

1904-4-29 Manchester Guardian

#### NATIONALISATION OF CANALS.

#### LIVERPOOL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FAVOURABLE.

The Council of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, at a meeting yesterday, passed a resolution approving of the principle of the Canal Traffic Bill introduced by Sir John Brunner, but expressing the opinion that nationalisation and not municipalisation of the canals was the best method of obtaining the end desired. The object of the bill, it was explained, was to enable municipalities to take up the working of derelict canals and throw the burden of working them on the rates. The feeling of the Chamber was that municipal indebtedness throughout the country had already reached alarming proportions, that it would be a mistake to throw the additional burden on municipalities, and that nationalisation of the canals was the proper remedy.

1904-5-25 Journal of Commerce

#### PROPOSED SHIP CANAL TO ROME.

The Rome correspondent of the "Pall Mall Gazette" states that the project of connecting Rome with the sea by a canal has come up many times, and each time with more probabilities of success. The Tiber, which would be a natural means of navigation, is unfortunately out of the question, especially because of the shifting sands at its mouth, but a canal is within the bounds of possibility. The idea is to make the canal wide enough for the passage of two ships. It is computed that it could be completed in five years at a cost of £2,360,000, which expense, it is believed, would soon be completely reimbursed by the charges levied as in other ports and canals all the world over.

1904-7-15 Manchester Courier

#### FOREIGN WATERWAYS. No. 1

To the Editor of the Manchester Courier

Sir, While investors are so deeply absorbed in Ship Canal finances and increase of freight, may I presume to ask you to allow me space in the Courier for gossip about aqueous roads and their trade generally? In the long days of this sweet summer, every one of the most attractive home and foreign places will be visited by tourists, and their water services and railways patronised to the surfeit.

The Continent is well supplied with navigable canals and streams, and local enterprise in catering for travellers having been developed to the standard of modern transport. Lancastrians hesitate not in undertaking tours abroad which would have dismayed their forefathers. Pleasure trips to France, Spain, Italy, Belgium and Germany are now as popular almost as excursions to the fashionable seaports in the South of England. Thus all the navigable rivers &c. of the Fatherland are to these homely people no longer mythical streams about which they have only read in books of travel. Many have "done" and are "doing" the Rhine and its ancient places whose traditions one yet of great interest: the Elbe, the Weser, Niemen, Pregel, the Vistula, Oder, &c., all of which are navigable even in the present era of supremacy of the iron horse. And the same statement may be made as to that beautiful westerly State of Europe—France.

The French, as proved by their fostering the Suez Canal scheme of M. Lesseps, are favourable to water. The Italians were, of course, amongst the very first in modern Europe to plan and make canals. The Swedish canals (Sweden and Norway our place is now very familiar as pleasure grounds for our tourist) are well known to be numerous and utilitarian. The formation in Sweden of an internal navigation long ago drew the attention of scientific and commercial Europe. Its purpose was the connecting of the Kattegat and the Baltic, but it was perhaps too great to work for its day, and had to be abandoned.

In 1794 a company was formed to cut a canal through the solid rock (one and a half miles long), and it was successfully completed in 1800. The navigable lakes are, however, more efficient waterways. The Russian canals are of vast extent and importance, also all in the use for the state. Formerly

Russia was somewhat adverse to federal trade, and the whole of her commerce almost was internal. But rapid increase since has been made, a more liberal policy having been sanctioned, and the Manchester Ship Canal (as the port of Manchester) is neither unknown or distained in the country of the absolute monarchy. Oldham firms, we are proud to affirm, have taken the work of genius (in the shape of machinery ad lib) to help to equip the splendid factories in the domain of the Tzar, and have thereby done honour to Manchester and its environs. It used to be the law in Russia (about 60 years ago) that 'none but natives may engage in internal trade.'

The Bavarians have a grand canal system, and have had for a long time. One waterway is about 112 miles long, carrying inland traffic through the centre of Europe. It is recorded that this carries into practical commercial utility the idea of Charlemagne for uniting the Black Sea with the German Ocean.

But the Austrian Empire is traversed in its whole extent by the Danube – a monster navigation. Two pretty extensive canals were also scores of years since constructed in Hungary. The Bega Canal is above 70 miles long, and the other (call Emperor Francis in its early days) stretches from the Danube to the Theiss, being nearly 70 miles long. Also the canal of Vienna establishes a communication between that city and Neustadt. But nowhere in the continent are canals more necessary than in Spain. I have seen it stated that the incompetence of the government has sadly retarded enterprise in this direction.

A story is narrated in this connection which is worthy of repeating. During the reign of Charles II, it is said that a company of Dutch contractors offered to render the Manzanares river navigable from Madrid to the point where it falls into the Tagus, and the latter from that place to Lisbon, provided they were allowed to impose a tax or duty for a certain number of years on the traffic conveyed by the channel. This is said to have been the reply by the council of Castile, after mature deliberation, viz: –

That if it had please God that these two rivers should have been navigable, he would no doubt have wanted human assistance to have made them such: but that as He had not done it, it is plain He did not think it proper it should be done. To attempt it therefore would be to violate the decrees of his providence, and amend the imperfection which he designedly left in his works. (Clarke's Letters on the Spanish nation, page 284) as a specimen of ignorance and superstition the above has no equal.

Such undertakings as constructing waterways are, however, no longer regarded as sinful in Spain or elsewhere. Thanks to the progress of civilisation, commerce has the benefit of these blessed factors, the prejudice against them passing away with the inquisitions of feudal Spain long ago. The canal of the Ebro (commenced in the reign of Charles V) is a worthy relic of that period, and others have since been made. The canals of Holland are as numerous in that country as veins in the human anatomy.—

Yours, &c.

"A FRIEND OF TRUE PROGRESS."