

Holt. (J.)

"In Shipping all Industries Unite."

CONFERENCE

—OF THE—

American Shipping & Industrial League,

—HELD AT—

Pensacola, Fla., Nov. 10-12, '86.

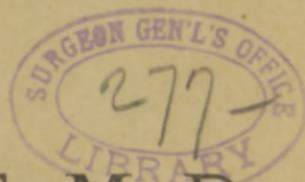
ADDRESS ON

Relation of Quarantine to Shipping Interests

—BY—

JOSEPH HOLT, M. D.,

President, Board of Health, State of Louisiana.





—:TO THE:—

President and Members

—OF THE—

AMERICAN SHIPPING AND INDUSTRIAL LEAGUE.

PENSACOLA, November 11th, 1886.

GENTLEMEN:

In responding to the invitation to address you on this occasion, I do so fully mindful of the fact that I am dealing with a most intricate problem, involving questions of commercial reciprocity between nations, and the development of subsidiary industries of infinite variety as tributary feeders to the currents of trade. Nor am I unmindful that these remarks are directed to an audience of capitalists, of merchants, of men whose whole training of thought is in accordance with the strict principles of business; whose impulses are progressive; and whose purpose it is to bring under control new fields of commerce; to open new lines of industry and to make great additions to the general sum of the wealth and happiness of the entire country, through the instrumentality of American enterprise.

Among the subjects pertinent to the general purpose, and formulated for the particular consideration of this convention, your committee has been pleased to honor the Louisiana State Board of Health by referring to myself for elucidation, the following:

“No. 5. Can a state of public health be maintained at the Gulf Ports while constant intercourse is had with the Tropics?”

Viewed from any point of observation, whether from that of humanity or science, whether from that of the grand future of commerce with our exterior or interior connections, the solution of this question is the most important and absolutely imperative that can engage the attention of the scientists, the statesmen, or the merchants of the Gulf States and Mississippi Valley.

To relieve it of all ambiguity of expression, let us turn the question over and state it backwards:—Is it possible to maintain constant intercourse with the Tropics without sacrificing the public health of the Gulf Ports?

And finally let us state it in this wise: Must the Gulf Ports continue to sacrifice their commerce, as a last resort, in order to maintain the public health? *Must they starve their people to save them?*

Whatever my own convictions on this point, to express them flatly by declaring that sanitary interest can be reconciled with the commercial and industrial necessities of these ports, would savor of a too forward assumption, and the assertion of opinion amounting to audacity, without enlightening the specific question, or convincing the reason, or in any manner satisfying the judgment.

In the first place is it true? Is the extension of commerce from the Gulf Ports to inter-tropical regions actually dependent on the satisfactory solution of the public health question, at least so much thereof as may be affected by free communication?

I will answer this dogmatically by saying that, however much the States of the Gulf may depend upon unrestrained commerce for the development of their resources and attainment of a higher civilization, characterized by a more numerous population, greater wealth, and greater political significance, and however much capitalists and business men with unlimited resources, may endeavor to achieve this higher destiny by sheer force of indomitable courage and the energetic spirit of enterprise, these are all in vain, and a wasteful expenditure of power, unless there has been securely laid, as the bottom-most foundation upon which must rest the entire fabric of the exalted prosperity of this people, the perfect reconciliation between the interests of the public health, and all the interests comprehended in the public livelihood.

Your accumulated capital and your genius may project vast enterprises; may cut canals; build inter-oceanic railways; jetty the Mississippi; deepen harbors; establish international exchanges and steamship lines—your genius and energy may do all this, but you will never establish in the Gulf ports of the Southern States a commerce upon a

solid foundation, until municipal authorities and the States themselves recognize at their true commercial value the principles of sanitation, and apply themselves earnestly and vigorously to a reformation in the methods of cleansing and purifying their cities, and cease to inflict arbitrary measures, declaring embargoes upon trade as the only remedy for their own deficiencies.

Just as the aggressive movement of an army must be conducted in strict accordance with established principles of war, so must your movements in reaching out from the Gulf ports of these States to encompass with your commercial and industrial enterprise the regions of the Tropics; so must your aggressive efforts be controlled by fundamental principles which you may obey, but can never command.

