

Papers of Mayor James Rolph

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Dec. 18, 1918.

Supervisor Eugene E. Schmitz,
City Hall,
San Francisco, Cal.

Dear Mr. Schmitz:

The other day you will remember that I made a protest against the mask ordinance on the ground that it would apply to the school children and I seriously object to my child having to wear the mask from the time she leaves home until she gets back, without any relief.

As I stated, my personal observation convinces me that grown up people, with very few exceptions, including Dr. Hasler, do not continuously wear the mask, but every now and then drop it down so that they can get some of God's pure air.

You will, I am sure, get the point that I am making, which is that the children in the schools will not be allowed this relief as the teachers will be obliged to see that they wear the mask continuously, and if there is any efficacy in the mask it certainly would be very foolish to open the door to the microbes even for a moment by letting down the mask.

As I understand it, you are going to consult several doctors in regard to the desirability of wearing the mask and I would like to have you ask each one the following questions:

Do you think that the continuous wearing of the mask, from the time the child leaves home until she returns, a matter of four hours, will be beneficial to the child's general health?

Is it possible that the wearing of the mask and the constant re-breathing of the impurities discharged from the system back into the lungs will affect the child's resistance to colds and other ailments?

Is it possible that the assumed effectiveness of the continuous wearing of the mask in protecting a child against the influenza germ will bring with it other troubles such as nervousness, irritability, headaches, etc.?

Incidentally I am sure that as our representative you will have even more consideration for the little children than you have for the older people, and while I am absolutely opposed to the use of the mask, because it has not been proved to have any effect and numerous individuals have been taken with influenza who have faithfully worn the mask, I am also anxious to be able to faithfully obey any law that is enacted, but I am quite sure that no mask law can ever be faithfully obeyed by San Francisco's population.

Yours very truly,
