

**EVILS**  
OF A  
**HEALTH BUREAU**



**The National League for Medical Freedom**  
METROPOLITAN BUILDING  
NEW YORK CITY

# The Menace of a National Health Bureau

By B. O. Flower

"Moved as are the projectors of a railway, who, whilst secretly hoping for salaries, persuade themselves and others that the proposed railway will be beneficial to the public—moved, as all men are under such circumstances, by *nine parts of self-interest gilt over with one part of philanthropy*—surgeons and physicians are vigorously striving to erect a medical establishment akin to our religious one. Little do the public at large know how actively professional publications are agitating for state-appointed overseers of the public health.

"There is an unmistakable wish to establish an organized, tax-supported class, charged with the health of men's bodies as the clergy are charged with the health of their souls. And whoever has watched how institutions grow—how by little and little a very innocent-looking infancy unfolds into a formidable maturity, with vested interests, political influence, and a strong instinct of self-preservation, will see that the germs here peeping forth are quite capable, under favorable circumstances, of developing into such an organization."

—Herbert Spencer, in *Social Statics*.

## THE PLAUSIBLE PLEA THAT MASKS A PERNICIOUS PROPOSAL

At the time of this writing a measure is being vigorously pushed in Congress for the establishment of a National Health Bureau, which we believe to be the most pernicious national legislation that has been attempted for years. The pending bills, for there are measures being pushed in both Houses, are the culmination of a systematic campaign that has been waged during the last few years by a committee which has served as a fence behind which the political doctors have worked with untiring zeal.

The committee has evidently found it extremely difficult to interest the people or the legislators in its adroit attempt to secure legislation that will prove the opening wedge by which the regular medical association will be able to supervise the health of the nation, as in a letter sent out under date of December 23, 1909, Professor Fisher, the head of the committee, thus hints at the difficulties he has encountered and shows that the only hope of securing legislation lies in an attempt to frighten Congressmen into favoring the proposed measure.

"We believe," says Professor Fisher, "that it is not possible to overcome the opposition unless a campaign fund of from twenty to twenty-five thousand dollars can be raised at once. This will be used for printing, stationery, telegrams, etc., the effect of which will be that Congressmen, especially pivotal Congressmen, will not dare to displease their constituents by opposing President Taft's programme. It will also be used to reach our American Health League—which contains many thousand health enthusiasts—to start up our 'authors' league' of 1,000 health writers, to stimulate our press council of 100 leading editors, and to supply them and their members generally with ammunition in the way of literature; also to reach the labor organizations and the Grange and all our allies."

Again he says:

"Letters received from Congressmen in response to our effort to poll them on this question show that many of them, and especially those who control procedure, need something more than the President's message to urge them to action; in short, that they must have letters and telegrams from their constituents."

This letter clearly indicates that the vigorous educational campaign, which has already entailed between forty and fifty thousand dollars' expense, has totally failed to meet with any general response on the part of the people, and that the legislators who have been labored with see so little need of the proposed measures that unless they can be intimidated by interested parties, there is no hope of securing the legislation in question.

The indifference or hostility on the part of the people to the proposed legislative innovation rises largely from their innate fear lest their rights and liberties be infringed upon by the proposed measure; although the sinister aim of the friends of the measure has been so carefully concealed and the arguments for the legislation have been so plausible that they have won the support of some of our ablest statesmen and publicists, who doubtless are unfamiliar with the long and desperate effort of the regular medical societies to obtain monopoly in the healing art.

Senator Owen, who has introduced the bill in the Senate, is a man for whom we entertain the highest regard. He has made a splendid record in his outspoken defense of popular rights, in opposition to the aggressions of privilege and in demanding that the people be recognized as the sovereigns and not the subjects in government. It is therefore with keen regret that we find ourselves compelled to oppose his stand in seeking to further the long-cherished scheme of the American Medical Association, by which it hopes to get the camel's head into the Government tent. We do not for a moment impugn Senator Owen's motives. We believe he, in common with scores of other distinguished and high-minded citizens, has been misled by the fair and plausible general professions and pretenses—the engaging exterior or mask, behind which advances the most sinister trust that has yet menaced American freedom.

The proposed radical innovation is so grave in character that it calls for more than passing notice.

## THE GREAT PRIVILEGE-SEEKING CLASS BEHIND THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION

When a few years ago the movement was organized to secure national health legislation, the plea advanced was merely for the bringing together of the various health activities in the National Government under the direction and control of one of the then existing departments, that needed work might be more systematically, economically and efficiently carried on.

In his message in January, 1909, the President, on the plea that it was highly advisable that there be intelligent action on the part of the nation on the question of preserving the health of the country, urged the concentration of the proper bureau into one of the existing departments; and in the preceding October, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, in speaking of the organized movement for legislative action, admitted that it did "not mean an independent department of health." Since then the advocates of special medical legislation have advanced from the apparently innocent plea made when the organized agitation was inaugurated, to an insistent demand for the creation of a full-fledged independent department, with a secretary who shall be a Cabinet officer, and with all the equipments of an elaborate bureau. What will be the next step?

No person familiar with the steady, uninterrupted, persistent and determined efforts of the organized medical societies or the activity of the American Medical Association for medical restrictive or monopoly legislation, can doubt for a moment that when such a bureau as is contemplated is once organized, the next step will be an aggressive attempt, through bureaucratic rulings, if additional legislation is denied, to place the control of the people's health in the hands of the regular medical profession, and thus compass a monopoly in the healing art which it has striven to gain during the past fifty years.

The same plea which the religious hierarchy long urged for the denying to the individual of the right to enjoy the ministrations of the clergyman or divine of his choice, on the ground that it would endanger the spiritual health of the people because the layman did not know what was best for his soul's salvation, has been arrogantly maintained in regard to the physical health by the American Medical Association and the various medical societies that have persistently striven for trust legislation.

The fact that the proposals outlined are general in character and that the emphasis is placed upon the good of the people has served in this instance, as in countless other cases where privilege-seeking interests have secured special legislation, to mislead many high-minded, earnest and patriotic citizens. Only those who have been familiar with the uninterrupted, adroit and persistent struggle on the part of organized medical societies for the past half-century to secure a monopoly in medical practice that would enormously enrich the favored ones, would appreciate the danger lurking in even Senator Owen's bill, unless he carefully scrutinized Sections 7 and 8 of this measure. From the Atlantic to the Pacific, the doctors who have battled for trust legislation, no less than the American Medical Association, are actively working to secure the creation of this new bureau. "The bill which I have introduced," says Senator Owen, "*is in accordance with the earnest and repeated desires of the American Medical Association.*" Certainly it is; and had it not been for this great special-privilege-seeking body there would have been no elaborate educational campaign such as has been carried on for the last three or four years. It did not require Senator Owen's naive utterance to reveal the Senegambian in Senate bill 6049.