As a skilful general prepares for an invasion by first securing his base of operations, and above all, by keeping open his communication with the interior, so must you not only establish reliably your own immediate base, but above all fix and definitely settle your relations with the interior.

Pensacola may open her port; Galveston and Mobile may open their's and declare them opened to the world for the whole year around, but what profiteth this if the people of the interior are not agreed?

New Orleans may boast of free intercourse with Mexico and Central America regardless of yellow fever prevalence in their ports. The boast may be true in fact, but is only an idle vapping in result, if Mississippi, Texas, Tennessee and Arkansas say: "You must keep such trade strictly to yourself, for we object, and shall emphasize our objection by quarantining your railroads and steamboats, and by locking you in".

You must perfect your interior relations, gentlemen, for these ports cannot be opened to the full tide of commerce except by and with the consent of the interior.

The right of self-protection is inalienable, and it matters not whether it be an individual, or a community, or a State, when they exercise that right as a natural prerogative, there is no alternative, but that it must be allowed. Not only therefore, must you harmonize in its local aspect the preservation of the public health and commerce, but in doing so

you must bring into close relation with this adjustment the States and communities constituting the interior.

Having accomplished this much, your strategic operations in foreign fields are simply a question of brains, capital and push.

Before proceeding further in this direction, let us examine, somewhat analytically, this "QUARANTINE and COMMERCE" problem in strict accordance with logical procedure.

Let us first agree upon the terms of the problem and if acceptable, project the investigation in a direct line from precedent to consequent until we reach a conclusion.

Quoting from a report entitled "Quarantine in its relations to the Commerce of New Orleans with West Indian, Mexican, Central and South American States," and addressed by myself to the joint-committee of the Commercial Bodies of New Orleans, 1884, I will here reiterate the three axioms which I conceive to embody all of the natural laws of trade in relation to the subject you have propounded in question No. 5.

"There are three natural laws governing commercial movement, as profound, as universal, and invariable as the law of gravity which determines the rotation of the planets around the sun; more persistently operative than international or local regulations.

1st. *The currents of trade seek the shortest course.*

2d. *It is a law of commerce, as of fluids, to follow the course of least resistance.*

3rd. *With increase of distance traversed, there must be increased assurance of unobstructed entry."*

I will here add a

4th. *In the interchange of products, the movement of commerce is not along isothermal lines or parallels of latitude, but from North to South across them, and therefore, coincident with longitude.*

That currents of trade seek the shortest course under the unseen and sometimes almost inappreciable influences which control their motion, addresses itself so palpably to the reason as to need but little said in explanation. Not only is it proven by all experience, but is plainly demonstrated in the fact that any departure is not an exception to the

law, but is invariably due to an obstruction blocking the way.

While the statement of this axiom sounds as trite as a mere platitude, yet it is a *natural law* under the tremendous pressure of whose influence the Suez Canal was cut, saving the distance around the Cape of Good Hope; it is the subtle influence which projected trans-continental railways, two and three thousand miles from the Atlantic to the Pacific, traversing regions known in the older geographies as the Great American Desert; it is under the pressure of this law that Lesseps is digging and blasting away at the Panama Canal; a force which will presently span the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and also Honduras with inter-oceanic railroads, as great arterial carriers and channels of trade between the continents and nations and peoples of the East and the West; between the Mississippi valley, the Atlantic seaboard of the United States, England and Europe on the one hand, and Australia, China, Japan, the Indian Ocean and the American Pacific seaboard, on the other; avoiding the deflection and thousands of miles of travel with its incident dangers around Cape Horn.

The mighty current of trade is already pounding and cutting its way across the American Isthmus; and when its floods burst through, and pour headlong into the Carribean Sea and Mexican Gulf its tide of wealth, will these Gulf ports be open to invite it hitherwards, taking a ready advantage of this same law of seeking the shortest course, or will they be barred in by proclamations of non-intercourse or lengthy quarantine detention?

