

# POOR DOCUMENT

# MC 2035

## FOR HEALTH ACT IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Address Last Night by Dr. G. G. Melvin

### DEPARTMENT NEEDED

Says Practical Results Sure to Follow — Organization of St. Andrew's Church Men Pledge Their Support

Before a get-together of the men's organization in the school room of St. Andrew's church last evening at 8:15 o'clock, when the members of the Ladies' Aid of the church supplied luncheon, Dr. G. G. Melvin, medical health officer, delivered a timely and highly interesting address on Public Health. Dr. Melvin treated his subject informally, but dealt with it in an able, direct and understandable manner, driving his points home and quoting figures and statistics, to prove his arguments for the need of this great work that was being done, and what remains to be done, in the interests of public health.

The most important features of the theme developed by Dr. Melvin was that contagious diseases are spread only by personal contact with the person who is ill and that the contagious element is never transmitted through the air in distant bodies; also dealing with what the public health officials have done in various cities within recent years, including the city of St. John and lastly Dr. Melvin urged his hearers to lend their sympathies and their efforts to bring about a final adoption of the Public Health Act to come before the local legislature, and made a strong plea for all present to help the sponsors for the act and all its supporters.

In beginning, Dr. Melvin said that public health was as broad as the world itself; it embraced the whole earth and everything in it, and was as old as the human race. Yet it was comparatively new when some features of it were considered.

### Going Back to Hebrews

Dr. Melvin divided his address into three periods: Public health at the time of Pasteur, introducing the science of bacteriology, and lastly public health from the time of Pasteur to the present. To prove that public health was something old Dr. Melvin went back to sanitation in the days of the Hebrews. Their laws, regulations and laws were the admiration of the whole world and have been up to the present, and it was only recently that their laws had been renewed. Dr. Melvin said that public health underwrote the growth of animal life, the most appropriate title was "preventive medicine," as its function is not so much to cure but to prevent a contraction of the disease. The difference between preventive and curative medicine was explained.

"Public health has come down through the ages. In 1665 when the terrible plague was in England public health activities were extensively carried on and were the chief means for driving the plague away; even Napoleon, the greatest man in Europe, had to subject himself to quarantine in his return from Egypt in 1798 as he came from a land where there was cholera. His clothes were fumigated and quarantine was ordered. Therefore you see public health is something to be proud of and something venerable."

By the discovery of bacteriology scientists were given much to aid public health. It gave the people relief from the idea that contagious diseases shot through the air like arrows; it brought them to the belief that it was contagious only when one came in contact with the person affected.

Speaking of quarantine, Dr. Melvin said that it was one of the main lines of sanitation, but it was not the chief one. The theory of bacteriology had been perfected by the introduction of vaccination, to prevent the spread of smallpox. "The dangers of sewer gas almost crazed the public at one time, but it brought about the trade of plumbing and the better plumbing you have the better housing conditions, other things being equal."

### Germs Useful in Place

With the introducing of bacteriology there followed much talk of germs, and this had produced the thought that all germs were bad. "Ninety-nine per cent of germs are harmless, without which we could not live, animals could not live. Germs aid the growth of animal life, but still in some instances it destroys and decays life. Disease producing germs are dangerous and should be avoided."

Coming to our town times, Dr. Melvin cited the city of New York to show what had been done by public health, and showed how lives had been saved and yearly being saved. Dr. Melvin said that the best health administration of the world outside of, perhaps, London, was in New York. In 1860 the death toll was twenty in every thousand in a year, but in 1916 it had been reduced to fourteen deaths per thousand in a year. Sanitary scientists in New York save yearly 80,000 lives. "They have no patent or special way of living, they are susceptible to disease like us, but through the exercise and activity of their public health they save life."

Coming to St. John, Dr. Melvin said in the last four years the death rate was reduced from 17½ to 15½ deaths per thousand a year which means in a population as large as St. John that 100 lives are saved yearly. Referring to the infant mortality, four years ago, he said, there were 200 deaths among infants under one year of age and last year there were 123; therefore fifty lives of infants under one year have been saved in that time. "Contagious diseases in St. John have also been considerably reduced," he said, "there have been within the last year three deaths from typhoid, two from dysentery and one from scarlet fever. If such utility can be derived from public health by our modest system here what more vast accomplishments can be the result if we are given better facilities; we get measurable results now and if the new Public Health Act goes through, how much greater results can be attained."

