

HOUSE No. 1145

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
BOSTON, Dec. 31, 1918.

HON. ALBERT P. LANGTRY, *Secretary of State, State House, Boston.*

SIR:— In compliance with the provisions of chapter 269 of the General Acts of the year 1915, I have the honor to present herewith such parts of the fifth annual report of the State Department of Health for the year ending Nov. 30, 1918, as contain recommendations for legislative action, accompanied by drafts of the bills embodying the legislation recommended.

Respectfully,

EUGENE R. KELLEY,
Commissioner of Health.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION.

1. PREVENTIVE WORK AGAINST CANCER.

During the year 1917-18 the State Department of Health has had the benefit of the service furnished by the Cancer Commission of Harvard University. Pathological specimens sent in by hospitals and physicians have been examined free of charge by an expert pathologist. The service has cost the Commission about \$4,000, but the expense to the State Department of Health has been only that of furnishing the containers for the specimens, at a cost of approximately \$50. The value of this service has been twofold. First, expert service, ordinarily very expensive, has been furnished to physicians and hospitals free, thus rendering an accurate diagnosis available to all. Second, the service has been of very great educational value in that it emphasized the vital need of early, accurate diagnosis and surgical treatment.

The value of this work has now been ably demonstrated, and this year the Commission feels that the State Department of Health should assume three-quarters of the expense incurred in carrying on this preventive public health measure. This is, I think, a most reasonable proposition, and an accompanying resolve provides for the taking over of this activity by the State Department of Health.

2. DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH.

Chapter 792 of the Acts of 1914, creating a State Department of Health and authorizing the appointment of a State Commissioner of Health, makes no provision for a deputy commissioner of health who can, in the absence of the Commissioner, sign pay rolls and other necessary documents, etc.

3. INVESTIGATION OF THE MEDICAL INSPECTION OF SCHOOLS OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

As a result of the draft examinations we now know that from one quarter to one third of those examined were suffering from physical defects. Most of these defects could have been corrected or prevented in childhood if proper medical examinations followed by appropriate hygienic medical or surgical treatment had been carried out in childhood and proper physical education instituted. In this as in other things, foresight is better than hindsight and hindsight better than no sight at all.

To forestall such a state of affairs in the future, thus ensuring that our children be physically fit whether for tasks of peace or of war, is the present duty of those interested in the health and education of the child. Two methods of attack have been proposed. One is through extension and standardization of the present medical inspection law, which would make it obligatory on all cities and towns to furnish, to an extent necessary to carry out the work properly school physicians and nurses and to provide modern teaching of hygiene. The other is through the universal establishment of instruction in physical education, so called, carried out consistently throughout the period of school attendance, and properly adjusted to individual needs and capacity of the child as determined by the periodic physical examinations.

Both these methods of attacking the problem depend for success on close co-operation between the two agencies interested, namely, the departments of health and education. The execution of the provisions of any such law or laws might well be in the hands of the educational authorities. Rules and regulations, on the other hand, should be promulgated only after the concurrence has been obtained of the other department most interested, namely, that of health.

In view of the great need for uniformity throughout the State if such methods of school hygiene are to be effective, there should be central control provided for in any laws

enacted on this subject, and, under the circumstances, this control should rest with the State Board of Education and the State Department of Health.

4. MEMBERS OF BOARDS OF HEALTH ACTING AS INSPECTORS OF SLAUGHTERING.

The law provides a penalty for improper inspection on the part of a duly appointed inspector of slaughtering, but this penalty fails to reach a member of a local board of health acting in his official capacity as inspector of slaughtering.

An accompanying bill would place the penalty upon members of local boards of health as well as upon inspectors of slaughtering who violate the law.

5. COLD STORAGE OF ARTICLES OF FOOD.

Two years ago the State Department of Health requested certain changes in the cold-storage law, some of which it was found desirable to remove from this bill when before the food and drug committee of the Legislature.

I have particular reference to the first sentence of section 3 of chapter 652 of the Acts of 1912, which states that no article of food intended for human consumption shall be placed in cold storage if deemed by the State Department of Health to be diseased, tainted or otherwise unwholesome. The courts have repeatedly informed us that it is necessary under this section for us to examine goods before they are placed in storage.

The change asked for before the 1917 Legislature was the removal of the words "deemed by the State Department of Health." The warehouses objected to this change on the ground that it placed the responsibility up to them and that they were obliged by reason of their charter to accept any articles of food which were submitted to them for deposit.

Mr. Justice Bolster, chief justice of the Boston municipal court, suggested that after the words "placed in" in this section, the words "or retained in" should be inserted.

Under such an amendment this Department could then order decomposed goods out of cold storage, and if the depositor declined to remove them he could be prosecuted under the act.

6. SLAUGHTERING OF NEAT CATTLE, SHEEP OR SWINE.

The present slaughtering law which permits a person to slaughter his own animals without inspection, if the carcass is intended for his own use, has led to serious difficulties in many instances. Carcasses are often shipped into the slaughter houses, and, if they fail to pass inspection, their return demanded. In one instance an epidemic of trichinosis occurred, caused by a pig slaughtered without inspection and distributed among the neighbors of the man owning the pig. Then, again, a false impression is created by the operation of this statute as it now stands among those not cognizant with the law requiring that an inspector be present at the time of slaughter. They see their neighbors slaughtering their animals for home use without an inspection and proceed to do the same, only to find that they cannot sell the carcasses of animals not stamped by an inspector at the time of slaughter.