Elsewhere in his speech Senator Owen says: "*The American Medical Association, I understand, for twenty years has been trying to accomplish some results in this matter.*" And again: "*The American Medical Association nineteen years ago (1891) by a committee. . . urged this policy of a department of public health.*"

Yes, it is the American Medical Association that has been so aggressively favoring medical monopoly legislation in the states, that for twenty years has been the real active, vital power in striving to get an entering wedge for national supervision of health. It has, according to the confession of its own members, been perfecting its political machinery and bringing itself into touch with the political leaders of all the parties, with a view to compassing its cherished aims.

The advocates of medical monopoly legislation may war among themselves in regard to whether a certain drug is poisonous or innocuous, or whether certain symptoms indicate organic or merely functional disease, but on one question there has been unity of purpose and action—the attempt to take away from the citizen the right to select the physician of his choice.

## DANGEROUS PROVISIONS OF THE PRESENT BILL

Usually, when such measures are introduced the first step, or the entering wedge, is apparently very innocent and little open to objection. The privilege-seeking interests first seek to obtain a standing in court and the mere prestige of government behind them. Then, step by step, they press forward in securing monopoly powers by depriving the people of rightful freedom and placing them in the power of the protected class. But in Sections 7 and 8 of Senate bill 6049 we find provisions that could easily be employed as engines of class advancement at the expense of the proper rights and liberties of the citizens.

Section 7 provides that: "*It shall be the duty and province of such Department of Public Health to supervise all matters within the control of the Federal Government relating to the public health and to diseases of animal life*"; while Section 8 provides for the establishment of "*chemical, biological and other standards necessary to the efficient administration of said department.*"

A bureau manned by representatives of a class that for half a century has striven to destroy rival systems of cure and schools of practice—a class that has battled uninterruptedly to obtain a monopoly in the treatment of the sick by denying the right of the citizen to the practitioner of his choice, could under the above provisions make arbitrary rulings that, while they might greatly augment the revenue of the members of the Medical Association, would abridge the rightful freedom of millions of intelligent citizens whose belief and convictions, based on personal experience, are opposed to the dogmatic assumptions of the regular doctors. The presence of these dangerous provisions in this introductory bill clearly demonstrates the sinister purpose of the monopoly-seeking class behind the measure.

Let us now consider some valid objections to the proposed measure.

## IT WOULD IMPERIL ONE OF THE MOST SACRED RIGHTS OF INTELLIGENT CITIZENS

(1.) *If this bureau is established, it will be dominated by the American Medical Association. Do not lose sight of that fact.*

(2.) *The American Medical Association has been aggressively favoring monopoly legislation or restrictive laws that would deny to the intelligent citizen the practitioner of his choice, if that practitioner did not conform to the creeds, dogmas and regulations of the medical school seeking protection. Do not overlook this fact.*

(3.) *There are millions of highly intelligent citizens whose belief in regard to the healing of the body is diametrically opposed to that of the regular profession. Indeed, there are in our midst to-day great and rapidly growing schools or systems of thought that number among their adherents hundreds of thousands of individuals who have been restored to health and the enjoyment of life after they had signally failed to obtain relief under the regular medical treatment.*

Here are three closely related facts that may well cause the thoughtful and conscientious citizen to pause, because they involve rights too sacred and intimate to be surrendered at the behest of a privilege-seeking class in which a dogmatic assumption of superior knowledge goes hand in hand with the cupidity of those who clamor for a law that will enrich them by placing unwilling citizens in their power.

There are two rights that free men throughout Western civilization have since the dawn of modern times, and especially since the advent of the democratic era, striven to secure and maintain even at the risk of their lives. One is the right of the individual to select the priest or clergyman of his choice to minister to his spiritual welfare or the health of his soul. The organized hierarchy, priesthood or clergy, representing various religious bodies that were dominant in different lands—as the Greek church in Russia, the Roman church in western Europe, the English church in Great Britain—denied this right, urging that they were the conservators of divine truth and that to permit the citizen to select his religious minister imperiled the spiritual health of the nation while threatening the eternal loss of the soul of the independence-demanding individual. To gain this priceless freedom Europe was drenched in blood, but in most lands it was finally granted.

Another analogous demand quite as intimate and, to many, quite as sacred, was the right of the individual to choose the physician of his choice for his bodily ills. To deny either of these rights is to surrender to privilege and reaction one of the most priceless victories that have made democracy the handmaid of human happiness, progress and enlightenment. *Political freedom, religious freedom, medical freedom—this sacred trinity must be preserved unless privilege-seeking classes are to be permitted to strike down the sacred rights of man.*

## IT WOULD BE A BLOW TO SCIENTIFIC ADVANCE AND INTELLECTUAL PROGRESS.

But there is another reason almost as grave as the depriving of the citizen of the right to select the practitioner of his choice, to be advanced against this measure, backed as it is by the great privilege-seeking class. *History teaches nothing more clearly than that a state-bulwarked class becomes intolerant of advanced thinkers within as well as without its own ranks.* The fierce opposition aroused by Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood is a typical illustration and not an exceptional example of the attitude of the regular medical profession in the presence of new and momentous scientific revelations, even when made by prominent members of their own school. In his day the College of Physicians and Surgeons of London refused even to consider this discovery, which is justly regarded as one of the most important in the realm of physiological advance; and nearly half a century after he had communicated the great truth to the world, the Paris Royal Society of Medicine gravely listened to an elaborate paper that claimed this discovery to be among the impossibilities.

A volume might be filled with similar illustrations of the hostility to distinguished investigators, even in the medical profession, who from time to time have made wonderful new discoveries. Yet the opposition to their own number has been as nothing to that meted out to savants who from without their class have made great and basic discoveries bearing vitally on the health of the people.

After the advent of democracy, freedom of thought and the right of the individual to enjoy the clergyman and the health practitioner of his choice were for a time conceded; and with this defeat of privilege-arrogating classes, with the recognition of human rights in the field of religion and the healing art, and with intellectual hospitality, came the most wonderful era of scientific advance civilization had ever known—an era unmatched in discoveries and revelations of new and undreamed of truths. In every department of investigation humanity moved forward in proportion as *liberty had been granted to her children*. In the field of medicine homœopathy arose, and later, in the New World, eclecticism. Both these schools were ridiculed and bitterly assailed by the regular medical profession. But who will deny the wonderfully beneficent influence which homœopathy has exerted on the regular practice in lessening wholesale drugging and reducing the size of the doses, while emphasizing the importance of sanitary conditions and reliance on nature rather than on poisons for the restoration to health? And who will deny the beneficent influence which eclecticism has exerted in modifying and lessening the administration of mineral poisons and in substituting comparatively harmless vegetable remedies for the cruder medication that was everywhere employed before the rising of these two independent schools? Neither of these schools of medicine could have arisen and become a power in the community had the medical associations obtained the monopoly legislation which, for fifty years, they have been demanding in various commonwealths and, indeed, throughout the English-speaking world.