### Getting at Rural Districts

He urged an immediate adoption of the Public Health Act to come before the legislature. Dr. Melvin said that if better public health laws were enforced in the rural districts, better results be obtained in the cities of the province, for as it is, there is "an importation of disease so to speak, which calls for

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more arduous work on our part." This is the main point of the act now before the government at Fredericton, he said, to enforce the public health law all over New Brunswick. Dr. Melvin asked his hearers to lend their sympathies to the proposed act so that the whole province would come under a more defined organization of public health. He said the cities of New Brunswick were fairly well protected, but it was the main object of the proposed bill to extend the work all over the rural districts and to put all districts under a good health organization as it was possible to do. Typhoid fever creates greater ravages in the rural sections and there being no public health supervision in these places there is no enforcement of the act. This will be overcome with the new act.

"It will cost money," he said, "but you can't carry on this war on rose water; any good work must have money and expenditure; you must also expend labor, help to bring to many people the great blessing on earth, 'health' of body, both mental and physical and

Why is this province swept by smallpox every few years? Simply because there is no vaccination. In the last five years I, myself, have vaccinated over 4,000 children and as many have been vaccinated by other physicians privately continue this and you will in time have the whole province vaccinated. In other places in this province there is the same law to have all children in schools vaccinated, but it is not enforced, and this is what the proposed piece of legislation will do. There will be excellent effects. In New York the motto adopted is 'An adequate and wise expenditure for public health.'"

Dr. Melvin said that towns in New Brunswick with populations of 3,000 had expended \$80 in the past year; another one spent \$15 on public health matters, and a whole county with a population of 22,000 spent only \$80 on public health. The passage of the present bill would help to bring to many people the great blessing on earth, 'health' of body, both mental and physical and

lead to a decent, honorable and healthy old age."

Rev. F. S. Dowling occupied the chair and there were a large number of men of the church present. At the conclusion of the address Dr. Melvin was accorded a hearty vote of thanks on behalf of the men by Rev. Mr. Dowling. Others spoke also expressing the value of the passage of such a bill for public health to come before the legislature.

The ladies of the church were extended a vote of thanks for the excellent luncheon they had served. Mrs. Frank White, president of the W. A., responded for the ladies.

A quartette by Messrs. Wood, Young, Guy and Charlton afforded much merriment to the audience, especially the "Hymn of Hate," sung for the benefit of "Kaiser Bill."

Fredericton, N. B., March 14.—Convincing arguments in favor of the government's plans for a new health department are given in the annual report of the secretary of the Provincial Board of Health, Dr. Roy H. McGrath, which has been presented to the legislature. Among the most convincing of the arguments, he says, are the reports submitted by some of the local boards and the absence of any report at all from others.

Mention is made of the smallpox epidemic which appeared in November of last year, and a full report is promised at a later date.

The introduction to the report, which is accompanied by such reports as were received from the local boards, is as follows:

"In submitting this report for the year just past, I will refrain from making any comments on the general health situation in the province, as I have found it since assuming the duties of secretary, because of the fact that a sanitary survey of the province has been made by a most competent sanitarian, acting on the orders of the executive, and his report when submitted will be most thorough and complete in every detail."

"Recognizing the necessity, I can most heartily endorse the movement which makes such a survey and report possible, and trust that the recommendations which will be made in the report when published, will be forthwith carried into effect, and a much needed reformation in the administration of public health matters in this province, will be enacted by those having power to grant many needed reforms."

"For some months past the membership of the P. P. Mal Board of Health has been reduced to its three ex-officio members, because of the expiration of the terms of the chairman and five other members, and it has not been thought necessary to make new appointments or re-appointments by those in authority. There has been in consequence very little activity displayed as a board, except in holding emergency meetings during November, to pass compulsory vaccination orders made necessary by an epidemic of smallpox at present existing in several health districts. The full report will be submitted on these conditions in due course."

"The reports from the various local boards leaving much to be desired, are interesting from many standpoints. Those from the St. John, Moncton, Charlottetown and Miramichi boards being well detailed and exhaustive, and show praiseworthy activity on the part of the various officials and health officers, while the reports received from other local boards leave much to be desired, and the absence of any report at all from the

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large percentage of health districts, speaks loudly in favor of the movement for reform in public health administration.

"In many districts willing health officials are much handicapped and discouraged in their work through lack of support, and at times interference of municipal officials."

### Y. W. P. A. ACTIVITIES

An unusually good meeting of the Y. W. P. A. was held last evening in the War Veterans' rooms. Miss Jessie Church presiding. The treasurer reported that there was a balance of \$866.22 in the general fund, \$76.10 in the reserve fund, and \$106.57 in the returned soldiers' fund. The feature of the meeting was an address by Captain Best of the military Y. M. C. A. Plans were discussed for the fashion show to be held soon. The society was placed on record as supporting the food pledges and desiring to do all possible to follow to the letter the regulations issued by the food board. The sum of \$10 was voted to Captain Gale of the 25th battalion, formerly of St. John, to provide extra luxuries for the men of "A" company. It was decided to take over the canteen at the Seamen's Mission and \$50 was voted for this cause.

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