Ibid., p.599. Speech of A.H. Brown in the Legislative Council, echoed in the Assembly by Francis Beattie, member for Fortitude Valley.

168. Ibid., p.472.

169. Ibid., p.473.

170. Ibid., p.476. On the other hand, C.H. Buzacott, member for Rockhampton, complained that the fault lay in the Act's never having been enforced. Ibid., p.477.

171. Queensland Government Gazette, XVI (1875), 1058, and Ibid., XVII (1875), 2249.

Even this solace was not extended to Ipswich. In March 1875, the mortality in that city assumed "a very serious character", and the central board requested proclamation, but to no avail.¹⁷² By mid-1875, measles had a hold on both Brisbane and Ipswich, while in nearby Goodna scarcely one family had escaped the scourge.¹⁷³ Again the government declined to proclaim Ipswich and her environs, but this was partly because the Central Board of Health itself attributed the "high death rate at present, not to drainage, /that is, to remedial causes/, but to a virulent epidemic of measles 'due to atmospheric changes'".¹⁷⁴

The weather had certainly been unkind to the colony. Queensland was once more in the grip of a drought, which was not only allegedly devastating from a health point of view, but was certainly causing "great anxiety and loss" financially as well. Queensland was "suffering an evident depression", and although it was "without its too-often concomitant - a panic", government works and expenditure had received a definite check,¹⁷⁵ particularly in the area of capital works for sanitary purposes.¹⁷⁶

Nevertheless, given the physical, political, and economic climate, changes to the 1872 Health Act were obviously necessary, and a health act amendment bill was produced. The bill was calculated to appeal to the decentralization faction, with its proposal to limit interference

- 172. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 30 Mar 1875, Q.S.A. COL/A 207, in-letter no.990 of 1875.
- 173. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1876, pp.56-7.
- 174. The Brisbane Courier, 6 Jul 1875. See David Hardie's Notes on some of the More Common Diseases in Queensland in Relation to Atmospheric Conditions, for an explanation of this contemporary view.
- 175. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1877, p.71. Maryborough was an exception to the drought situation. In the early part of 1875, disastrous floods had hit the town. In this case, water and "a lot of muck lying around" was blamed for the unsatisfactory health of the town. See The Brisbane Courier, 11 Mar, 22 Mar, 25 Mar, 29 Mar, 31 Mar, and 5 Apr 1875.
- 176. Apart from government reluctance to finance sanitary improvements, funds were either entirely lacking, or very slow in being passed on for local board of health purposes. See especially with regard to Milton and Breakfast Creek boards. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 30 Mar 1875, Q.S.A. COL/A 207, in-letter no.994 of 1875, Colonial Secretary to Central Board of Health, 12 Apr 1875, Q.S.A. COL/A 206, out-letter no.260, and reminder letter from Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 14 Aug 1875, Q.S.A. COL/A 213, in-letter no.2394 of 1875.

"with any powers belonging to any Municipalities".¹⁷⁷ Like the amendment bill of the previous year, it was favourably received by the committee of the whole, yet it was ignominiously discharged from the paper before the second reading.¹⁷⁸

The following year, one of continuing recession,¹⁷⁹ which was marked by a depressed state in the labour market,¹⁸⁰ was a rare period in the decade of the seventies - a year which did not see any attempt to pass amending health legislation. Sanitary difficulties had certainly not disappeared, and the Central Board of Health was still experiencing troublesome delays in having obvious trouble spots declared and proclaimed.¹⁸¹ But in 1876 the Registrar-General produced a favourable report,¹⁸² and local, and even more importantly, overseas medical journals, began to comment propitiously on Queensland - "one of our healthiest colonies... in spite of what are acknowledged to be grave sanitary evils and defects in the principal towns of the colony".¹⁸³

The respite from attempts to pass health legislation did not last long. In 1877, Queensland's health situation deteriorated. Rampant home-grown diseases were multiplied with the arrival of typhoid, measles, and scarlet-fever-ridden ships from Great Britain and Europe,¹⁸⁴ and smallpox made its appearance on the Queensland coast.¹⁸⁵ Fever attacks

177. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 27 Apr 1875, Q.S.A. COL/A 208, in-letter no.1229 of 1875.

178. Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, I (1875), 312. The bill was discharged on 3 September 1875.

179. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1877, p.71.

180. Immigration Agent's Report on the Queen of Nations to Colonial Secretary, 22 Sep 1876, Q.S.A. COL/A 226, in-letter no.2301 of 1876.

181. For example, on 12 January 1876, Cooktown was reported, by telegraph, to be "one great hospital". Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1877, p.48. Yet the central board achieved only partial proclamation by 25 November. Only after a deputation had pressured the Colonial Secretary, was the Act proclaimed in full force. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 25 Nov 1876, Q.S.A. COL/A 229, in-letter no.3075, and marginal comments on results.

182. Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, II (1876), especially pp.388 and 390-93.

183. The Lancet, Vol.II, 8 Jul 1876, p.63. See also Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1877, p.75.

184. For example, the Charles Dickens, which sailed from Hamburg on 5 April 1877 and arrived in Moreton Bay on 14 July, with measles and scarlet fever rife in the ship. The ship was immediately put into quarantine, being granted pratique early in September 1877. The Telegraph, 3 Nov 1871.

185. Within, p.223.

increased throughout the colony, particularly amongst men working on important government developmental projects in rural areas,¹⁸⁶ and in heavily-populated areas near the heart of the capital.¹⁸⁷ To add to these problems, the Central Board of Health was deeply concerned over "the Chinese invasion of the Palmer Gold Fields", and the distinct possibility that the formidable contagious diseases prevalent in the East might enter the colony with these aliens.¹⁸⁸ The immediate reaction of the board was to call upon the government to reconsider their 1875 health act amendment bill.¹⁸⁹

After deliberation, the board made fresh proposals to the government. A new amendment bill incorporated the central board rules and regulations which had been gazetted in 1876,¹⁹⁰ and which would certainly have made for a more effective and comprehensive piece of health legislation.¹⁹¹ But incredibly, the 1877 bill met exactly the same treatment as its immediate predecessor,¹⁹² possibly because Dr. K.I. O'Doherty, now elevated to the Legislative Council, was unavailable to fight for the measure during its short life in the Assembly.

The following year witnessed repeat performances for Queensland in two important areas. Once again, the colony was faced with serious drought conditions,¹⁹³ which, in some tragic instances, had disastrous

- 186. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXIII (1877), 28. "Malarial" - type fevers were rife amongst men working on the Dalby to Roma railway line, and parliamentarians representing the area were most concerned.
- 187. South Brisbane "prayed" to be brought under the 1872 Act on 4 January 1877. The first notice came on 27 September 1876, with a petition from forty-one persons. The situation was confirmed by the central board as "urgent" in November 1876. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 24 Nov 1876, Q.S.A. COL/A 229, in-letter no.3083 of 1876 and attachments.
- 188. "Progress Report of the Central Board of Health", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1877), 1145.
- 189. Ibid., p.1146.
- 190. Queensland Government Gazette, XIX (1876), 839.
- 191. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 19 May 1877, Q.S.A. COL/A 238, in-letter no.2889 of 1877.
- 192. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1877), 166.
- 193. See for example The Brisbane Courier, 9 Feb 1878, and 11 Feb 1878; editorial.

effects on the health of Queensland towns.¹⁹⁴ Another health act amendment bill was placed before the Queensland parliament, with Kevin O'Doherty as a strong proponent once again.¹⁹⁵ This bill, which was more strongly worded, and sought wider power for the Central Board of Health than any other previously prepared, was supported by the government, but was stopped through prorogation.¹⁹⁶

With monotonous regularity, an amending attempt appeared before the house again in 1879. It was becoming increasingly obvious that the government, now led by the conservative Thomas McIlwraith, with A.H. Palmer as Colonial Secretary, was presiding over an ever-worsening public health situation. Grave sanitary problems, which needed immediate attention,¹⁹⁷ were shamefully neglected. The Central Board of Health admitted to having "no power to deal with the matters",¹⁹⁸ and the local board immediately concerned also confessed to experiencing the "greatest difficulty in properly enforcing Health Regulations".¹⁹⁹

In Maryborough, a city plagued by fevers and a high death rate, government tardiness in reproclaiming the 1872 Health Act set back programmes which were essential "in order to maintain due health during the hot months".²⁰⁰ The government was also irritatingly slow in paying professional men for services rendered. Dr. Joseph Bancroft, having inspected the construction of drains, the water supply, the water

- 194. In particular the typhoid outbreak in Toowoomba. Within, pp. 99-102.
- 195. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXV (1878), 67-68. The Douglas ministry with Douglas as Colonial Secretary was in power.
- 196. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1878), 18.
- 197. Particularly bad "plague spots" existed in South Brisbane, ranging from large swamps to cesspits, pools of stagnant water, and "pigs luxuriating in the filth of the place". Report of Committee of Central Board of Health (John Petrie and K. Cannan), attached to Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 30 Apr 1879, Q.S.A. COL/A 276, in-letter no.1584 of 1879.
- 198. Letter no.1879 of 30 April 1879 attached to Ibid.
- 199. South Brisbane Local Board of Health to Central Board of Health, 15 Nov 1878. Unnumbered in-letter attached to Ibid.
- 200. The original letter from E.P. Wells, Secretary to the Maryborough Local Board was written on 2 September 1878. The central board was still requesting government action on 7 April 1879. Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 7 Apr 1879, Q.S.A. COL/A 275, in-letter no.1368 of 1879.

closets, and other sanitary arrangements at government house, had to wait for months for the settlement of his account. Bancroft, who felt that he "should not refuse government work without adequate reason" for the sake of the public health, nevertheless complained that it took "twice the time to get paid for government work as it /did/ to get the work done".²⁰¹

Even worse, from an overall public health point of view, considerable differences of opinion had arisen between all of the parties charged with looking after the welfare of the colony, particularly over the essential, but prohibitively expensive business of drainage for Brisbane, its suburbs, and nearby populous areas. The drainage plan itself was "elaborately" and "carefully drawn" by the government, and the Brisbane City Council was duly grateful.²⁰² But the council's improvement committee was unable to advise the city fathers to accept the scheme, because it involved a large expenditure on works outside municipal boundaries. Moreover, in the opinion of the medical experts, Drs. Joseph Bancroft and Richard Rendle, the sanitary effects of the open drainage envisaged, in which "large areas of mud, sewerage, and offensive material might be expected to collect", would be most deleterious.

Before so large a risk to public health is incurred and the city involved in a debt of such magnitude, further scientific opinions should be sought and obtained. ²⁰³

The problem was so pressing, that, despite objections on account of the expense, it was decided, on the suggestion of Colonial Secretary Palmer, to call a conference between the Central and Brisbane Local Boards of Health and the Brisbane City Council. Antagonism between the parties was obvious at once. The necessity for better drainage was not in question, but there were "some recriminations with respect to the Central Board of Health's criticism of the Local Board of Health".²⁰⁴ The local board claimed that the objects of the conference were being defeated by the tactics of the Central Board of Health, and that the failure of that board to persuade their Colonial Secretary chairman to

201. Joseph Bancroft to Colonial Secretary, 16 Aug 1879, Q.S.A. COL/A 275, unnumbered in-letter of 1879. The Colonial Secretary denied having received the vouchers and marked this letter "Pay this".

202. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Jan 1879; report of the Brisbane City Council improvement committee on the Government Drainage Scheme.

203. Ibid., 7 Jan 1879.

204. Ibid., 28 Feb 1879.

introduce new, satisfactory sanitary legislation had rendered Local Board of Health "inspection well-nigh useless".²⁰⁵

By March 1879, it was quite clear that lines of communication between the two boards of health were stretched almost to breaking point. The situation was not improved by The Brisbane Courier's publication of the Central Board of Health sub-committee's report on the work of the local board with respect to the earth closet system,²⁰⁶ and the reply from the chairman of the Local Board of Health, Alfred Hubbard.

The Central Board of Health gave no help to the Local Board of Health, even when asked to, and the Local Board had frequently pointed out the weaknesses of the present legislation to no avail. They /the Central Board/, had given no instructions as to which system they desired to be enforced.... The weaknesses of the Health Act and the Instructions to Local Boards are:

1. The Local Board has no power to collect any money for work done;
2. No power to prevent ships landing offensive goods within the municipality;
3. No power to inspect lodging houses;
4. Municipal bye-laws are useless as the Health Act supersedes them;
5. The Local Board has no power to interfere with food unfit for use.

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Dr. O'Doherty took up the local board's challenge, sarcastically alluding to Hubbard's letter as "idle wind", and pointing out that the Central Board of Health had endeavoured to have the Health Act amended on a number of occasions.²⁰⁸

The Local Board of Health, prompted by Dr. Joseph Bancroft, tried "in part to meet the views of the Central Board of Health",²⁰⁹ but Dr. O'Doherty persisted in his attacks, the focal point of which was the local board's duties under the 1872 Health Act. This important matter was taken up by the central board's ministerial chairman, who called attention to the provisions of the Health Act, under which appointees to the Local Board

205. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Mar 1879; letter from the Local Board of Health to the Conference, printed in full.

206. Ibid., 12 Feb 1879.

207. Ibid., 1 Feb 1879.

208. Ibid., 18 Feb 1879; letter to editor from K.I. O'Doherty.

209. Ibid., 20 Mar 1879.

were to be health officers who were themselves to do the work. If the members of the Local Board did not do this, they must either resign or be superseded.... If the provisions of the Health Act were carried out, the Local Board would be one of the most effective bodies possible. 210

This was a calculated insult both to the Brisbane Local Board of Health and to the Brisbane municipal council which appointed it. The impact was made effective by its full exposure in the Brisbane press.

The argument developed as letters to the editor,²¹¹ reports of central board meetings,²¹² and general news items on the insanitary state of Brisbane, kept the health question before the public eye.²¹³ Then on 7 June 1879, the Local Board of Health, fed up with constant destructive criticism from the central board and the press, appointed a committee to examine the workings of the 1872 Health Act. On the credit side, the committee reported that valuable improvements were slowly but surely being made in the sanitary condition of the city; that even more importantly, the customs and habits of the people of Brisbane, which were prejudicial to health, were gradually being improved;²¹⁴ that a cleaner, more effective method of human waste disposal was being introduced - again gradually; that Brisbane's street drainage had shown a marked improvement; that many low lands had been filled in, and other allotments had been drained; that house-to-house, and some special inspections had been made; and that financially, the Act had been a success.²¹⁵ On the other hand, the local board's committee underlined the very definite weaknesses of the 1872 Act under which they had to work. One of the main complaints was that the life of a local board was too short. Local board existence was dependent upon the proclamation

- 210. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Apr 1879; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 7 Apr 1879.
- 211. See for example, Ibid., 9 Apr 1879; letter to editor from Dr. J. Bancroft.
- 212. Ibid., 1 May 1879; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 30 Apr 1879.
- 213. One other public health landmark in 1879 was the publication of the "Report on the Working of 'The Prevention of Contagious Diseases Act of 1868'", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1879), 1273-78.
- 214. The recognition of the need for personal hygiene was one of the most important steps on the way to the creation of a satisfactory health situation in every country.
- 215. The Central Board of Health had already calculated that the local board had shown a profit of £90 over their five years of operation. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Feb 1879; sub committee report of Central Board of Health on work of Local Board of Health with respect to the Earth Closet System.

of the city, otherwise its life span was only six months. This prevented the board from entering into contracts and agreements, and discouraged it from sanctioning expenditure. Of crucial importance was the recovery of expenses, since the Health Act authorized the removal of nuisances, but did not provide for just remuneration. Local boards were also severely handicapped by the lack of proper by-laws, and by the necessity to make inspections of nuisances only in daylight hours. Lack of power and/or of proper regulations also inhibited the board in dealing with sanitation in new buildings, with the inspection of food, and with other similar matters, which the local board considered were essential to the maintenance of the public health in Brisbane.²¹⁶ The central board and its shortcomings are not mentioned in the report, but the legislative weaknesses which the local board chose to emphasise, were those already covered in their publicly-aired disagreements. Criticism of that board, and a defence against its attacks, are implicit in the local board report.

By the end of July 1879, there could scarcely have been a newspaper reader in the capital who was not aware of the bitterness existing between the two health boards. This was the situation when Dr. K.I. O'Doherty rose in the Legislative Council to move the second reading of the health act amendment bill, very late in the session of 1879.²¹⁷

When considerable difference of opinion arose between the sanitary authorities, the Municipal Council and the Local and Central Boards of Health,... the Colonial Secretary as Chairman of the Central Board of Health, on a recent... occasion,... threw out a hint to the Central Board to take the present Health Act in hand and to endeavour to frame an amending Bill upon it which would meet the difficulties that were encountered in the working of the existing sanitary law.

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O'Doherty still insisted that the 1872 Health Act was very satisfactory, because it had enabled the government to deal with diseases imported by the Chinese, and all sorts of ills of "a similar malignant kind".²¹⁹ But he also pointed out that

216. The Brisbane Courier, 17 Jul 1879.

217. It is doubtful if this bill, which required the raising of money by the state for its proper functioning, should have been introduced in the upper house. See the arguments on this question which arose when the Contagious Diseases Act was before parliament in 1867. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, V (1867), 148.

218. Ibid., XXVIII (1879), 408. My italics.

219. Ibid., p.409.

the main purpose of a sanitary law... was not merely to be prepared in every way to meet the invasion,... but it should be efficient in all the means that obtained for preventing the outbreak of many dreadful diseases amongst us. 220

The organisation of preventive measures to ensure domestic as well as public cleanliness was essential. But the various health boards were unsure of their ground, since scientific developments had left sanitarians bewildered as to the best course to pursue. 221

It was quite possible... that under present circumstances, owing to the great uncertainty prevailing in every part of the world, even in England, upon some important questions of sanitary law, the authorities might be endeavouring to carry out a system that was utterly inconsistent with public safety. 222

In this way, with considerable delicacy, O'Doherty covered the differences of opinion on methods of dealing with Queensland problems, which had caused the health boards of the colony to differ so violently. But because of this dissension, he stressed that the passing of the bill then before the house was an "urgent necessity". Members should do their homework, and be prepared, at the opening of the next session, "to take an intelligent and earnest course", by reforming and amending the existing Health Act.

Legislative Council members eagerly agreed that the bill was a "very important one indeed",²²³ but despite the aura of good-will, neither that bill nor any other amending legislation was brought before parliament in the new year,²²⁴ probably because of the very

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- 220. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXVIII (1879), 409.
 - 221. At this time and later, many northern Queensland papers in particular were offering their readers advice on the latest domestic sanitary arrangements. The journal articles of Dr. W.H. Corfield, M.A., were used as the basis for much of this newspaper material. Corfield wrote for the British public, but the articles were reprinted first in Australia in the Australian Engineering and Building News, Vols.1-3, 1879-1881.
 - 222. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXVIII (1879), 410.
 - 223. Ibid., p.412.
 - 224. There was apparently no pressing economic reason for delaying amendment. In 1879, Pugh's Almanac reported that in general, things has improved, and a good deal of building was proceeding in Brisbane. However, in reviewing the year 1880, the same journal reported that "the returning tide of prosperity had not been so rapid as anticipated", though there was no cause for alarm. In the Almanac's opinion, the retarding of progress and commerce in the colony was "undoubtedly due to the unsatisfactory state of politics". See Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1880, p.98 and Ibid., 1881, p.77.

favourable Central Board of Health progress report for 1879, which was released on 13 October 1880.²²⁵ This report was based on returns furnished by the Registrar-General, and not merely on central board observations. It revealed that Brisbane, and the colony generally, had shown "continued improvement", and that benefits to the public health were most marked "in those townships proclaimed under the operation of 'The Health Act of 1872'". This declaration of faith in the Act was not accompanied by any criticism of local boards which had neglected their duty under the legislation. Indeed the Brisbane Local Board of Health, the alleged chief offender in this regard, received an indulgent mention in the report. Where an exceptionally high, above average death rate had occurred,²²⁶ the central board defended itself, asserting that it had issued early warnings,²²⁷ and had appointed a special commission which "very clearly point/ed/ out from whence the evil /arose/, and the best mode of dealing with it".²²⁸

The central board admitted to only one "defect" in the 1872 Act. This was the six monthly proclamation period which had already been singled out for special condemnation by the Brisbane local board, and which aroused a feeling of "distaste among all municipalities and townships... brought under the operation of 'The Health Act'". No beneficial results could be expected in any community in so short a time, and the Central Board of Health "strongly urged" the government to proclaim all Queensland municipal townships to be permanently under the operation of the Act. If this were done, the central board pledged itself "to afford to the local authorities every help in the difficult task they ha/d/ to perform". At the same time the central board, "considering the yet imperfect state of sanitary science", promised to refrain from arbitrary rule. In future it would offer advice on "general principles only,... leaving the widest possible latitude as to the means by which these principles may be carried out".²²⁹

225. "Central Board of Health, 1879, (Progress Report)", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1880), 1503-4.

226. In Warwick. Ibid., p.1503.

227. In this case as far back as 1878. Ibid.

228. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 2 Nov 1878, Q.S.A. COL/A 267, in-letter no.4039 of 1878, and attached papers.

229. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1880), 1503-4.

