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1912-08-26

Letter from J. E. Crichton to E[dward] T. Parsons, 1912 Aug 26.

J. E. Crichton

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# The City of Seattle

Washington

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND SANITATION

August 26th, 1912.

E.T. Parsons,  
Sierra Club,  
402 Mills Bldg.,  
San Francisco.

Dear Sir:

In answering your communications, received August 24th, I beg to state that your understanding of the matter regarding the Chicago - Milwaukee Railroad etc., is not exactly correct.

We were opposed to the franchise being granted through a portion of our watershed. Our watershed, however, at the point of crossing by the railroad is narrow so that their camps were easily located outside of the shed. They were not to exceed a half mile from our watershed but yet entirely within the adjoining river basin.

The typhoid rate did not increase at all and the figures which you give, 50 and 55, were unfortunately charged against this city by several eastern publications when they figured our total number of cases as being the number of deaths which had occurred in Seattle. This was done with no desire to injure this city but by mistake. Since that time, however, by careful control of typhoid we have been able to reduce the number of deaths more than ever so that last year the total number of deaths occurring in the entire city was 24, including about 40% shipped in from outside towns.

We are allowing no habitation or industrial camp to exist in our watershed of any kind or character excepting those doing municipal work in the shed and one or two camps which, under

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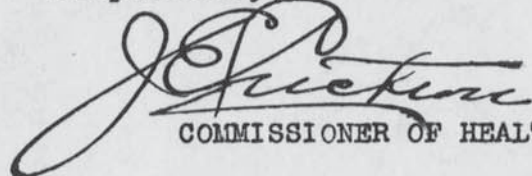
-2-E.T. Parsons.

the condemnation award were allowed to finish logging certain lands. We have moved industrial camps and several hundred people entirely out of the watershed and today it is almost free from human life other than above. This district embraces 87,000 acres of land, nearly all owned and controlled by the City of Seattle.

The Milwaukee Railroad was required to build as far back from the river as possible and to build a dike between the railroad track and the river so that by no possibility could anything from the train reach the river without passing through soil and in all human probabilities being exposed to direct sunshine between the dike and the track. The bridges across the main river are specially constructed and are absolutely water tight. Anything from the bridges is carried across by gutters (water tight) down into sinks at either end of the bridges.

I am sending you a copy of our ordinance covering our Cedar River watershed. We have, however, a very strict State enactment which gives us complete control. We have two sanitary policemen at all times in this district and in summer season we have three or four. The Milwaukee pays about half of the expense of this patrol.

Respectfully,

  
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH,

JEC/B

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COPY

ORDINANCE NO. 27534.

AN ORDINANCE amending Section 1 of Ordinance No. 19061, entitled "An ordinance providing for the protection of the water supply of the City of Seattle from pollution, and providing penalties for violations of the provisions of this ordinance"; approved August 25th, 1908, for the purpose of providing additional safeguards and protection to the water supply.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. That Section 1 of Ordinance No. 19061, approved Aug. 25th, 1908, be and the same is hereby amended to read as follows:

Section 1. For the purpose of protecting the water supply of the City of Seattle from pollution, it is hereby declared unlawful for any person or person to camp, picnic, loiter, trespass, fish or otherwise be within the Cedar River Watershed from which the city obtains its water supply, unless they are there performing municipal work, or have been authorized to go upon said grounds or waters legally, or by permission of the Commissioner of Health or for any person or persons, whether or not they are performing municipal work, or have been authorized to go upon said grounds or waters legally or by permission of the Commissioner of Health, as above provided, to deposit within said Cedar River Watershed any human excrement or other substance whatsoever deleterious to health, or to commit any act whatsoever tending to pollute the waters in said watershed.

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[ ca Sep 1912 ]

A renewed attempt is being made by the municipal authorities of San Francisco to obtain from Congress a retification of an ill-considered grant made by former Secretary of the Interior Garfield. This grant confers upon San Francisco conditionally the right to flood Hetch-Hetchy Valley as a source of water-supply and of electric energy "for the actual municipal purposes of the city and county of San Francisco." At the hearings in Washington last winter it was shown that this would practically mean the dismemberment of the Yosemite National Park, because, as a sanitary precaution, it would ultimately require the sequestration of the northern half of the park which comprises by far the most notable scenic features. There are a number of reasons why public spirited men throughout the United States should urge congress to revoke the grant and to place Yosemite as well as the Yellowstone under the sole disposition of Congress. The proved existence of a number of excellent watersupplies, available by purchase or condemnation, exhibits the municipal authorities of San Francisco in the undignified endeavor to drive a sharp bargain at the nation's expense, and all under cover of a petty quarrel between the municipality and a water company. Chairman Mondell of the Public Lands Committee found in his report "that the city has failed to establish its contention that the Hetch-Hetchy is the only reasonably available source of water supply in the Sierras". Why then should irreparable injury be inflicted upon one of the nation's fairest possessions? Because it will produce "a relief from taxation now imposed for lighting streets and public buildings" is one of the answers of the city engineer. It seems incredible that a project so inherently selfish can be seriously urged upon the notice of Congress.

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One who has followed the European development of alpine winter sports, tobogganning, skinning, curling etc., as for instance at Saint Moritz, is bound to anticipate a similar development in the United States. Yosemite valley and especially the Tuolumne Meadows are the preordained alpine winter resorts for the entire Pacific Coast region south of Seattle and Portland. The ignorant objection that snow, cold, and the attitude will prevent people from ever going into the Sierra Nevada in winter is sufficiently answered with the fact that thousands now engage in winter sports at the same attitudes in the Alps. With the increase of the population and the improvement of hotel and travelling facilities the Yosemite National Park must inevitably become a winter as well as a summer resort. Now is the time to say to San Francisco's politicians: You shall not destroy our present joys nor our national hopes of the future with a selfish and foolish municipal project! Selfish, because the chief object is to save the city taxes with Hetch-Hetchy water power; foolish, because the modern science of sanitation demands that a municipal water supply, from whatever source, shall be filtered. Yosemite National Park can not be at the same time a public resort and the source of an unfiltered water supply. All public spirited men should unite in petitioning Congress to revoke the Garfield grant, which threatens to entail universal public loss for a doubtful local benefit. Thwarted in its selfish scheme San Francisco will follow the example of enlightened communities and provide a safe filtered supply from one of the many sources nearer home.

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