

Papers of Mayor James Rolph

Used with permission.

From the collections of the California Historical Society, San Francisco, CA

Documents can only be used for educational and research purposes. If used for commercial purposes, please contact the above institution.

MS 1818 Folder 525
Box 44

1085 Mission Street
San Francisco, California,
Thursday, October 17th, 1918.

Roll Call

On roll call following named noted Present:
Doctors Somers Messrs. Arnstein
Manning Barendt
Klimm
Dr. O'Brien, out of town. Sharp

Dr. Jones, acting Health Officer of Oakland, stated that they have had 830 cases reported in that city. They have a film running in all

motion picture houses, telling the mode of treatment and have pamphlets distributed to the people upon leaving the theater. They are also sending to large manufacturing plants and ship yards, department stores etc. the same pamphlets; likewise circular prepared by the U. S. Public Health Service. Street car windows have been ordered kept opened and a circular is to be posted in each car relative to the disease. The closing of the schools or other activities has not yet been considered.

Dr. Crosby, of Oakland, stated that he had been called to many cases of "la grippe" and "colds" and he is of the opinion that there are a great many cases which are not being reported and are being treated without the aid of a physician.

Dr. W. C. Billings, U. S. Public Health Service stated: "I have not anything particular to say in regard to the question of closing the various places of amusements, etc., as it is a matter entirely and essentially in the hands of the local Health Officer to determine. It is not a Federal function. There may be arguments on both sides but if the Health Officer of any city decides these places should be closed, then that should be final. I would like to say tho that if this policy is adopted in anyone city all of the contiguous Bay cities should pursue a uniform policy. The Federal Government is supplying doctors in such places as the epidemic exists when such community is unable to handle the cases. We are confronted with a serious proposition but not necessarily a vital condition, and I would like to plead with the city to not get panicky and what is done should be done quietly and without scare headlines in the newspapers. It is almost criminal to undly frighten the laity."

Dr. Fred. Rothganger, of the 12th Naval District, stated: "I am in harmony with the ideas of the Public Health Officer. I do not think the closing of these activities will be successful in controlling the epidemic. We have adopted the closure system in the Navy and it is only in places where the men can be entirely shut off, such as Yerba Buena Island, that any success has been obtained. I think forcible closing would do more harm than good. I think people who have the disease should be instructed to keep away from others. The U. S. Public Health Service has prepared circulars relative to the disease and the same have been printed by the Red Cross for distribution among the people of the community. This plan should help some."

Mr. Arnstein stated that judging from the discussions had within the last few days the consensus of opinion of doctors seems to be that we should avoid crowds and he is of the opinion that if a brief closing order were enforced at this time it might obviate the necessity of closing various activities for from six to eight weeks later.

Dr. George Ebricht, President California State Board of Health, stated: "A meeting of the State Board of Health to consider this question will be called on Saturday, October 19, 1918, and in all probability action along the lines as suggested here will be taken, and I am strongly of the opinion that the schools could be kept open but under rigid inspection. In regard to Red Cross activities I would advise going slow on any matters of this kind. This work is carried on largely by women who have passed the age where Influenza is likely to attack them.

Mr. Sproule stated: "It occurs to me that there can hardly be any debate about the closing of the schools and I think such action should be taken for a limited time at least, and by so doing we would be giving a warning to the entire city. Further than that I have some doubts as to the wisdom of taking any drastic action. The panic created by unnecessary actions promotes the very thing it is intended to prevent, and as this city has suffered various shocks in times past, I would suggest that the Board of Health give notice to the press and by every other means available, that persons having colds of any sort whatsoever should remain at home as they are a public menace. Likewise give notice that all having colds should not go to places of public gathering and appeal to them as good citizens to refrain from doing so. That if people go to the theaters and are found infected they should be immediately asked to leave the house and that notices of the care and treatment of Influenza be distributed."