During the early 1880's, the central and local boards continued to limp along under the 1872 legislation, in the face of increasing health hazards. Boards were still proclaimed - and reproclaimed - for six monthly periods at the government's discretion,²³⁰ even as opposition mounted from municipal and town councils which "condemned our sanitary law and sought to consign our Health Boards and the Acts (sic) under which they are constituted to Hades".²³¹

Genuine, but usually ineffective, attempts were made to deal with sanitary problems, but contemporary observers could detect little improvement, either in Brisbane and its suburbs,²³² or in outlying cities and towns.²³³ By the end of 1882, only Dr. O'Doherty continued to give public praise to the existing health legislation, affirming

I am quite content with the good work our Health Act has done, during the ten years of its existence.... I feel that our Association will guard with jealous care, the Health Act and the Central Board as the fountain-head of our sanitary law. It is quite likely that the time has arrived for a revision of its code of sanitary regulations... but... I contend that the law itself should be defined by the government represented in the Central Board whose chairman is the Colonial Secretary, and that it should be altered and modified only by them.... I

230. Although the government did nothing about amending the Health Act during the early 1880's, they did pass two very important measures bearing on the public health. One was the Sale of Food and Drugs Act of 1881, which was passed in spite of opponents' claims that it would "to a great extent embarrass trade" and would cause great difficulties for the public service because of "an insufficient number of analysts". Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XXXV (1881), 260-2. The other act was again, in part, the work of Dr. O'Doherty. It was intended to "provide the public with some efficient guarantee... that they would be provided with proper drugs... and have the prescriptions of medical men properly compounded". Ibid., XXXIV (1881), 139.
231. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Dec 1882.
232. For examples see, The Brisbane Courier, 24 Feb 1881, 3 Jul 1881, 21 Oct 1882; sub-editorial, 14 Dec 1882, Lutwyche Local Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 20 Jun 1881, Q.S.A. COL/A 315, in-letter no.2646 of 1881, Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 16 Jan 1882, Q.S.A. COL/A 330, in-letter no.256 of 1882, and Woolloongabba Local Board of Health to Central Board of Health, 10 Jul 1882, Q.S.A. COL/A 338, in-letter no.3086 of 1882.
233. For examples see The Queensland Times, 5 Apr 1881, editorial, Ibid., 26 Apr 1881; letter to editor from Pro Bono Publico, Ibid., 9 Jul 1881, letter to editor from Sanitas, Warwick Local Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 10 Oct 1882, Q.S.A. COL/A 347, in-letter no.5365 of 1882, Wide Bay and Burnett News, 18 Jan 1882, Ibid., 11 Mar 1882; letter to editor from X. Miloof, Ibid., 15 Aug 1882; editorial, and Supplement to Wide Bay and Burnett News, 2 Nov 1882.

contend that this Act has not alone been of great benefit to Brisbane,... but in addition, we may justly claim for it that it has proved its efficiency in protecting the colony threatened with an attack of a formidable disease. ²³⁴

The Brisbane Courier, already campaigning to see an end to the Health Act and the restoration of local authorities to their traditional position in sanitary affairs, expressed surprise that Dr. O'Doherty should cling so stubbornly to his out-moded legislation, but assured its readers that "although we know and esteem /the doctor/, we do not look to him for perfect accuracy of statement".²³⁵

Noone had long to wait to witness the death throes of Queensland's first Health Act. Certainly, on 24 February 1883, the government began again to reproclaim the Act,²³⁶ in an attempt to deal with the increasingly serious public health problems facing the colony. There were "flagrant pest holes" in and around the city of Brisbane and throughout the whole colony,²³⁷ in spite of the existence of the Central and Local Boards of Health. Indeed, in The Brisbane Courier's view, "the working of the systems under the Act was responsible for this horrible state of affairs".²³⁸

The deficiencies were so patently obvious, that the Central Board of Health offered little defence against this opinion, but on 13 April 1883 presented the government with a set of amended regulations to try to ensure the better working of the 1872 Health Act.²³⁹ But at least one local board of health was convinced that the time for amendment and patchwork treatment was over. The Milton local board suggested the holding of a conference of Brisbane and suburban local board chairmen,

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- 234. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Dec 1882; Address to the inaugural meeting of the Queensland Medical Society. See Cilento, p.42 for the story of various attempts to form and re-form this Society.
 - 235. Ibid., 20 Dec 1882; main editorial.
 - 236. Woolloongabba, Lutwyche, Breakfast Creek, Milton and Warwick were all reproclaimed on 24 February 1883. Under Colonial Secretary to various Boards and Councils, 6 Mar 1883, Q.S.A. COL/G 20, out-letter no.349 of 1883.
 - 237. For some examples outside of Brisbane see The Queensland Times, 15 Feb 1883, Town Clerk Toowoomba to Colonial Secretary, 13 Feb 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 354, in-letter no.720 of 1883, Charters Towers Herald, 28 Feb 1883, 7 Mar 1883, 10 Mar 1883, and 17 Mar 1883; letter to editor from Father.
 - 238. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Apr 1883; main editorial.
 - 239. Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 13 Apr 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 357, in-letter no.1795 of 1883.

to discuss the drawing up of an entirely new health act.²⁴⁰

This call was long overdue. Weaknesses in the wording of the Act which had been made very clear to the Central Board of Health almost from the beginning, were now being detected by laymen, who managed to prevent inspections of offensive premises being carried out.²⁴¹ Without inspection rights to root out deliberate pollution, the Act could not stand. Similarly, the defective Act was constantly preventing the effective prosecution of detected offenders by the Brisbane Local Board of Health.²⁴²

Finally, the Brisbane City Council decided to take a firm stand. Just one week previously, in another attack on the council, the Central Board of Health had decided "conclusively" that the municipal body had "failed to carry out the spirit of the Health Act, hence in some degree its failure to secure the results desired".²⁴³ The council retorted that "always averse to the city being under the Health Act", they considered that the health by-laws of the council met the case more effectively, and more summarily, than the regulations made under the Health Act. On these grounds, the council unilaterally declared that when the operation of the current proclamation of the 1872 Health Act ceased on 1 May 1883, it should do so forever.²⁴⁴

The formalities had to be observed, and a deputation waited on the Colonial Secretary, asking that Brisbane be not reproclaimed.

Fortunately for the council, A.H. Palmer, who had piloted the 1872 Act through the house,²⁴⁵ and who had taken the central board's part in the

- 240. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Apr 1883; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 13 Apr 1883. However, at a special meeting of the central board held on 27 April 1883, the board reverted to the bill unsuccessfully proposed by Dr. O'Doherty in 1879. They considered its proposals, and "more or less approved of it". Ibid., 28 Apr 1883.
- 241. In Rockhampton, two or three individuals had questioned the right of local board representatives to enter their properties, and Dr. John Thomson doubted the legal right of paid inspectors to enter private property under the Act. Only "Health Officers", that is actual members of health boards, had that right. Ibid., 14 Apr 1883; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 13 Apr 1883, and Ibid., 17 Apr 1883
- 242. Ibid., 20 Apr 1883; Minutes of the special meeting of Local Board of Health, 19 Apr 1883.
- 243. Ibid., 17 Apr 1883; main editorial.
- 244. The Brisbane Courier, 26 Apr 1883; Minutes of the special meeting of the Brisbane City Council, 24 Apr 1883.
- 245. O'Doherty acknowledged the importance of Palmer's contribution to the passing of the Act in his speech to the Medical Association in December 1882, and at the same time, voiced his doubts as to whether McIlwraith would lend the Act his support.



No. 24. Sir Thomas M'Ilwraith, Queensland Punch, 8 August, 1893.

altercations of 1879, had gone to the Legislative Council in 1881.²⁴⁶ Thomas McIlwraith, who now held the Colonial Secretary's office was a traditionalist. He was alarmed by the centralising tendencies of the Health Act, and was very amenable to council pressure. Municipal claims that the system under the Act was eminently unsuited to the current requirements of the colony, and that in principle, the Health Act nullified local self-government, found an answering chord in the Premier's heart. Unable at that moment to give the council a precise answer, he nevertheless gave it as his opinion

that the care of the health of the city should be placed in the hands of those representing the ratepayers and not in those of a Board appointed by the Government....

He would be acting against his own principles if he were unable to comply with the request, because he would much rather see the work transferred to the representatives of the citizens.

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McIlwraith did not waste time in assessing the best way of attaining the council's object.²⁴⁸ On 28 April 1883, he informed the Central Board of Health of his opinion "that the conservation of the public health should be left entirely to the local bodies", and requested the central board to "inform the several Local Boards accordingly".²⁴⁹

The colony of Queensland now entered a curious state of limbo, as far as the 1872 Health Act was concerned. On 13 June 1883, the Registrar-General presented a grim report, which revealed a very high general death rate, and an infant death rate greater than it "was in either of the three years preceding that of 1882".²⁵⁰ In Brisbane and its

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- 246. Palmer became President of the Legislative Council in 1881 and was granted a knighthood in 1882. Writing of his elevation, the Wide Bay and Burnett News said that he got his appointment and his £1,000 rise in salary through his brother-in-law, Thomas McIlwraith. "The new salary is a lot for the waspish and not too courteous knight. We do not... begrudge the money, for his removal from the Assembly has been so beneficial to the tone of the debates and the temper of the House". Wide Bay and Burnett News, 24 Aug 1882. Palmer's biographer is kinder, claiming that his "brusque manner" and "rough way of speaking" hid "much kindness, strong common sense, and capability". Percival Serle, Dictionary of Australian Biography, Vol.II (Sydney, 1949), p.212.
 - 247. The Brisbane Courier, 27 Apr 1883; report of the deputation to the Colonial Secretary, 26 Apr 1883.
 - 248. Ibid.
 - 249. Under Colonial Secretary to Central Board of Health, 28 Apr 1883, Q.S.A. COL/G 20, out-letter no.750 of 1883.
 - 250. "Registrar-General's Report for 1882", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1883), 348 and 351.

environs, where the local boards of health had been abolished, "the residents who were not rich enough to go to law on their own account were at the mercy of anyone who chose to commit a nuisance".²⁵¹ Some city dwellers began to regret bitterly the non-proclamation of the Act. In Toowoomba, the withdrawal of the proclamation extending the Health Act to that city, and the failure of the new Griffith government to confirm the city's by-laws led, according to the Mayor, to a severe outbreak of typhoid fever.²⁵² And in Charters Towers, where many fatal cases of typhoid had occurred, the local press urged the inhabitants themselves to bring the town under the Health Act, "if the municipal council does not perform its obvious duty in this respect".²⁵³ The confusion was compounded when a successful summons was brought under the no-longer-proclaimed Health Act,²⁵⁴ and the Central Board of Health attempted to have new regulations accepted by an unsympathetic government.²⁵⁵

The situation became clearer once Samuel Griffith was firmly in command.²⁵⁶ Although the central board was still meeting regularly in the early part of 1884,²⁵⁷ "it was evident that it was merely a Board in name and could effect no good in the existing state of affairs". On the motion of Dr. John Thomson, the board adjourned until they were summoned by the Colonial Secretary himself.²⁵⁸ In a year of panic over the killer disease typhoid,²⁵⁹ when pollution was evident on all sides,

- 251. The Telegraph, 15 Dec 1883; editorial.
- 252. Mayor of Toowoomba to Colonial Secretary, 28 Apr 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 388, in-telegram no.3122 of 1884.
- 253. The Northern Miner, 11 Jan 1884; editorial.
- 254. Memorial from Robert Gowdy to Colonial Secretary, 20 Dec 1883, Q.S.A. COL/A 377, in-letter no.6756 of 1883.
- 255. Apparently the new regulations were rejected by the government. The suggested regulations are undated, but the Central Board of Health proposed that they should be put into operation from 2 July 1883. They do not appear in the Queensland Government Gazette. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, undated, Q.S.A. COL/A 357, in-letter no.1795 of 1883.
- 256. Griffith came to power on 13 November 1883.
- 257. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Mar 1884; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 14 Mar 1884.
- 258. Ibid.
- 259. Joseph Bancroft to Colonial Secretary, 1 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 404, in-letter no.7385 of 1884.

"with gross difficulties met with to overcome these problems",²⁶⁰ the necessity for the government to bring in an entirely new, and far more comprehensive health act was all too obvious. On 12 August 1884, Samuel Walker Griffith, who, with A.H. Palmer, was credited by Dr. Kevin O'Doherty with having helped to push the first health act through parliament as the smallpox scare threatened,²⁶¹ began the process of giving Queensland that new act.

260. Joseph Bancroft to Colonial Secretary, 1 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A 404, in-letter no. 7385 of 1884.

261. The Brisbane Courier, 19 Dec 1882.

The new health bill, framed and introduced by Samuel Griffith in the spring session of 1884 because

it has for some years past been notorious that the laws
of this colony with regard to public health are, if not
discreditable to the Legislature, undoubtedly in a most
unsatisfactory condition, 1

resembled the predecessor which was repealed under it, in several ways. The government finally realized the danger of delaying enabling health legislation any longer, because of fears of a renewed onslaught of typhoid fever following the disastrous inroads of the summer of 1883-1884.² There was no real opposition to the bill,³ for once again "Panic /had become/ the Handmaid of Hygiene".⁴ In 1884, no less than in 1872, the Queensland government placed implicit faith in improved sanitation as the only effective means of attaining public health with any degree of certainty, and numerous clauses covering this area were included in the bill. The 1884 proposal, like the original measure, owed a great deal to British experience, being "founded not altogether, but almost entirely upon /an/ Imperial Act".⁵ And once more, the government signified its intention to appoint a central board of health, which would be responsible, within certain limits, for the overall supervision of the colony's health.

But in spite of these similarities there were very significant and very far-reaching differences between the two acts. Not least was the fact that

to the lasting shame of the constituencies /the
Legislative Assembly did not now/ contain a single
member of the medical fraternity whose assistance in

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1. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLII (1884), 135.
 2. Brisbane City Council to Colonial Secretary, 23 Jul 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A395, in-letter no. 5139 of 1884.
 3. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 501.
 4. R. Cilento and Clem Lack, Triumph in the Tropics (Brisbane, 1959), p.432.
 5. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 501. This was the comprehensive British Public Health Act of 1875.

framing a sanitary law adapted to the peculiar conditions of colonial settlement and climate must be deemed indispensable. 6

Perhaps for this reason, despite the vaunted improvements claimed by Griffith for the undoubtedly much more comprehensive legislation of 1884, loopholes, discrepancies and downright deficiencies were soon detected, as observant critics perused the new bill.

One entirely new provision of the bill, which concerned and amended local government Acts passed in 1878 and 1879, allowed for the suspension of council by-laws which dealt with any of the matters covered by the newly proposed health legislation.⁷ Councils from all over Queensland were unhappy with this proposal,⁸ as it would require them to produce new health by-laws, which would then be exposed to Central Board of Health and government scrutiny, before approval. Their objections were summed up by John McMaster, the Mayor of Brisbane, who felt that local authorities, who were familiar with local conditions, could produce more effective and more stringent by-laws than any central board of health.⁹ But the clause was acceptable to the majority of parliamentarians, and was allowed to go through.

Perhaps the largest changes proposed in 1884 reflected a profound shift in basic British policy - a departure from laissez-faire, and a growing awareness of the need for state intervention for the protection of the public good.

Public health enactments /were/ but part of the modern movement which /was/ lifting the masses,... ameliorating the struggle for existence...lessening ...human misery, and enlarg/ing/ the possibilities of a better life for all. 10

6. The Colonist, 27 Sep 1884; sub editorial. By this time Dr. K.I. O'Doherty was in the Legislative Council.
7. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1884), 1417 - Clause 6.
8. Representatives from Brisbane and Brisbane suburbs, Toowoomba, Maryborough, Ipswich, Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Townsville met the Premier and Colonial Treasurer as a deputation. Parliamentary representatives were sent as substitutes if councillors were unable to attend. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Aug 1884; report of deputation to Premier, 28 Aug 1884.
9. John McMaster to Colonial Secretary, 4 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A399, in-letter no. 6174 of 1884.
10. Campbell, p.2.

The people of Queensland, for their own well-being, were to be subjected to stricter, more minute inspection and supervision of their shops, lodging houses and private homes than any undertaken previously.¹¹

The matter of defraying health costs, which had caused immense problems and dissatisfaction under the old Health Act was given attention in the new measure. Under a clause which the Postmaster-General considered the "most important" in the bill, municipal authorities were to be empowered to levy a general health rate on all rateable property in a district. The government would be liable to pay the same endowment on these special rates as they did on general rates - under the provisions of the Local Government Act of 1878 and the Divisional Boards Act of 1879.¹²

The whole question of central government aid to local authorities was a thorny one, since the injection of such funds almost always brought with it the threat of increased pressure and control from the centre, to the outrage of local autonomists. The problem had already engaged the attention of parliamentarians in Britain, because the enactment of sanitary legislation in that country had effectively doubled local government rates within thirty years. In the face of such horrendous rises, even the most ardent supporters of local authority, and indeed the central government itself, were "not adverse to the cry for State aid".¹³

What was good enough for Britain was good enough for the colony of Queensland, and generally the endowment provision was welcomed. But despite this supposed generosity the press of the colony was wary, with good reason as it turned out in 1886, warning the ministry not to "add too heavily to the burden already imposed on ratepayers", and praying instead for a large, unconditional infusion of central government moneys. For only then, could Queensland's city and town councils undertake the massive capital works on sewerage and drainage which would lead to truly improved sanitation.¹⁴

11. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 506 and 565. See also The Brisbane Courier, 25 Aug 1884; main editorial.

12. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLII (1884), 138 and Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1884), 1442 - Clause 121.

13. Redlich and Hirst, Vol. I, pp.160-61.

14. The Maryborough Chronicle, 17 Sep 1884; editorial. This paper echoed the fears of William Henry Groom, member for Drayton and Toowoomba. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 575.

There was another very important departure from the first Health Act. One of the most contentious issues arising out of the 1872 legislation had been the resistance to the proclamation of the Act in areas seriously affected by disease, and the refusal of some local authorities, to recognise dangers and to accept responsibilities.¹⁵ The Colonial Secretary proposed to deal with this problem by automatically applying those parts of the bill which dealt with sewerage, drainage and sanitation, and the regulation of cellar dwellings and lodging houses, to eighteen of the most populous or most imperilled cities and towns in the colony.¹⁶ Other municipalities or divisions were to be proclaimed under these sections - parts III and IV of the Act -¹⁷ should the need arise. The remainder of the legislation was to apply at all times, throughout the whole colony. These sections comprised clauses to enable the control of nuisances of any kind, noxious trades, the adulteration of food, and the sale of unsound meat, provisions against the spread of infectious and epidemic diseases, including the right to authorise or require combinations of local authorities to fight epidemic diseases, and the legal proceedings under which action could be enforced or fines extracted from offenders.

None of the sections of the bill was allowed to pass without some challenge, though there was no opposition to the aims of the measure. Rather, protestations were made because the proposed legislation contained no explicit instructions on how local governments were to prevent insanitary conditions. The new measure failed from the beginning to eradicate the principal difficulty facing local authorities, especially where nuisances and foul trades lying on or within the boundaries of other local councils were concerned - they simply "did not know what to do".¹⁸

Another part of the bill which attracted considerable debate, both within the two houses of parliament and in the press of the colony,

15. See for example Within, pp.315-17.

16. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1884), 1417. The towns and divisions concerned were Booroodabin, Brisbane, Bundaberg, Charters Towers, Cooktown, Gympie, Ipswich, Mackay, Maryborough, Rockhampton, Roma, Sandgate, Toombul, Toowong, Toowoomba, Townsville, Warwick, and Woolloongabba.

17. Ibid., pp.1419-30.

18. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXIII (1884), 566-67. Complaint of Matthew Mellor, Wide Bay, Robert Aland and William Henry Groom, both of Drayton and Toowoomba.

was the position of the proposed central board of health. Like the board constituted under the 1872 Act, the new health authority was to be an appointed one, chosen by the governor in council. It was to have not more than seven members, at least three of whom were to be medical practitioners, and the Colonial Secretary was to be its chairman.¹⁹ The board was to be empowered to appoint officers, subject to ministerial approval, to assist in carrying out the colony's health requirements,²⁰ and was to hold its meetings at "such times and places as the Minister /might/ appoint".²¹ Although the new bill provided "for the handing over of the whole business /of the public health/ to the local authorities",²² the central board could be authorized to compel defaulting local councils to perform their duties, such order to be enforced by writ of mandamus, should councils fail to comply within the given time.²³ In emergencies, either the board or the Colonial Secretary could "exercise all or any of the powers by this Act conferred upon a local authority", but in such cases, any expenses incurred were to be paid out of consolidated revenue.²⁴

Members of the Assembly showed considerable surprise that a board of health should be the minister's chosen vehicle for sanitary reform "seeing a board had already shown themselves incapable of doing the work". Boyd Dunlop Morehead wanted to know why "one capable medical man... could not do instead of a board".²⁵ John Ferguson was very anxious about the "dangerous" amount of power being left in the hands of a body of proven incapacity,²⁶ and Edward Palmer was convinced that the previous record of the central board would not persuade any honourable member that such a body should be "continued under the measure now under consideration".²⁷

The Mayor of Brisbane, John McMaster, was also gravely concerned that this purely nominee body /was/ to possess a power which /would/ enable them to altogether override representative institutions...and that the people upon

19. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1884), 1417 - Clause 8.

20. Ibid., pp.1417-18 - Clause 9.

21. Ibid., p. 1418 - Clause 10.

22. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Aug 1884; report of deputation of local authorities to Premier - Samuel Griffith in reply.

23. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1884), 1418 - Clause 15.

24. Ibid., p.1419 - Clause 16.

25. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 545.

26. Ibid., pp.547 and 551. John Ferguson, member for Rockhampton.

27. Ibid., p.503. Edward Palmer, member for Burke.

whose properties the rates can be levied to provide funds for disbursement as this Board /might/ direct /would/ have no voice in the expenditure.

28

The criticism in the press, though on the same lines, was even more harsh. Only The Northern Miner, which catered for the people of Charters Towers, where the local authorities showed "sinful apathy to the danger that threatens...health and lives", came to the defence of the minister's proposal to reappoint a central health authority.

This is a very wise and necessary provision, for the stupidity and obstinacy of "local authorities" require to be overcome and borne by the superior intelligence of a Central Board.

29

The Queensland Times on the other hand, regretted that power should be given to a central board of health, especially if any of the old members who were "rather useless",³⁰ and "fast approaching the fossil period of life" should be included on a new board.³¹ The Maryborough Chronicle managed to combine local hostility against a "Queen Street government" led by Samuel Griffith with its attack on the proposed health body.

The new Bill provides for one Board only for the whole colony, headquarters in Brisbane of course, who, while enjoying perfect irresponsibility, will legislate for all towns included in the scope of the Bill and order the "local authorities" to carry out their instructions.... Even in the Health Bill it will thus be seen the Bismarckian autocracy wriggles in.

32

The Brisbane Courier joined in the general press condemnation of the decision to persist with a central board. The proposal

to vest administration in a body whose incompetency ha/d/ been proved in past years

33

was ludicrous, the Courier claimed.

- 28. John McMaster to Colonial Secretary, 4 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A399, in-letter no. 6190 of 1884. McMaster who was to become very active in all parliamentary health debates did not enter parliament until September 1885.
- 29. The Northern Miner, 12 Sep 1884.
- 30. The Queensland Times, 1 May 1884; editorial.
- 31. Ibid., 4 Sep 1884; editorial.
- 32. The Maryborough Chronicle, 17 Sep 1884; editorial.
- 33. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Aug 1884; main editorial. For example, as one Courier correspondent pointed out, not only did the Central Board of Health do nothing, but complaints to them went unheeded. Ibid., 21 Jul 1884; letter to editor from Ratepayer.

Surely nothing in our experience will induce us to resuscitate the Central Board of Health and endow it with such powers as the Bill proposes... The ultimate authority in the administration of a Health Act must be vested in a sort of despot, a qualified and intelligent despot, endowed with sufficient authority to enforce his enlightened will on reluctant and lazy local authorities.

34

Exception was also taken to the proposal to pay members of the central board at the rate of £1. 1. 0 per sitting.³⁵

The protesters might have saved their breath and printing-ink. Samuel Griffith abhorred the idea of bestowing centralized power in the person of a single "despot", not being

disposed to propose that the minister of the day, with the advice of one medical officer, should be empowered to order the local authorities to do what he liked.