The tide of trade will surely set this way; but it is a law of commerce as of fluids, "*to follow the course of least resistance.*" If this flood, setting across the Gulf towards these shores, meets with sand bars blocking the harbors, and mud lumps blocking the rivers, and quarantine blocking the ports, the current will gently glide in the direction of least resistance, toward Baltimore, New York and Europe; and will shortly cut a channel in that direction so deep, that no amount of coaxing or persuasion can ever deflect it. If, however, that current is to flow straight through the Gulf ports into the heart of this continent, the question must be decided *at once and preparation made to-day.*

As an abundant preliminary offering, the trade of Mexico, Central

and South America and the West Indies is open to you now, but preparation for its reception must be made, and obstacles must be removed, particularly in dealing with vessels or freight from great distances; for *with increase of the distance traversed there must be increased assurance of unobstructed entry.*" Not only shall you *not declare* a prolonged detention, but you must remove every possible moment of delay to a ship which has winged her way from Buenos Ayres or from Rio de Janeiro, to freights from Melbourne or Hong Kong transhipped over Honduran or Tehuantepec or other isthmian passage. *You may detain these once, but you will never touch that trade again!*

Therefore, gentlemen, as the only logical conclusion deduced from a philosophical analysis of the propositions which we agreed upon as the basis of our investigation, and trying your cause by the organic laws of your own calling, which is commerce with her hand-maiden, finance, you are compelled to halt right here, and dare not move forward another inch, until you have reconciled those clashing interests, the public health and the public livelihood; until you have harmonized in peaceful unity, quarantine and commerce.

If this cannot be decided favorably, your labors are in vain and it were well you do not begin.

In warding off pestilence, quarantine is indispensable; but quarantine, even at its best, is an obstruction, and *five days is the maximum detention commerce can safely bear without ruinous deflection.*

A quarantine of ten days as effectually destroys commerce eventually, as non-intercourse. The only difference is one of a force slowly or quickly applied.

The necessities of modern civilization are wholly in the direction of rapid transit. If a particular port does not choose to adapt itself to this higher law, it must endure the consequences in a complete transfer of its trade to ports in competition, where wisdom and shrewdness combine for the preservation of the public interest in its entirety; the public health and the public wealth.

When New Orleans, Mobile and Pensacola close their gateways, they starve their own children and feed the hungry multitudes of rival cities. Can any but an enemy or a fool saturated with ignorance insist upon the continuance of such a ruinous course?

The problem of quarantine and commerce, although confronting you sharply at this moment, is not a question only of to-day, but it has stood unanswered, the vexation and the curse of maritime ports and of governments from the earliest record of pestilential invasion along the highways of trade and travel, down to the period when the Louisiana State Board of Health concentrated upon this riddle the light and resources of modern science, in order to compel a solution.

We believe that we have solved it; but time alone can demonstrate!

Not from choice, but under the compulsion of necessity, the State of Louisiana, from her own scant treasury took thirty thousand dollars to devote to experiment in solving the quarantine problem.

Thirty thousand dollars voted for an experiment!

This ceases to be strange when we consider for a moment that, modern enlightenment signifies the present condition of man through developmental processes of experiment. To take from him the results of experiment compelled by necessity, means to relegate the human creature to his primitive existence, clothed in the skins of wild beasts and sheltering with them in caves.

The gulf ports are certainly no exception to this rule.

To find relief, and to attain wealth and greatness, they must do so by following the rugged path of experiment, the only highway of human progress, and must abandon the dreamy speculations and theoretical abstractions which have held the medical and through it the public mind in a state of apathy; bewildered and moving in a circle of endless suggestion and controversy, but never advancing.

It is positively certain that under the old policy of sitting still and trying no experiments, but relying on detention as constituting the virtue and main reliance of quarantine, foreign pestilences have swept the country so frequently, that boards of health have been compelled to increase the detention, ten, twenty, forty days, and finally to abandon quarantine altogether and to declare absolute non-intercourse as the final result of that fatal contentment, of that indolence, sometimes called conservatism, which tries no experiment.

The merchants of New Orleans, interested in tropical trade development, and especially the members of the Mexican Exchange, came

forward with a hearty will and cashed at their face value some fifteen thousand dollars of State warrants, which were considerably below par, in order to give the matter an immediate impulse; for affairs had become desperate under the proclamations of non-intercourse and twenty and forty days quarantine, emanating from the advice of boards of health.