Moreover, *medical practice is not a science; it is at best a progressive art*. Within one hundred years even the regular practice has been revolutionized, largely through the influence and success of practices that through freedom have been enabled to grow up in competition with the monopoly-seeking class. Not only is the practice to-day entirely unlike the practice of one hundred or even fifty years ago, but there is the widest divergence of opinion among the leading physicians of the regular profession in regard to the influence or specific action of drugs, and in regard to the indications of the same symptoms. Thus, to take a typical example fresh in the minds of the people, we find that a large number of eminent and reputable physicians denounce the use of benzoate of soda as poisonous to the system and destructive to health; while an equally large number of equally reputable regular physicians hold that the use of benzoate of soda as a preservative is harmless and not to be discouraged. In a murder case or a case in which the sanity of the criminal is in question, we have usually the spectacle of a number of eminent physicians solemnly swearing that in their judgment certain symptoms indicate paresis or some other form of insanity; while equally distinguished physicians with equal solemnity declare that the same symptoms do not indicate insanity. And these cases well illustrate the divergent views prevailing even in the ranks of the regular profession and clearly indicate that whether or not we admit that the most popular medical system is a progressive art, it cannot be called a science, and that for the cause of science and the public health no class or school should be given powers that would infringe on the right of the individual or tend to check beneficent discoveries and practices.

## IT WOULD FURTHER PROMOTE BUREAUCRATIC AGGRESSIONS THAT ARE ALREADY A MENACE TO FREE GOVERNMENT.

Nothing in the history of recent administrations has been more disquieting to friends of popular government or fundamental democracy than the steady arrogation by the bureaus of the clearly defined functions of the legislative and judicial departments of our Government. Though these dangerous innovations have been by no means confined to the Post-Office Department, this bureau has been the most flagrant in its despotic usurpations of power. Here, for example, after the department had gone to Congress or the people's representatives for

several successive years, demanding certain new legislation, and Congress after full consideration of the demands had refused to grant it, the bureau accomplished the legislation that Congress had positively refused by departmental rulings. He is blind indeed who does not see the peril of this assumption of legislative functions by an appointive department not directly responsible to the people.

Furthermore, time and again the department has assumed the right to rule on the legality and legitimacy of various business enterprises—something that should clearly be a judicial function; and no provisions exist recompensing the victim whose business may have been destroyed and whose freedom may have been abridged, in the event of the charges being proved to be without foundation.

These recent arrogations of despotic power by usurpation of legislative and judicial functions savor of Russian bureaucratic despotism and are in direct opposition to the fundamental principles of democracy and the safeguards provided for popular government by the fathers.

Now to create a new bureau, behind which would be a privilege-seeking class whose activity in striving to obtain legislation that would grant monopoly rights has been unmatched even by the great commercial interests, would be to greatly augment the perils of bureaucracy. Hence, if for no other reason, no such step should be taken until leading representatives of all great systems of cure and of the laity should have been given ample opportunity to consider the whole question and report its findings.

#### IT IS UNNECESSARY, AND THE ASSUMPTION OF WHAT IT COULD ACCOMPLISH IS WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL WARRANT.

In the next place, the establishment of such a bureau as is proposed is unnecessary. Our Government has proved itself amply able to efficiently handle threatened contagion from without. Could the most elaborate bureau have done better in stamping out cholera or yellow fever in Panama and Havana?

Mr. Owen calls attention to the wonderful record in Havana in stamping out yellow fever, but this was done without handing the Nation's health over to any bureau dominated by a monopoly-seeking special class; while since the awakening of the people to the peril of the white plague and the general agitation that has resulted, the progress in checking this and other preventable diseases has been as marked as could possibly be expected without radical economic changes that are opposed by privileged wealth and class interests with all the multitudinous resources at their command. The chief drawback in the campaign for the reduction of the number of preventable deaths lies not in the failure to disseminate necessary information or to conserve healthful conditions, as far as a bureau could conserve them, but in the cupidity and avarice of trusts, monopolies and landlords. They block the sanitary changes demanded, the abolition of child labor, in factory, mine and sweatshop, and prevent the remedying of other conditions that at present foster preventable disease and death.

The advocates of this National legislation have laid great stress on the spread of bubonic plague on the Pacific Coast, through rats from ships, and later through squirrels, which became infected. It is difficult to see how a National Health Bureau could have quarantined the rats or prevented their infecting the squirrels. But if it is granted for the moment that special staff physicians with autocratic power could have proved more efficient than the accredited municipal and State medical authorities of California, this end could easily be effected by empowering the medical and surgical staff of the army or navy nearest the quarantined port to establish rules and regulations and co-operate with the accredited medical authorities. In such cases power could be delegated to them similar to that which is possessed in outlying points, such as Havana, when we occupied Cuba and Panama. Thus all possible benefits that could be accomplished by a central autocratic bureau at Washington could be efficiently and economically achieved without this radical departure in government, with the menace which it would carry against the freedom of the citizen, and without further burdening the taxpayers with a bureau which, according to its friends, will in a few years call for an annual expenditure of millions upon millions of dollars.

But to enthrone in power another privilege-seeking class will fall far short

of remedying the evils due to unbridled avarice and privileged wealth. To understand how absolutely absurd is the inference that the establishment of the bureau in question would save the 600,000 lives said to be annually lost through preventable disease one has only to compare the general conditions of the people and the vital statistics of medical slave States or States where the most rigid monopoly laws have long been imposed and the doctors have succeeded in obtaining commissions and control where they have desired it, with those of the medically free States. Compare New York and Massachusetts, for example. On the other hand, the establishing of this bureau would ultimately mean the placing in power of the regular school or a special class, on the plea that it would banish preventable disease.

The advocacy of this measure has been characterized by appeals to the emotionalism and sentiment of the public, based on statements and inferences that are unwarranted and in many instances thoroughly misleading. Thus, for example, Dr. Charles A. L. Reed, chairman of the Legislative Committee of the American Medical Association, in a communication incorporated by Senator Owen in his speech, declares that about 600,000 persons die in this country every year from preventable causes. How do we know this?

In his address Senator Owen says: "In New Zealand the deaths per thousand per annum are nine and a fraction, and in the Australasian States ten and a fraction, while in the United States it is 16.5, a loss of seven to the thousand in the United States in excess of the New Zealand rate—that is, in 90,000,000 people it would exceed 600,000 deaths that could be saved annually in our Republic."

The legitimate inferences which would make this comparison valuable are that New Zealand and the Australasian States, through the possession of such a health bureau as the Senator is advocating, have reduced the death rate seven in a thousand, and that therefore a similar bureau in the United States could be made to save 600,000 lives annually. Now we ask: Does the Senator or the American Medical Association claim that such health bureaus do exist in Australasia, which alone would make the inferences legitimate or the citation worthy of serious consideration?

There are valid reasons why the death rate in New Zealand and Australia is smaller than with us, one of the leading causes being the unceasing warfare which has been waged by the democratic government of New Zealand, for example, against trusts, monopolies and privilege-seeking wealth, which has rendered it impossible for the lives of the people to be jeopardized through entrenched avarice and greed, as is the case with our people and as will be the case so long as privilege-seeking interests are able directly or indirectly to control the Government.