36

He was fully of the opinion "that the existence of such a controlling board as the Central Board of Health /was³⁷ essential to ensure a satisfactory working of the scheme".³⁷ Nevertheless, the Premier had no intention of vesting the central board with unlimited powers. No less than The Maryborough Chronicle,³⁸ Griffith recognised that the central board owed no accountability to electors. Executive authority and the right to interfere with property, which were powers "too serious to be left to a board", were to be held in ministerial hands.³⁹ The board's duty was supervision of local authorities "in matters technical".⁴⁰ It could not compel local councils to act, but could simply recommend that the governor in council should do so.⁴¹ In fact, "/amp;le provision /had been made⁴² by the Bill to prevent the arbitrary exercise of the powers of the Board".

Griffith dealt with the objections to the appointment of the board and their position vis-a-vis the local authorities with considerable delicacy. He knew, as an experienced administrator, that the proper

34. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Sep 1884; main editorial.

35. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 548.

36. Ibid., p.546.

37. Under Colonial Secretary to Mayor of Brisbane, 8 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/G26, out-letter no. 2722 of 1884.

38. Within, p.343.

39. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 559.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., L (1886), 1129.

42. Under Colonial Secretary to Mayor of Brisbane, 8 Sep 1884, Q.S.A. COL/G26, out-letter no. 2722 of 1884.

operation of the proposed bill depended entirely on cooperation between the centre and the periphery. He recognised that the placing of too much authority in the hands of an irresponsible and administratively inexperienced board would be to go against

recent developments of the principles of self government,... and that to coerce the elected representatives of the people in their corporate capacity /would be/ a reflection on the effective efficiency of the ratepayers of the colony. 43

But at the same time, a clear parliamentary majority's determination to retain a central board of health with restrictions placed on it,⁴⁴ put such irksome and debilitating restraints on the health authority, that members were indeed unable to give that clear, concerted leadership which the colony so badly needed and desired. As the century drew to its close, more and more of the energy of the central board was spent in constant wrangling with the minister over the scramble for power, making it progressively less capable of giving clearly defined directives for the protection of the public health.

If the central health authority projected under the new legislation was like its precursor in appointment and function, the local boards, which had been central board agents in towns proclaimed under the old Act, were to disappear altogether in 1884. The government proposed instead "to leave health administration" in the hands of elected local councils,⁴⁵ which could, if they wished, appoint health committees from among their own numbers to perform or oversee the day to day chores. In this way, it was hoped to obviate the friction previously generated between local boards and corporations to the detriment of the public health.⁴⁶ For the health committees, unlike the old local boards, were specifically forbidden to incur expenses, to borrow money, or to levy any rate.⁴⁷

The Colonial Secretary hoped to solve another problem with his 1884 bill. Under the old legislation, some councils and divisional

43. The Brisbane Courier, 31 Oct 1884; main editorial.

44. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIII (1884), 559.

45. Ibid., p.504.

46. For a classic example of Brisbane City Council and Brisbane Local Board of Health antagonism, see Within, pp.318 and 326-29.

47. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1884), 1442 - Clause 119.

boards had strenuously resisted the appointment of inspectors of nuisance, or health officers, whose salaries or retainers added to ratepayers' burdens. Now Griffith suggested that a degree of compulsion should be applied where such appointments were concerned. This was written into his bill, and accepted by his parliamentary colleagues in both houses.⁴⁸ Members of the Council did send certain amendments to the bill to the lower house, but all things considered, they found the subject matter of the measure "so attractive and savoury in itself" and so necessary for the general good, that on the whole it was heartily approved.⁴⁹ Nor had spirited debate in the Assembly blinded members to the urgent need to pass this bill, and on 21 October 1884, "An Act to Make better Provision for Securing and Maintaining the Public Health", reached the statute book.⁵⁰

The Health Act of 1884, which The Brisbane Courier, in spite of its criticism, hoped would be "the panacea of all our sanitary" ills,⁵¹ was put to work at once, but not always as the body of legislators who had passed it might have expected. Certainly the Bundaberg council, after an approach to the Colonial Secretary, was urged to take full advantage of the endowment scheme on health rates, and of any available government loans, in its efforts to prevent "a recurrence of the dismal experiences of last summer".⁵² But Griffith's dealings with the police magistrate at Charters Towers, where filthy court house cesspits had been condemned by the usually careless local council, were hardly in accord with the spirit of the Act. The local nuisance inspector had taken this initiative on the authority of council by-laws shortly before the passing of the bill, and Griffith's advice to the police magistrate was to "wait till the Health Bill becomes law, when the by-law will be suspended".⁵³ By January 1885 the police magistrate,

- 48. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1884), 1441 - Clause 116.
- 49. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLII (1884), 139. Peter Macpherson, Member of Legislative Council.
- 50. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1884), 1415.
- 51. The Brisbane Courier, 10 Oct 1884; sub editorial.
- 52. Marginal comment on Andrew Goodwin, Bundaberg, to Colonial Secretary, 10 Oct 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A404, in-letter no. 7252 of 1884, and Under Colonial Secretary to Goodwin, 21 Oct 1884, Q.S.A. COL/G27, out-letter no. 3196 of 1884.
- 53. Marginal comment on Police Magistrate, Charters Towers to Colonial Secretary, 7 Oct 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A414, in-letter no. 7142 of 1884.

recognising the advantages of clean accommodation, had called tenders for the work and had investigated on-going fees for the night-man's regular attendance. He recommended that the work be done at once,⁵⁴ only to have his request for funds and improvements refused by Griffith under the relevant clause of the Health Act.⁵⁵ This was not the only case where the Colonial Secretary hid behind the provisions of the new legislation in the interests of trifling economies, and to the chagrin of local councils. The Clermont council was overridden in the same way.⁵⁶ But in this instance, the police magistrate wanted to retain the cesspits in violation of the council regulations, because the earth closet substitutes, "unless used discreetly and kept accurately clean are an abominable nuisance"!⁵⁷ His wish was granted.

Nevertheless, great hopes were held that with the automatic enforcement of the whole of the 1884 Health Act

in all our chief centres of population, the good effects of the statute will soon be visible. ⁵⁸

The four medical and three lay members of the Central Board of Health were chosen,⁵⁹ began to meet, and immediately ran into trouble over the interpretation of certain provisions for lavatory accommodation, not made clear under Clause 37 of the new Act.⁶⁰ Even after discussion, the central board members still had "some doubt on the subject", and the supervisory body of experts ultimately decided to forward the problem to Griffith "for advice".⁶¹

- 54. Police Magistrate to Colonial Secretary, 27 Jan 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A414, in-letter no. 718 of 1885.
- 55. Under Colonial Secretary to Police Magistrate, 12 Feb 1885, Q.S.A. COL/G28, out-letter no. 460 of 1885.
- 56. Under Colonial Secretary to Police Magistrate, 6 Nov 1884, Q.S.A. COL/G27, in-letter no. 3386 of 1884.
- 57. Police Magistrate Clermont to Under Colonial Secretary, 27 Oct 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A405, in-letter no. 7672 of 1884.
- 58. The Brisbane Courier, 31 Oct 1884; main editorial.
- 59. Members were Drs. K.I. O'Doherty, Joseph Bancroft, John Thomson, Hill Wray (Secretary), and Messrs. John Petrie, T. Finney, and J.H. Wilson.
- 60. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Nov 1884; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 7 Nov 1884, letter from Mayor, Brisbane to Central Board printed in full, Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1884), 1423, and Hill Wray to Under Colonial Secretary, 15 Nov 1884, Q.S.A. COL/A406, in-letter no. 7997 of 1884.
- 61. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Nov 1884.

Griffith's reply to the board, though partially settling the immediate question,⁶² emphasised basic differences between board members⁶³, and fatal weaknesses in the board's structure. No one member was the "qualified", "intelligent", "enlightened", all-powerful "despot" of the Courier's editor's imagination,⁶⁴ and after a failure to agree "on a subject very seriously affecting the health of the city",⁶⁵ the board "thought /they/ had better not commit themselves".⁶⁶

Despite these set-backs, Brisbane's Mayor had not yet lost faith in the Act, rejoicing that it would enable the council to levy a scavenging rate to allow it to deal, not only with refuse collection, but with "the whole sanitary question".⁶⁷ By November 1884, the health committee set up under the Act had recommended the calling of tenders for the scavenging of the streets. This was accepted by the whole council,⁶⁸ and by January of the following year, very satisfactory amounts of foul rubbish were being removed from city streets.⁶⁹ For this reason alone, and the improvements achieved under a new council by-law for the regulation of common lodging houses,⁷⁰ the 1884 Health Act might be deemed a success. But it was not long before the corporation was in dispute with the central government and the board of health, over the even bigger headache of the disposal of human excreta - a problem which had been evident at the time of the 1884 health bill debate.

The Booroodabin Divisional Board Chairman was also convinced that the new Health Act gave him power to stop the conveyance and

- 62. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Nov 1884;Minutes of Central Board of Health,12 Nov 1884, and Under Colonial Secretary to Secretary Central Board of Health,18 Nov 1884,Q.S.A. COL/G27,out-letter no. 3483 of 1884.
- 63. Especially between two of the lay members,Finney and Wilson, though Dr.Thomson was drawn into the argument.
- 64. Within, p.344.
- 65. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Nov 1884; sub editorial.
- 66. Ibid.,13 Nov 1884;Minutes of Central Board of Health,12 Nov 1884.
- 67. Ibid.,21 Oct 1884;Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 20 Oct 1884.
- 68. Ibid.,18 Nov 1884;Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 17 Nov 1884.
- 69. Ibid.,27 Jan 1885;Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 26 Jan 1884. The urgent need for scavenging was obvious.According to the inspector's report,644 loads of rubbish were removed in one fortnight ending 26 January 1885.
- 70. Brisbane City Council to Colonial Secretary,10 Mar 1885, Q.S.A. COL/A421, in-letter no. 1656 of 1885.

deposit of refuse within his division, and he was determined to do his duty in this matter.⁷¹ A glance at the saga of the gigantic Enoggera Creek nuisance shows how sadly astray the Chairman's convictions were.⁷² As to the rest of Queensland, in the Maryborough district, difficulties over the dumping of that city's nightsoil in the neighbouring division of Tinana re-erupted, as both the divisional board and nearby residents were encouraged to expect relief under the new Health Act.⁷³ They achieved the same degree of success as the Booroodabin Board's Chairman. In Charters Towers, the local hospital had quarrelled with the council over sanitary matters, and had called in the new Central Board of Health for advice, but problems were no closer to resolution.⁷⁴ And in Ipswich, an important south Queensland city which had been brought automatically under sections III and IV of the legislation, as late as July 1885, "nothing had...been done towards carrying out the provisions of the new health act".⁷⁵

Things did not improve much in 1885-86 as far as sanitary affairs were concerned, although a number of cities and towns throughout Queensland applied for and implemented new sets of by-laws under the terms of the 1884 Health Act.⁷⁶ To supplement any improvements made under the health legislation in Brisbane, and to try to alleviate the bad or insufficient air caused by overcrowding, the government did push through another sanitary measure, the Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Act of 1885.⁷⁷ This was done in the face of very considerable opposition from the conservatives, for whom the intent of this Act represented "an invasion - a gross invasion of the rights of property owners".⁷⁸

- 71. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Nov 1884; Minutes of Booroodabin Divisional Board.
- 72. Within, p.32-34.
- 73. The Colonist, 15 Dec 1884; Minutes of Tinana Divisional Board.
- 74. The Northern Miner, 5 Dec 1884; editorial, Ibid., 11 Dec 1884, and Ibid., 16 Dec 1884; Minutes of Charters Towers Council.
- 75. The Queensland Times, 28 Jul 1885. But see also Ibid., 22 Sep 1885, which reports a start being made on the destruction of insanitary and dilapidated buildings.
- 76. A number of these applications for by-law approval are listed in Within, pp.29, f.n.181.
- 77. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXVII (1885), 1573.
- 78. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLVII (1885), 849.

The 1884 Health Act, and the central board-local government health arrangements made under it, underwent a very exacting testing time during the summer of 1885, when the colony had an unfortunate episode involving the deadly disease cholera, and when weaknesses apparent from the very inception of the Act, particularly with regard to the competence of the Central Board of Health, were underlined.⁷⁹ To add to this, the inefficacy of the Act through "Mr. Griffith's omission to insert /adequate wording/ in the condemnatory clauses" was becoming increasingly evident, as feeble legislation "greatly hampered the /Central/ Board in its attempts to complete the sanitation of /Brisbane/".⁸⁰

It was obvious too, that many councils and divisional boards on the periphery, which were presently outside the provisions of parts III and IV of the Act, had little or no idea of the significance of those clauses, nor of their natural obligation to avoid "gross neglect of the ordinary sanitary precautions".⁸¹ It was further revealed at the Municipal Conference held in Brisbane in May 1886, "that there was hardly a municipality /in the colony/ satisfied with the existing Health Act",⁸² although some delegates

deprecated any interference with the Health Act provisions or limitation of its powers, which effected not only themselves but their families. 83

Many of the complaints sprang from the necessity, under the Act, for raising the health rate from whole towns or cities automatically brought under the legislation. This applied even where the expense of extending sanitary measures to sparsely settled sections in outlying areas precluded councils from such undertakings,⁸⁴ to the great annoyance of unhappy ratepayers, who were forced to pay for improvements which were never received. The same difficulties faced boards outside of

79. Within, pp.174-75.

80. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Mar 1886; report of inspection by Dr. J. Bancroft, general inspector Lee Bryce, and several aldermen.

81. Town Clerk, Rosalie Divisional Board /Darling Downs/ to Colonial Secretary, 29 Mar 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A490, in-letter no.2440 of 1886, and attachments from the equally confused local authorities in Gowrie and Highfields.

82. The Brisbane Courier, 27 May 1886; report of Municipal Conference.

83. Ibid., 28 May 1886; report of Municipal Conference.

84. Ibid.

sections III and IV, who required the protection of the Act in special circumstances, but who wanted it to pertain to "a certain portion" only.⁸⁵ The Act did not allow for this differentiation. If applied, it had to be to all areas or none at all.⁸⁶

Another bone of contention for the newspapers, the Colonial Secretary, and particularly the colony's Treasurer, was the way in which certain councils had managed to pry considerable sums from the central government under the general health rate endowment scheme.⁸⁷

The practical operation of /that clause/ has been what was never intended by Parliament. General health rates have been made, not for the general purposes of the Health Act, but for the purpose of cleansing earth-closets, privies, ashpits, and cesspools. ⁸⁸

Griffith asserted that the government should not be called upon to raid the public purse "to contribute towards the cost of performing such purely domestic work as that". He ignored the obviously continuing misunderstandings over the content of the 1884 Act,⁸⁹ some parts of which required amendment to assist clarification. The protests from Central Board of Health members, that he had consistently failed to listen to their proffered advice, and that he should therefore revise the Act to strengthen board powers, were also ignored.⁹⁰ The government chose instead to introduce a short amending bill, which promised real improvement to the public health in only one area - the right of investigators to enter, and examine any dairy, to check on unwholesome or unclean conditions, to search for diseased animals, and to prohibit the sale of suspect milk in an effort to contain "one of the most fruitful sources...of typhoid fever".⁹¹ The rest of the bill included new, much

- 85. Woongarra Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary, 26 Jun 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A472, in-letter no. 5336 of 1886.
- 86. Under Colonial Secretary to Woongarra Divisional Board, 23 Jul 1886, Q.S.A. COL/G35, out-letter no. 3439 of 1886.
- 87. In particular the Booroodabin Divisional Board.
- 88. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIX (1886), 700.
- 89. Shire Clerk Tiaro to Colonial Secretary, 9 Oct 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A484, in-letter no. 7965 of 1886. See also Chairman Johnstone Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary, 20 Jan 1887, Q.S.A. COL/A488, in-letter no. 911 of 1887.
- 90. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Dec 1886; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 3 Dec 1886, comment of W.F.Taylor, who was now a member of the board.
- 91. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIX (1886), 700, and Queensland Government Gazette, XXXIX (1886), 1601-1602.

more stringent rules relating to the general health rate, and the categorical statement that "no endowment shall be payable to a local authority in respect of moneys raised by a Cleansing Rate".⁹²

The Amending Act passed into law on 13 October 1886, in spite of anguished protests from local authorities, the press, and some parliamentarians. Councils all over Queensland warned of dire consequences, such as the complete inability to "cope successfully with sanitary requirements...in this climate",⁹³ if endowments were cut off. Contracts entered into on the strength of government promises would have to be abandoned - a terrible, retrograde step, just as sanitary affairs were making headway.⁹⁴ The Brisbane Courier thought that the Treasurer's "resort to stop this particular outlet in his purse a very unwise one".⁹⁵ Some parliamentary members, averring that "it was worth more than money to preserve the health of the public",⁹⁶ deeply regretted the introduction of a bill which would only punish local authorities which had acted in good faith to engage in capital works.⁹⁷ The Treasurer, J.R. Dickson, assured the house that the bill "was in no way intended to affect outlay upon the construction of works for sewerage and drainage".⁹⁸ But for technical and time-tabling reasons, this statement is misleading. Only those municipalities which had already begun capital works under the 1884 Health Act were covered for continuing general health rate endowments.⁹⁹

92. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXIX (1886), 1600-1601.

93. Mayor Hipwood of Brisbane to Colonial Treasurer, 26 Aug 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A480, in-letter no. 7019 of 1886.

94. Ibid. For further protests see also Mayor, Ipswich to S.W.Griffith, 1 Sep 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A479, in-telegram no. 6770 of 1886, The Brisbane Courier, 7 Sep 1886;Minutes of Brisbane City Council, 6 Sep 1886, recording support for action against the amending bill from Sandgate and Rockhampton,Burrum Divisional Board to Colonial Secretary,13 Sep 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A480,in-letter no. 7124 of 1886, and Bundaberg City Council to Colonial Secretary,11 Sep 1886, Q.S.A. COL/A480, in-letter no. 7132 of 1886.

95. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Sep 1886.

96. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIX (1886), 702.

97. Ibid. , pp.701-703 and 705. Foremost amongst the protesters were John McMaster,Fortitude Valley,John Ferguson,Rockhampton, and William Pattison,Blackall, but with an interest in Rockhampton.

98. Ibid. , p.705.

99. Ibid. , p.706. Maurice Hume Black, member for Mackay, brought out this point which Dickson presumably would have preferred to avoid.



THE COLONIAL SECRETARY.

May his personality penetrate the whole of Queensland.

No. 25. Sir Samuel Griffith, The Judge, 20 September, 1890.

Nevertheless the Premier and Treasurer won the day, and the Act was passed with the aid of those members who thought that "in this country people should clean out their back-yards themselves", if they wanted it done,¹⁰⁰ and others who suggested that those who neglected their duty in this respect "should be made to pay to the fullest extent".¹⁰¹

Like the Health Act of 1884, the amending measure was applied at once. Unfortunately only limited results were achieved with regard to the state of dairies,¹⁰² owing to central board and local government failure to enforce the Act rigidly.¹⁰³ The only noticeable result of the Act was one which The Brisbane Courier had feared and condemned.¹⁰⁴ Early in 1887, Brisbane ratepayers' health rate contributions rose sharply as the inevitable consequence of the withdrawal of the government endowment.¹⁰⁵

The government passed two more amendments to the Health Act of 1884. One, the Health Act Amendment Act of 1890, confirmed and exceeded the Act of 1886 in refusing absolutely any government endowment on health rates.¹⁰⁶ The other, which was passed in 1889, was introduced for one specific purpose - the attempt to solve the capital's overwhelming human waste disposal problem.¹⁰⁷ But one of the main weaknesses of the 1884 Act - the inability of the Central Board of Health to enforce sanitary action on recalcitrant councils and unheeding governments - was left for a new minister to handle, when the tragedy of a plague invasion made immediate, drastic alterations to the colony's health arrangements essential.

The intent of Samuel Griffith who framed it, and its scope as compared with the legislation of 1872, made the Health Act of 1884

100. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIX (1886), 707. William Kellett, member for Stanley.

101. Ibid., XLVIII (1886), 124. Dr. W.F. Taylor, Member of Legislative Council.

102. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Jan 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 14 Jan 1887.

103. Ibid., 26 Apr 1888; sub editorial.

104. Ibid., 4 Dec 1886; main editorial.

105. Ibid., 5 Feb 1887.

106. Queensland Government Gazette, III (1890), 1061. See also Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LX (1890), 176, and Within, p.61.

107. This Act is dealt with in Ibid., pp.51-54.

"in the main a good piece of legislation, but the machinery to put it into force /was/ defective and weak".¹⁰⁸ The story of the central board's vain struggle to achieve executive powers throughout the late 1880's and 1890's, is an accurate reflection of the true, underlying impotence of Queensland's first comprehensive health act.

Members of the central health authority had always smarted under the criticism that they were weak and ineffectual, but by 1887 it had become obvious that

they had no power to deal with the smallest thing that came before them and the machinery of the law was so cumbersome that it might take months to remedy an evil.... Dr. W.F. Taylor/ thought this should be represented to the Government with a request that executive power should be given to the Board.... in the interests of sanitation. 109

Taylor was unflagging in his campaign. He pressed for amending legislation which would do away with the "unsatisfactory and anomalous position of the Central Board of Health of Queensland", which did not have the executive powers possessed by its colleagues in the other colonies.¹¹⁰ His agitation led to a request for a deputation from the board to the Colonial Secretary to explain its difficulties in enforcing the Health Act - difficulties of which Moreton was probably unaware - as they never saw him at board meetings!¹¹¹ Moreover, in spite of the passing of the 1884 health legislation

the condition of Brisbane was as insanitary now as it was in 1885: there was no single alteration..../There were/ crying evils... but the board waxed powerless,¹¹² when confronted with antagonistic, or openly hostile, local authorities. Members of the board were also stung into protesting that they were always "saddled with the responsibility when anything went wrong", since the general public assumed they had "full powers".¹¹³ Faced by a determined deputation, Moreton admitted the need for action, and

108. The Brisbane Courier, 9 Aug 1887; main editorial.

109. Ibid., 12 Feb 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Feb 1887.

110. Ibid., 12 Mar 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 11 Mar 1887.

111. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 14 Mar 1887, Q.S.A. COL/A493, in-letter no. 2212 of 1887, with an undated, unidentified newspaper cutting of the report of the deputation attached.

