

BLAME LAID TO SANTA MARIA

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FEDERAL MARITIME Commissioner George Henry Hearn hears the city's side of the dispute with the Military Sea Transport Service over preferential berthing rights granted Sea-Land Service, Inc. Mayor Elmer Rasmuson (back to camera) explains the situation. (Daily News photo)

City's Port Position Backed

"I have a feel for your position," Federal Maritime Commissioner George Henry Hearn told the City Council yesterday concerning the port berthing dispute with the military.

Hearn made the statement at an informal meeting of the council members of the city's Port Commission and the administration.

The dispute revolves around a pending agreement between Sea-Land Service, Inc. and the port giving Sea-Land preferential berthing rights two days a week in return for a guaranteed annual minimum payment. The Military Sea Transport Service has filed a letter of question with the FMC maintaining the Sea-Land agreement would hamper MSTs operations.

Hearn recommended that the city present its case to the FMC in an informal manner prior to the scheduling of any hearing. He said a letter to commission members would do the job.

He also suggested that a solution be sought before the matter came up for hearing. At the request of Mayor Elmer Rasmuson, Hearn said he would check with Washington on the status of the dispute—whether an official protest has been filed by MSTs.

"I feel very sympathetic," Hearn said. "We can't discourage the one carrier which will give this service," he added, referring to Sea-Land.

Port Commission Chairman Wally Martens said that without "our common carrier (Sea-Land), the port will not pay for itself."

AT PRESENT, MSTs vessels call in port about once a month, according to port operations manager Don Walters. MSTs has discontinued dry cargo shipments and its tankers use the petroleum-oil-lubricant facility which is not included in the Sea-Land agreement, Walters added.

If a hearing is finally held, Hearn said he would try to arrange to have it in Anchorage. It would be conducted by a hearing examiner and would not be before the whole commission, he said.

Hearn also discussed the proposed FMC rate schedule investigation of the Alaska trade. He termed Alaska shipping along with Puerto Rico shipping the "big problems" in coastal freight services. He estimated that the study would take from 10 months to a year.

Captain, Pilot Are Charged by Panel

A charge of negligence was issued against the captain and pilot of the ill-fated "SS Santa Maria" by the Coast Guard at the end of a five-day hearing yesterday.

The charge, if substantiated, could result in the revocation or suspension of the marine licenses of Capt. Austin P. Tomter, 63-year-old skipper of the "Santa Maria" and of his pilot, Capt. Robert Kamron.

The charge was issued yesterday against the two captains by Cmdr. Robert F. Hornbeck, officer in charge of the Coast Guard Marine Inspection Office here.

THE HEARING was initiated by the Coast Guard last Wednesday to fix responsibility in the fiery collision of the Dutch-registered tanker "Sirrah" and the "Santa Maria" in Cook Inlet a week ago.

A final hearing on the matter will be conducted by a civilian hearing examiner in Anchorage at 10 a.m., Nov. 12.

The Coast Guard has hearing examiners in Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles and "one of these will probably be assigned to the case," according to Commander Hornbeck.

CMDR. HORNBECK pointed out "this does not necessarily mean the Coast Guard has now concluded that the sole fault of the collision lies with the officers of the Santa Maria."

"The three-man Marine Board of Investigation which investigated the casualty must first submit its report to the Commandant of the Coast Guard for review and approval. After this, the findings of fact, conclusions, and recommendations of the board will be made public, in addition to the remarks of the commandant," he said.

Concerning the officers charged with negligence, the Marine Board apprised the 17th Coast Guard District commander, Rear Adm. George D. Synon, that there "appeared probable cause for preferment of charges against the above two licensed officers."

Admiral Synon referred the matter to the Officer in Charge Marine Inspection, in Anchorage for administrative processing.



HERE TO INVESTIGATE COLLISION

Two officers with the 17th Coast Guard District, Capt. R. J. Fugina, merchant marine safety officer, and Cmdr. Dan Rayachich, officer in charge of marine inspections, go over details prior to the opening of board of investigation hearing on the collision of the tankers Sirrah and Santa Maria. Cmdr. R. F. Hornbeck, who is stationed in Anchorage, is also on the board which started taking testimony this afternoon.

Santa Maria Crewmen Testify On Collision Of Oil Tankers

Crew members of the American-registered Santa Maria were to be the first to testify on Monday's collision of two petroleum-loaded tankers as a U.S. Coast Guard board of investigation opened its probe of the Knik Arm accident today.

The Santa Maria and the Dutch-registered Sirrah collided about a mile from the Port of Anchorage Monday afternoon. Both were immediately swept by flame but the crew of the Sirrah was able to maneuver their vessel from the turmoil and put out the fire.