Again, New Zealand has been settled, probably more largely than any other country, by vigorous and sturdy Englishmen and Scotchmen. The vast influx of diseased, weak and enervated emigrants from southern Europe and from lands where despotism and misrule have crushed and degraded the poor enormously swells the number of deaths with us from diseases that under some circumstances might be preventable.

Furthermore, if we grant for the sake of argument that there are 600,000 deaths annually that might be prevented in the United States, do the advocates of this bureau claim that such deaths would be prevented by the bureau? Would the enthroning of a great monopoly-seeking class in government, empowered to supervise the health of the people, lead to the destruction of monopoly-bulwarked conditions that the Government has been powerless to deal with? And if not, could we hope for any appreciable diminution in the preventable deaths through the bureau? It may be argued that the bureau would sow the country broadcast with literature, disseminating the views held by the members of the American Medical Association or the regular doctors who happen to be in charge of the bureau. But how could we tell whether such views would be conducive to health or disease, since we are constantly presented with the fact that leading physicians strenuously hold diametrically opposite opinions? For example: Would the bureau send out literature advocating the healthfulness of Duffy's Malt Whiskey or other brands of alleged pure whiskey? Would it urge that whiskey is injurious, but that beer and light drinks are healthful? Or would it take the position that all stimulants as beverages are deleterious to



the general health? Reputable and leading physicians in the regular profession hold to all these views. Would the bureau rule that benzoate of soda used as a preservative is a noxious poison destructive to the health of the people, as many physicians hold? Or would it rule, as equally able physicians insist, that its use as a preservative is harmless and should not be discouraged?

## IT WOULD ENORMOUSLY INCREASE THE EXPENSES OF GOVERNMENT.

The argument that it would be economical to entrust the health provisions that are being so admirably met by the various departments, to one bureau, is not borne out by the facts. For the present fiscal year the appropriations for sanitary purposes, exclusive of the Philippines, Porto Rico and Cuba, were \$14,972,320. And it is claimed that the proposed bureau could handle this large appropriation much more economically and efficiently than the bureaus that have so admirably handled the appropriations in the past. But this claim is seen to be thoroughly misleading when it is remembered that the bill expressly exempts the medical staffs of the army and navy and their sanitary activities from the supervision of the proposed health department. Now the great bulk of the money for which the above appropriation is provided will under any circumstances be expended by departments independent of the proposed health bureau; while on the other hand, the provisions of the bill demand \$12,000 for a Cabinet officer; \$6,000 for his assistant; \$3,000 for a chief clerk, together with an army of such employees as may be found necessary.

The flooding of the Nation with literature favorable to the theories of the physicians in power will enormously swell the expenses of the bureau. And yet such expense will be small indeed compared with annual appropriations that will be called for in the event that this bureau, dominated by a special privilege-seeking class, is once in operation. Indeed, Professor Fisher, in the letter to which we have referred above, admits as much when, in speaking of the bureau, he says that "*once started,*" it "*will surely expand within a decade so that millions upon millions of Government money will be put into this new form of National defense.*"

Here, then, are some leading objections to the proposed legislation:

(1.) It would imperil one of the most sacred rights gained by the people since the dawn of modern times, because it would place the health supervision of the Nation in the hands of the representatives of a great privilege-seeking body that for more than fifty years has been adopting the various tactics of trusts, corporations and privileged wealth to secure monopoly rights which would prevent the citizen from enjoying freedom of choice in selecting a practitioner when ill.

(2.) It would be a blow to scientific advance and the sound intellectual progress that can only flourish under the ægis of freedom, as it would discourage free and independent research and investigation such as has been responsible for so many of the greatest and most beneficent discoveries in the domain of the healing art as well as in all other lines of scientific advance and intellectual progress throughout the world. Whenever an arbitrary power, whether it be a religious hierarchy, a medical hierarchy, or a political despotism, holding its dogmatic tenets and enjoying special privileges, is able to discourage freedom of thought and investigation, progress, enlightenment and scientific advance are retarded.

(3.) It is unnecessary. Our Government, acting through its various departments, has had no difficulty in stamping out yellow fever and cholera. What more could a bureau with unlimited wealth have done in Havana than was done by our Government through the proper channels? The bureau would also entail, as we have seen, an enormous and ever-increasing burden of expense for the taxpayers to meet.

(4.) It would be another wide stride in the march of centralization and the establishment of a Russian bureaucratic system in the place of a democracy of the fathers, inimical to the rights of the people, a burden to the taxpayers and contrary to the growing spirit of opposition to trusts, monopolies and privileged interests, which is so marked at the present time.

# The Truth About the Bubonic Plague Scare\*

By B. O. Flower

## I.

AT the public hearing on the bills for the creation of a National Health Department or a Federal Health Bureau, held before the Senate and House Committees at Washington last spring and summer, one of the things which seemed most to impress the Senators, Congressmen, and, indeed, the public at large, in favor of the proposed measure, was the alleged facts relating to the bubonic plague of ten years ago in California.

The speakers dwelt impressively on the supposed facts, and the impression was given that through inadequacy of city and state provisions and the powerlessness of the national government—lacking a department or powerful bureau clothed with autocratic power—the dread plague had gained a firm foothold in San Francisco and thus seriously menaced the nation.

With the sensational alarmist newspaper stories, the terrifying imaginative Sunday supplement illustrations and the magazine "health writers' " rumor-based and grossly exaggerated articles still fresh in the minds of the people, it was possible for the representatives of the American Medical Association and their allies to utilize the alleged facts for influencing those appealed to, exactly as do the jingoes of the press, army and navy create war scares and excite the people when an unusually large military and naval budget is desired.

It is not too much to say that the assumed deadly work of the bubonic plague and the inability of California successfully to grapple with it was one of the most effective, if indeed it was not the most effective reason urged by more than one of the eminent medical men who were seeking to secure a National Health Department, for which the American Medical Association has striven during the past twenty years. The changes were rung in a most amazing manner by Major Owen and also by Surgeon-General Wyman and others.

Very ingenious were the elaborate theories advanced from time to time by the sensation-mongers and the political doctors, to account for the spread of the dread plague that was supposed to be ravaging California. We were told how rats from the ships had carried the plague to the city; how fleas had transferred it to squirrels; and we were clearly given the impression that, what with the plague-infected rats, the agile, disease-carrying flea and the victimized squirrel, not only all

\* From the Twentieth Century Magazine for December, 1910. Published by special permission.

California, but the nation had been imperilled, since there was no National Health Department or Federal Health Bureau empowered to act with a strong hand. It was assumed that the city and state were powerless to do what the central government could and would do if it had the authority.

At the time of the House Committee hearing, a prominent business man from California chanced to be in Washington, and he unequivocally declared that there was no adequate foundation in fact for the claims advanced by the bureaucrats and political doctors, bearing on the bubonic plague scare in California. Indeed, he insisted that it was a serious question whether there was ever bubonic plague in California, and he declared that if he had the time he could bring documentary evidence from high authorities to prove his contention.

