

NO RESOLUTION OF WASTE DISCHARGE REGULATION QUESTION

Immediately prior to the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Public Health Service, in cooperation with the several Great Lakes States, the Canadian health department and vessel operators, initiated a Great Lakes study project. The result was amendment of the Interstate Quarantine Regulations to prohibit vessels from discharging sewage, ballast, or bilge water within certain delineated areas around water intake cribs in the lakes and rivers. Unfortunately, from a vessel operator's viewpoint, the two most important aspects of the study project were not resolved, namely, the promulgation of standards for treatment of vessel overboard waste discharges and the development of treatment systems for shipboard installation necessary to meet those standards.

I point this out merely to illustrate the feeling of frustration which has been experienced by vessel owners in endeavoring to learn just what steps should be taken to control overboard waste discharges. Thus remedial measures on commercial vessels, whose numbers have decreased in a like period; that is, there are fewer vessels now which are operating as against the increasing discharges that come from municipalities.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

Then I would like to go to page 7, gentlemen, and tell you what our proposals are here. But first of all I think we have a figure which is rather interesting, and that is at no one time are there more than 14,000 seamen on the Great Lakes which is an average of about one seaman for every 6.8 square miles. So we are submitting a draft of some legislation which embraces four points and these are as follows.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

First: It would seem that insofar as commercial vessels are concerned, enforcement of water quality standards should not be achieved punitively through the imposition of prohibitions and penalties. Initially, suitable waste treatment systems for shipboard installation must be developed. Manufacturers have come up with many devices, such as chemical toilets, et cetera, but these are, at best, only temporary and stopgap measures. What is needed are type accepted, practical shipboard waste treatment systems which, once installed, will assure the owner that his vessel is in compliance with applicable regulations. We earnestly urge that an accelerated program be initiated directed toward development of improved low-cost techniques for control and treatment of vessel overboard waste discharges. Under the Clean Air Act in connection with air pollution control, such a program has already been initiated.

Although the Department of the Interior is responsible for administering the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, as amended, we believe the Department of Transportation to be the agency most knowledgeable in the field of requirements for vessel construction and related navigational problems. Such an allocation of authority should not only produce greater efficiency but would be productive of greater economies since the problem is not one merely of prescribing stand-