The hearing on the accident was originally scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. but was postponed until 1 p.m. in order to allow the board more time for preliminary work.

Capt. R. J. Fugina, merchant marine safety officer with the 17th Coast Guard District with headquarters in Juneau, opened the investigation with a statement outlining the purpose of the sessions which are expected to continue until Saturday.

The marine board of investigation, according to Fugina, is to investigate the circumstances of the collision in order to determine the possible cause and the responsibility.

Through testimony, the board will seek information toward "preventing and reducing future" incidents of the type. The board also will be seeking "any evidence of incompetency, misconduct, unskillfulness, and willful violation of law."

Sitting on the board with chairman Fugina are Cmdr. Dan Rayachich, district officer in charge of investigations, who is also here from Juneau; and Cmdr. R. F. Hornbeck, marine

inspection officer and port captain for Anchorage.

Crew members of both vessels are to be called during the course of the investigation. Rayachich said. The Sirrah crew is still aboard its vessel, expected to dock late this afternoon.

As the Sirrah lost an anchor in the collision, the captain decided not to chance movement in Tuesday's high winds. The tanker is expected to move into the Port of Anchorage when the

Sea-Land Inc. vessel departs port officials indicated today.

The Santa Maria is anchored off Pt. Woronzof.

A San Francisco attorney Gilbert C. Wheat, has arrived here to represent the Santa Maria along with the local law firm of Burr, Boney and Pease.

A Seattle attorney, Tom Paul, of the legal firm of Summers-Howard-LeGras, will represent the Dutch ship in the investigation.



PORT ENGINEER John Strout checks the progress on construction of a giant ice bumper which port officials hope will protect the temporary petroleum-oil-lubricant facility from the potentially damaging ice chunks

floated in by the tides. The bumper is over 100 feet long, weighs about 40 tons and is made from surplus and donated materials. It will be held in place by a half a mile of steel cable. (Daily News photo)

Anchorage Daily Times Wednesday, Oct. 28, 1964

BIGGEST VESSEL TIES AT CITY'S DOCK TODAY

The largest vessel ever to use Port of Anchorage municipal terminal facilities was scheduled to dock this afternoon.

Standard Oil's Chevron Transporter, 625 feet in length, was to tie up at the terminal. It is one of five tankers scheduled to call at the port the remainder of this week.

Because of her length and weight, the Transporter is unloading at the municipal terminal rather than the petroleum dock. The tanker is 25 feet longer than the terminal dock.

The 28,276-ton tanker was built at Sparrow's Point, Md., in 1950. Her total capacity is 210,012 barrels of fuel; she is carrying 160,000 barrels of aviation turbine fuel on this trip. The cargo was taken aboard at

Aruba in the Netherlands West Indies, according to port records.

Captain O. Rolla is the Chevron Transporter's master. Unloading operations continue today on the Union Oil's Santa Maria. Fuel is being unloaded by lighter from the vessel, damaged in a collision last week with another tanker.

The Standard Oil tanker Collier was to arrive at the petroleum dock tonight.

Standard Oil's North Dakota, bound for the petroleum dock, and Texaco's North Dakota, bound for the terminal dock, are scheduled to arrive Friday.

The North Dakota will unload 400 tons of packaged cargo at the terminal dock, then transfer to the petroleum dock to finish unloading.

Also scheduled to arrive Friday is the state ferry Tustumena.

City Told To State Stand On Berthing

Federal Maritime Commissioner George Hearn has recommended that the City of Anchorage make its position known to the commission in the preferential berthing dispute between Sea-Land Service, Inc., and the Military Sea Transport Service.

Hearn, meeting Monday afternoon with members of the city council and the port commission, said he would check with his commission to determine the status of the disagreement.

The city has approved a contract with Sea-Land which includes the preferential berthing agreement. This part of the contract is opposed by the military which also seeks a preferential agreement at the Port of Anchorage for military cargo vessels.

"You are a party to the contract," Hearn said. "Your voice should be heard."

Hearn said the city would be informed if the military protested to a commission hearing on the preferential berthing question.

Should such a hearing be set, Hearn said, a commission examiner probably would come to Anchorage to take testimony locally.

The commissioner said he felt it would be better to resolve the question without the need for a hearing which could cause considerable delay.

He also sketched in details of the commission rate study now under way.

He said the study would take "10 months to a year at the earliest" to complete but that the commission planned to make reports on its findings as "it goes along."

He termed domestic freight rates to Alaska and Puerto Rico a "problem," then added that Puerto Rico has the benefit of more competition than Alaska has enjoyed.