So positive, however, had been the utterances and implications of those supposed to speak with authority, who represented the great medical organization that for twenty years had been striving to get a National Health Department, that the League did not feel that it was justified in challenging the statements made without having the official data at hand with which to refute them. Since then, however, the secretary of the National League for Medical Freedom has not only interviewed leading citizens of California, but has had access to data embracing the official correspondence and documents relating to this question which not only throw a flood of light upon the subject, exploding at once the sensational stories upon which the advocates of Federal medical departmental and bureaucratic legislation depended, but which also afford illuminating illustrative examples confirmatory of the position taken by the League on many important points. It is our purpose now to give the story of the bubonic plague scare of California, based upon the official correspondence and documentary reports. And at the outset let it be observed that it is not necessary to agree with the mature conclusions of the State Board of Health of California, the heads of the leading medical schools, the Governor of the State, or the special commission of distinguished citizens of California, appointed by the Governor to supervise the investigation, that *there never was a case of bubonic plague in San Francisco*, in order to prove that the facts—the unassailable facts, disclosed in the documents here examined, showed conclusively that the position taken by the advocates of national departmental or bureaucratic legislation at the hearings was unwarranted.

## II.

In 1900 there was general apprehension throughout the civilized world about the spread of the bubonic plague. It had broken out in many places, and its ravages in certain centers of India, among the weak and starving people, had been almost as appalling as the deaths from famine in the great famine areas of Hindustan. It was natural and very commendable, therefore, for the City Health Board of San Francisco to be alert and vigilant, especially on account of the large Oriental population of the city, and it was perhaps not surprising when there were certain deaths of a rather suspicious character that some of the city physicians hastily concluded that the bubonic plague had made its appearance. Moreover, it is not necessary for the purpose of

our argument to assume that no case did occur, but the careful investigator who wishes to maintain a judicial attitude will not forget how prone men are to find what they are looking for. It will be called to mind that several years ago the brilliant New York *World* correspondent, Nellie Bly, took the same number of general symptoms to five eminent New York physicians, who were specialists in the treatment of different diseases, and in each instance the physician diagnosed her case as an affection of the organs to which he was devoting his special attention.

Certain it is that some members of the City Board of Health, concluded that the suspicious deaths in question were caused by the plague and reported their opinion to the Federal Government, and a representative of the Marine Hospital Service forthwith appeared on the scene and with the invincible certitude of the shallow dogmatist concurred in the opinion of the city doctors of the San Francisco board, although *no attending physician had diagnosed the said suspicious cases as bubonic plague either before or after death*, nor had the State Board of Health been called with its specialists, some of whom had been personally familiar with the plague in India.

The Federal officer, who, we understand, had never personally seen a case of plague, reported his conclusions to the Marine Hospital authorities at Washington, and they in turn promptly announced the presence of bubonic plague in San Francisco in the weekly *Public Health Reports*, and also notified foreign nations of the fact.

Now this procedure, which would have been right and proper had full and impartial investigation been made by unprejudiced bacteriologists and experts, was open to serious question when all the facts involved were taken into consideration, and appears especially unwarranted in the light of subsequent revelations. For it must be remembered that at this time, as well as later, the California State Board of Health and other leading physicians, as well as the Governor and many of the most prominent citizens of the state, *did not believe that any case of bubonic plague had appeared in the state*. The hasty alarmist report of the representatives of the Federal Marine Hospital Service was seized upon by sensational newspapers, professional "health writers" of the magazines and certain medical journals whose editors were as desirous of obtaining a National Health Department as was the Marine Hospital bureau eager for increased power and appropriations, with the result that the nation was soon led to believe that San Francisco was being ravaged by the bubonic plague, and that the disease was spreading from one end of California to the other, and even up into Washington, through the small mammals of the section.\* Gross exaggerations of conditions, based on the *ex parte* investigations of doctors who had a case to make, created general alarm in the public mind. The plague was supposed to have appeared in March, 1900, and on June 13th, in the course of an extended dispatch forwarded to United States Secretary of State John Hay, in answer to a telegram from the State Department, Governor Gage of California made the following statement of pertinent facts:

"No case in San Francisco or California has been diagnosed as

---

\* See statement of Major William S. Owen, U. S. A. (Retired), before House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, at Washington, June, 1910.

bubonic plague by any attending physician while the victim was alive, nor by the attending physician after death. In some of the suspected cases death has occurred when no regular physician was in attendance. There have been in all only eleven suspected cases among a population of 35,000 Chinese (15,000 of whom are quarantined), and no cases among white and other races. The examinations made after death of the bodies of the suspected cases since the alleged discovery of the disease, more than three months ago, fail to furnish satisfactory proof of plague.

"Full and fair investigations have been denied the physicians of the Chinese by the City Board of Health.

"The Chinese were forced to appeal to the courts, and were then accorded the right of investigation into the cause of death of the dead suspects.

"Since the procurement of the order of the court, granting privilege to the white physicians of the quarantined Chinese to visit the sick and be present and take part in autopsies had, neither the City Board of Health nor Federal officers have been able to discover any bubonic plague case, dead or alive.

"The municipal records show the proportion of deaths in Chinatown has been no greater than that of any other portion of San Francisco since the date of the discovery of the alleged plague in Chinatown.

"No two persons of the same family have contracted the disease, and no two cases have occurred within the same house or building, no matter how great the exposure may have been.

"The medical gentlemen and experts of the City Board of Health and the Federal quarantine officers who have ventured the injurious opinions which have spread broadcast over the world the rumor of the existence of the dreadful plague in the great and healthful city of San Francisco have never seen a living case of plague; whereas, some among the physicians, surgeons and scientists with whom I have advised have had personal experience and wide opportunities in observing bubonic plague when it was raging in India and elsewhere, and they all pronounce the suspected cases here not bubonic plague.

"From the best light I have been able to procure, and from a most careful consideration of the whole subject, I am pleased to inform your Excellency that I firmly believe no case of bubonic plague has at any time existed within the borders of our state."

This report was signed by the Governor, and the following statement was appended:

"We concur in the foregoing conclusion that bubonic plague does not exist, and has not existed, within the State of California."

It was signed by the following eminent and authoritative physicians: L. C. Lane, President Cooper Medical College; Winslow Anderson, M. D., M. R. C. P., M. R. C. S., Eng., President College of Physicians and Surgeons of San Francisco; C. N. Ellinwood, Professor in Cooper Medical College, all of the regular school, and by Edwin S. Breyfogle, M. D., of the homeopathic school; also by ex-Governor Budd and a large number of representative leading citizens.

On June 15, 1900, Hon. W. W. Morrow, Judge of the United States Circuit Court, in the course of a ruling, said: "If it were within the province of this Court to decide the point, I should hold that there is not, and never has been, a case of plague in this city."