Honorable James Rolph, Mayor, stated: "I am here pursuant to notices sent me by the Board of Health and a copy of these proposed

resolutions to be voted upon by the members of said Board. I came to listen, as I knew of no proposed regulations to be put into effect by my Board of Health until I received this copy today. In the first place I wish my position clearly understood. I am only a layman but as Mayor of the city I appoint certain commissions to handle certain departments of the city government prescribed by the Charter, and I want the members of the Board of Health to know and feel that I have confidence in each and every one of them, and in the Health Officer, and I must be guided by their recommendations, but I would like to sound a warning and to ask my Board of Health to be cautious and to be careful. I have just returned from the East and the orders put into effect in Philadelphia covering the Influenza situation were orders emanating from the State Board of Health of Pennsylvania. I think the State Board of Health of California should have its meeting, call the representatives of the various health departments of the State into conference and formulate a definite plan of procedure. In my judgment a situation like that which now exists should be handled by the united efforts of the doctors. There has been enough discussion of this situation to ~~arise~~ create a doubt in the mind of the average layman as to whether or not it would be wise to adopt drastic measures, but wish to assure the Board of Health that I will be with them in whatever they do, but add that they should act with caution."

Health Officer stated: "In the matter of distribution of literature and warnings to the public, the Board of Health several weeks since took steps to notify the public by all possible means, endeavoring to educate them thru the medium of the Press and by other methods telling them of the dangers to be encountered and the prophylactic measures to be taken. Every moving picture house in the city has run on its screens a film intended to be one of education. The question of policy should not be measured in dollars and cents. I have not been in favor of universal closing. I was in favor of closing certain places and think that the dance hall where two or three hundred people are swirling around in a room stirring up dust and dirt should be one of them. We have been blamed during the past week for not closing up everything and thus protecting public health. The President of the State Board of Health has just informed me that in regard to the first four sections of the attached resolution that the State Board will likely adopt them for the entire State, so that whatever action is taken here tonight will be far reaching in its scope."

The President called for an opinion from the various motion picture houses represented:

Mr. Roth of the California Theater stated: "In the early stages of the epidemic, a committee from the moving picture houses called upon the Health Officer and offered the use of their screens for public education and very good service was rendered in this regard. The situation in the city at the present time is somewhat trying and as the movie houses are now suffering from lack of patronage it might be of vital interest to the city to order the houses entirely closed for a period of whatever time may be necessary to clear up the situation."

Mr. Sheehan, of the Rialto Theater, stated: "I have interviewed the managers and owners of many theaters and show houses and they have all stated that as the people appear to be voluntarily staying away anyhow, that the amusement managers would not suffer much more if all theaters were ordered closed. Even tho the public would still continue to patronize use, we are public spirited enough to want to do anything and everything possible to protect the public health."

Mr. George R. Puckett, representing the dancing hall interests, stated that his people are anxious to help and eager to abide by whatever decision is reached by this Board and are perfectly willing to discontinue their dances for the time being.

Mr. Sam Harris, of the Hippodrome and Casino Theater circuits, stated that his concern conducts theaters at Butte, Mont., Seattle, Wash., and thruout the State of California as far south as San Diego, and San Francisco and Oakland are the only two cities in which they are now operating. In Seattle all show houses were closed over ~~ten~~ days ago. They would be more than glad to close up in San Francisco during the epidemic.

Mr. Del Lawrence, of the Majestic Theater, stated that receipts have fallen off 40% since the invasion of Influenza and he is of the opinion that their house should close entirely for the time being.

Mr. M. M. Lowenthal, representing the Winter Garden Dance Hall and Tait's Cafe stated that in regard to the Winter Garden they have an unusually well ventilated place but in the interest of public good and of the public health it would be well to stand behind the orders of the Board of Health and close their establishments.

Mr. Samuel Uprede, representing Foster and Kleiser, outdoor advertisers, requested that definite action be taken this evening as the contracts for any week for advertising must be let on the preceding Friday.

Mr. Irving Ackermann, of the Hippodrome stated that if the contemplated action is to be productive of any real good, he cannot see the wisdom of delaying the date of closing and action should be taken immediately in this regard. If prompt closing of all the show houses of this city will result in saving but one life, it is certainly advisable to close down everything immediately.