Within six weeks time from the beginning of the work, the appropriate buildings and the invention of appliances were completed, the "New System of Maritime Sanitation" was set in smoothly working operation, and the portal of the Valley of the Mississippi was flung wide open, early in June, 1884, to the commerce of the whole world, and vessels from cholera and yellow fever ports invited to come; and all of that, gentlemen, with the full knowledge and consent of Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, and all the States of the interior, northward to the great lakes. That portal has never been closed for an hour since. The interior is satisfied, because the public health has not been sacrificed.

During the quarantine season just closed, and which extended from the 10th of May to the 31st of October, in the place of almost nothing, certainly from tropical ports, as heretofore, under the old regime of extended detention, there passed under treatment of Maritime Sanitation, 219 vessels, of which 166 were steamships; 120 vessels were detained from three to five days, and 99 vessels were freighted with cargoes of tropical fruit and treated, but not detained. Six vessels with yellow fever on board were detained an average period of twelve days in the Lower Station in Pass a l'Outre, for infected vessels only. The whole system has been operated with the precision with which one would run a first-class daily paper; and we were not afraid to run it either.

I will present a few figures as a reply to some of our superficial economists who flippantly dispose of our tropical trade as a few bananas, some pine-apples and a few bags of coffee; a commerce which has not been developed because there has been no concerted effort of laborers in a field teeming with the richest products of the earth; and whose flood of gold alone, two hundred years ago, according to

Buckle, ¹wrecked the kingdom of Spain!

Under a policy of exceptional leniency on the part of the Board of Health, this same despised banana and other tropical fruit business in New Orleans, in five years, jumped from \$133,000 to \$920,000, and has been booming ahead ever since.

When the quarantine embargo was taken off the coffee trade, last year, the import rose from 29,000,000 pounds to 44,000,000 pounds, and is still on the rise!

What Louisiana *has done*, Texas, Mississippi, ²Alabama, and Florida can more easily do.

Their State treasuries can better afford it; and the expenditure would require to be much less, considering that they do not represent in the work the whole Mississippi Valley.

Why do not these States foster their commerce and help themselves, and in all matters of quarantine depend only upon themselves rather than committing so important a trust to any agent but their own?

I seriously question, gentlemen, in making the effort so essential to their prosperity, but that the Congressional appropriation, called the "Epidemic Fund," stands in the way as a far greater curse than a blessing.

This fund was voted from the National Treasury in the spirit of charity.

It is now a subject of discussion by modern philanthropists if free handed charity does not cultivate improvidence, a spirit of indifference, of negligence, and really create a lazzaroni.

These States are abundantly able to take care of themselves, and should be made to do so by compulsory self-reliance; and the wisest and most beneficent thing Congress can do, is to turn back into the Treasury this "Epidemic Fund" and apple of discord, to be expended in the development of National resources. But in the matter of quarantine assistance beware, lest in accepting gifts you barter a birth-right for a mess of pottage! National interference in yellow fever affairs has been a failure *except in begetting trouble*.

To permit a Federal finger in the quarantine affairs of a State, is the concession of an inherent right, fraught with danger, and should

never be tolerated under any circumstances. The framers of the constitution never contemplated such absorption of local police power.

The strength of an adjustment between quarantine and commerce in the Gulf ports, rests solely in the assumption of responsibility by the States themselves; not parting to the Federal Government any prerogative or dividing control in quarantine management; for human flesh is weak, and the temptation to discriminate against these Gulf ports is worse than dangerous under the pressure of the hundreds of millions of gold representing the hostile interests of trans-continental railroads and associated steamship lines centered in the cities of the Northern Atlantic seaboard.

Even if you suffer, make no concession of a right which commits you, in giving a part, to sacrifice the whole.

Knowing the *power of gold* to affect legislation in the halls of the National Capitol, as is generally believed and cannot be successfully denied, commit no such trust as this to a National Board or Bureau of a few men, aliens to your cause; and still less, to any *one man* in any department of the National service, to hold the pulsations of your commercial heart subject to the autocratic pressure of his thumb. Let the State confide this power only to its own servants, whom it may make or unmake, according to its sovereign will.

