

sufficient quantity to undertake the engineering surveys necessary to find out what the final cost would be.

It was at such an impasse that former State Senator Wallace Williams, an "inland farmer" of Cecil county, suggested that the most feasible solution would be the creation of a sanitation commission which could spread the cost over a greater area and at a more equitable ratio.

Says Counties Can Do It

He said the communities should not attempt to fall back on State or Federal assistance.

"They have an obligation to deal with this problem," he said, "and they can do it themselves."

"The counties have the resources to do it."

Robert M. Brown, chief of the Division of Environmental Hygiene, recommended at the conclusion of the hearing that authorities in Elkton, Havre de Grace and Perryville be required to take prompt steps to alleviate pollution conditions.

Steps Proposed

He said these steps should include the retention of an engineering firm to make surveys, preparation of a bill authorizing a bond issue for finances and submission of the bill to the voters in a referendum.

The problems posed at North East, Port Deposit and Charlestown are less, he said, simply because the towns are smaller.

George Hall, head of the Division of Sanitary Engineering, said that bacteria tests on the Big Elk River show that above Elkton the bacteria count is normal; below the town the water is "highly polluted."

Sources Being Sought

The Little Elk is polluted on both sides of the town, he said, and upstream sources are being tracked down.

Health officers from the two counties said that tests in the Elk, North East and Bush rivers and Swann Creek show dangerously high bacteria concentrations at points below towns. In nearly every case, they said, raw sewage outfalls were at fault.

No town denied that pollution constitutes a health menace. But Charlestown contended that in view of the financial considerations, "it's a problem for the whole county."

Towns Explain Status

Elkton, citing a \$10,000 cost figure for the preparation of plans, said it wanted to be sure a treatment plant had to be installed before saddling several generations with bonded indebtedness.

Havre de Grace said the wishes of the Board of Health would be followed, "but we've got to find the money."

North East observed that with a \$1.05 tax rate it is having trouble keeping its residents and could not conceive of increasing the debt.

Perryville favored a joint project for its area, and Port Deposit, located between a hill and a river, could figure out neither a financial plan nor a place to put the disposal plant—"unless we moved the bank."

\$794,000 Deficit Seen

In an earlier meeting today, the board was told that it may wind up with a deficit of \$794,000 in its program of hospital care for the medically indigent in the current fiscal year.

6 TOWNS FACE SEWAGE QUIZ

State Pressing Drive To Halt Pollution Of Waters

Sun

By JOSEPH R. L. STERNE

When six Upper Chesapeake towns are called on the carpet tomorrow to explain why they are dumping raw sewage into the bay it will mark an intensified drive to halt the growing pollution of Maryland waters.

The hearing before the State Board of Health in Bel Air will be concerned with the sewage-disposal practices of Elkton, Havre de Grace, Perryville, Port Deposit, Charlesstown and North East.

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Perry Point Veterans Hospital also will be questioned.

But State Health Department records showed yesterday that these towns are not the only offenders.

80 Places Are Included

The health records indicated that some 80 cities and towns are continuing to dump untreated sewage into Maryland waterways.

As a result, said department officials:

1. The danger to public health increases.

2. Boating and swimming areas are ruined.

3. Fish are dying off in contaminated waters.

4. More oyster-taking areas must be condemned.

To reverse this trend will require an increase of \$40,000,000 in expenditures on sewers and treatment plants during the next decade, according to Health Department estimates.

\$12,300,000 Spent Last Year

Last year the State's cities and towns spent about \$12,300,000 on sewers and treatment plants.

But this is not enough, according to Robert M. Brown, environmental hygiene chief for the department. He said it would take at least \$15,000,000 a year to clean up Maryland rivers, streams and bays.

The State's rising population, the buildup of towns and suburban communities, higher construction costs—these are the reasons Mr. Brown cited in calling for increased spending.

First Order In 1933

Although laws requiring proper sewage treatment plants have been on the books since 1914, it was not until 1933 that the Board of Health issued its first order—to Chestertown—to make sewerage improvements.

It was not until recent years that the board really started to put on the pressure. Of the 24 orders issued by the board to date, nine have come since 1951.

All the cities which were the targets of the Health Board orders have obeyed except Middletown, Frederick county.

Late in 1952, the board ordered Middletown to have sewers and a treatment plant in operation by July, 1954.

Ready To Go To Court

But yesterday, Mayor Floyd Stine said nothing has been done, and he indicated the town is ready to go to court if necessary to fight the Health Board order.

The Mayor said he agreed that his town—and all towns—should have proper sewage treatment facilities.

But he argued that under the present plan Middletown, a community of 1,000 persons, cannot afford the estimated \$350,000 it would cost to build these facilities.

The town's bonded indebtedness now, according to Health Department records, is only \$16,000. To add \$350,000 to this would mean the city would be in debt up to 30 per cent of its entire assessed value of \$1,165,080.

State Bonds Proposed

Mayor Stine said the city would have trouble financing a bond issue sufficient to cover such an outlay. He also said the interest rate might run as much as four to six per cent; that the Middletown tax rate would skyrocket.

What might break the logjam, said Mayor Stine, would be a plan to have the State issue bonds for municipal sewerage plants at the low interest rate the State can command.

Then, at a slightly higher rate, small town like Middletown, might be able to swing the deal over a 30-year period.

In contrast to Middletown's financial worries is the story of St. Michaels in Talbot county.

"Do A Little Preaching"

On October 13, 1949, the board ordered St. Michaels to build a sewer system and a treatment plant to stop pollution of Miles River, an oyster-producing area. The town's harbor already had been condemned for oyster production.

