

**A PLAN FOR A MORE
EFFECTIVE
FEDERAL AND STATE
HEALTH ADMINISTRATION**

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A Plan for a More Effective Federal and State Health Administration by Frederick L. Hoffman

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FREDERICK L. HOFFMAN

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HEALTH
ADMINISTRATION

By

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A consolidation of papers read before the
Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, October, 1918
and the American Public
Health Association, December, 1918

TO
THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION

IN SINCERE APPRECIATION
OF ITS EFFORTS TO
IMPROVE THE HEALTH
AND LONGEVITY OF THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE

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CHARTS

Tuberculosis	Cancer	Scarlet Fever
Malaria	Diphtheria	Typhoid Fever
Whooping Cough	Measles	Accidents
Infant Mortality	Pauper Burials	Infantile Paralysis

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A PLAN FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE FEDERAL AND STATE HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

INTRODUCTION

It is not only desirable but an essential prerequisite of social progress that inquiry shall be made from time to time concerning the present value and the further perfection of existing methods or instrumentalities ministering to human welfare and human wants. Health is so obviously of the first importance that its protection and more or less effective conservation have from time immemorial been made at least a matter of individual, if not collective, concern. Most of the so-called health legislation from the earliest times to the present day, however, has been concerned with the correction of ascertained sanitary or related imperfections, rather than with anticipatory action having for its purpose the prevention of disease and premature death. Much of what is called preventive medicine, even at the present time, is in the direction of prevention of further damage and harm rather than of a character deliberately designed to preclude the occurrence or inception of dangers which so frequently, and practically continuously, threaten the individual and collective welfare in what, for want of a better term, is comprehended as the vast field of public hygiene. The fact must not be overlooked that in its origin, every modern public health organization rests primarily upon the principle of quarantine as applied in the case of recognized infectious or contagious diseases, and the, if necessary, drastic exercise of the police powers on the part of the Government, the States, and the civil subdivisions thereof.

THE QUARANTINE BASIS OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Probably the earliest quarantine legislation in this country was adopted by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1647 or 1648, to prevent the introduction of the plague (probably yellow fever) "which was then devastating the West Indies." Unquestionably, and in a large measure, effective quarantine regulations, whether maritime or local, constitute, however, but a fraction of modern health legislation, which has gradually been extended from communities to persons and which

now comprehends every conceivable sphere or function of individual and social life. Even an enumeration of the subject-matter of modern public health activities would unduly enlarge upon the present discussion, which is chiefly concerned with future possibilities rather than with past achievements. What is to-day understood as health conservation concerns largely such anticipatory action as by general consent seems feasible of enforcement, if not in the form of specific statutory requirement, at least in the nature of improved personal conduct in matters concerning both personal and public hygiene. In the broadest sense, therefore, modern health activities have become largely educational, with a view of securing on the part of each and all concerned a better understanding of the principles which govern in the attainment of better health and greater freedom from disease, a more perfect adaptation of the human organism to its environment and a substantial prolongation of life. The acceptance of this principle has enormously increased the sphere and the function of public health administration and made perfectly obvious the inadequacy of existing methods, whether Federal, State or municipal, to effectively serve the true interests of all the people. What in former years, when the nature of epidemic diseases was not understood, was a necessary exercise of the police powers has in modern times become of rather secondary importance. All that is generally comprehended under so-called sanitary legislation, such as the burial of the dead, the control of nuisances, the protection of water supplies, sewage, drainage, etc., is no longer within the realm of debatable public consideration, but is accepted as a paramount necessity of and the rightful prerequisite to a wholesome community life. Even though the principle has not as yet been generally accepted that failure in these matters on the part of the responsible authorities should constitute an indictable offense, it is nevertheless a safe conclusion that such a view is gaining ground, and a number of court decisions seem to settle the question that every community is in duty bound to furnish pure water, to abate dangerous nuisances, to prevent the further spread of communicable diseases, etc.* But practically all that concerns the health of the individual and his

*The early history of quarantine as a basis for a public health organization is unquestionably of much practical interest, even at the present time. One of the most instructive papers on the subject is a discourse by Richard Mead, M. D., "Concerning Pestilential Contagion, and the Methods to be Used to Prevent It," an eighth edition of which was published, London, 1722. Referring to the dangers of disease spread by means of infection through the medium of commercial intercourse, Mead took occasion to point out that "By the preceding cause [goods from infected places] the plague may be spread, from person to person, from house to house, or perhaps from town to town; but this carries it into the remotest regions. From hence the trading parts of Europe have their principal apprehensions, and universally have recourse to quarantines for their security."

In 1834 there was published in Boston an essay on "Quarantine and Other Sanitary Systems," by Chas. Caldwell, M. D., in which the question was raised as to whether the