Returning to the thread of our subject and summing the whole matter in a few words: By what process may the Gulf Ports maintain the public health while permitting free communication with Inter-tropical Ports?

The reply is by turning to science, and to science alone, as offering the only hope of reconciliation between quarantine and commerce.

In offering words of encouragement I am not speaking to you of the shadow of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen, but of that *which is* and is actually in practical demonstration, when I point you to the Valley of the Mississippi and its outlet, the port of New Orleans, resting securely behind the beneficent system of Maritime Sanitation, obstructive to the importation of pestilence, but keeping open the highway of commerce.

A physical bar, obstructing the mouth of the Mississippi river, presented itself for years as a formidable obstacle to the commerce of the

great Valley.

The genius of Eads has overcome this physical bar; but of what avail would have been the expenditure of genius, of the \$5,000,000, and the enormous amount of labor, had not the necessity of the very *existence* of New Orleans as a commercial emporium compelled the State to *jetty the quarantine*, and limit it to a narrow channel, at all times open to trade?

That which has been done by Louisiana can also be done easily by Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Texas.

If these care for commercial intercourse, and would seek it, *they must jetty their quarantines*, even before they do their harbors, as the first and most essential prerequisite.

It is not pertinent to the inquiry to enter here into a description of the methods and appliances of Maritime Sanitation. It is sufficient to state that in the place of protracted detention, which has always proven itself an ally to pestilence but destructive to commerce, the new system contemplates the detention of a ship only such time, as may be required to cleanse her by the aid of powerful appliances, as speedily as can be effected by skill and steam.

In the case of ships from yellow fever infected ports, and therefore having a foul bill of health, but presenting a clear health record, there is a detention of from three to five days, according to distance traversed.

In the case of actually infected vessels, these are remanded to an isolated station, removed from the highway of commerce, and for infected vessels only, and are there treated with a severity of cleansing and disinfection, which immediately changes all the conditions of the ship from an *infected* to a *disinfected* vessel. The sick, in the meantime, have been removed to a comfortable hospital, with medical attendance and every convenience and comfort that could be desired.

The Port of New Orleans, having confidence in its protective regulations, does not cry out to the plague-smitten ship seeking asylum for its sick and dying, "Go away! go back and toss, hopeless and helpless upon the sea, like the 'Ancient Mariner,' to die for saken!" but resting her faith upon the stability of natural law, in obedience to which

Maritime Sanitation was created, she says to the cholera and yellow fever-stricken vessel, "Come, that we may cleanse you of pestilence, and may assuage the suffering and sorrow of the afflicted and send you on your way rejoicing."

In that port the unreasoning terror and hideous brutality of *the old system* has given way to the tender sympathy of *the new*.

The simplicity of the system of Maritime Sanitation makes it available even for ports having small commercial intercourse.

In harmonizing the preservation of the public health with the necessities of commerce, as we have to deal with it in the Gulf Ports there are three essential elements upon which success depends.

1. To keep out pestilence by a strictly scientific system of maritime sanitation, which should properly begin in the thorough treatment of a vessel in the port of departure previously to taking in cargo. The latter is an exceedingly important part of the process, to secure which, the Louisiana State Board of Health has earnestly endeavored to enlist the attention of the National Government, with a view of establishing in all foreign ports, from whence pestilence might be introduced, consular agents, whose duty it shall be to see that all vessels clearing for the United States shall be in a perfect sanitary condition *before taking in cargo, and at the moment of departure*.

They shall also certify to the number and health of all on board, and to the health and sanitary condition of the ports in which they are located, which constitutes a bill of health.

The method of quarantine sanitation should begin its work *at the port of departure* and be completed *at the port of entry*, to include approved methods of ship sanitation under competent authority during the voyage of a vessel from one port to another.

2. In case that pestilence from any direction should enter, it is the adopted policy of the Louisiana State Board of Health, to report at once "every actual" or "suspected" case of cholera or yellow fever; in so doing we have recognized the right of every citizen to be instantly informed of danger threatening himself and his family; recognizing, also, that the only hope of subduing pestilence is to deal with it as we do with fire, by extinguishing the first spark, instead of wait-

ing for the proof of fire in the spread of conflagration.