112. Ibid.

113. Ibid. See also for example, Queensland Parliamentary Debates, L (1886), 1128, for McMaster's very strong criticism during the supply debate.

promised to bring the matter before cabinet,¹¹⁴ but no mention of the central board appears in the record of Executive Council meetings for 1887.¹¹⁵

Entering the argument, The Brisbane Courier again called for a single medical adviser to the government, not because it did not esteem central board members personally, but because "collectively their wisdom is not... above question".¹¹⁶ Too often the colony of Queensland had been treated to unseemly displays of differences of medical opinion being aired in public. If central health authority members wished to be taken seriously, they should "sink professional jealousies, cease to ventilate crotchets, and devote themselves to the real business of an executive board in a business-like manner".¹¹⁷

Such criticism may well have been justified in a period when rapid developments in medical science led to uncertainties as to theories and methods, but the galling fact remained that central board advice was being ignored with impunity. The Brisbane City Council refused central board suggestions to appoint a slaughterhouse inspector,¹¹⁸ the Roma City Council did not consider a dairy inspector necessary,¹¹⁹ and Rockhampton local authorities stated that "the health of the town did not require the appointment of a health officer".¹²⁰ The Colonial Secretary, B.B. Moreton, refused to recommend the approval and issuing of regulations drawn up by the central board.¹²¹ Later, B.D. Morehead

- 114. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 14 Mar 1887, Q.S.A. COL/A 493, in-letter no.2212 of 1887.
- 115. Minutes of Executive Council, 6 Jan 1887 to 30 Dec 1887, Q.S.A. EXE/E100 - EXE/E111. /Except for preliminaries to the supply debate/.
- 116. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Mar 1887; sub editorial.
- 117. Ibid., 9 Aug 1887; main editorial. See also Ibid., 20 Mar 1888; letter to editor from W.H. Chambers.
- 118. Ibid., 11 Jun 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 10 Jun 1887.
- 119. Ibid., 30 Jul 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 29 Jul 1887.
- 120. Ibid., 30 Jul 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 29 Jul 1887.
- 121. See for example Ibid., 8 Oct 1887; Minutes of adjourned meeting of Central Board of Health, 7 Oct 1887, Ibid., 19 Nov 1887; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 18 Nov 1887, and Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 20 Mar 1889, Q.S.A. COL/A574, in-letter no.2642 of 1889.

disregarded that body's carefully documented and very sensible advice on the need for the appointment of a medical inspector and sanitary engineer, both of whom could give helpful advice and instruction, where and when needed, throughout the whole colony.¹²² During supply debates, criticisms ranged from mild comments that the board was unsatisfactory,¹²³ to jibes that the body would probably not be missed if it were only summoned once a year.¹²⁴ Morehead, was even unkind enough to assert that unless he prodded it, the board did no work at all.¹²⁵ This provoked a very hurt reply from members, who were astonished that the minister could make such a statement in parliament, for subsequent publication in Hansard and The Brisbane Courier.¹²⁶ When the unrepentant Colonial Secretary confessed that he had indeed said and meant the words, which he felt were fully justified,¹²⁷ the board replied at length, giving examples of work successfully done against great odds, but ending with the old cry that

unless the Health Act is to be allowed to remain a dead letter, either executive power must be granted to some individual or Board, or the Government must adopt the recommendations of the Central Board of Health and act promptly on them. ¹²⁸

Morehead did nothing to amend the Act, and the same sorts of insults were heaped on the central board in succeeding years. It was labelled "helplessly incompetent and inefficient",¹²⁹ medical colleagues calling for the board's replacement by a department of health.¹³⁰ With considerable justice, country parliamentary representatives accused the board of failing to interest itself with obvious sanitary evils outside the capital.¹³¹ And a frustrated

- 122. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 17 Dec 1889, Q.S.A. COL/A601, in-letter no. 11097 of 1889, and subsequents, extending to 21 October 1890.
- 123. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LIII (1887), 1252.
- 124. Ibid., p.1254.
- 125. Ibid., LVIII (1889), 1648.
- 126. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 20 Sep 1889, Q.S.A. COL/A591, in-letter no. 8357 of 1889.
- 127. Under Colonial Secretary to Central Board of Health, 24 Sep 1889, Q.S.A. COL/G52, out-letter no. 3412 of 1889.
- 128. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 9 Nov 1889, Q.S.A. COL/A596, in-letter no. 9882 of 1889.
- 129. The Brisbane Courier, 13 Mar 1888; main editorial.
- 130. The Brisbane Courier, 15 May 1888; letter to editor from Dr. Richard Rendle.
- 131. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LVIII (1889), 1648, complaint of Arthur Morgan, member for Warwick, and Ibid., LXII (1890), 1343, complaint of W.H. Groom, member for Drayton and Toowoomba.

Dr. W.F. Taylor confided that he and his fellow board members were "just like a lot of fowls trying to fly over a fence".¹³² The only thing for the "practically useless", "inept", and "restricted" board to do in these circumstances, suggested The Brisbane Courier, was to resign en masse, and force an amending health act on the government.¹³³ Board members did not take the Courier's advice at that time. But thwarted once too often, Drs. Taylor and Marks resigned in 1894, when the Colonial Secretary rudely remarked that he would now have "a live board... likely to answer all requirements".¹³⁴ Meantime, some minor successes did redound to the board's credit, as from time to time local councils appointed medical officers of health and health inspectors at the board's behest.¹³⁵

The central board's struggle for administrative authority and parliamentary debate on the matter, dragged on throughout the nineties. Gradually, more and more parliamentary members began to realize that without the investment of executive powers, the board could hardly be expected to exercise properly, the provisions of the 1884 Act.¹³⁶ If any further proof were needed, that both the Act and its supervisory agent had failed to work as the legislature had planned, it was provided in 1891. Startlingly damning evidence against the legislation was revealed, not as part of a campaign by a power-seeking Central Board of Health, nor by its increasingly-sympathetic parliamentary supporters, but by the commissioners investigating the conditions under which thousands of workers toiled in the factories, shops and workshops of Brisbane and Ipswich.¹³⁷

- 132. The Brisbane Courier, 22 Feb 1889; Minutes of special meeting of Central Board of Health, 21 Feb 1889. The Courier thought Taylor's simile a thing of "rare felicity" spoken by a "genius". Ibid., 23 Feb 1889; sub editorial.
- 133. Ibid.
- 134. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXI (1894), 600. View of Horace Tozer.
- 135. In 1890 both South Brisbane and Ipswich appointed medical officers of health. The Brisbane Courier, 14 Jan 1890, and The Queensland Times, 7 Jan 1890. Most of the councils and divisional boards written to at this time denied the need for medical officers. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Jan 1890.
- 136. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXII (1890), 1342-45.
- 137. "The Shops, Factories, and Workshops Commission Report", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1891), 957-1319.

After uncovering ill-ventilated, overcrowded, disgustingly filthy work places, which were "completely unfit for human occupation", and which provided no decent amenities for staff, nor clean, private, proper closet accommodation,¹³⁸ the commissioners made a most damaging accusation against Queensland's 1884 health legislation, which was supposed to cover these areas under Clause 71 of the Act.¹³⁹

Neither the Local Government Act nor the Health Act gave /the nuisance inspectors/sufficient power to deal with /these evils/.

The indefinite, feeble wording of the clause prevented its being effectual.¹⁴⁰

This shocking report made the need for legislative action only too evident, but Queensland was moving into a depression period. No factories and shops legislation was passed until 1896, and as far as the central board was concerned, apart from peaks of activity when special meetings were called to discuss extraordinary problems,¹⁴¹ votes of money for the board,¹⁴² and meetings, were held to a minimum.¹⁴³ Members were prevented from meeting altogether for months at a time in 1894,¹⁴⁴ by the action of the Colonial Secretary,¹⁴⁵ when the overall supervision required under the Act was done without altogether. And although the board later gave useful advice on various diseases within the colony, and on local authorities which should be proclaimed, that counsel was not necessarily taken.¹⁴⁶

138. "The Shops, Factories, and Workshops Commission Report", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1891), 1304-1308.

139. Queensland Government Gazette, XXXV (1884), 1430.

140. "Shops, Factories...Report", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1891), 1061.

141. For example over a smallpox scare.Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 24 Apr 1893, Q.S.A. COL/A732, in-letter no. 4656 of 1893.

142. Money was so scarce in 1893 that the Colonial Secretary felt the board might be "desirous of foregoing their fees in these depressed times".Central Board of Health to Under Colonial Secretary, 5 Dec 1893, Q.S.A. COL/A755, in-letter no. 14246 of 1893.

143. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXX (1893), 807.

144. Ibid., LXXI (1894), 600.

145. Central Board of Health to Colonial Secretary, 19 Apr 1894, Q.S.A. COL/A768,in-letter no. 4389 of 1894, and reply 23 Apr 1894, Q.S.A. COL/G90, out-letter no. 2769 of 1894.

146. The Brisbane Courier, 6 Oct 1894; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 5 Oct 1894.

Perhaps because of government disinclination to take the proffered advice, the board does appear to have been remarkably lethargic at times. For instance, members did debate the dangers presented by the plague outbreak in Asia and Africa, "on several occasions". But they "decided not to take any action" until frequent exchanges of letters with the Central Board of Health in Melbourne, appears to have made up their minds for them. Queensland certainly followed the Victorian example as far as the proclamation of infected ports was concerned,¹⁴⁷ and copied the Melbourne board's early plague regulations, once the disease had broken out in Australia.¹⁴⁸

Even at this stage, and beyond, the board's main energies were engaged with "looseness, dissatisfaction, and want of power".¹⁴⁹ Right up to the period when the invasion of Queensland by the plague made the amendment of the now utterly useless Act of 1884 and the appointment of the long-awaited "despot" absolutely essential,¹⁵⁰ the board, "having no authority... could best be described as a lion tied down with cotton".¹⁵¹

As far as the Act itself was concerned, it had been a step in the right direction. It was a piece of legislation based on an English Act, which, at the time of passing, contained the most up-to-date medical and sanitary knowledge available.¹⁵² By the end of the nineteenth century, it had more than outlived its usefulness.

147. Central Board of Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 3 May 1899, Q.S.A. COL/A 830, in-letter no.6045 of 1899. See also Within, p.270, which shows an energetic board at work with regard to rat extermination.

148. Ibid., p.272.

149. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXVII (1897), 830.

150. Within, pp.274 and 283 ff.

151. The Street, 19 Mar 1898.

152. Cartwright, p.112.

12 - LEGISLATION OF THE EARLY

COMMONWEALTH PERIOD:

FOOD AND DRUGS

The very comprehensive "Act to Consolidate and Amend the Laws relating to Public Health" in Queensland received royal assent on 20 November 1900, to take effect from the beginning of the new century.¹ This measure did not repeal any of the health acts then extant, although it contained some radical departures from its predecessors. In a very real sense, as far as the conferring of enormous emergency powers was concerned, it was

altogether an experimental piece of legislation /for which/ there was no parallel...in any British community. 2

The Health Act of 1900 was the product of the obvious need for change. Its introduction was fully justified by the almost complete breakdown of Queensland's existing health arrangements, which had been apparent for some time, by rapid advances in medical science, and by the need to keep the colony abreast with the latest developments in health administration both in countries overseas, and in the southern colonies.³ Yet it is doubtful whether Queensland would have entered the Commonwealth period with this modern law on its statute book, had it not been for the invasion of the colony by the fearsome disease bubonic plague. Certainly, neither the official revelations of instances of extreme insanitation laid bare by the chief inspector's report on factories and shops,⁴ nor a serious outbreak of typhoid fever throughout the whole colony early in 1900,⁵ were sufficient to pressure the government into bringing in amending or new health legislation, in the unsettled political,⁶ and very

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1. Queensland Government Gazette, II (1900), 1467 ff. (64 Vic. No. 9).
 2. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXV (1900), 1098.
 3. Ibid., LXXXIV (1900), 224-25, and Ibid., LXXXV (1900), 1002 and 1098.
 4. "Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Shops, 1899", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, V (1900), 1046.
 5. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1901, pp. 64, 68, and 71.
 6. T.A.Coghlan, Labour and Industry in Australia, Vol. IV (Oxford University Press, 1918), p. 1959. There was a full-scale ministerial crisis late in 1899 when Anderson Dawson was in power from 1 to 7 December, before the return of J.R.Dickson's government with J.F.G. Foxton as Home Secretary.

unsatisfactory economic climate then prevailing.⁷

The economic situation, in particular, was hardly conducive to the introduction of a health bill, whose fundamentally different concept - the setting up of an entirely new department of health - would be expensive to implement. After several seasons of consistent drought, the crucial pastoral industry was reeling. In a period when wool was still one of the foremost export money earners for Queensland,

/when the pastoralists suffered almost to the point of extinction from 1899 to 1903, wages everywhere were low, work was scarce, trade was bad, and the industrial classes suffered exceedingly. ⁸

Some measure of the economic and social importance placed on rural industries by contemporaries can be gauged from the Commissioner of Public Health's 1902 statement on the importation of foreign fodder which was urgently needed to supplement local drought-affected supplies. Although these imports posed the threat of introducing exotic " 'germs' of a very contagious nature", it was

difficult to see how, without great delay, expense, and harrasment to the shipping and commercial communities of the State, precautionary measures /were/ to be insisted upon. ⁹

The mining industry, which might have tided the colony over the bad years, was also affected by the lack of water,¹⁰ and to the inroads made on the treasury by "parsimonious nature", were added the severe financial demands of Federation.¹¹

In these circumstances, only an extreme emergency could have induced the government to act on behalf of the public health, since financial crises had always inhibited moves in this direction in Queensland.¹² But having made his decision to bring down a bill, Justin Foxton was

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7. T.A. Coghlan, p.1959.
 8. Harry C. Perry, Memoirs of the Hon.Sir Robert Philp, K.C.M.G. 1851-1922 (Brisbane, 1923), p.208.
 9. "Interim Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, I (1902), 4.
 10. Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1901, p.87.
 11. - Our First Half-Century A Review of Queensland Progress Jubilee Memorial Volume (Brisbane, 1909), p.27.
 12. See for example, Within, pp.300-303, and 322-23.

determined not to make any apology for the measure.¹³ Nor were members of either house, or of any political complexion, to allow the question of finance to stand in the way.¹⁴

This determination, and a genuine fear of the plague, particularly in the latter part of 1900, did not ensure a smooth or quick passage for the bill. The debate was very long drawn out, touching every facet of previous and projected health legislation: and at times it was very acrimonious, as members took the opportunity to castigate old enemies and to defend pet interests. Yet in view of the changes contemplated, it was both inevitable and necessary, that the parliamentary representatives of the people of Queensland should seek to understand and discuss the new legislation very thoroughly indeed.

The most significant alteration proposed under Foxton's bill was the authorisation of the governor in council to appoint a commissioner of public health - a medical practitioner expert in sanitary affairs - who would be the permanent head of a health department, with responsibility for the administration of the act.¹⁵ The governor in council was also to have the right to appoint medical inspectors and health officers, who were to be medical practitioners and experts in sanitary science, medical practitioner public vaccinators, analysts, engineering inspectors and nuisance inspectors. These officers were to work within the department of health, and could be assigned to any area throughout the colony. They were to be invested with large powers to give directions or advice to local authorities, but they were to report any orders they might make "as soon as may be", to the commissioner of public health.¹⁶

Financial difficulties during the period up to 1914 ensured that this new bureau did not reach the proportions envisaged by the

13. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 223.

14. Ibid., p.529. George Ryland, member for Gympie, Labor.

15. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 223.

16. John L. Woolcock (ed.), The Health Act of 1900 (Brisbane, 1903), pp. 15-16, Clauses 24, 26, 27 and 28.

minister in 1900,¹⁷ but its purpose remained the same. It was created to replace and far surpass the old central board of health. A central board was to be retained under the new bill, but its numbers were to be reduced, its function was to be purely advisory, and its chairman was to be the commissioner of public health.¹⁸ Under this new arrangement, the Home Secretary hoped to eliminate that grave weakness in the 1884 Health Act, which The Brisbane Courier had so frequently and so perspicaciously pointed out - the absence of "a strong man occupying a strong position"¹⁹ who could assume direction of Queensland-wide health affairs.¹⁹ Not unnaturally, the Courier was quick to take full credit for pushing the government "in the right direction".²⁰

The Queensland branch of the British Medical Association also welcomed the suggested appointment, though its deputation to the Home Secretary tried to protect both the monetary and professional interests of the proposed appointee. The delegation advocated that a minimum salary be fixed by statute. But above all, remembering the unenviable situation in which the doctor members of the Central Board of Health had often been placed, the British Medical Association's representatives requested that the proposed medical officer should be in a position to be "independent of criticism", because by the very nature of the proper discharge of his duties, "a great deal of opprobrium" was likely to be

- 17. Queensland's first health commissioner complained frequently of lack of staff to undertake necessary work "by reason of economic administration". When he left the Queensland service in 1909, the protest was taken up by his successors. "Report of Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1904), 113. For other examples see, Ibid., I (1902), 883, Ibid., II (1903), 170, Ibid., II (1905), 136, Chief Inspector, Health Department to Commissioner of Public Health, 5 Feb 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A878, in-letter no. 9706 of 1906, Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 15 Feb 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A869, in-letter no. 2154 of 1906, Commissioner of Public Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 15 Mar 1907, Q.S.A. HOM/J24, in-letter no. 2927 of 1907, "Report of Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1908), 289, Ibid., II (1909), 356, Ibid., II (1910), 377, and Ibid., II (1913), 18.
- 18. The board was to have five members, two of whom were to be medical practitioners. At least one board member was to have had three years' experience in local government. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 815.
- 19. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 224.
- 20. The Brisbane Courier, 6 Aug 1900; main editorial. One member of parliament actually suggested that the Courier had "largely induced [the Home Secretary] to bring in this Bill". Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 236.

cast upon him.²¹ Impressed, the minister promised to give the suggestions of this "pretty strong union... of the medical fraternity"²² his serious consideration,²³ but he forgot his assurances when confronted by even more effective pressure groupings, defending the independence of local government.

The local authorities retained the vital position in the public health scheme of 1900, which they had had under the 1884 Health Act - the requirement that they "carry out... all works and matters of health... under the supervision of the Commissioner".²³ But they were concerned about their position, following this new appointment, because it seemed to some observers, that the government had jumped from the extreme of having a central board of health with

no responsibility at all, to creating a sort of autocrat who /would/ be able to do all sorts of things on his own responsibility.

24

Local government bodies therefore resolved on delaying tactics, to enable further consideration and the drafting of amendments covering a number of areas.²⁵

In this they were very firmly supported by those parliamentarians for whom the preservation of local authority rights continued to be of the utmost importance. The ratepayers of Queensland might be as anxious as any one else to preserve the public health, and might welcome the bill to this end,²⁶ but local autonomist sympathy was strong enough

21. Minute Book of the Queensland Branch of the British Medical Association, 8 Aug 1900, pp.182-84, and The Brisbane Courier, 14 Aug 1900; report of deputation of Drs. Thomson, Love, Brockway, Connolly, Sutton, Carvosso and Hirschfeld, 13 Aug 1900.
22. Ibid. The quotation is from George Kerr's speech on the 1900 bill in the Legislative Assembly. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 544. Kerr, the member for Barcoo, was a Laborite.
23. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 223.
24. Ibid., 821. This included the power to force local authorities to appoint medical officers of health, public analysts, inspectors and any other necessary officers to ensure the proper execution of the provisions of the proposed health act. Woolcock, p.16, Clause 29.
25. Minutes of Proceedings of the Local Authority Association of Queensland, Executive Committee, No.54, 5 Aug 1900.
26. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 529-30. Especially the views of J.C. Stewart, Rockhampton North, F. McDonnell, Fortitude Valley, both Labor, and Thomas Glassey, Bundaberg, formerly Labor.

to win a temporary postponement of the health bill debate.²⁷ Indeed, because it was clearly necessary to appease that body of opinion, both inside and outside of parliament, which feared the persistent incursion of the central government into peripheral affairs, the Home Secretary promised to limit the public health commissioner's powers.²⁸ Thomas Glassey pointed out, that to have a health commissioner "clearly and distinctly under the thumb of the Minister", would be to risk the perpetuation of obvious weaknesses in the 1884 Act. But the Home Secretary declared that he had reached a satisfactory compromise.

The Commissioner would have ample power to deal with local authorities, but would not be an irresponsible autocrat.

29

Some members of both the Assembly and Council were critical of the idea of a medical head of a government department for other reasons, which were consistent with the British experience that "laymen are always jealous of the specialist administrator".³⁰ W.H. Groom was convinced that the medical man had not yet been born who was capable of managing the local authorities of Queensland.³¹ The Honorable A.C. Gregory agreed. He was quite happy to let a commissioner deal with medical matters, but was uncertain of his capabilities, when it came to the practical administration of the Act.³² The Honorable Dr. C.F. Marks assured his colleagues that medical sanitary experts understood all forms of local government.³³ But Gregory persisted in his opinion, which accorded strongly with the views of business groups in the

- 27. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 469, 471, 526-27, and 823. Especially W. Stephens, South Brisbane, W.H. Groom and J. Fogarty, Drayton and Toowoomba, and the Honorable A.C. Gregory, Member of the Legislative Council.
- 28. Ibid., p.529.
- 29. Ibid.
- 30. Cartwright, p.112. This was certainly the case with Sir John Simon, "the inspired leader" of the English public health movement, who became "Simon the desk official...increasingly subservient to lay officials...with his power so eroded that his usefulness had almost gone". See also, Anonymous, "Sanitary Progress", The Edinburgh Review, CLXXIII, Jan to Apr 1891, pp.85-87, and Lambert, pp.519 ff.
- 31. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 238.
- 32. Ibid., p.823.
- 33. Ibid..

community,³⁴ that

it would be highly injudicious and improper to pass
a law which would give a person who is not an expert
in business...power to spend the money of other people
on sanitary improvements.

35

Yet another aspect, which was connected with local pride and prejudice, ruffled the feathers of loyal Queenslanders. As the debate progressed, it became increasingly obvious that the government had already selected a medical gentleman for the proposed position of commissioner;³⁶ it also appeared clear to members of the Assembly that he would be "an imported man, who would³⁷ not understand local government here and local matters at all".³⁷ In fact, the government's choice could not offend any patriotic Queenslander. The successful candidate for the post, Bertie Burnett Ham, whose medical qualifications were excellent,³⁸ was "an Australian and one who was resident in this country until he had been some years at Melbourne University".³⁹

One other important reservation was expressed, not by local authority enthusiasts, but by the redoubtable Honorable Dr. W.F. Taylor. It concerned the proposed emergency powers which the appointee was to assume whenever a crisis situation - of which he was to be the sole judge - should arise.⁴⁰ To grant these powers would be to depart from any "recognised course", and place Queensland in a pioneering situation with regard to the public health; for they went far beyond powers granted to any one officer of the Local Government Board in England,⁴¹ or to the heads of the health authorities in New South Wales and Victoria.