In the face of the fact that the State Board of Health and leading medical experts and bacteriologists, including doctors who were thoroughly familiar with the plague from actual personal contact with it, had declared that it did not exist, and never had appeared in the city, and notwithstanding the facts cited in Governor Gage's dispatch quoted above, and the mature opinion of the United States Circuit Judge, the representative of the Washington medical bureau determined to exercise that autocratic power so dear to bureaucrats; so on June 16th we find, to quote from the first biennial message of Governor Gage:\*

"Dr. J. J. Kinyoun, the Federal quarantine officer (who had been previously a party to some of the investigations of those favoring the plague scare), arbitrarily and without proper cause quarantined the entire state. This summary and unjustifiable action appalled our citizens. The fruit and other industries were threatened with ruin. Business was partly paralyzed. Gloom settled over our state, and the promises of a prosperous and happy ending of the year were dispelled. On the night of Saturday, June 16, 1900, the date of the arbitrary quarantine of Dr. Kinyoun, I telegraphed the President, appealing in behalf of the people of the state to release the quarantine. . . . The President, being sufficiently advised of the true condition of affairs, acted promptly, and on Monday, June 18, 1900, he communicated with the Secretary of the Treasury, so that United States Surgeon-General Wyman was directed to order a release of the state quarantine, which was done at once."

It is altogether regrettable, but to persons familiar with the arrogant and autocratic spirit of bureaus by no means surprising, that the course that was obviously demanded on the part of those who place truth and the welfare of the people above personal opinion, should have been ignored when such questions were involved, and when there were such radically divergent opinions on the part of physicians representing the nation and the state. It was of paramount importance that the judicial and not the partizan spirit should predominate. The Board of Health of California, the officials and leading citizens of the state requested that their representatives should be present and have a voice in the investigations, but this did not accord with Surgeon-General Wyman's desires. The maintenance of his own personal opinion and that of his representative appears to have been of more importance to him than arriving at the truth. Certain it is that the Federal Government appointed a committee of investigation, without consulting the California officials or inviting the representatives of the State Board of Health to be present. This action called forth a protest from Governor Gage, sent to the President on January 28, 1901, in which he made the following very reasonable and proper request:

"In this matter, which concerns deeply the welfare of this state, I respectfully request that co-operation with the state authorities by such experts should be advised, in order that the State may select emi-

\* See First Biennial Message of Governor Gage, delivered to the Legislature of California, January 7, 1900.

ment home bacteriologists and physicians, as well as, if deemed necessary, bacteriologists and physicians from other states and countries, to examine same suspected cases, so as to arrive at a correct and impartial conclusion.

"I dislike much now to call your attention to this matter, but the irreparable injury heretofore done to this state by unfair and *ex parte* examinations warrants this appeal."

Secretary of the Treasury Lyman J. Gage, of whose department the Marine Hospital Service was a part, replied in a diplomatic manner to the very reasonable demand of the Governor of California, but declined to permit the State Board of Health or any expert employed by the state to co-operate with the commission. This determination to continue an *ex parte* investigation and refuse even to permit the state medical authorities to be present at the investigation, elicited from Governor Gage a strong message to the Legislature, from which we extract the following:

"From this answer of the Honorable Secretary of the Treasury, it is apparent that State co-operation is refused, and that the investigation of the commission will be conducted wholly on such lines as will exclude any possible opportunity on the part of the state either to verify or refute any position which may now or hereafter be taken by the said commission or the United States Marine Hospital Service.

"The previous inaccurate reports respecting the existence of bubonic plague in this state, which has resulted in the injury to the reputation for health, as well as in injury to its citizens, industries, and commerce, have been the consequence of a system of *ex parte* investigation, without opportunity of state examination or superintendence.

"The repetitions of such investigations upon secret lines, without public scrutiny under state authority as have heretofore been pursued, will imperil the welfare of every citizen and inhabitant of this state.

"The meanest criminal under the Constitution of the United States cannot be denied the right of being confronted by his accusers, listening to their testimony, and subjecting them to cross examination, and shall it be contended that the great State of California shall be unjustly denied a similar privilege in the opportunity of facing those who, impugning the public health, as a result of a secret and one-sided examination, might choose to cast an irremovable blemish upon the state's sanitary condition, on which the personal rights and property of her citizens in a large measure depend?

"The state being denied a hearing, I conscientiously believe, therefore, that legislation is immediately and urgently needed by which our state may assume that general and unrestrained control over the subject of the public health within its borders which so vitally concerns her, and which is her inalienable right by virtue of her sovereignty."

The refusal of Surgeon-General Wyman and the Marine Hospital Service to allow the California State Board of Health or any expert bacteriologists or physicians who were conversant with the bubonic plague through actual personal knowledge, to be present at the investigations, can be explained on one of three hypotheses, but we can think of no other reasonable explanation: (1) The bureau had committed

itself to the bubonic plague theory and feared that any thorough and impartial investigation by unprejudiced authorities would prove that the department had blundered, and through its hasty action had done an irreparable injury to a great sovereign state. (2) It might have held the California State Board of Health and the leading physicians and bacteriologists of the Pacific Coast in contempt, believing them incompetent or too ignorant to be able even to assist in making a trustworthy investigation which would determine by scientific investigation the truth or falsity of the claims made. Or (3) it might have believed that the State Board of Health was composed of men so venal, weak or wanting in all the nobler qualities of scientific thinkers and true men as to be willing for commercial considerations to lend themselves to a conspiracy for the attempted concealment in their own home cities and state of a terrible plague that would not only endanger the lives of hundreds of thousands of Californians, but also of millions beyond the state borders.

The fact that if the plague was actually spreading through the cities and the state, as the Washington bureau so positively claimed, the action of the State Board could not have saved the commerce of the state, while it would have caused the death of thousands of people, would make this last hypothesis seem too absurd to advance, if it were not that it is precisely the explanation that has most frequently been made by the upholders of the Marine Hospital Service and the advocates of a National Health Department.

But it matters not which horn of the dilemma one takes; it is difficult to conceive of one set of medical officials offering a greater indignity to another official medical board than that shown by Surgeon-General Wyman and the Marine Hospital Service and the medical journals which upheld the bureau and joined their alarmist cries—journals which doubtless felt that in so doing they would materially aid the American Medical Association in its twenty-year-old attempt to secure a National Health Department.

### III.

When it was found that the Federal authorities, who had been so arrogantly insisting that the plague was firmly rooted in San Francisco, would not permit representatives of the California State Board of Health to be present at the investigations of the newly appointed commission, the state government and leading citizens thought it wise to send a committee composed of prominent and influential Californians to Washington to confer with the officials and strive to obtain an investigation that should be broad, fair, impartial and thorough, instead of a partizan examination conducted by a commission appointed by a bureau which absolutely insisted that the plague was present. Accordingly, the Governor of California sent to Washington a commission composed of leading citizens, but at first, according to the statement of one of this commission to the secretary of the National League for Medical Freedom, the Surgeon-General would not consent to discuss the subject unless the committee would concede the presence of the plague. President McKinley, however, when appealed to insisted that the requested conference should take place, and finally it was ar-



ranged that Dr. J. H. White of the Marine Hospital Service should superintend the cleaning, disinfecting and fumigating of Chinatown, the work to be carried on by the state and city authorities at the expense of the citizens of California, the commission agreeing to maintain a crematory for the destruction of all rubbish, to furnish a laboratory for bacteriological examinations, buildings suitable for detention barracks, a hospital for any suspicious cases discovered, a morgue and a hall of tranquility, on condition that the autopsies and examinations should be conducted in the presence of expert representatives of the State Board of Health. The following extracts from the official report of the commission appointed by the Governor will help us further to understand the real facts of this case:

