

DRASTIC HEALTH BOARD ORDER CLOSES PLACES OF AMUSEMENT AND SALOONS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Step Taken to Prevent Further Spread of Influenza—Enforcement in Hands of Local Boards of Health

(By Associated Press.)

Harrisburg, Oct. 3.—Every place of public amusement and every saloon in Pennsylvania was ordered closed forthwith by Dr. H. F. Royer, state commissioner of health, tonight as a means of preventing further spread of influenza. This action, which was taken under the acts of assembly creating the state department of health, is the most drastic exercise of powers of the commissioner since the establishment of that branch of the government in 1906 and failure to obey the order is a misdemeanor.

"This action was ordered tonight as the best means of safeguarding the people of the state," said Dr. Royer tonight. "I have just returned from Bethlehem, a big industrial center which is badly infected, and the reports I have had from Philadelphia, Chester and other places indicate that the disease is spreading. Reports have come here from Butler and other places today telling of the appearance of the disease."

Dr. Royer said that the order would be sent to over nine hundred local boards of health throughout Pennsylvania and to more than seven hundred health officers with instructions to enforce it.

"For the present it has been decided to leave to the discretion of local health authorities whether churches and schools should be closed," said Dr. Royer. "Where children are under medical supervision they can be left in school. By public amusement places are meant theatres, pool rooms, dance halls, saloons and the like. The telegraphic instructions sent to local health officers will fully cover the matter."

Before issuing the order the commissioner of health consulted with state executive and legal authorities and arranged with Adjutant General Henry to obtain the use of armories for hospitals should it become necessary and also for shipment of tentage from the state arsenal.

In an extended warning to the people of the state Dr. Royer urged that they stay in the sunshine as much as possible and get fresh air. Local health authorities are being directed to act promptly. All local health boards have been ordered to advise the department by wire of an extended prevalence of the disease in their communities.

Major W. G. Murdock, the state draft officer who had instructed Philadelphia local boards to discontinue elimination of registrants tonight gave similar instructions to the local board with headquarters at Ardmore, Montgomery county, and said that if he had reports of serious outbreaks in other places he would act as might seem necessary.

The official order issued by Dr. Royer is as follows:

"The spread of epidemic influenza in other states has shown that public gatherings and places where large numbers of people are likely to congregate play important parts in the dissemination of the disease. This is especially the case in poorly lighted and badly ventilated rooms. As the disease at this time shows definite signs of assuming serious proportions, drastic measure must be taken at once.

"By the authority of the powers vested in me as commissioner of health and as authorized in the act of April 27, 1905, your board of health is directed to close all public places of entertainment including theatres, moving picture establishments, saloons and dance halls, and to prohibit all meetings of every description until further notice from this department.

"If necessary placards may be put on all public places denoting 'Closed' by order of the state commissioner of health."

"It will, for the present, and subject to further orders from this department, be left to the judgment of the local health authorities as to whether or not the public schools, Sunday schools and churches be closed. If in the case of the schools, children are under medical supervision and those having coughs and colds are excluded, there would not appear to be the same necessity for directing the closure of such places.

"Prohibiting visiting of the sick, except to those who are desperately ill, then admit near relatives only. Make funerals private."

The orders were addressed to the nine hundred and twenty boards of health and the six hundred and seventy health department officials in charge of townships of the second class.

A statement issued regarding the penalty for violation says the law provides:

"Every person who violates any order of the department of health shall be deemed guilty of misdemeanor and shall upon conviction thereof be punished by a fine of not more than \$100 or by imprisonment not exceeding one month or both at the discretion of the court."

Philadelphia, Oct. 3.—The most sweeping closing order issued by the Philadelphia Board of Health in many years was decided upon today in an effort to check the epidemic of Spanish influenza and pneumonia which is growing more serious here each day. All schools, churches, Sunday schools, theatres, motion picture places and concert halls were ordered closed for an indefinite period. The

order includes public and private dance halls, billiard and pool rooms, bowling alleys, skating rinks, boxing exhibitions and banquets and public gatherings in hotels and prohibits the gathering of crowds even at football games.

The drastic action is due in part to an effort to prevent any serious curtailment of war materials. Philadelphia and its environs constituting one of the greatest war industry centers in the world. At Hog Island alone there are more than 4,000 men off duty on illness.

Saloon proprietors were warned not to let patrons congregate or remain long in the premises; funerals of influenza or pneumonia victims must be private and employees in hotels, barber shops, restaurants and stores are not to be permitted to remain at work if they show indications of these diseases.

The order also applies to all indoor Liberty Loan meetings and it may have a serious effect on the city's plans to fill its quota. The question of closing the courts will be decided upon tomorrow.

There were 636 new cases of influenza reported today and the health department expects a big jump in figures tomorrow as orders were sent out to physicians to report all cases. It is estimated that there are more than twenty thousand cases of influenza in this city. The number of deaths reported today was 139.

There is a shortage of doctors, due in part to the fact that 26 per cent of the city's physicians are in war service and appeals have been sent out for medical assistance. All the students in two pharmaceutical colleges here have been assigned to assist overworked druggists. The city council of defense and the Red Cross have united in sending out calls for nurses.

Some of the hospitals are so crowded that they are declining to take other medical cases. In nearly every hospital a certain proportion of the staffs of doctors and nurses have fallen victims to the disease.

In Camden and Gloucester, N. J., Chester, Pa., and in many small towns within the metropolitan district of Philadelphia, closing orders are in effect in an effort to stop the epidemic.

Washington, Oct. 3.—All theatres and motion picture shows in the District of Columbia will be closed after tonight's performances until Spanish influenza in war-crowded Washington is stamped out.

Wilmington, Del., Oct. 3.—The closing of schools, churches, motion picture houses and forbidding of assemblies, was made statewide for Delaware by an order issued by the State Board of Health tonight. Fifteen physicians have been sent to Wilmington from Washington by order of the Federal Public Health Service to combat Spanish influenza.

Cases in the city are estimated at over ten thousand and deaths since Saturday from influenza and pneumonia officially reported number 113.