- 34. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXV (1900), 100. Petition from "certain merchants in Brisbane".
- 35. Ibid. For Gregory's personal involvement in local government affairs see Douglas Pike (ed.), Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol. IV (Melbourne, 1972), pp.294-95, and Within, p.64, f.n.147.
- 36. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 527.
- 37. Ibid., pp.239 and 544. View of William Stephens, John Fogarty and others.
- 38. At the time of his Queensland appointment, Ham held a Doctorate in Medicine and the essential Diploma in Public Health from Cambridge.
- 39. Under Secretary Home Department to Chief Secretary's Office, 12 Oct 1900, Q.S.A. COL/A904, in-letter no. 10750 of 1900.
- 40. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXV (1900), 1098.
- 41. The Local Government Board was administered by a ministerial head with a chief medical adviser and a chief engineering adviser and a staff of experts.

Such proposals would also create the chance for a minister to escape "all responsibility" for any far-reaching or unpopular decisions taken in an emergency, "by sheltering himself behind the commissioner".⁴² Taylor won some support for his views,⁴³ but the leader of the debate in the upper house, the Postmaster-General James George Drake, and a majority of members, saw no difficulties on this score, and Taylor's amendment was defeated.⁴⁴

Taylor attempted another unsuccessful amendment on a related matter. The doctor, who had engaged in continual battles with various colonial and home secretaries during his term as a member of the Central Board of Health,⁴⁵ suggested that under the new bill the projected "quasi-department of public health" would

simply be an appendage to the Home Secretary's Department,...
/yet/ he knew of no other department at present existing
 that was as important...as far as the public were concerned.⁴⁶

Its work would be greatly facilitated if it was controlled by a

Minister, who would be responsible to Parliament and the
 country for its due administration.⁴⁷

The Postmaster-General acknowledged the importance of this argument - possibly even recognising that future needs might justify such a move. Vigorous debate took place, but in the end Taylor's amendment was lost,⁴⁸ because a separate ministry would lead to "unlimited expense" for the already hard-pressed government,⁴⁹ and the eve of federation was "an inappropriate time... to contemplate the creation of an additional Minister".⁵⁰ In the event, Queensland had to wait until 5 December 1935 before the first Secretary for Health and Home Affairs was appointed.⁵¹

42. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXV (1900), 1097.

43. Especially from A.C. Gregory, Ibid., p.1098.

44. Ibid., p.1099 and John L. Woolcock, p.13, Clause 20.

45. See for example Within, pp.354 and 356-57.

46. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXV (1900), 957.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., pp.957-59.

49. Ibid., p.959.

50. Ibid., p.957.

51. Edward Michael Hanlon, formerly Home Secretary, first held the post.

The first minister to head a department purely concerned with health was not appointed in Queensland until 1963.⁵²

Another seemingly "drastic" innovation,⁵³ which was based entirely on a British act, and which was to be brought into operation only by proclamation,⁵⁴ was included in the 1900 health bill. This section related to the protection of infant life in the colony, and was aimed in particular at the crime of baby-farming, which the minister was happy to state, was rare in Queensland.⁵⁵ On paper these clauses looked very stringent indeed, requiring close inspection and registration of the people concerned, the houses in which the children were to be kept, and the children themselves.⁵⁶ But in practice this part of the Act proved "totally inadequate to deal with many cases of neglect".⁵⁷

The much tougher "Act to Make Better Provision for the Protection of Infant Life", which was to be administered by the police rather than the health department,⁵⁸ had to be brought down in 1905,⁵⁹ because of the "enormous death rate among such children".⁶⁰ The enforcing of the new Act had a "salutary" effect, according to the Commissioner of Police. The children were

- 52. Henry Winston Noble, appointed on 26 September 1963.
- 53. This was the Courier's description of this section. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Aug 1900; main editorial.
- 54. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 223.
- 55. Ibid., p.227. But see L. Goldman, "Child Welfare in Nineteenth Century Queensland: 1865-1911", unpublished M.A.Qualifying thesis, University of Queensland, 1978, p.170. Goldman, quoting The Brisbane Courier, asserts that there was "an extensive system of baby-farming in Brisbane" at least from 1890 onwards.
- 56. Woolcock, pp.69-71, Clauses 152-158.
- 57. "Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1905), 432.
- 58. See Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCV (1905), 510-13 and 881, for the debate on the question of police ability to recognise cases of medical neglect and inadequate sanitation.
- 59. Queensland Government Gazette, LXXXV (1905), 1369-76.
- 60. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCV (1905), 509. Very often these were illegitimate babies who were "farmed" out as their mothers had to work for their support. See Thornhill Weedon, Queensland Past and Present (Brisbane, 1898), p.109, for a contemporary assessment of the illegitimacy rate in Queensland as compared with that of other colonies in Australia. Registrar-Generals' reports for the period give tables showing illegitimate births, but there are no figures on the death rates of these particular babies.

generally speaking well looked after, and there /was/ no doubt that the Act /had/ very much conduced to the bettering of the conditions of life for these infants. 61

Even so, observers considered this Act "but an instalment of the necessary legislation on this subject",⁶² especially in the area of inspection, which appeared to be very much more satisfactorily conducted in New South Wales under that state's more rigorous Act.⁶³ The matter was of very great concern to the Commissioner of Public Health, although the police authorities had been entrusted with the work. Dr. Ham felt that the health department was "not wholly exonerated" by this official shift of responsibility, since only his inspectors were

competent to express opinions on sanitary matters, which must necessarily affect the health of the infants boarded out in the various nursing homes throughout the State. 64

One very important improvement was made with the appointment of a fully qualified nursing sister to the position of inspector, under the Infant Life Protection Act in 1908.⁶⁵ But difficulties which fully justified the health commissioner's warnings continued to occur, as experienced but unqualified persons tried to cope with sanitary problems in nursing homes registered under the Act.⁶⁶

The rest of the health bill of 1900 included very many significant changes and additions designed to overcome the inadequacies of the 1884 Act, and to reduce some sections and clauses "to a more orderly arrangement".⁶⁷ Yet the method of operation for a number of the divisions was similar to those obtaining under the old Act. The very much expanded Part III which dealt with sanitary provisions of all kinds, including

- 61. Memorandum from Commissioner of Police to Under Secretary Home Department, 25 Jul 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A873, in-letter no. 9109 of 1906.
- 62. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Jan 1906; main editorial.
- 63. Ibid.
- 64. "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1908), 304.
- 65. Under Secretary Home Department to Eveline Smith, 12 May 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A903, in-letter no. 5641 of 1908 and attachments, and Queensland Government Gazette, CIV (1908), 1180. Previous to this, "practical nurses" had been employed as women inspectors. For example, Hannah Elizabeth Wilson had been an inspector on these terms from 1 February 1906. The Morning Bulletin, 27 Aug 1908.
- 66. See for example, the successful appeal against the deregistering of a very doubtful nursing home, Daniel Carey to Under Secretary for Justice, 1 Sep 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A892, in-letter no. 10394 of 1908 and attachments.
- 67. Greenwood and Laverty, p.232.

sewers and drains, the disposal of sewage, sanitary conveniences and scavenging, and Part IV which covered such things as ordinary housing, cellar dwellings and lodging houses, were, like their counterparts in the 1884 Act,

only to be in force in such portions of the colony as
they may be proclaimed to be in force in. 68

There was very little resistance to the substance of these clauses, because the need for strengthened powers to ensure proper cleanliness, especially in the presence of bubonic plague, was obvious to most members. What did concern some speakers was the desirability of putting these sections

into force all over the colony....Any safeguards for the
preservation of health should be enforced in all towns,
large and small. 69

Nevertheless, such a concept was immense in planning and cost, and the proposals were rejected. That subdivision of the bill, which concerned the very touchy problem of vaccination against smallpox, was also to be brought into operation only by proclamation.⁷⁰ But the whole of the rest of the bill was to be in force in all parts of Queensland, from the time it became law.

This included very large sections on nuisances and offensive trades,⁷¹ on food and drugs,⁷² and on all aspects of infectious illnesses including an extremely important section on compulsory notification of certain diseases, and the appointment of joint epidemic boards.⁷³ Once again most members found these parts of the bill to be "very good",⁷⁴

68. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 223.

69. Ibid., pp.230, 243, 536 and 560. Labor members were most concerned with this issue which affected conditions in small towns, shearing and woolsheds, railway and fencing camps and other such places which catered for the working men of Queensland. Glassey, McDonnell, and the leader of the party, William Henry Browne, member for Croydon, were foremost in speaking on these points. See also Within, pp.120-122.

70. Woolcock, pp.65-69, Clauses 139-151.

71. Ibid., pp.38-44, Clauses 79-89.

72. Ibid., pp.45-57, Clauses 90-116.

73. Ibid., pp.57-69, Clauses 117-151. See also Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 542-43, 820-21, and Within, p.274.

74. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 241.

"decided improvement/s/ on our present laws relating to health", which would be "hailed with considerable satisfaction throughout the length and breadth of the country", and for which the Home Secretary was to be "highly commended... and congratulated".⁷⁵ Nevertheless, this did not prevent protracted arguments on what constituted nuisances as far as noxious trades were concerned,⁷⁶ nor the accusations that the Home Secretary had framed certain clauses in an endeavour to shield from ruin, some businesses which did cause irritation and annoyance.⁷⁷

Some very lengthy and vitriolic discussion also took place on the preservatives and colouring used in food, on the weights and measures of breads, on antiseptics and drugs, and on the type, quality and number of analysts and other public servants, who would be required to administer that section of the proposed health act under the direction of a commissioner of public health.⁷⁸ There is no doubt that some of this argument was encouraged by very effective pressure groups within the community, who feared the loss of business or increased costs, if the apparently stringent clauses went through.⁷⁹ But there was also a suspicion amongst some parliamentary members, that the government was deliberately delaying the passage of the bill. For example George Kerr pointed out that on occasions

there was not a quorum present when they were discussing such an important Bill, and that the Home Secretary was the only Minister present, there was so much indifference displayed. 80

Matthew Reid complained that during several evening sessions there were scarcely any government members in the house,⁸¹ while William Higgs observed that not only were more opposition than government members

- 75. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 243 and 471.
- 76. Ibid., pp.634-36 and Ibid., LXXXV (1900), 1241-42.
- 77. Ibid., LXXXIV (1900), 635.
- 78. Ibid., pp.245, 529 and 637, and Ibid., LXXXV (1900), 1243-46, 1342-48, 1375-81, 1470-75, and 1794-1803. At this stage the government analyst was a member of the Department of Mines.
- 79. For bakers' representations see Ibid., p.1242, the dairy industry protests, Ibid., pp.1244-45, for the meat industry petition, Ibid., p.1246, and a petition from the Brisbane Traders' Association, Ibid., p.1349.
- 80. Ibid., LXXXIV (1900), 544.
- 81. Ibid., p.566. Matthew Reid, member for Enoggera, Labor.

present during debate, but that they took a more "intelligent interest in the discussion of the measure".⁸²

In contrast, there was never any want of attention when matters connected with financing the new bill came up for discussion. Under the proposed health act of 1900

all expenses incurred by the Commissioner... in the execution of this Act... /were to/ be defrayed out of moneys from time to time appropriated by Parliament towards the expenses of the Commissioner. 83

But unfortunately for local councils and divisional boards, all costs and expenses incurred by the commissioner in emergency situations were to come, not from government appropriations, but from the local authorities concerned.⁸⁴ Moreover, although the measure provided that local governing bodies were to be given "a great deal more power than they had had before",⁸⁵ increased powers almost inevitably meant "increased liabilities", which would "undoubtedly entail additional expense".⁸⁶ Vocal local government supporters insisted that there was "no alternative but for the Government to find the money",⁸⁷ for council rates were already too high.⁸⁸ But the bill made no such provision, even though a Royal Commission on Local Government had found, as early as 1896, that one overwhelming barrier to the success of the 1884 Health Act had been limited local council and divisional board funds.⁸⁹

82. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 567. William Guy Higgs, Fortitude Valley, Labor.

83. Woolcock, p.14, Clause 23.

84. Ibid., p.13, Clause 20.

85. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 229.

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid., pp.238 and 562.

88. Ibid., pp.242, 528 and 531.

89. "Report of the Local Government Commission of 1896", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1896), 555-56. See also Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 238, for severe criticism of the removal of cleansing rate endowments under the Health Act Amendment Act of 1890 and references to the Royal Commission on Local Government by Stephens of South Brisbane. There was considerable sympathy for local government in the upper house as well. See for example, the speeches of C.H. Buzacott and A.C. Gregory, Ibid., pp.819-20 and 823.

David Hay Dalrymple, minister without portfolio, could not agree.
 Local authorities in this country do rather less than more
 than they may fairly be expected to do...⁹⁰ In the towns it
 is a perfectly proper thing that local authorities should
 find the cost of those things necessary to the health of
 their community. 90

The Home Secretary, J.F.G. Foxton was rather more sympathetic,
 acknowledging the difficulties, and pledging that

not only the present Government, but any Government, would
 necessarily have to see that the resources of the local
 government were not overtaxed. 91

The Treasurer would either have "to see his way to increase the endowment",
 or the rating powers of local authorities would have to be enlarged.⁹²

In the end, the government chose the second option, thus
 transferring a very considerable amount of the financial responsibility
 for the public health affairs of cities and towns to the ratepayers of
 Queensland. In the fiscal year 1902-3, a period of "special retrenchment",⁹³
 the allocation of funds for endowments to local government dropped to
 £30,000, and in the following year no moneys were made available at all.⁹⁴
 To cover this loss of endowment, the government had "no alternative but
 to increase again the rating powers of local authorities".⁹⁵ Consequently,
 the health bill which depended so much on local and central governments
 working "harmoniously together",⁹⁶ passed on to the statute book with one
 obvious flaw.⁹⁷ Indeed a very short amending health bill concerning
 certain financial arrangements for local authorities had to be passed
 almost at once.⁹⁸

90. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 240.

91. Ibid., p.640.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid., LXXXIX (1902), 347. See also The Brisbane Courier, 4 Feb
 1902.

94. Laverty, p.256.

95. Ibid. See also Within, pp.352-53.

96. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 240.

97. Cumpston, writing particularly of smallpox, suggests that the main
 weakness of the Act was the government's failure to ensure the
 active application of provisions written into the Act. Cumpston,
History of Smallpox, p.140.

98. "Health Act Amending Act of 1900", Queensland Government Gazette,
 II (1900), 1581, (64 Vic. No. 10). This allowed local authorities
 which undertook their own sanitary work to recover the cost
 from householders.

But the minister was supremely confident. Contrary to Labor claims,⁹⁹ and his own later admissions that the department was "not as yet fully equipped",¹⁰⁰ Foxton maintained that he had "the whole machinery for the working of the Act¹⁰¹ already in existence". Dr. B. Burnett Ham,¹⁰² one of the "young men revelling in new fields /and/ limitless possibilities,¹⁰³ was installed as head of the health department from 1 January 1901.¹⁰⁴ He began work immediately, investigating an area covered by one of the most fiercely debated sections of the Health Act of 1900 - the "whole question of preservatives used in food, and the adulteration and unwholesomeness of certain foods manufactured in the State of Queensland".¹⁰⁵

Ham had taken a special interest in this subject before leaving England,¹⁰⁶ and had kept in touch with the latest developments and usages both in that country,¹⁰⁷ and on the continent of Europe.¹⁰⁸ He promptly fell foul of vested interests in the community, and incidentally uncovered "a very weak spot in the Act",¹⁰⁹ as he delved into the preservatives added to certain imported food, liquor and drugs.¹¹⁰

- 99. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 527, View of Andrew Fisher, Gympie.
- 100. Foxton before the Local Authorities Association, Minutes of Fifth Annual Meeting of the Local Authorities Association of Queensland, No. 61, 6 Mar 1901.
- 101. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 527.
- 102. Agent General, London to Under Secretary Home Department, 16 Oct 1900, Q.S.A. COL/A904, in-cablegram no. 16229 of 1900.
- 103. Cumpston, Evolution of Public Health in Australia, p.197.
- 104. Ham claimed to have commenced duty on this date in various reports. The official record states that his appointment commenced on 10 January 1901. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, I (1901), 1007.
- 105. "Report of the Commissioner of Public Health Upon Food Preservatives and Adulterated Food", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1901), 1655 ff.
- 106. Ibid., p.1655.
- 107. Letter to Ham from Dr. Theodore Thomson, 21 Mar 1901, included in Ibid., pp.1655-56.
- 108. Ibid., pp.1656-57. See also Ham's insistence on awaiting the findings of the British Royal Commission into food and drugs before taking definite steps in Queensland. Ibid., p.1658.
- 109. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXVII (1901), 1165.
- 110. See for example, J. Brownlie Henderson, Government Analyst to Collector of Customs, Brisbane, 21 Mar 1901, Q.S.A. COL/A842, letter no. 1549 of 1900 and attachments, including letters from federal parliamentarians who were drawn into the argument because trade and customs is a Commonwealth responsibility.

and into the manufacturing methods of some home-grown industries.¹¹¹

Attacks were made on the commissioner on two fronts. "Very old and highly esteemed colonists" who had set themselves up in the food and drink manufacturing business, objected strenuously to the claim that "at present there is not a single sample of the Queensland /products/ which I have tested that is 'pure'".¹¹² The other offensive was waged in parliament by those confirmed champions of the local government cause, Messrs. Fogarty and Stephens.¹¹³ When the government analyst found himself overwhelmed by the rapidly increasing health department work load,¹¹⁴ and the Commissioner of Public Health requested local councils to appoint their own public analysts, there was a great outcry from both Stephens and Fogarty. They condemned the provisions of the Health Act which empowered the commissioner to compel defaulting authorities to appoint such officers.¹¹⁵ They contended that as

no financial assistance was given to the local authorities it was utterly impossible for them to carry out the recommendations made to them....Local authorities were at their wits' ends to make ends meet.

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And John Fogarty, reaching for the impossible dream of perfect local autonomy and access to central government funds, declared that in any case "it was the duty of Government to see that the food supply was pure".¹¹⁷

111. Particularly wineries. Report from Government Chemical Laboratory to Home Secretary, 18 Oct 1901, Q.S.A. COL/A843, in-letter no. 17240 of 1901.

112. Further report of Dr. J.C. Brunnich, and complaints of Messrs. Bassett, Lambert and Childs, attached to Ibid.

113. Within, p.365, f.n.27, p.366, f.n.37, and p.372, f.n.89.

114. The government analyst was an officer of the Mines Department who made tests for the Commissioner of Public Health on request. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXVII (1901), 1165. This "courteous", "extremely helpful", "overworked" officer, and the government chemical laboratory in which he worked, were transferred to the Home Secretary's department in 1906. "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1906), 193.

115. Woolcock, p.16, Clause 29.

116. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXVII (1901), 1165.

117. Ibid. Fogarty was very persistent in his criticism. See for example, Ibid., XCI (1903), 458-65, supply debate.

This question continued to concern Ham - and aware Queenslanders¹¹⁸ - throughout the whole period of his commissionership. In the doctor's opinion, Queensland "led the van in the matter of the prevention of food adulteration", being the first state in the Commonwealth to issue judiciously-framed regulations based on the recommendations of an English departmental committee,¹¹⁹ but it would appear that New South Wales had ousted Queensland from its premier position by 1910.¹²⁰

Ham had achieved a notable victory in persuading the Home Secretary to accept his regulations, particularly as it was obvious to some observers that the government had studiously ignored health authorities' representations on adulterated food "for years".¹²¹ But he still faced an uphill battle in convincing the local authorities that

one of the primary objects of the Health Department /was/
to secure for the public at large a good and wholesome
food supply;

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and that this could only be achieved, if local governments fulfilled their part under the Health Act of 1900, and undertook "systematic inspection, and condemnation, /of impure food/, followed by prosecution, where necessary".¹²³

- 118. According to Ham too few Queenslanders were aware."On many occasions" he bemoaned "the public apathy in the matter of daily food supplies". "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1907), 220. But The Brisbane Courier backed his call for pure food. See for example, The Brisbane Courier, 31 Jul 1901; main editorial. Some parliamentarians also showed great interest.
- 119. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, I (1902), 883. This was the outcome of the British Royal Commission's findings. See also Queensland Government Gazette, LXXVIII (1902), 1495-96.
- 120. See Within, p.384.
- 121. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XC (1902), 1073. View of Vincent Bernard Joseph Lesina, member for Clermont. Lesina refers here to the Department of Health, but presumably he means the Central Board of Health.
- 122. "Report of the Commissioner of Public Health Upon Food Preservatives and Adulterated and Unwholesome Food", Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1901), 1662.
- 123. Ibid.

By 1903, a disappointed Burnett Ham claimed that that part of the Health Act of 1900 concerned with food and drugs was "practically a dead letter". This was partly because of local authority "complacency", but chiefly because the proper carrying out of those provisions of the Act, would involve the councils in very considerable expense.¹²⁴ Peter Airey, the Labor member for Flinders, entirely supported the health commissioner during the subsequent supply debate. The local authorities were "the greatest hindrance in the way of Dr. Ham doing efficient work. /Because/ they had the key to the situation",¹²⁵ Airey asked that government pressure be brought to bear to force them to do their duty.¹²⁶

The conservative Philp government failed to act decisively against the local authorities in this matter, and consequently the Commissioner of Public Health could record little improvement during the ensuing months.¹²⁷ But Airey, on becoming Home Secretary early in 1904, did not hesitate to reprimand the periphery. It was clear that the wording of the Act itself was creating a considerable stumbling block. Even as the minister labelled the councils and divisional boards "very remiss and very careless", he admitted that the "proceeding that had to be followed was somewhat cumbrous" and therefore at least off-putting.¹²⁸ The impetuous V.B.J. Lesina argued that

the proper course was to amend the Health Act so as to take the whole business out of the hands of the local authorities, who, as a rule, consisted of little pettifogging grocers and other traders who were interested in the sale of these very food products that were complained about, and it was not likely that they were going to take any action. 129

The Morgan government did not bring down any amending legislation at that time, and it was 1911 before any noticeable change in

124. "Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1903), 170. See also Within, p.375.

125. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCI (1903), 461.

126. Ibid.

127. "Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1904), 110, and Ibid., II (1905), 149. Only "feeble action" or "total apathy" could be expected from local authorities, according to Ham. Ibid.

128. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCVI (1905), 1325.

129. Ibid.

government thinking placed the protection of consumer interests before those of the manufacturer and retailer.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, the year 1906 was to see a slight but definite change in the attitude of some local authorities. This followed closely on two important developments. The first was the transfer of the invaluable J. Brownlie Henderson and his laboratory from the Mines Department to the jurisdiction of the Home Secretary, following some impassioned representations from Burnett Ham.¹³¹ The move allowed the analyst to occupy "his time more fully with matters directly pertaining to the public health".¹³² At the same time, Ham achieved a decided advance as far as the Manufacturers and Traders Association and the Grocers' Association of Queensland were concerned. With the cooperation of these bodies, much good work was done to eliminate adulterated food, until "on the whole, the large bulk of foodstuffs manufactured and retailed in Brisbane /was/ free from adulteration".¹³³

No doubt the official posture taken by the traders' associations, the attacks made by The Truth on disgusting conditions and foodstuffs,¹³⁴ the commissioner's close liaison with the southern states on the "live question" of food standards,¹³⁵ and the continuing interest of parliamentarians in the pure food question, all combined to make Lesina's "little pettifogging grocers" in local government more amenable to Burnett Ham's overtures. Certainly by 1907, the health commissioner was able to report that although

130. View of Home Secretary, John George Appel, during debate on the food and drugs section of the health act amending bill of 1911, Ibid., CVIII (1911-12), 513. This conservative government was bringing in "a measure of...great importance to the democracy of this State, involving, as it does, the health of that democracy". (Hear, hear! and Opposition laughter.) Exchange between Appel and William Lennon, member for Herbert. Ibid., p.512.

131. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 15 Feb 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A869, in-letter no. 2154 of 1906.

132. "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1906), 193.

133. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1906), 196. See also Commissioner of Public Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 24 Nov 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A869, in-letter no. 12026 of 1905, and Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 15 Feb 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A869, in-letter no. 2154 of 1906.

134. See for example, The Truth, 15 Apr 1906.

135. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Jan 1906.

too much /was/ expected of the central authority,
 and too little /was/done by the local authority,
 in the matter of protecting the people from adulterated
 and sophisticated foodstuffs...the local authorities,...
 in by far the great majority of instances, /had/
 honestly done their best with the resources at their
 command.

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However, the real break through came after the passing of the Health Act Amendment Act of 1911,¹³⁷ which was itself, the direct result of a conference of the chief health officers of the various states, held in Sydney in 1910.¹³⁸ This Act contained a very large number of clauses covering all manner of matters concerning food, drink and drugs, including patent medicines. The sheer size of this part of the measure and the time spent in parliamentary debate on these questions,¹³⁹ give some indication of the growing contemporary anxiety over impure food as a grave health hazard. Purity, packaging, labelling and advertising, blending and adulteration, utensils used in manufacture, inspection, sampling and analysis, and the punishment to which offenders would be liable, were all dealt with under this Act. Most importantly, it removed the anomalies caused by local government unwillingness to participate whole-heartedly in this work. Local authorities were still to be involved in analysis and prosecution, being empowered to work side by side with the health department. But the question of pure food had by now assumed national importance. For this reason, the administration of the Act was entrusted to the central authority.

136. "Annual Report of Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1907), 220. But see also The Brisbane Courier, 28 Oct 1907; sub editorial, for the Courier's sharp criticism of both local and central government neglect of "their first concern, the health of the people".

137. "An Act to Amend The Health Act of 1900", Queensland Government Gazette, XCIVII (1911), 1763-81, Section II, Pure Food, Clauses 13-59. The Act was effective from 1 January 1912.

138. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, CVIII (1911-12), 331.

139. The debate lasted from August to December. The measure was delayed by the time spent discussing issues which aroused a good deal of public resentment, and which might well have been the subject of separate legislation - venereal disease and the Contagious Diseases Act. A lot of debating time was taken up with sanitation and specific diseases such as dengue, diphtheria and typhoid. But the question of pure food was almost always on parliamentarians' lips over this period. The record of the debate is spread over Queensland Parliamentary Debates, CVIII (1911-12) and Ibid., CIX (1911-12).

We have not taken any power whatever from /the local authorities/, but the sole power to carry out this Act is vested in the central authority.... There are so many different local authorities there cannot be that combined action which should exist in connection with this particular matter. That action, as I have already pointed out, can only be taken by the central authority, who must be, and by this measure is, vested with all the necessary powers to carry into effect the different provisions of the Bill.

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As The Brisbane Courier pointed out to its readers, the new Act rendered it possible for the health department

to take steps for the protection of the people's health untrammelled by some of the formal legal restrictions and technicalities which /had/ stood in the way of effective administration and much useful work.

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Only the difficulty of extracting sufficient funds from the government to provide for extra inspectors and adequate machinery to carry out the legislation, now stood in the way of the completion of the work which had been "so excellently begun".¹⁴²

Popular reaction to the pure food section of the Act was varied. It ranged from angry protests that such a measure would allow the general public to be

crushed under a medical despotism whose interference with the liberty of the subject /would/ be more harassing than any other form of despotism known to Britishers,

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to acclaim for any legislation, which promised the people of Queensland a reasonable chance of obtaining pure food for human consumption.¹⁴⁴

The Brisbane Courier, in an outburst of patriotic fervour which was a feature of the early Commonwealth period, rejoiced that this Act meant that

140. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, CVIII (1911-12), 514.

141. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Dec 1911.

142. Ibid.

143. Ibid., 15 Aug 1911; letter to editor from Veritas. See also Ibid., 12 Aug 1911; letter to editor from Pharmacist. "Whilst the... measure provides for a high standard... /it/ may prove an injustice to a section, and a detriment to the whole community".

144. Ibid., 1 Nov 1911; letter to editor from Viator, and Ibid., 6 Dec 1911; letter to editor from D. O'Connor.

no other part of the British Empire /was/ better equipped in respect of sanitary legislation than this state. 145

As for the "extensive mercantile interests affected by the new legislation", they had offered no resistance to its passage, and the Commissioner of Public Health confidently expected "the mercantile community to aid cordially in securing its efficient working".¹⁴⁶

Queensland had a long way to go before all difficulties were resolved, as the royal commissioner looking into uniform standards of food purity for the whole of the Commonwealth discovered, in August 1912.¹⁴⁷

In fact, the Queensland health commissioner gave evidence that although "the public interests were protected in the first place.../he/
endeavour/ed/ to harass trade as little as possible".¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless in November 1912, eleven months after the Act became effective,

Dr. Elkington was able to announce to The Brisbane Courier that five extra inspectors, who could make more rigid investigations into foods and drugs, had been chosen.¹⁴⁹ By March 1913, these officers had more than justified their appointment by the work done in and around Brisbane.¹⁵⁰

In the following month, a number of inspectors were despatched to pay flying visits to Gympie, Maryborough and Bundaberg. Here again, the commissioner was pleased with the impact made, for the very presence of the departmental officers ensured that traders exercised greater care.¹⁵¹

But at this time, and well beyond 1914, there was some disappointment, as many prosecutions begun by the department had to be dropped, either for

145. The Brisbane Courier, 29 Dec 1911.

146. "Annual Report" /of the Commissioner of Public Health/, Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1912), 9.

147. Within, p.385

148. The Brisbane Courier, 30 Aug 1912. Dr. Elkington did not give specific instances.

149. Ibid., 29 Nov 1912 and Queensland Government Gazette, XCIX (1912), 1451. From 28 Nov 1912, the government appointed H.W.Petherick, chief food inspector, C.W.Beaver and J.Stewart, senior food inspectors, and A.E.L.Mason and A.N.Young, food inspectors.

150. The Brisbane Courier, 10 Mar 1913.

151. Ibid., 9 Apr 1913.

want of evidence or because of legal technicalities.¹⁵² Another constant cause of dissatisfaction was lack of staff.

One other element of the food and drug problem, which had caused great concern to Queensland's first health commissioner, also awaited resolution well after 1914. This was the swamping of Queensland markets with "low-priced, inferior, adulterated and fraudulently labelled goods",¹⁵³ allegedly dumped in Brisbane, by southern manufacturers taking advantage of the removal of the tariff barriers affected by federation.¹⁵⁴ It seemed to Dr. Burnett Ham, that the only really effective method of dealing with this problem in Australia, was to invite the various health authorities throughout the Commonwealth to reach "some uniform ruling on the matter".¹⁵⁵

The commissioner persisted in his calls for a Commonwealth conference on food and drug standards, and the related problem of regulating the wording of labels.¹⁵⁶ He was ably supported by the left wing orientated

152. See for example, Justice Department to Under Secretary Home Department, 20 Mar 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B44, in-letter no.2537 of 1914 regarding the selling of adulterated milk in Toowoomba, Atthow & McGregor to Under Secretary Home Department, 15 Apr 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B44, in-letter no.3272 of 1914 re adulteration of liquor at the Railway Hotel, Goodna, and Health Department to Under Secretary Home Department, 5 Nov 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B44, in-letter no.9216 of 1914, enclosing a list of cases regarding adulterated whisky, gin, milk and essence of lemon, which were not proceeded with.

153. "Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1903), 169. Presumably, as Queensland fell behind other states, notably New South Wales, in the matter of food standards, goods which became unsaleable on southern markets were sent to Queensland, in much the same way that inferior goods refused sale in Brisbane, were dumped in towns in Queensland's north and west. See Within, p.383, and f.n.159.

154. Burnett Ham made this claim in Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1903), 169, but it was echoed by some parliamentarians. See for example, Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCI (1903), 461, view of John McMaster.

155. "Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, I (1902), 883.

156. See for example, Ibid., II (1905), 148, Commissioner of Public Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 24 Nov 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A869, in-letter no.12026 of 1905, Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1906), 196, The Brisbane Courier, 11 Jan 1906, and Cross Sons and Absalom Ltd., London to Under Secretary Home Department, 17 May 1907, Q.S.A. COL/A880, in-letter no.7111 of 1907 and attachments. This 1907 example deals with an imported coffee "mixture", and involved "a verbal mistake in labelling". The "coffee" was actually chicory, and the strength claimed for the product was "grossly misleading". It is typical of a number of claims made at this time. J. Brownlie Henderson to Commissioner of Public Health, 1 Jul 1907, Q.S.A. COL/A880, in-letter no.7489 of 1907.

parliamentarians, Francis Kenna and V.B.J. Lesina. Both men protested about the "cheap and nasty" rubbish coming into Queensland,¹⁵⁷ mainly because very low-priced tinned food, which according to Dr. Ham was "something diabolical", was given by

poor women /to/ their children as a cheap and reliable lunch
 Poor people were forced to buy these cheap articles; their consumption led to internal disorders and disease, which filled our hospitals and charitable institutions.

158

An outbreak of ptomaine poisoning high-lighted the difficulties facing the poorer sections of the state's population, particularly in the north and west.¹⁵⁹ In a country with a very large meat consumption,¹⁶⁰ the high price of fresh meat removed it from many Queensland tables, and resulted in the substitution of the tinned variety. This in turn enabled the purveyors of bad, but cheap, canned meat to reap profits at the expense of those least able to cope with the resultant damage.¹⁶¹

The long-sought-after meeting of the chief medical officers of the various states on the standards of food and drugs, was finally held in Sydney in 1910, at the instance of a conference of state premiers.¹⁶² By that time, Burnett Ham had taken up a position as head of the Victorian health department, and the new Queensland health commissioner Dr. J.S.C. Elkington represented the state in his stead.¹⁶³

157. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCVI (1905), 1322-25. For examples of earlier interest in this question from Lesina and Kenna see also Ibid., XC (1902), 1073-74, and Ibid., XCI (1903), 458-64.

158. Ibid., XCVI (1905), 1323.

159. The situation was grave in these areas for longer than in southern Queensland, because foodstuffs condemned and withdrawn from the Brisbane market sometimes "/found/ their way to the northern and western towns of the State". Commissioner of Public Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 20 Feb 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A891, in-letter no. 2207 of 1908. Ham's italics. But see also The Brisbane Courier, 19 Dec 1908, on the despatch of inspectors to the north.

160. Within, pp.88-89.

161. Report on ptomaine poisoning from Commissioner of Public Health to Under Secretary Home Department, 5 Jan 1903, Q.S.A. COL/A850, in-letter no. 605 of 1903.

162. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Jun 1910. Every state except Western Australia sent delegates.

163. Chief Secretary to Home Secretary, 14 May 1910, Q.S.A. HOM/24, in-letter no. 5973 of 1910. The government analyst J. Brownlie Henderson also attended the conference. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Jun 1910.

Very wide-ranging discussion took place during the fifteen day conference, but special emphasis was placed on infant food regulations, on dairy produce requirements, and on the special precautions to be taken to protect food and drink from contamination during manufacture and storage.¹⁶⁴

Queensland no longer held its place in the van of the Australian states as far as food standards were concerned, if indeed it ever had - except in Burnett Ham's opinion.¹⁶⁵ The conference took the current New South Wales standards as a minimum to be attained, although the Commonwealth government urged delegates to be prepared to revise and raise this standard if, and when required.¹⁶⁶ But the main emphasis was placed on the uniformity of the criteria, which was considered to be "just as necessary from the trade point of view as from the public health point of view".¹⁶⁷ With this in mind, the Premier of New South Wales investigated the progress made in that direction as the year drew to its close.¹⁶⁸ This was despite the fact that

conference standards as such /had/ no force of law, but /were/ designed to coordinate administration and manufacturing methods in the different states, where pure food acts may or may hereafter be legislated and enforced. 169

With the encouragement of the Queensland Commissioner of Public Health, some food manufacturers in Brisbane had already begun the process of improving production standards,¹⁷⁰ and the equally important task of upgrading methods of delivery, storage, and the conditions of sale of perishable goods.¹⁷¹ Increasingly, pasteurization plants were being erected throughout the state, in an effort to ensure a pure milk supply.¹⁷²

164. Three copies of the report of the conference were included in Chief Secretary to Home Secretary, 16 Jun 1910, Q.S.A. HOM/24, in-letter no. 7378 of 1910. See also The Brisbane Courier, 23 Jun 1910.

165. Within, p.376.

166. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Jun 1910.

167. Ibid.

168. Chief Secretary to Home Secretary, 12 Nov 1910, Q.S.A. COL/24, in-letter no. 12701 of 1910, enclosing the New South Wales Premier's request.

169. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Jun 1910.

170. See for example, Robert Harper & Co., to Home Secretary, 14 Jul 1909, Q.S.A. COL/A903, in-letter no. 8630 of 1909.

171. Master Bakers' Association of Queensland to Home Secretary, 15 Jun 1910, Q.S.A. COL/163, in-letter no. 7195 of 1910.

172. See for example, North Ipswich Ice and Butter Factory to Home Secretary, 16 Feb 1911, Q.S.A. HOM/B39, in-letter no. 1645 of 1911.

But overall improvement had to await the health commissioner's advice to the government, on the action which would give effect to the conclusions of the Health Commissioners' Conference.¹⁷³ Late in 1911, this not only resulted in the passing of the Health Act Amendment Act, but also in the appointment of Dr. J. Ashburton Thompson, the chief medical officer of New South Wales, as a Royal Commissioner for Queensland, charged with collecting evidence of the state's progress towards uniformity of standards.¹⁷⁴ Ashburton Thompson was not entirely satisfied with what he found,¹⁷⁵ and some time later, suggested that another conference on uniformity of standards was necessary.¹⁷⁶ The Chief Secretary of Queensland, Digby Frank Denham, again after some delay, was happy to agree.¹⁷⁷ But the question was not decided in that year - 1914 - and manufacturers in the southern states continued, sometimes for years, to put forward their arguments for permission to sell in Queensland, products which were allegedly considered perfectly safe in their place of origin.¹⁷⁸

Adulteration of food, drink and drugs had certainly not been abolished by the health legislation of Queensland's early Commonwealth period. Nor had the problem of Commonwealth-wide uniformity been solved. But considerable progress had been made, as the health

- 173. Commissioner of Public Health to Home Secretary, 16 Dec 1910, Q.S.A. COL/24, in-letter no.12925 of 1910.
- 174. "Appointment as Commissioner of our Trusty and Well-beloved Dr. John Ashburton Thompson", Queensland Government Gazette, XCVII (1911), 1629, 21 Dec 1911, and The Brisbane Courier, 22 Dec 1911.
- 175. Ibid., 30 Aug 1912.
- 176. Ibid., 10 Jun 1913.
- 177. Chief Secretary to Home Secretary, 7 May 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B44, in-letter no.3982 of 1914 and subsequent no.5822 of 1914.
- 178. See for example, Bacchus Marsh Milk Co. to Under Secretary Home Department, 25 Aug 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B44, in-letter no.7236 of 1914, and subsequent in-letter no.10194 of 1923. See also Health Department to Under Secretary Home Department, 20 Nov 1914, Q.S.A. HOM/B44, in-letter no.9641 of 1914, and subsequent in-letter no.9754 of 1914 enclosing submissions from a southern firm, Clifford Love and Company. It is difficult to assess from this correspondence whether the Queensland government was anxious to protect industries within its own state from competition from southern firms, or whether it feared that interstate companies might try to dump inferior goods, not saleable under their own stricter regulations, on the Queensland market.

commissioner was pleased to record.¹⁷⁹ In any case, the struggle to provide pure food and drugs - though looming large in the calculations of all of the health commissioners who held office to 1914 - did not present the Queensland legislation of the period with the acid test. This was to be provided by renewed attacks of the bubonic plague.

179. "Annual Report" /of the Commissioner of Public Health/, Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1914), 9. "The food inspector is now regarded by traders in the light of a business friend".

13 - QUEENSLAND'S HEALTH LEGISLATION OF THE

EARLY COMMONWEALTH PERIOD :

THE TRIUMPH OF CENTRALISM

The year 1901, the first in which Queensland's Health Act of 1900 was in operation, was, not unnaturally, one of considerable official activity as far as public health matters were concerned. As events were to prove, that activity did not always lead to successful conclusions. Nor was the Act of 1900 the definitive measure its framers had hoped.

The installation of the Commissioner of Public Health, Dr. B. Burnett Ham, was followed almost immediately by the proclamation of no less than seventy-two cities, towns, and divisions under those parts of the Act which were designed to stamp out sanitary evils, and unsound or filthy dwellings.¹ The necessity for this widespread application of Parts III and IV of the Health Act of 1900 is sufficient testimony that grave insanitation still existed in most of the populous areas of the state, and that the health provisions of the nineteenth century had failed to deal adequately with this basic problem.

Burnett Ham, fearing a recrudescence of the plague, enjoined scrupulous cleanliness upon the local authorities in special memoranda sent to all councils and divisional boards throughout the state.² He followed his written instructions with an early "northern tour" culminating in Townsville. As he worked his way north, visiting the seaports of Maryborough, Gladstone, Bundaberg and Rockhampton en route,³ the health commissioner was able to see at first hand, the peculiar problems besetting a country with the "greatness of the size of

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1. Queensland Government Gazette, LXXV (1901), 461, 23 Feb 1901.
 2. The Brisbane Courier, 12 Feb 1901. See also "Department of Public Health Report on Plague in Queensland 1900-1907 by B. Burnett Ham, M.D., M.R.C.S., D.P.H. (Cambridge), Appendix B", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1907), 166, for a copy of this memorandum dated 28 January 1901.
 3. The Brisbane Courier, 30 Apr 1901 and 1 May 1901. Later, Ham gave "popular" lectures on sanitation in "various centres of the State", but there is no record of the actual venues. "Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1903), 172.

Queensland".⁴ As well, he was able to lecture the local authorities in these thriving gateways to the state on their vital role of arresting any possible plague threat.

Recognition of the first case is of paramount importance, for the history of epidemics teaches over and over again that a single case has contaminated a hitherto clean country.

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Also with the plague in mind, the government tried to ensure that those parts of the Act concerned with infectious diseases were in good working order, particularly in Brisbane and its suburbs. The Home Secretary named those local authorities which were "to join to act together /as the Metropolitan Joint Board for the Prevention of Epidemic Diseases" for the purposes of the Act".⁶ This board, and any others called into being in a emergency, was to take action if and as required by the health commissioner.⁷ The duties of all such boards, especially with regard to isolation hospitals, were fully set out,⁸ as were instructions on the compulsory notification of diseases.⁹ The new Metropolitan Joint Board, showing a commendable sense of responsibility,¹⁰ promptly chose Dr. A.C.F. Halford as its new medical officer of health.

4. The Brisbane Courier, 8 Jan 1901. Ham's comment taken from a report on the Courier's first interview with the commissioner.
5. Ibid., 12 Feb 1901. Queensland's 2,250 miles of coastline and many harbours presented the state with problems quite unknown in New South Wales and Victoria, where commerce passed almost exclusively through Sydney and Melbourne. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1907), 91.
6. Queensland Government Gazette, LXXVI (1901), 485.
7. The commissioner made this quite clear to the Townsville City Council. A local body was obliged to send members to sit on the epidemic board in its own area. A council also had to pay the precepts which were levied to cover the costs of fighting infectious diseases at the local level. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Apr 1901.
8. Queensland Government Gazette, LXXVI (1901), 486.
9. Ibid., p.487 and Ibid., pp. 1667-73 for "The Infectious Diseases Regulations of 1901".
10. The Brisbane Courier, 7 Feb 1901. A.C.F. Halford, M.D., Ch.B (Melbourne), was an experienced bacteriologist who had worked for considerable periods in general hospitals. He had an excellent knowledge of Brisbane and its suburbs, and possessed that other mystical qualification so esteemed by Queenslanders at this time - he was an Australian. The Courier fully expected him to do very well.