"Although this agreement imposed the greater part of the burden of cleansing, disinfecting and fumigating the Chinese quarter of San Francisco upon the state, your commission, considering the exigency and the possible consequences of delay, heartily approved the arrangement entered into, and urged that the work be proceeded with at once, in order that the pressure which was undoubtedly being exerted to have the Federal authorities erect a quarantine against California should be relieved. At your request your commission consented to continue acting in its advisory capacity and agreed with you that it was desirable to have an efficient corps of physicians, acting under the direction of the State board of Health, to assist in the examination of every alleged case of bubonic plague brought to the attention of the Federal authorities while making their investigations in this city. The importance of this course of action was demonstrated by the results which fully justified the position taken by you from the beginning, namely, that there was no ground for the charge that cases of genuine bubonic plague had been found in San Francisco.

"Although your commission, at the conclusion of this meeting of April 2d, announced to Dr. J. H. White, the official designated by the Federal health authorities to direct and supervise the work of cleansing, disinfecting and fumigating Chinatown, the readiness of the state to proceed, he postponed the commencement of operations until April 9th. On the morning of that day a force of forty-three men, subsequently largely increased, was put to work, and the instructions of Dr. White were rigidly adhered to, your commissioners taking pains to hear from him at frequent intervals, in order to learn if everything was proceeding according to his desires."

A further point in the commission's report is worthy of special notice as giving illustrative emphasis to one of the contentions of the National League for Medical Freedom. Dr. White, when appearing before the city and state officials of California, was asked as to the "probable cost of carrying out the cleansing, disinfecting and fumigation which he said would be necessary. He answered he had given the subject some attention, but could not make a close estimate. He thought, however, that the work would necessitate an expenditure of at least one hundred thousand dollars."

If the Marine Hospital Service had conducted the work, the cost would unquestionably have reached the amount given by Dr. White, and probably would have exceeded it, judging from the extravagant recommendations made. The state authorities of California, however,

were unwilling needlessly to waste the taxpayers' money, as will be seen from the following illuminating passage in the commission's report:

"That the business was done expeditiously and economically will be inferred from the fact that it was accomplished for about one-fourth the amount estimated by Dr. White.

". . . The State Board of Health by disregarding the recommendation of Dr. White to purchase sulphur, bichloride of mercury, dutch ovens, etc., in large quantities, a considerable saving was effected. Thus the work of disinfecting and fumigating was thoroughly performed with 300 pounds of sulphur, although the Marine Hospital Service estimated that thirty tons would be necessary. Fifty pans were bought, and twenty only used, but the requisition of the Federal official called for two hundred."

The following illuminating paragraphs from the closing part of the commission's report furnish an important historic passage in this famous case:

"In addition to the work of cleansing, disinfecting and fumigating, the State Board of Health undertook the important duty of assisting the Federal health officers in their search for suspicious cases. A doubt having arisen in the minds of Dr. White and his staff regarding the accuracy of the number of sick Chinese reported in the quarter, a corps of five physicians was employed by the State Board of Health to make a house-to-house canvass. These physicians made a daily report of the work performed by them, and also a report of the Chinese whom they found sick, giving a history of each case and a diagnosis of the disease. Each block in the quarter was covered by the state's physicians eight times, and in all of the seventeen blocks only 307 sick cases were reported. A morgue was established by the Marine Hospital Service at 638 Merchant street, and any Chinese man, woman or child dying in the city and county of San Francisco was, by order of Dr. White and his associates, immediately removed thereto and treated as a case of bubonic plague until the autopsy proved the contrary. Under an order issued by the City Board of Health of San Francisco, no Chinese person dying in the city and county of San Francisco could be buried until a certificate of death was countersigned by either of the three physicians in charge of the morgue and laboratory conducted by the Federal officials. At all the autopsies the state was represented by one or more physicians, and no autopsy was held without a representative of the State Board being present. The state had its bacteriologist, Dr. S. M. Mouser, who conducted a very thorough and complete investigation in all cases that were considered in any way suspicious.

"The wisdom of these precautions was soon made evident. Many cases were reported that were pronounced suspicious by the physicians employed by the Marine Hospital Service, but although *between April 8th and August 27th 103 autopsies were performed, not one case was found which could be pronounced bubonic plague.* The report of the State Board of Health, which gives the clinical history of these cases and the circumstances attending autopsies indicates that there was an eager desire on the part of those who contended bubonic plague existed in this city to establish that fact. In one instance an attempt was made to quicklime a body in order to destroy the evidence which would conclusively prove that the deceased had died of pulmonary tubercu-

losis, which fact had been ascertained at the autopsy. Had not the State Board's physicians taken the attitude they did, the evidence is strong that it would have been pronounced a genuine case of plague. Many other circumstances are cited tending to show that there was a disposition manifested to keep up the impression that bubonic plague had prevailed in the city and that it was still present, but the watchfulness of the State Board's representatives prevented any misunderstanding on the point. . . . *It is significant in this connection that the latest case of bubonic plague alleged to have been discovered in this city was on April 8th, the day before the State Board commenced its active investigations. After that date no case was discovered, although many were asserted to be such until an autopsy disproved the assertion.*

"The commission heartily commends the attitude taken by you in your answer to the telegram from Walter Wyman, Surgeon-General, Marine Hospital Service, dated June 18, 1901, which seems to have closed the incident, and in which he says: '*It is a matter of mutual congratulation that no cases have been found during the progress of this work*' (that is, the cleansing of Chinatown and the investigation of the character of every case of sickness found within its limits). Your declaration that 'there is no occasion at this time for further investigation suggested by Dr. White' is fully concurred in by us, and we trust that the determination expressed by you that 'one-sided or secret examinations such as have been in the past in San Francisco, to its irreparable detriment and to that of the whole state . . . cannot again be permitted,' will be rigidly adhered to.

"In conclusion, your commission desires to express the opinion that the result of the steps taken by you has been wholly to disprove the allegation that bubonic plague has existed in San Francisco. Had the same precautions been taken before April 8, 1901, that were adopted after that date, we should not have been menaced with quarantine, nor would we have had imposed upon us the expenditure of a large sum of money, every dollar of which was extorted by the necessity of warding off the evil consequences of the false reports concerning the health of the city and state. There can be no reasonable doubt that the autopsies made prior to April 8, 1901, would have had the same result as those made after that date had there been present doctors who were not interested in creating the impression that San Francisco was plague-infected. The fact that no plague has been found since April 8, 1901, and the further fact that the disease, although it was alleged to have made its appearance on March 6, 1900, did not become epidemic, and that no two cases of what was termed bubonic plague appeared in the same house, should carry conviction to every candid mind that San Francisco is and has been absolutely free from the disease, and that those who said it existed were either mistaken or deliberately misrepresented the facts."