This timely information enables us to fight the disease, and to make an intelligent effort to quench a pestilence by isolation and disinfection; *the only hope!*

*3. The consent of all who are concerned in the keeping out of pestilence. This can only be accomplished by an alliance between the seaboard and the States of the interior upon the basis of confidence begotten of truth, in the outspoken announcement of pestilence or of that which is reasonably "*suspicious*" of pestilence, in order that all may be timely warned; and, in watching the progress of disease, may act with proper caution in self-preservation, while avoiding panic and unnecessary severity of protective measures.

This confidence, without which all else is impossible, is secured through the medium of "INTER-STATE NOTIFICATION," previously agreed upon by specific treaty; dependent upon the honor, courage and fidelity of boards of health and the medical profession.

The necessity of being prepared to fight pestilence as we do fire, to prevent its spread in the event of its appearance inside the lines of quarantine defence, is a point constantly dwelt upon and urged by the Louisiana State Board of Health; for no quarantine, however perfect, can afford absolute, but only a relative guaranty of safety, in direct proportion to its degree of perfection; *but never absolute.*

The same must be said of the fire department, of every system of railroad signals, of every passenger train and line of ocean steamers, and of all the resources of the medical profession.

Again it must be remembered that no system of quarantine can give a relative guaranty except for the one avenue of entry it specifically defends. The possible introduction of pestilence through a multitude of highways not so guarded must be considered, and their faults not counted against quarantine as a failure.

Because we cannot attain the absolute in practice, it does not follow that we shall not accept *the best relative guaranty* of safety.

In the matter of quarantine improvement, we are compelled by increasing need to search for a better security, on account of the utter failure of old methods to protect against pestilential invasion, while

they have sacrificed commercial and industrial interests, vital to our existence.

The effort is not of choice, but is made under the compulsion of necessity.
Let this fact be constantly borne in mind.

QUARANTINE MAINTENANCE.

To prevent the introduction of pestilence while imposing the least hindrance to commerce, is the established maxim of an honestly conducted and beneficent system of quarantine. Any departure from this rule indicates a serious fault which should not be tolerated.

The revenues derived from quarantine sources should never exceed the expenditure in quarantine maintenance, economically administered.

The application of methods adequate to the speedy and thorough disinfection and cleansing of a vessel, the keeping of a station for infected vessels only, the general sustenance, in short, of a system of efficient maritime sanitation necessarily requires a considerable outlay of money, which redounds to the immediate saving to the ship and to commerce, of very many times the amount so expended.

A radical fault, and the one which inflicts upon commerce even the most perfect quarantine as a grievous obstruction, is chargeable to the action of the State in imposing the entire burden of maintenance upon the shipping.

If the Gulf Ports seriously desire to improve their commerce, they should indicate it by doing everything to invite, by removing every possible obstruction to shipping. With a high quarantine tariff and ruinous port charges, including enormous wharfage dues, vessels are kept away as effectually as an enemy could accomplish by a blockade.

As a matter of the best paying economy, the action of the Province of Quebec in sustaining all the expenditures of quarantine maintenance, addresses itself as probably the wisest course in the long run. It is perfectly certain that, inasmuch as the State and its maritime port are, at least, one-half beneficiaries of commerce, these should bear, at least, one-half the entire expense of quarantine maintenance, and should therefore cut the charges down one-half.

Every sentiment of equitable dealing and principle of progressive movement endorse this proposition; not to allow which, is simply a part of that narrow and short-sighted policy, which has consistently made the Gulf Ports their own most formidable enemies.

Considered alone from the position of a State and of a sea-port, and in the line of a far seeing and sound economic policy, vessels should not be charged quarantine dues of any kind except for quarantine maintenance; these should be strictly proportioned to the services rendered, and one-half the expense should be borne by the State.

The Quarantine and the Board of Health should be a State institution appointed and controlled by the Governor of the State, and should not be local and therefore subject to local influence and interference.

In conclusion, gentlemen, and as the logical answer to your inquiry; "Can a state of public health be maintained at the Gulf Ports while constant intercourse is had with the Tropics?" I point you to Louisiana and its great maritime port, New Orleans, for the reply—"IT CAN!!"

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of several loops and flourishes, positioned to the left of the library stamp.