Mr. Arnstein here stated that he had asked Dr. Fred Rothganger, U.S. Navy a question and would like to have the doctor answer same in order that it might become a matter of record.

Dr. Rothganger stated: "Mr. Arnstein asked me for an opinion as to the effect of concentration or congregating of people in large numbers, such as in theaters, dance halls, etc., and I told him in reply that concentration which is necessarily a part of the Navy program was mainly responsible for the spread of Influenza in the service."

Mr. Gregory, of the "Influenza" Committee of the Red Cross, stated that in his opinion, and from what he had heard, the gathering together of people in large numbers is the chief means of dissemination of the disease, and he considered that the closing of all activities drawing large numbers of people together should be put into effect forthwith.

Capt. Daniel O'Brien, of the Police Department, representing the Chief of Police, D. A. White, stated that whatever plan the Board of Health decides upon, the Police Department will carry out to the last detail.

Supervisor Ralph McLeran stated: "The sentiments that have been expressed by the theater and "movie" house managers, clearly indicate that they are heartily in accord with the recommendation of the Health Officer and in my judgment there should not be any delay in enforcing every such recommendation as presented."

Mr. C. C. Moore stated: "I am sorry that the Mayor and Mr. Spruile left before the moving picture and theater men spoke. I am amazed to realize that the California State Board of Health has not taken action before this. I cannot here recite the action taken by the State Council of Defense, but I believe personally that the first four recommendations as offered should go into effect at once. In regard to Red Cross work, if we feel that it is being seriously interfered with then in the interest of war service, let us make an exception with the thought that we are aware of the existing danger. If I were a member of your Board I would vote "yes" on every recommendation as prepared by the Health Officer."

Mr. Harry R. Bogart, of the American Red Cross, stated that their Salvage Department has been closed and that only the very necessary essential war activities will be carried on during this invasions.

Mr. Arnstein here stated that he had been conferring with Dr. Billings of the U. S. Public Health Service and that official states "you are getting somewhere near sanitation when you are beginning to talk about closing everything."

Dr. Billings stated: "I simply said that in my opinion it is the City Health Officer who has the power to do this thing. If in his judgment it is the proper course to pursue, he should proceed. If he does not, that is for him to say. I also said if it is to be done in San Francisco, it would be also done in Oakland and Alameda and likewise in San Mateo County; that ~~she~~ it should be done without scare heads in the papers and not alarm the people any more than necessary. We can accomplish results just as well by going about it quietly and not getting everybody panicky. I believe this to be proper sanitation."

Dr. Somers stated that he believed the matter has been very thoroughly discussed and would call for action on the resolution.

It was therefore regularly moved and seconded that Section 1 be adopted. On roll call Klimm, Manning, Somers, Sharp, Arnstein, Barendt voted "aye." Declared carried.

It was regularly moved and seconded that Section 2 be adopted. On roll call Klimm, Manning, Somers, Sharp, Arnstein, Barendt voted "aye". Declared carried.

It was regularly moved and seconded that Section 3 be adopted. On roll call Klimm, Manning, Somers, Sharp, Arnstein, Barendt voted "aye". Declared carried.

It was regularly moved and seconded that Section 4 be adopted. On roll call Klimm, Manning, Somers, Sharp, Arnstein, Barendt voted "aye". Declared carried.

It was regularly moved and seconded that Section 5 be adopted. On roll call Klimm, Manning, Somers, Sharp, Arnstein, Barendt voted "aye". Declared carried.

In re section 6 it was moved, seconded and carried that said section be amended to read as follows "That all Red Cross activities be eliminated with the exception of such war activities as may be agreed upon by the Health Officer and the Red Cross." Duly adopted.

It was regularly moved and seconded that Section 7 be adopted. On roll call Klimm, Manning, Somers, Sharp, Arnstein, Barendt voted "aye". Declared carried.

It was regularly moved and seconded that Section 8 be adopted. On roll call Klimm, Manning, Somers, Sharp, Arnstein, Barendt voted "aye", Declared carried.