The report is signed by John P. Young, William F. Herrin, T. T. Williams and H. T. Scott, commissioners appointed by the Governor, and by Fremont Older, commissioner of the City of San Francisco and of the State of California.

In an added note, Mr. T. T. Williams expresses the conviction that in the earlier reports the officials were sincere in their belief that the plague had entered the city, but he adds that: "I am of the opinion,

however, that later on the judgment of the Board of Health became corrupted by its dislike to confessing mistake and by its desire to prove that its erroneous conclusions were justifiable."

Next we desire to give the official declaration of the California State Board of Health, with which it closes its report to the chief magistrate of the commonwealth:

"At the beginning of this work the Federal authorities who cooperated with us were of the opinion, based upon the reports of others more or less trustworthy, that bubonic plague was prevalent among the Chinese of that city, and that it would be readily found as soon as proper investigation was had. During this period of fumigation, disinfecting and cleansing no effort was omitted on our part nor on the part of the Marine Hospital representatives to locate and identify the presence of the plague.

"At the conclusion of this work, as thorough and searching as it could possibly be made, no case of bubonic plague was found, nor was any indication of its having been there discovered. If plague had existed in San Francisco just prior to this sanitary investigation, it would have been there during the months of April, May and June, because no efforts had been made to suppress it, and no precaution taken to prevent its spread.

"It is safe therefore to say that the evil reports of the presence of that disease in San Francisco were based upon error in diagnosis upon the part of incompetent investigators. We take great pleasure in assuring you that plague does not exist in San Francisco, and that it never has had lodgment there, nor elsewhere in California."

The claim has so frequently been made that the Governor of California, the State Board of Health and the leading citizens of the coast opposed the investigations of the Washington authorities for commercial reasons, that the absurdity of such a position cannot be too strongly emphasized. No rational board of medical men, even if they were heedless of the health of the people and thoroughly wanting in moral rectitude, would be so foolish and short-sighted as to deny the presence of a disease like the bubonic plague if they believed it to exist, as they would know full well that such an attempt at concealment would in a short time not only work havoc with the lives of their own people, but would also paralyze commerce in a far greater degree than would be possible from the prompt recognition of the plague followed by efficient measures to check it; while in answer to the claim that the Marine Hospital Service and the medical journals that upheld the contention could have no selfish end in view, it is plain that for years Surgeon-General Wyman has been striving to secure greatly increased appropriations and to augment the power of his bureau, while the American Medical Association has for twenty years been working for the establishment of a National Health Department at Washington.

#### IV.

The official correspondence of the Governor and the reports of the commission and State Board of Health, which we have been considering, are rich in suggestive revelations that eloquently attest the truth of many of the contentions of the National League for Medical Freedom. Thus for example:

(1) We see in the action of the Marine Hospital Service that arrogant assumption of infallibility that is so menacing a feature of bureaucratic government and that is doubly dangerous to the people when behind the bureau is a powerful class that for years has sought the enrichment of its members and its own aggrandizement through special legislation and the exercise of arbitrary official power. The Marine Hospital Service readily accepted the report of its representative, though the report was in direct opposition to the mature conclusion of the State Board of Health and many other eminent bacteriologists and physicians, some of whom were acquainted with the plague through personal contact; and assuming that it was necessarily correct in its conclusions, the bureau brushed aside the claims of the state, treating with utter contempt the California Board of Health, and on the slender proofs presented refused to permit an unprejudiced and thorough investigation at which the state experts and physicians familiar with the plague should be present, while it threatened to quarantine the state. Here we have a striking illustration of the menace of bureaucracy. A petty bureau chief is always liable to assume that his opinion is necessarily right, and on that assumption he acts as though his views were infallible. What would be right and proper in a case where a conclusion had been arrived at through an impartial and judicial tribunal, might be injurious, oppressive and despotic when the conclusion was based merely on *ex parte* evidence. Russia affords an impressive illustration of bureaucracy in full flower. It is the most intolerable despotism. But one does not have to go to Russia to find the despotic and subversive spirit of bureaucracy rampant.

(2) A central bureau or department is liable to be far more wasteful and extravagant with the people's money than is a city or state government, which is in closer contact with the taxpayers. We can easily understand that a Federal Health Department could soon be spending annually "millions upon millions" of the people's money, a large part of which would go to grafters, or would represent wasteful and needless extravagance. Take this case as an illustration. Dr. White estimated that it would require *thirty tons* of sulphur for disinfecting and fumigating; but the California officials thoroughly performed the work with *three hundred pounds*. Dr. White made a requisition for *two hundred pans*; the California health authorities *bought fifty*, but *used only twenty*. Dr. White estimated that at least *one hundred thousand dollars* would be needed to clean up and disinfect the Chinese quarter; yet the work was well done, under the direction of the local and state officials, for *less than forty thousand dollars*. And this is a typical concrete illustration that emphasizes the truth of the contention of the League, that the establishment of a National Health Department or Federal Health Bureau would be another fruitful field for graft and extravagance, through which vast sums of the people's money would be needlessly expended.

(3) The history of the bubonic plague scare affords a very impressive illustration of the uncertain, unreliable and empirical character of medical opinion. We do not have to go to the different schools to see how untrustworthy are medical conclusions. Here are two official bodies, both dominated by the same medical school, both claiming

to represent the best scientific thought of the school, and equally sure of the correctness of the opinions advanced. Yet these opinions are absolutely opposed to each other in the determining of so simple a thing as to whether certain deaths are caused by a disease with clearly defined symptoms and where the doctors have at their command laboratories and all the accessories for scientific investigation of the disease in the living subject and by autopsies after death. Ought autocratic power to say who should treat the sick be lodged in a medical board so ignorant or untrustworthy as the California State Board, if the contention of Surgeon-General Wyman and his bureau was correct? Ought arbitrary power to be given to a health bureau as reckless in jumping at conclusions and as unscientific and erroneous in its conclusions, as contemptuous of the constitutional rights of a sovereign state and as despotic in spirit as was the Marine Hospital Service, if we are to accept the contentions of the Governor of California, the commission of distinguished citizens and the California State Board of Health?

If, with very limited power, such abuses could be attempted as appear from the official reports given in this paper, what might we not expect from a national department or a Federal bureau with augmented power?

Again, is it not perfectly obvious that where there is such wide divergence of opinion in regard to a question like the plague among high authorities of the same school, it would be absurd to permit a department or bureau to send broadcast tons of literature that should promulgate the medicinal views of those who happened to be in charge, when it is probable that these views would be in direct antagonism to those of a large part of the dominant school, to say nothing of the other leading schools and the representatives of the newer systems of cure?

A department dominated by a certain school or schools, in a field where so much is theoretical and so little scientifically established, and where the conjectures of one generation are largely discarded by the same school of the succeeding generation, would be a menace rather than a blessing, especially when the subjects concerned are so intimate and vital to the people as their health theories and religious beliefs.

These are a few legitimate inferences and valid conclusions that are naturally suggested by the official documents and reports we have been considering.