The Executive Council also performed its part, appointing a new Central Board of Health to fulfil the requirements of the Act;¹¹ and John Simpson, a plumber with seven years' experience as a sanitary inspector in Aberdeen, Scotland, was engaged as a foundation member of the Queensland health department in that same capacity.¹²

It was not long before these preparations were put to the test, when the plague broke out in March 1901 at Myrtletown - a village near the mouth of the Brisbane River.¹³ A number of other cases were reported in various parts of the state, usually accompanied by "foul and insanitary conditions", and "gross overcrowding".¹⁴ But fortunately, the disease was in a "mild form",¹⁵ and although the scourge lingered for some months,¹⁶ this particular outbreak is more notable for its political and administrative machinations, than for any peculiarities in the nature of the disease itself.¹⁷

Several matters were of intense interest to contemporary observers in this plague year of 1901, when, for the first time in Queensland's history, existing health legislation seemed to provide "the machinery necessary to deal with the problem".¹⁸ The first essential for which early twentieth century Queenslanders looked was the hearty cooperation of the local authorities. But in spite of the Metropolitan Joint Board's early zeal over the Halford appointment, it was far from certain

11. The Brisbane Courier, 2 Feb 1901. The new board comprised Drs. John Thomson, Wilton Love, and D. Hardie, and Messrs. Theodore Unmack and G.V. Hellicar. Hellicar's appointment fulfilled the requirement that at least one board member should have had local government experience, and the preference that there should be a legal man on the board.
12. Ibid., 21 Feb 1901. Dr. K.I. O'Doherty was reappointed public vaccinator. Votes and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly, II (1901), 44.
13. The Brisbane Courier, 5 Mar 1901.
14. For example, a number of cases occurred at Petrie Terrace, Brisbane, and at Bundaberg. A nurse at Colmslie Plague Hospital also contracted the disease. Ibid., 18 Apr, 23 Apr, 30 Apr, 10 May 1901.
15. Ibid., 11 Mar 1901; sub editorial.
16. Ibid., 24 Aug 1901, and The Street, 3 Aug 1901.
17. But see Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1907), especially pp.124 ff. 155ff., and 219 ff., for details of useful scientific experiments carried out, particularly between 1902 and 1907, on the types of plague occurring in Queensland, with anti-plague sera, and on the rat-flea theory of the dissemination of bubonic plague.
18. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Mar 1901; sub editorial.

that further concerted action would be forthcoming. The new board's first few meetings were spent almost entirely bemoaning its impecunious state,¹⁹ and its finance committee resolved to delay any large outlays until some satisfactory formula could be worked out with the Home Secretary.²⁰

A deputation from the board which waited upon Foxton, discovered that financial arrangements between the central and local authorities, as represented by the joint boards, had already been laid down on the "proper basis... of a fixed principle". In practice, this meant that government assistance would be given at the rate of a pound for a pound, based on amounts raised by precepts levied on the various local councils concerned. This new scheme was not expected to be as liberal as the one in operation during the first plague year. But the Home Secretary claimed that it would be fair to the whole country; that it would result in joint boards doing only that work proper to such bodies; and that since the government endowment would be granted only after the receipt of precepts, "as good businessmen they would see that these precepts were paid". Justin Foxton made two other telling points. Local governments and joint boards should not ignore their financial responsibilities, in the hope that the central government would come to the rescue - a tendency which was "painfully prevalent" - because the government itself was in no position to throw money away.²¹ Furthermore, he revealed that the health commissioner had been instructed to draw up plans prescribing the work which epidemic boards would be required to perform. Only these undertakings would attract the government subsidy.²²

Despite these warnings, some local councils had to be pressed strongly before precepts were paid.²³ By July 1901, the Ithaca, Enoggera, Sherwood and Wynnum Councils were in default,²⁴ and by August of that

19. The Brisbane Courier, 28 Mar 1901.
20. Metropolitan Joint Board's Finance Committee's Report, 13 Apr 1901, Q.S.A. COL/400, Report No.2 of 1901. Large expenses such as the purchase of an ambulance wagon, and the work on the Reck Disinfector and the disinfecting chamber were delayed.
21. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Apr 1901; report of the deputation of the Metropolitan Joint Board to the Home Secretary, 17 Apr 1901.
22. Supplementary Report of the Finance Committee of the Metropolitan Joint Board, undated, Q.S.A. COL/400, attached to Report No.2 of 1901.
23. The Brisbane Courier, 25 Apr 1901; meeting of the Metropolitan Joint Epidemic Board, 24 Apr 1901.
24. Finance Committee of the Metropolitan Joint Board Report, 16 Jul 1901, Q.S.A. COL/400, Report No.9 of 1901.

year, the Metropolitan Joint Board had issued writs against the offending local government bodies to enforce payment. This process was repeated on 16 October 1901,²⁵ and many times thereafter.²⁶ Small wonder, observed The Brisbane Courier, "if the local authorities are looking longingly for the day when the Joint Board will be dissolved";²⁷ and that the point was soon reached where local councils were not only in dispute with the central government, but had also entered into bitter controversy with the Metropolitan Joint Board.²⁸ Well before the end of the first year of operation of the Health Act of 1900, it was already clear that where the expenditure of money was concerned, the new legislation contained no magic prescription that would ensure the willing cooperation of the local councils of Queensland in the government's health schemes.

Nevertheless, the central government persisted with this method of dealing with an increasingly virulent plague epidemic until 15 July 1902, when the President of the Metropolitan Joint Board announced that the responsibility for the plague "has at last been taken over by the Government... as a National matter".²⁹ This did not absolve the joint boards of Queensland from all commitment to fighting the plague immediately,³⁰ but it was the beginning of the end for those bodies. The government's decision followed a series of deputations to the Premier

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- 25. Finance Committee of the Metropolitan Joint Board Report, 17 Dec 1901, Q.S.A. COL/400, Report No.22 of 1901.
 - 26. See for example President's Report, Metropolitan Joint Board, 4 Mar 1903, Q.S.A. COL/400-401, Report No.35 of 1903. Almost all of the local councils and divisional boards connected with the Metropolitan Joint Board failed to pay their precepts at some time during the period of the board's operation.
 - 27. The Brisbane Courier, 18 Sep 1901.
 - 28. See for example President of Metropolitan Joint Board to Coorparoo Shire Council, 17 Oct 1902, Q.S.A. COL/400-401, Board's letter no. 241 of 1902.
 - 29. President's Report, Metropolitan Joint Board for the Prevention of Epidemic Diseases, 15 Jul 1902, Q.S.A. COL/400-401, Report No.9 of 1902. Writing in 1907, Dr.Ham suggests that boards throughout the state were abolished on 19 September 1902. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1907), 92.
 - 30. See for example, President's Report, Metropolitan Joint Board, 2 Sep 1902, Q.S.A. COL/400-401, Report No.13, which details the board's continuing interest in the infectious diseases hospital, Wattlebrae, the proposed new buildings for an isolation hospital, Dr.Halford's report on the plague, and the board's involvement in the cleansing operations in Brisbane because of the plague.

and the Home Secretary, which sought to have the joint board system abolished.³¹ When this was refused, the Metropolitan Joint Board itself, although "not desiring to shirk responsibility", announced that it "could not go on".³²

Foxton, intent on preserving the integrity of his Health Act, insisted that "unquestionably...all epidemics should be regarded as matters to be dealt with by local government".³³ It was probably only a combination of pressures, which eventually caused the Home Secretary to change his mind³⁴ - press revelations of pockets of incredible filth, "a crying disgrace to... Brisbane",³⁵ which the Metropolitan Joint Board was apparently powerless to cleanse,³⁶ the complicated procedure necessary should emergency plague cases arise outside joint board areas,³⁷ and most importantly, the intervention of Dr. Ham. The health commissioner, taking a line which was to be pursued by Home Secretary John George Appel in presenting the health act amendment bill of 1911,³⁸ asserted that the joint board arrangement had only been introduced to ease the

- 31. The Brisbane Courier, 4 Feb 1902; Deputation to Robert Philp and Justin Foxton from South Brisbane. W. Stephens was a prominent member of the deputation, once again defending local government rights.
- 32. Ibid., 21 Apr 1902; report of deputation from Metropolitan Joint Board to Home Secretary, 20 Apr 1902.
- 33. Ibid..
- 34. At this time, 23 Apr 1902, the government was still determined that local bodies should administer plague matters under the direction and supervision of the health commissioner.
- 35. The Brisbane Courier, 15 Mar 1902; a Reporter's Experiences in Insanitary Brisbane, Ibid., 19 Mar 1902; Official Correspondence on the Insanitary State of Brisbane, Ibid., 3 Apr 1902; letter to editor from Dr. Ham on the Insanitary Condition of Brisbane, and Ibid., 23 Apr 1902; Report on Insanitary Brisbane and Special Council Meeting on Health By-Laws.
- 36. There was a great deal of legal difficulty involved in the question of joint board powers to enforce by-laws, to undertake inspection, and to give instructions about cleansing operations. A new order in council had to be made constituting the epidemic boards as local authorities under the Local Government and Health Acts before such powers could be granted. Ibid., 6 Jun 1901; Meeting of Metropolitan Joint Board, 5 Jun 1901, with apologies from Dr. Ham regarding delays in drawing up Metropolitan Joint Board regulations under Part VII of the Health Act of 1900.
- 37. Secretary, Metropolitan Joint Board to Under Secretary Home Department, 10 Apr 1902, Q.S.A. COL/238, in-letter no. 5772 of 1902. See also The Telegraph, 11 Apr 1902.
- 38. Within, pp. 379-380.

burden of expense for individual councils, and that this system

complicated the administration a good deal....At any rate, the cooperation of the Joint Board had not been very successful owing to the divided and disputed authority between the independent local government bodies, the overlapping of work, and the endowment of the board being insufficient to carry on its work. 39

The Metropolitan Joint Board continued to function for some months, undertaking,

under an Order in Council...duties...of a preventative character...against the spread of diseases which though less dreaded because more familiar than Plague, are far more fatal in their ravages on our population. 40

But if the board was to function properly and efficiently against the spread of infectious diseases, it needed the power - automatically vested in local authorities under the Health Act of 1900 - to compel the notification of those diseases. In the legal opinion of John L. Woolcock, the order in council controlling the joint board's new duties had specifically denied these particular rights.⁴¹ Once again, the decision was vitally affected by the attitude of the health commissioner. In the light of Woolcock's findings, Burnett Ham refused to support the joint board's application for these powers, bringing the board into open conflict with himself,⁴² and almost certainly hastening its dissolution.⁴³

39. The Brisbane Courier, 23 Apr 1902; Report of conference between the Health Commissioner and the Metropolitan Joint Epidemic Board, 20 Apr 1902.
40. President Metropolitan Joint Board to Coorparoo Shire Council, 17 Oct 1902, Q.S.A. COL/400-401, Board's letter no.241 of 1902. See also President, Metropolitan Joint Board to Members of Board, 8 Oct 1902, Q.S.A. COL/400-401, unnumbered copy.
41. Opinion of John L.Woolcock, Barrister-at-Law in Re Health Act of 1900, Part VII, Section 120, attached to Secretary, Metropolitan Joint Board to Under Secretary, Home Department, 12 Dec 1902, Q.S.A. COL/400-401, Board's letter no.338 of 1902. Woolcock was very influential in local authority affairs in Queensland from 1893, when he was secretary to the Royal Commission which investigated local government matters. His prestige was enhanced when, in 1899, he became parliamentary draftsman. Robinson, pp.6-7.
42. The Metropolitan Joint Board claimed that the Commissioner's memorandum on the matter was deliberately given to the press by the Health Department. See President's Report, Reply to Dr. Ham, 8 Jan 1903, Q.S.A. COL/400-401, unnumbered copy.
43. Queensland Government Gazette, LXXX (1903), 1135. The board was now gazetted as The Metropolitan Joint Hospital Board.

The depression-like conditions of 1903 forced the dismissal of the board's paid staff, and the end came on 1 April of that year.⁴⁴ But as Burnett Ham had pointed out earlier, the joint boards set up under the Health Act of 1900 had never really worked. From a government and local authority point of view, the exercise had been an expensive failure. The cost to the whole community in inefficiency, filth, extended sickness and death, will probably never be measured.

If The Brisbane Courier and other observers had been interested in assessing the extent of local authority cooperation and effectiveness under the provisions of the Health Act of 1900 and in an emergency situation,⁴⁵ they were even keener to see how the newly-appointed Commissioner of Public Health would perform. Burnett Ham commenced his duties under the eyes of sceptics, who were convinced that a Brisbane-based commissioner could not possibly control health matters Queensland-wide;⁴⁶ and even those favourably disposed towards him admitted that "Dr. Ham cannot be expected to cover all the ground".⁴⁷

The health commissioner's task was far from easy. Before his department was even off the ground, he had to cope with a plague outbreak, with chronic shortages of funds, lack of staff, and a battle against the insensitivity of governments and the apathy of local authorities. Yet by 1911, both the commissioners and the departmental staff appointed under the Health Act of 1900, had proved their worth to such an extent, that a conservative government - ignoring the traditional right-wing tendency to eschew centralization - was willing to vest a central health authority with the powers necessary to put the comprehensive Health Act Amendment Act of 1911 into effect.⁴⁸ Dr. Bertie Burnett Ham's early successes were

44. Queensland Government Gazette, LXXX (1903), 1135.

45. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Mar 1901; sub editorial.

46. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXXXIV (1900), 243. View of Thomas Glassey.

47. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Mar 1901; sub editorial.

48. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, CVIII (1911-12), 514. John George Appel, who as Home Secretary introduced the bill, called himself a "democrat", and showed "much capacity for bestowing largesse on the poor". Bernays, p.286.



YOU DIRTY' BOY !

THE COUNCIL—You're a filthy little germy brat, you're full of smell and dirt.

THE CITY—Wash me cleaner then, you duffer; you don't scrub enough to hurt.

THE COUNCIL—You're nasty and you're verminy, you're diseased beyond a hope—

THE CITY—Scrape me harder then, old fellow, be more liberal with your soap.

OTHER AUTHORITIES—We've got to share the danger too, and we've hardly got a say.

JOINT BOARD—We make our little levy, though, and you've got to pay, pay, pay.

THE RATS—You capture us, and board us, and we laugh the laugh ironic;

We know you're but distributing the little flea bubonic.

We're twice as harmless living as we're boarded up when dead.

Though you think you're doing wonders putting prices on our head,

You cause us more amusement than a city full of cats—

DR. HAM—Of your mercy, gentlemen, feed these rats, rats, rats.

THE PUBLIC—Listen to the words of wisdom that are falling from our Proe,

KILL OFF ALL THE DOCTORS AND THE PLAGUE WILL QUICKLY GO!

significant in ensuring this triumph of centralism.⁴⁹ Once again, the presence of the bubonic plague, and Ham's methods of dealing with it, presented contemporaries with a useful yardstick for measuring his performance - not least because the government itself placed the plague, and all virulent, exotic ailments, in a different category from ordinary infectious diseases.⁵⁰

In 1902, to the delight of Brisbane residents, a "strongly worded letter" threatening the emergency take-over of the work by the health commissioner, resulted in a massive sanitary effort by the combined local authorities, who had previously failed to effect the cleansing operations needed in the face of an increasingly serious bubonic plague outbreak.⁵¹ "Coincidentally with this special cleansing, the cases of the plague began to fall off".⁵² A similar significant improvement took place during the 1903 outbreak in Brisbane and its suburbs, as systematic, well directed scavenging was carried out by all local authorities, "as never before", after the health commissioner had forcefully "reminded /the councils⁵³ of their powers and duties under the Health Act".

Outside the capital, Burnett Ham's instructions to the Maryborough City Council were taken so seriously that in 1901 an immediate and vigorous crusade against rats was undertaken,⁵⁴ some much-needed improvements in the management of the district's dairies were instituted,⁵⁵

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- 49. For reasons of space, it is possible to give only a few examples of Ham's successes in this thesis; and this section is not intended to give a comprehensive history of the bubonic plague outbreaks in Queensland from 1901. For some additional information on the plague see Report on the Outbreak of Plague in the State of Queensland, 1903 (Brisbane, 1903), and "Department of Public Health Report on Plague in Queensland 1900-1907 by B. Burnett Ham, M.D., M.R.C.S., D.P.H. (Cambridge)", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1907), pp. 54 ff.
 - 50. Undated and unsigned /indecipherable initials/ Memorandum on the Powers and Duties of Local Authorities under the Health Acts with respect to infectious diseases, written for the advice of the Minister /John Huxham/ in 1917, Q.S.A. Department of Health Files 1913-1919, Home Secretary's File No. 16702 of 1917.
 - 51. See for example, The Brisbane Courier, 23 Apr 1902; letter to editor from A.H. Barlow.
 - 52. City of Brisbane Mayor's Report 1902-3 (Brisbane, 1903), pp. 51-52.
 - 53. Report on the Outbreak of Plague, 1903, p. 7.
 - 54. Wide Bay and Burnett News, 23 Mar 1901.
 - 55. Ibid.

and a new system of human waste disposal was eventually put into operation.⁵⁶ Maryborough's many health problems were certainly not eliminated under the commissioner's supervision at that time.⁵⁷ But when the city was unfortunate enough to suffer an outbreak of the particularly severe and dreaded pneumonic plague in 1905, The Australasian Medical Gazette considered that only the "prompt and energetic action of the Public Health Department" had prevented what might otherwise have been a very considerable spread of the disease.⁵⁸ The disgruntled Maryborough council objected to the increased expense of fighting the plague, as the health department moved in to take charge of the cleansing operations in the city.⁵⁹ And an irate Dr. H.C. Garde accused the "so-called experts from Brisbane" of interference in the local conduct of the plague campaign, and of causing the death of two of his nurses.⁶⁰ But the health commissioner was able to justify the departmental action, and win government approval.⁶¹

Comparable successes were achieved by the commissioner and his department, over a number of years, in widely separated centres of Queensland. Plague outbreaks were brought under control, and defensive measures were taken, in Charters,⁶² in Cairns,⁶³ in Thursday Island,⁶⁴ in Port Douglas,⁶⁵ and in Ipswich.⁶⁶ In most cases, the commissioner

- 56. "Report of the Commissioner of Public Health, 1903", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1903), 174.
- 57. Within, p.75.
- 58. "Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1905), 137.
- 59. Town Clerk, Maryborough to Home Secretary, 12 Jul 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A864, in-letter no. 7536 of 1905.
- 60. Dr.H.C.Garde, Maryborough to Home Secretary, 3 Jul 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A864, in-letter no. 7134 of 1905. The Brisbane expert referred to was C.C. Baxter-Tyrie.
- 61. Ham's explanation of the whole business is in Burnett Ham to Under Secretary Home Department, 24 Jul 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A864, in-letter no. 7892 of 1905, and marginal comment.
- 62. Clerk, Department of Health to Health Commissioner, 30 May 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A863, in-letter no. 8577 of 1905, enclosing reports from Dr. C.C.Baxter-Tyrie and Chief Inspector John Simpson.
- 63. "Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1904), 117 and Town Clerk, Cairns to Home Secretary, 29 Jul 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A865, in-letter no. 8289 of 1905.
- 64. Memorandum to Commissioner of Public Health, 16 May 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A871, in-letter no. 6253 of 1906.
- 65. VERY URGENT Memorandum written by hand by Dr.Ham to John Woolcock, 18 Jun 1907, Q.S.A. COL/A880, in-letter no. 7071 of 1907 and attachments.
- 66. The Queensland Times, 14 Feb 1907.

worked either through health officers resident in the areas concerned and local councils frightened into cooperation,⁶⁷ or by sending departmental medical officers, sanitary inspectors and specially-trained rat gangs, to assess the sanitary situation, and to initiate remedial action.⁶⁸ But occasionally, for example during the Rockhampton outbreak in 1906, the commissioner made himself personally available, because of the plague's virulence and widespread nature,⁶⁹ and to counteract bitter attacks from the "yellow" press.⁷⁰ But whatever method - or staff - the commissioner chose to use, the Central Board of Health was convinced that

the more virulent epidemics, i.e. Asiatic cholera, Plague, Smallpox and Yellow Fever,.../should/ be left entirely to the care and administration of the Commissioner of Public Health, the only responsible officer able to effectually cope with the emergencies which are necessarily associated with all these diseases.../including/...conferring and arranging with the Health authorities of other states in matters of notification, proclamations, etc. 71

This had basically been the government's view, since the responsibility for fighting the plague had been taken from the Metropolitan Joint Board in 1902. Discussions held between the minister, Woolcock and Ham, ensured that commissioners of public health did retain this power.⁷² Commissioners also insisted on plague prevention work, in the form of a "war against the rat",⁷³ being carried out for the whole period under review in this thesis, although no cases of the disease were detected

- 67. As for example in the case of Thursday Island. Cilento suggests that Ham "brought local authorities to heel in no uncertain manner". Cilento, p.53.
- 68. See for example, John Simpson /writing from Rockhampton/ to Commissioner of Public Health, 9 May 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A871, in-letter no. 5936 of 1906, and Frank Daniel, Inspector to Commissioner of Public Health, 9 May 1906, Q.S.A. COL/A871, in-letter no. 5945 of 1906.
- 69. "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1906), 180.
- 70. See for example The Sunday Truth, 15 Apr 1906. "What is the Commissioner of Health doing?...analysing spirits, milk, jams etc. But is he aware of what is going on in plague matters under his very nose, of the most vital importance".
- 71. Central Board of Health to Under Secretary Home Department, Q.S.A. COL/A865, in-letter no. 10837 of 1905. At this time there was a bill before parliament which proposed placing the care of all victims of epidemics in the hands of a Metropolitan Hospitals Board.
- 72. Marginal comment on Ibid.
- 73. "Annual Report" /of Commissioner of Public Health/, Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1914), 10. J.I. Moore was now commissioner.

in man or rats for a number of years,⁷⁴ and the cost to the state was considerable. Queensland's freedom from this frightening disease depended "mainly upon the accuracy and thoroughness with which this work /was/ carried out".⁷⁵ Ministerial cooperation with the central health authority in this matter was given readily, since the government itself feared the bubonic plague so greatly⁷⁶ - not only from a medical point of view, but because its presence caused a drastic interruption to trade and commerce. Moreover, even expensive preventive measures cost a great deal less than the outlay required to fight an established disease.

But it would be quite wrong to assume that Queensland's public health commissioners of the early Commonwealth period had an unimpeded path to success, or that ministerial support was always given freely. It has already been shown that the commissioner was strongly criticised at times by some of the state's newspapers;⁷⁷ and there were occasions, when Queensland's executive was very upset by health department "revelations" - "calculated to do much harm to the State" - appearing in the press.⁷⁸ An annoyed Premier warned his Home Secretary that

/t/he Health Commissioner...should be instructed that these continual "scare" references to Health matters appearing in daily newspapers are calculated to prejudicially affect the commerce of the city and ought to be discontinued.... You might consider... laying down a rule that in future only such information in relation to the public health as may be furnished by the Health Commissioner through the Minister shall be published.

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74. For example for the years 1911-12, 1912-13, and 1913-14. See Annual Reports of Commissioners of Public Health for 1911-1914 in relevant Queensland Parliamentary Papers.
75. Ibid., II (1913), 9.
76. Undated Memorandum to Minister written in 1917, Q.S.A. Department of Health Files 1913-1919, Home Secretary's File No. 16702.
77. See Within, p.397, f.n.70. See also The Street, 3 May 1902, Ibid., 14 Jun 1902, and parliamentary comment on press reports, Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCII (1904), 1091-92.
78. Marginal note from Digby Denham to Chief Secretary, 17 Apr 1905, on clipping from The Telegraph, 17 Apr 1905, Q.S.A. COL/A863, in-letter no. 4389 of 1905.
79. Undated marginal note on Ibid., from Arthur Morgan, Premier to Home Secretary, Peter Airey.

This suggestion would impose a severe gag on the department's right to issue warnings to the public, and ran counter to the apparently unrestricted powers which the Health Act of 1900 had vested in the health commissioner. As one informed contemporary observer, J.R. Baker has indicated, the Queensland Act was far from ideal, like the rest of the health legislation placed on Australasian statute books during the 1890's and early 1900's. In all states, the ministers who held the ultimate responsibility for the administration of health measures, "dragged after" the eager experts, who, because they outstripped their lay masters in knowledge and enthusiasm, seemed to make unreasonable demands both on the government and the general public.⁸⁰

But the threat to impose special ministerial supervision on a commissioner when vital commercial interests were at stake, does not necessarily mean that centralizing tendencies were abandoned. When the question of the health commissioner's ability to act with a "free hand" was questioned in the Queensland parliament during the 1906 supply debate, especially with regard to areas outside Brisbane,⁸¹ the minister capitulated with a fairly good grace, and members representing north Queensland electorates were promised increased visits by health inspectors to their areas. This was largely because of the spectacular improvements which followed Chief Inspector John Simpson's remedial work in Charters Towers.⁸² But it also pointed to the government's increasing realization that real reforms on the periphery were dependent upon direct central health department intervention, backed by the authority of the minister and the health commissioner. The growing awareness of this need was not restricted to health authorities or governments. The residents of fast-growing towns which were mushrooming throughout the state, often

too far distant from the seat of the Local Authority for any efficient /sanitary/ control by the Council,... naturally look^{ed} to this Department for assistance.