It was regularly moved and seconded that Section 9 be adopted. On roll call Klimm, Manning, Somers, Sharp, Arnstein, Barendt voted "aye". Declared carried.

It was regularly moved and seconded that Section 10 be adopted. On roll call Klimm, Manning, Somers, Sharp, Arnstein, Barendt voted "aye". Declared carried.

It was regularly moved and seconded that Section 11 be adopted. On roll call Klimm, Manning, Somers, Sharp, Arnstein, Barendt voted "aye". Declared carried.

Moved, seconded and carried that the terms of the resolution as adopted become effective from and after 1 A. M. Friday, October 18th 1918.

Department of Public Health
San Francisco, Cal.

October 17, 1918.

WHEREAS, there exists at this time in the City and County of San Francisco and throughout the State of California an epidemic of Spanish Influenza of the virulent type, and

WHEREAS, the number of cases, to-wit, 2700, now existing in San Francisco, and the daily increasing number reported by physicians indicate a very grave situation which can only be met by the most radical measures, therefore, it is hereby

Moved, seconded and carried that the Board of Health direct the Health Officer to carry out the following measures for the protection of public health and in order to insure speedy control of the present epidemic of Influenza in the city and county of San Francisco by closing

1. All places of amusement, including billiard parlors, and like places, theaters, moving picture theaters, concert halls, dance halls, and dances in cabarets, cafes and hotels and all forms of entertainment in any or all hotels.

2. All lodge and fraternal meetings and gatherings.

3. All penny arcades, merry-go-rounds, and other or similar types of public amusement places.

4. All private dances, balls, club gatherings and social gatherings of whatsoever nature and kind.

5. The Board of Health also recommends that all church services and socials be either discontinued or held in the open air.

6. All Red Cross activities be eliminated with the exception of such war activities as will be agreed upon by the Health Officer and the Red Cross Committee.

7. That community singing be likewise temporarily discontinued.

8. That the Municipal Auditorium be closed during the prevalence of the epidemic.

9. That a permit be secured from the Board of Health before any public meetings can be held.

10. That the Chief of Police be requested to act in accordance with this proclamation and see that the orders of the Board of Health are obeyed.

11. That all public and private schools and kindergartens be closed until further notice.

These resolutions shall go into effect at 1 A. M. Friday October 18, 1918.

Enclosed in: *Hassler to Rolph*
1918 0 19

146

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
CENTRAL OFFICE
1085 MISSION STREET

October 17, 1918

When replying quote subject:
This is a copy from the original manuscript held in the California Historical Society Library, San Francisco. It may be used for reference only, and no permission is here given for duplication in whole or in part.

Running
This is tentative in all probabilities
or passed Hassler
WHEREAS, there exists at this time in the City and County of San Francisco and throughout the State of California an epidemic of Spanish Influenza of the virulent type, and

WHEREAS, the number of cases, to-wit 2000, now existing in San Francisco, and the daily increasing number reported by physicians indicate a very grave situation which can only be met by the most radical measures, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Health respectfully urges and requests his Honor James Rolph, Mayor of San Francisco, to issue forthwith a proclamation closing

1. All places of amusement, including theatres, moving picture theatres, concert halls, dance halls, cabarets, dances in cafes and hotels.

2. All lodge and fraternal meetings and gatherings.

3. All penny arcades, merry-go-rounds and other or similar types of public amusement places.

4. All private dances, balls, club and social gatherings of whatsoever nature and kind.

5. The Board of Health also recommends that all church services and socials be either discontinued or held in the open air.

6. That all Red Cross activities bringing together assemblages of men or women for volunteer work be temporarily suspended.

7. That community singing be likewise temporarily discontinued.

8. That the Municipal Auditorium be closed during the prevalence of the epidemic.

~~9. That all public schools and kindergartens be closed for ten days and longer if the Board of Health deems necessary.~~

9. That a permit must be secured from the Board of Health before any public meetings above mentioned can be held.

10. That the Chief of Police be directed to act in accordance with this proclamation and see that the orders of the Mayor & request of Board of Health are obeyed.