

Papers of Mayor James Rolph

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San Francisco, Dec. 17, 1918.

Mayor James Rolph Jr.,

City Hall,

San Francisco.

16-10
no address

Dear Sir:--

As a citizen of San Francisco, I take the liberty of addressing this communication to you, which refers to the compulsory wearing of masks. In looking over the newspapers, I find quite a controversy in reference to the benefits derived from wearing masks to ward off the so called fashionable name-- "Spanish Influenza".

It appears to me that ever since the alarmist Dr. Hutchinson visited San Francisco, it is quite evident he must have inoculated Dr. Hassler, who insists that masks must be worn in order to decrease the epidemic. It appears to me that it is rather far-reaching when men, women and children have to disfigure their faces with masks, which in no way do any good and do not serve the purpose, as Dr. Hassler desires people to believe. It has not been proven that the masks do any good. If you will kindly look over the records of other cities, you will find this was the only one compelled to wear masks. This is a free country and everyone should have the privilege of doing as he pleases, so long as he is not disturbing the peace of his neighbor. If Dr. Hassler feels inclined to wear a mask, let him do so, and as far as I am concerned, I hope he will have to wear one for the next five years. It appears to me he is looking for a lot of cheap notoriety rather than anything else.

It is doubtful to my mind whether a Board of Supervisors or anyone else could pass a law, absolutely compelling people to wear masks, and I furthermore believe if the matter was tested out in the Courts, it would result in dissolving the ordinance. This matter has been tried in the courts of Walla Walla recently and the ordinance failed to stand.

If Dr. Hassler can prove to this community that the wearing of masks will do any good, why then there is no question but what everyone would be glad to put them on but his persistence in trying to compel people to wear a nasty rag is simply a theory on his part and I do hope you are not going to permit a man like Dr. Hassler to dominate you or any other good sensible people.

The fact that Dr. Hassler has advertised in this city that the epidemic is again in our midst and that it is absolutely imperative that masks be worn, and the fact that the majority of the people are not wearing them, proves conclusively that the community does not want to wear them. As Mayor of this city, I believe you desire to please the people and not Dr. Hassler.

Yours very truly,

X *Walter R. ...*