Eugene Rude, St. Michaels commissioner for water and sewage, yesterday said he took this order as a cue to "go out and do a little preaching."

After a battle, the forces backing the State Board order won the day, and St. Michaels built a \$345,000 system with 49,000 feet of sewers and a treatment plant.

The town was able to issue 30-year bonds for interest totaling only 3.2 per cent, said Mr. Rude.

Owens Power Utility

He conceded that his town of 1,400 persons might be in better financial condition than Middletown. For example, St. Michaels owns its own power utility which returns a profit each year. In addition, the town had \$50,000 in cash from utility profits which it was able to use as a "down payment."

As a result, the city's tax rate stayed where it was, and a sewer rental of \$20 a year was set up.

"We're doing just fine," said Mr. Rude, "and if Middletown or any other cities want to see how it can be done tell them to pay us a visit."

Under present laws, the State Board of Health appears to have the power to order sewerage improvements. This power, however, has never been tested in court.

The issue might come up in the Middletown case.

It also threatened in the Cumberland case, but Maryland's sec-

ond city gave up a bitter, two-year fight against sewerage orders after the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company said it would not build its huge new plant there unless a sewage treatment plant were installed.

Estimated cost of the project is \$2,000,000.

According to Health Department records, there are 32 Maryland towns without sewers or treatment plants. They are:

Cresaptown, Severna Park, Round Bay, Chesapeake Beach, Hampstead, Manchester, Mount Airy, New Windsor, Taneytown, Union Bridge, North East, Perryville, La Plata, Secretary, Middletown, Walkertown, Friendsville, Mountain Lake Park, Elkridge, Ellicott City-Oella, Galena, Rock Hall, Forest Heights, Morning-side, Queenstown, Oxford, Trappe, Boonsboro, Clear Spring, Funksville, Halfway, Smithsburg and Hebron.

Counties Included

The Anne Arundel county sanitary commission and the Baltimore county metropolitan district partially fall into this category on department listings.

There are 25 towns which have sewers but do not have treatment plants. These communities present a graver problem than the towns without sewers, said Mr. Brown, because sewage is collected from individual houses into public sewers and then discharged in volume to waterways without treatment.

The communities in this category are:

Barton, Cumberland, Frostburg, LaVale, Lonaconing, Luke, Midland, Westernport, Denton, Federalsburg, Greensboro, Preston, Elkton, Port Deposit, Vienna, Loch Lynn Heights, Havre de Grace, Laurel, Princess Anne, Hancock, Salisbury, Sharptown, Pocomoke City and Snow Hill.

In Need Of Expansion

Communities which have treatment plants which are in need of expansion in order to stop water pollution are:

Baltimore city, Annapolis, Ridgely, Westminster, Rising Sun, Indianhead, Cambridge, Hurlock, Frederick, Thurmont, Savage, Betterton, Chestertown, Rockville, Leonardtown, Crisfield and Williamsport.

The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission also falls within this category.

Other Health Department figures showed there are 140,000 persons living in Maryland incorporated communities who are not served by a sewage treatment: 40,000 persons living in communities without sewers either.

First Regional Attack

Mr. Brown, in warning of the increasing pollution of Maryland waters, said the situation has been creeping upon the State and now vigorous measures must be taken.

The Upper Chesapeake meeting tomorrow marks the first time the Health Board has attacked the problem on a regional basis, according to Dr. Robert H. Riley, chairman.

Mr. Brown said other regional hearings might be held if tomorrow's prove successful.

Mr. Brown said Maryland has been lucky up to this point in that no communities have had to depend on drinking water that is

polluted by sewage disposal from upstream communities.

Threats On Disease

But he warned that polluted water anywhere carries a threat of dysentery, typhoid fever and other diseases. Especially in summertime, he noted, it is difficult to keep youngsters from swimming in contaminated waters.

Because sewage tends to rob water of its oxygen, fish are dying off in increasingly polluted waters, he went on.

This cuts into a prized recreational activity, just as boating and bathing already have been curtailed in the Upper Chesapeake, the Choptank River near Cambridge, the Bush River in Harford county, Baltimore harbor, the Severn River, along the beaches of Calvert county, and elsewhere.

Oysters Dangerous

It is common knowledge, said Mr. Brown, that although oysters grow big in polluted water they cannot be eaten because of the danger of stomach disorders.

The extent of forbidden oyster areas is increasing, he said, thus crimping a vital Maryland industry.

"We in the Health Department realize sewerage works cost money—lots of money," he stated. "But we feel the eventual cost to the State in failure to stop pollution would be even greater."

BAY HEALTH UNIT IS URGED

Agency For Harford-Cecil Area Proposed At Parley

Sun

BY BYNUM SHAW

[Sun Staff Correspondent]

Bel Air, Md., Oct. 29—A sanitation district commission was proposed today for the Harford-Cecil county areas situated on the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay.

The action came after town after town, accused of dumping raw sewage into waters used for boating, fishing and bathing, pleaded poverty in a hearing before the State Board of Health.

Towns Represented

Arrayed on one side at the hearing were the Upper Chesapeake Watershed Association, the Izaak Walton League, the League of Maryland Sportsmen and bacteria specialists of the Health Department.

Appearing somewhat in the role of defendants were officials of the towns of Elkton, Havre de Grace, Perryville, Port Deposit, Charlesstown and North East.

The watershed association, the sportsmen and the doctors contended that growing pollution in the watercourses is rendering the streams unfit for human activities and poses the threat of an epidemic.

The unanimous position of the towns was that sewage treatment facilities cost money—a commodity they do not have even in