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- 80. J.R.Baker,"Notes on the Public Health Legislation of Australasia", Australasian Medical Congress Transcription, 1905, p.436. Baker himself was a layman.
 - 81. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XCVIII (1906), 1614-15.
 - 82. Ibid., p.1615. Particular complaints came from M.J.R. Woods, representing Woothakata, C.F.Nielson, Musgrave, and John Mann,Cairns.
 - 83. Chief Inspector John Simpson to Commissioner of Public Health, 25 Jan 1908,Q.S.A. COL/A890,in-letter no. 1160 of 1908, and subsequent in-letter no. 5972 of 9 May 1908.The underlining on the original was probably done by Burnett Ham.

As Dr. Ham neared the end of his commissionership in Queensland, praise was lavished upon him for his initial aggressiveness which had placed his bureau in the position where it could offer sanitary help and advice; for his strength in dealing with local authorities, which had been "in a sense minatory", but at the same time supremely necessary; and for his constant willingness to listen to reason and to treat each case on its merits.⁸⁴ After Ham's splendid service in stamping out the plague,⁸⁵ the only restrictions on a full-scale effort by the Health Department's officers up to 1914 and well beyond, were those imposed by the government's failure to "form a separate Department with a Minister of Health as its fitting head",⁸⁶ and the executive's continuing parsimony with regard to funds - both for staff,⁸⁷ and for incidentals.⁸⁸

The appointment of Dr. J.S.C. Elkington as the new Commissioner

- 84. See for example The Brisbane Courier, 14 Jul 1909, Ibid., 28 Jul 1909, Ibid., 30 Jul 1909, Ibid., 9 Aug 1909; sub editorial, and Ibid., 13 Aug 1909. Plaudits came from shipping companies, the Pharmaceutical Society, the Master Bakers' Association, the Lifesaving Society, the Royal Sanitary Institute, and the general public.
- 85. Ibid., 9 Aug 1909; sub editorial.
- 86. "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1909), 336.
- 87. John Simpson to Commissioner of Public Health, 25 Jan 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A890, in-letter no. 1160 of 1908, and attachments up to 9 June 1908, but especially in-letter no. 6385 of 21 May 1908, when two inspectors were upgraded in salary, but only one additional inspector was grudgingly appointed. See also a series of letters between Drs. Humphry and Ham, which detail friction between these medical men, but also show government tardiness in paying for fumigation work, rat gangs, and other salary and pay claims. Dr. Humphry to Under Secretary Home Department, being notes, letters and comments dated between 25 Nov 1907 and 15 Dec 1908, Q.S.A. COL/A897, top in-letter no. 1128 and attachments.
- 88. The government went to ridiculous lengths at times to reduce expenditure. For example, the cost of very inexpensive repairs to the Bundaberg rat catcher's bicycle were refused at first, even though the man had provided his own cycle, and the government medical officer had "certified that a bicycle was absolutely necessary for the efficient carrying out of the work by the man". Payment was eventually made - very unwillingly. Dr. May, Government Health and Medical Officer, Port and Town of Bundaberg to Commissioner of Public Health, 18 Nov 1907, Q.S.A. COL/A884, in-letter no. 12279 of 1907 and marginal comment.

of Public Health,⁸⁹ if anything, strengthened this impulse towards centralization. Under his direction

a systematic survey of the principal centres of population /was/ undertaken,...the results.../being/ recorded...in such a way as to secure uniformity of observation and ready reference....By/this/ means a large amount of precise information /was/ secured, for use in emergency, for enabling sanitary progress to be accurately computed and assisted or stimulated where necessary, and for justifying...measures of rectification where deliberate default or neglect occur/red/ in the local performance of statutory duties. 90

Indeed, although Cilento gives Burnett Ham due credit for his able work in establishing a health department in Queensland,⁹¹ he does contend that it was Elkington "who actually made the Queensland Health Service".⁹²

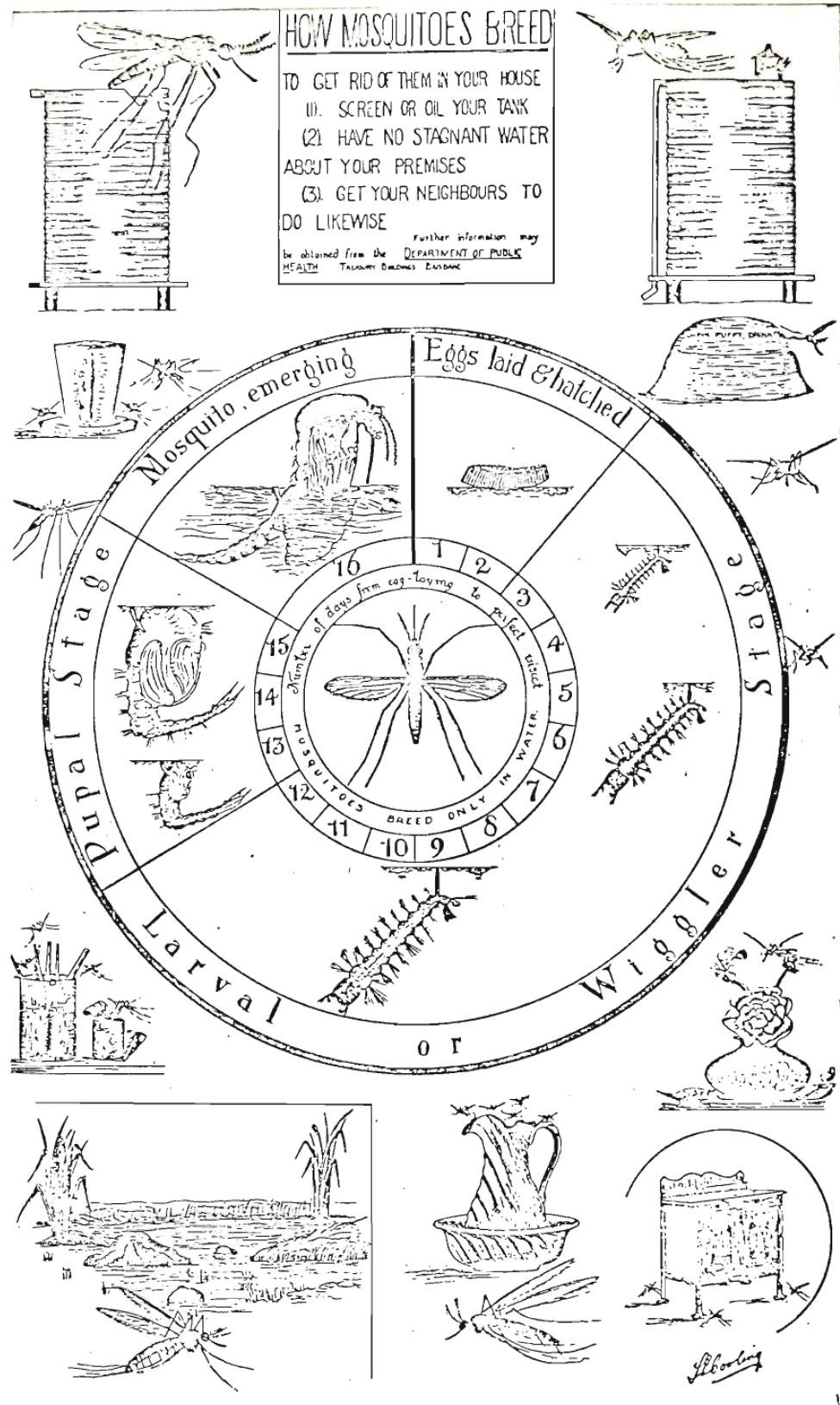
Undoubtedly the new commissioner was helped considerably when the northern sub-department was opened formally in Townsville on

- 89. John Simeon Colebrook Elkington, M.D., D.P.H., L.R.C.P.E., L.R.C.S.E., L.F.P.S.G., was appointed to the Queensland service on 5 November 1909 to commence duty on 1 January 1910. Queensland Government Gazette, XCIII (1909), 1165. See also J.S.C. Elkington, Chief Health Officer, Tasmania to Chief Secretary, Tasmania, 17 Nov 1909, T.A.O., C.S.O., /Tasmanian Archives Office, Colonial Secretary's Office/ 22/128, File No. 60/6/09. He had worked at the Plague Research Laboratory in Bombay in 1902, Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1907), 220, and held the position of Chief Health Officer in Tasmania from 1903 to 1909. Chief Secretary, Tasmania to J.S.C. Elkington, T.A.O., C.S.O., 22/70, File No. 124/15/03. Elkington's real interest was in quarantine and related services, and from the commencement of his work in Queensland he showed particular concern for the northern parts of the state. J.S.C. Elkington to Under Secretary Home Department, 22 Aug 1910, Q.S.A. HOM/J69, top letter no. 11121 of 1910. He resigned his Queensland post on 16 November 1913 - to the great surprise of his minister - to transfer to the Commonwealth service. He sustained a considerable drop in salary to do so, and The Brisbane Courier called on the Queensland government to boost Elkington's salary by £200-300 immediately, to try to keep a man of his "special attainments", "administrative capacity", and "strength of character" in the state service, but Elkington was resolved to go. The Brisbane Courier, 11 Sep, 12 Sep, 13 Sep, 15 Sep, and 16 Sep 1913.
- 90. "Annual Report of the Commissioner of Public Health", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1910), 376.
- 91. Cilento, p.56.
- 92. Cilento and Lack, p.433.

18 January 1912⁹³ - as a result of strenuous representations from Elkington himself.⁹⁴ This masterly piece of decentralization actually gave the Brisbane office added strength. It allowed the commissioner to keep a close watch on all health matters in the north, through a medical inspector, assisted by two sanitary inspectors, working under Elkington's direction.⁹⁵ Above all, it allowed the commissioner to put departmental officers on the spot quickly, when serious outbreaks of infectious diseases occurred,⁹⁶ eliminating the long journeys up the Queensland coast from Brisbane which, besides being costly and time-consuming, could possibly mean the loss of precious lives.

The Health Act Amendment Act of 1911, which contained clauses covering the control of adulteration of food, drink and drugs, infectious diseases, rat and mosquito infestation, typhoid carriers, and the usual instructions for the provision of sewerage and drainage,⁹⁷ set the seal on the direction taken from the commencement of the Commonwealth period. The 1911 Act vested sole power in the central health authority to carry out all sections of the legislation. It also illustrated the great and growing importance with which the government and the parliament regarded the public health department.⁹⁸ Like all Queensland's health legislation up to 1914, the Act of 1911 was far from perfect.⁹⁹ For

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- 93. "Annual Report" /of the Commissioner of Public Health/, Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1912), 8.
 - 94. Within, pp.257-59.
 - 95. J.S.C.Elkington to Under Secretary Home Department, 7 Apr 1910, Q.S.A. HOM/J69,in-letter no. 4179 of 1910.With the salaries of the professional staff and clerical,travelling and general expenses added together,Elkington calculated that the annual cost of the sub-department would be £1,330. 0. 0.
 - 96. Within, pp.149-56.
 - 97. "An Act to Amend 'The Health Act of 1900'", Queensland Government Gazette, XCVII (1911), 1757-1798 (2 Geo V. No. 26).
 - 98. Unnamed,undated and unnumbered newspaper cutting filed in Q.S.A. COL/163, and date-stamped 16 Jul 1912.
 - 99. The sections on venereal disease - listed under infectious diseases- were particularly bothersome,both to get through parliament and afterwards.Endless correspondence and investigations by doctors and letters to the press were forthcoming on this subject,but by March/April 1913,new disease regulations and new provisions had to be drawn up.See Queensland Government Gazette,C (1913), 117, and The Brisbane Courier,17 Apr 1913. The very large amount of official correspondence on this subject for the period 1911-14 can be perused in Q.S.A. bundles COL/A934 and COL/165.



No. 27. "Commissioner of Public Health Report, 1912", Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1913), No Page Number.

instance, some sections which had consumed very considerable time in debate,¹⁰⁰ were allowed to fall into disuse after powerful vested interests registered immediate protests, claiming that it was impossible to produce the high grade products demanded by the Act at a price people could afford.¹⁰¹ But the health commissioner was pleased with the legislation, which eliminated some weaknesses in the Act of 1900. In particular, he welcomed those parts of the new Act which increased the central authority's powers to deal with epidemics,¹⁰² with the notification of diseases,¹⁰³ and with the pure food sections.¹⁰⁴ It also permitted the commissioner much greater access to private property in his fight against the mosquito, which was assuming great importance in this period.¹⁰⁴

In fact, in many ways this Act, and the debate which led to its passing, epitomized the whole of the changing and developing attitudes displayed by health authorities, governments, and the general public from the time of the passing of the first Health Act in 1872, up to 1914. The Act of 1911 greatly increased the possibility of central government interference in the private lives of the people of Queensland - but equally, it demonstrated a greatly increased concern.

100. See for example Queensland Parliamentary Debates, CVIII (1911-12), 668-69, 890-91, and Ibid., CIX (1911-12), 1161-62 and 1874-78.
101. The Brisbane Courier, 22 Aug 1912; Report of deputation from the Boot and Shoe Retailers to the Chief Secretary, Digby Frank Denham. Further suspension of this section until 31 December 1913 was later agreed on 28 November 1912. Ibid., 29 Nov 1912. Clause 31, paragraphs (ii) and (iii) of the Health Act Amendment Act of 1911 are referred to here. Queensland Government Gazette, XCVII (1911), 1769.
102. "Annual Report" /of the Public Health Commissioner/, Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1912), 4-5.
103. The Brisbane Courier, 3 Jan 1912.
104. Ibid., 31 Oct 1911. Everyone - the Commissioner and his staff, the Institute of Microbiology, the state schools, and the general public - were invited to join the fight against this bearer of disease. The Commissioner must have been gratified by the continuing interest. See for example, Ibid., 7 Apr 1914; letter to editor from Tormented, Ibid., 17 Apr 1914, Ibid., 22 Jun 1914, and Ibid., 1 Jul 1914.

The history of the struggle to provide decent standards of public health in any country is the story of the passing of restrictive legislation which leads, in turn, to increasing centralization of government, to increasing incursions upon personal liberty, and to greatly increased taxes. For these reasons, the process of acquiring effective health laws is almost invariably slow.¹ On the one hand, governments themselves must be educated to the point where they recognise the need to provide for the expensive staff appointments and sanitary undertakings which must necessarily follow the enactment of such laws. As well, the members of the general public, who inevitably have to pay for the high costs of public health, must be made aware of the dangers which threaten their own well-being, before such legislation can be implemented successfully.

In Queensland, the threat of virulent exotic diseases, likely to strike at rich and poor alike, was most effective in leading to vigorous, legislative and administrative action. But by 1864, there had already been some recognition that

the interests of the public at large must be considered in preference to individual interests, ²

when sanitary evils apparently menaced the community with fever and death. This was translated into official action with the appointment of a Central Board of Health, but the government failed to pass health legislation at that early stage - probably due in part, to the inability of an inexperienced executive to formulate workable administrative policies, but overwhelmingly, because of the severe restrictions placed on governments by a depression. But at the same time it was also related to the strength of laissez-faire attitudes within the community.

Even when smallpox threatened Queensland in 1872, and the colony's first Health Act was rushed onto the statute book there were many

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1. Cumpston suggests that a feeling of communal responsibility for health improvement was not well developed in Australia as a whole. He bases his views on the colonies' slowness to legislate to provide central boards of health. Only three colonies - Victoria (1855), Queensland and South Australia (1873) - had such boards before 1880. New South Wales, Western Australia, and Tasmania followed in 1881, 1884 and 1885 respectively. Cumpston, "The Health of the People", p.19.
 2. The Brisbane Courier, 24 Mar 1864; editorial.

Queenslanders who resented and feared the centralizing tendencies of that Act, which they saw as a direct threat to the rights and privileges of local government. Almost certainly, the 1872 health bill would not have been passed, in spite of the emergency, if it had involved the universal application of the health measures it contained, instead of being brought into operation by proclamation.

Such opposition to the authority of the central government may be seen as part of the general individualist movement of the nineteenth century and to this extent can be regarded as one manifestation of the broad movement in favour of laissez-faire. 3.

Thomas McIlwraith and others in his party placed themselves firmly in this league, when in 1883, the conservative government announced its decision to suspend the working of the 1872 Act, and to leave the conservation of the public health where McIlwraith felt it belonged - entirely in local government hands.⁴ Even The Brisbane Courier, which had campaigned vigorously for stronger sanitary laws with the inevitability of more government interference, questioned whether the modern tendency of the state to undertake more and more of the functions connected with the collective interests of the community might cause, through some fatal weakness at the centre, the paralysis of the whole body politic. To ensure some balance, as central government became increasingly complex, local government needed strengthening as well, lest individual duty should become

lost under the shadow of the all pervading national machinery. Where /was/ it all to end? /Was/ law then to prevail over liberty, order over that self-reliance out of which great nations have been born? 5.

In fact, Flinn has pointed out that in Britain, the natural concomitant of the strengthening of central government powers has been that the periphery was expected to shoulder increased responsibility for a wide range of local services, since governments in that country have "implicitly accepted the principle of local government intervention

3. Arthur J. Taylor, Laissez-faire and State Intervention in Nineteenth Century Britain (London, 1972), p.46. Taylor is writing here specifically of the British Public Health Act of 1848, on which the Queensland Act of 1872 was based.

4. Within, p.335.

5. The Brisbane Courier, 6 Feb 1884; sub editorial.

under the authority of the central government".⁶ When Samuel Griffith came to power in Queensland in time to draft the much-needed Health Act of 1884, he certainly applied this principle to his work,⁷ and it was expanded and strengthened by his successors in the even more comprehensive and repressive Health Acts of 1900 and 1911. For by that time, it was no longer a question of whether the public health was a legitimate area for government interference, but of how far that interference should go. Moves towards centralization were becoming acceptable to an increasing number of Queenslanders, because many had reached the conclusion that

/w/here local self-government means merely mis-government we are apt to wish for a little wholesale despotism to curb such vagaries. 8.

Griffith was also convinced that all sanitary laws are

an infringement of the liberty of the subject... but that...in matters of public health the comfort of the individual must yield to the good of the public. 9

These attitudes were to find more and more acceptance within the Queensland community in the period up to 1914, particularly as the preservation of extreme localism became impossible with the extension of scientific knowledge. When the Health Commissioner Dr.J.I. Moore made a northern tour of the state late in 1914, he reported finding all local authorities willing, and even eager, to conform with the health legislation. Where matters were unsatisfactory, the main cause was lack of knowledge; but to remedy this, councils looked increasingly to the central health department for help.¹⁰ Indeed, R.H. Robinson, who was wholly committed to the cause of local government to which he devoted a lifetime of service, feared that it was possible that central departmental interference could destroy local government

6. Flinn, p.41. My italics.
7. The Health Act of 1884 and the Local Government and Divisional Board Acts passed under Griffith "led to the creation and functioning of municipal bodies controlled by the State". Murphy and Joyce, p.168.
8. Briggs, Victorian Cities, p.146, quoting James Hole of Leeds, England.
9. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, XLIV (1884), 1531.
10. The Brisbane Courier, 16 Nov 1914; report of northern tour by Dr. J.I. Moore.

responsibility and efficiency.¹¹ Even so, he offered this "impartial view" of Queensland's early twentieth century health legislation.

/T/he working of these compelling powers and the powers of interference in this instance... has been for the general good and in the interests of the public health of the people of the State. 12

But one area continued to present immense problems to health administrators, inhibiting progress during the whole period under review. This was the question of funding - at both the central and local government level. In this period according to Buer,¹³ political power in local government was passing into the hands of the petite bourgeoisie who, though thrifty and hard working, were "notoriously lacking in large views or sympathetic imagination".¹⁴ Most were wholly committed, as were the ratepayers of Queensland, to resisting any threat of increases in local taxation, thus making it virtually impossible for local authorities to fulfil their expanding obligations. This stance drew severe criticism from Dr. B. Burnett Ham, who claimed that Queensland local authorities were "helpless... in direct proportion to the activity of the responsible State Health Authority".¹⁵ But at the same time he did consider that the government, with its great resources, should be ready to render reasonable assistance to needy local authorities.

The reluctance to use central government funds on public health projects at a local level seems to have been something of a British tradition. It arose from a fear that such prodigality would lead to wasteful spending on the periphery, and possibly, to the spinelessness to which Burnett Ham refers. As R.J. Morris has pointed out, it dates back to the first reaction of the English administration to the demands of the cholera outbreak in 1831. Although some of the country's leaders - notably Robert Peel - felt that national money should be used to meet what could clearly become a national emergency, all members of the government were certainly not convinced that such liberality was necessary.¹⁶

11. Robinson, p.121.

12. Ibid., p.379. My italics.

13. And V.B.J. Lesina. Within, p.377.

14. Buer, p.233.

15. Queensland Parliamentary Papers, II (1907), 97.

16. R.J. Morris, Cholera 1832 : A Social Response to an Epidemic (London, 1976), p.73.

The same attitude imbued ministers in the Queensland government. For a short time, after the passing of the Health Act of 1884, Queensland local authorities enjoyed the benefits of endowments on health rates, but by 1890, the government had acted to prevent this too great abuse of its funds. With some justification, ministers could claim that for many years the country either wallowed in deep depression, or faced troublesome recessions, crippling droughts, or devastating floods. But the state health department continued to be starved of funds, even though after 1904, under William Kidston's careful management, the treasury was able to record budget surpluses for a number of years.¹⁷

The reason for the lack of funding is not hard to find. Sadly, but not surprisingly, in this early period, when economic and industrial development seemed of the utmost importance in the still young but potentially rich state, all governments rated the demands of public health rather low in terms of total commitment. Dr. John Thomson had mourned in 1883, that the claims of public health always had to give way to what was considered more urgent or more profitable business.¹⁸

The Commissioner of Public Health, Dr. J.S.C. Elkington, into whose hands the welfare of the whole state had been placed, was even more critical of governments which neglected health administration because they

regard/ed/ the production of actual revenue as the only criterion of usefulness.

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Yet despite these disappointments, by 1914 the governments and people of Queensland, under the tutelage of their expert commissioners of public health, had developed some understanding of the standards of public health required in a modern state. Through the great advances in medical science, they had also grasped the principle that prevention, and not merely cure, is the ultimate aim of public health programmes.

17. Murphy and Joyce, pp.251 and 259.

18. The Brisbane Courier, 17 Apr 1883; Minutes of Central Board of Health, 16 Apr 1883.

19. J.S.C. Elkington, quoted in Cilento, p.63.