

The issue of the "White plague" or tuberculosis (TB) was used as an excuse by Indianapolis city fathers to further segregate Indianapolis neighborhoods and then the entire Indianapolis Public School system in 1927

Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce Activities

1923

Death Rate Among Colored Folk in City Is High

Indianapolis Is Not Unhealthy Community as Figures Indicate

INDIANAPOLIS is not an unhealthy city. Neither is it the most healthy of cities of approximately the same class. These are the conclusions reached by the Public Health Committee of the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce of which Harry E. Jordan is chairman, after four months' study.

A tabulation of information contained in the United States Mortality Statistics for 1920 has been made by the committee, and compiled in the form of a chart, which is reproduced on this page, and which shows the relative standing of Indianapolis and eleven other cities.

The relatively high death rate among the colored population of the city is pointed to by the committee as a problem which should have intelligent attention at the earliest possible moment. A number of other important phases of the health problem of Indianapolis are discussed by the committee in the report which has been made to the board of directors.

Report of Committee

In part the report says:

"Indianapolis occupies the middle ground of not being extremely careless in protecting the lives of its people nor of doing any work efficiently enough to give it a lower rate and more favorable ranking than any other city in the group. Its position would be materially improved if the colored population were as resistant as the white. Eleven per cent of this city's population is colored. Next to Kansas City, Kansas, it has the largest per cent of colored people of any city north of the Ohio river.

"Their dying rate from the principal causes of death, except cancer, is higher

than the white. There is no reason why this condition could not be improved by organized effort. With the present shortage of labor and the knowledge that the colored people form this city's principal source of common labor, as a definite commercial proposition, improved health among them is desirable.

"This committee feels that a step in this direction will be taken by encouraging the formation of civic associations in two or three sections of the city. A meeting with certain leaders of the negro race has been held and the general conditions outlined.

"It is now desired that the board of directors approve and encourage such activities and the co-operation of the Civic Affairs Committee be obtained.

Dr. Mock Speaks

"The Marion County Tuberculosis Society arranged a meeting for May 10, which was addressed by Dr. H. E. Mock of Chicago, on 'Human Conservation.' This referred to the need of reclaiming and putting on a self-supporting basis those injured in industry. Practically nothing is being done in Indianapolis in the way of industrial health service, calculated to maintain the health of employes or restore them to activity after injury. The Public Health Committee believes the economic value of such service will come to be definitely recognized, especially during periods of acute labor shortage. It desires therefore to participate in the development of health service of this nature with the approval of the board of directors.

"The increasing attention being given to the health of growing children of school

age throughout the country warrants greater interest in the development of proper facilities for health service of this character, in our own city. A beginning has already been made in the establishment of a corps of public school nurses, in the extension of fresh air classes, and in the attention being given to undernourished children.

Need More Nurses

"The Public Health Committee realizes the need for a greater number of school nurses in proportion to the population which they must serve, and would urge a reasonable expansion of this work and of all other important phases entering into the care of school children.

"Infant welfare is also a subject which has engaged the interest of this committee. Prenatal service calculated to eliminate many of the conditions which are known to have a direct relation to the death of infants occurring within a month or more of birth, is one field of activity to which importance attaches.

"The committee also urges the necessity for the creation of additional infant welfare districts with nursing facilities adequate to care for 3,000 infants under two years of age annually.

"In part the proposed increase in health facilities will have to be met out of the appropriations to the Board of Health. In smaller measure the cost must be borne by some plan of private financing, but it is the opinion of the committee that larger public appropriations should be made in order to meet the most urgent needs, and that private contributions should be used to supplement the public funds."

DATA DEVELOPED BY COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH
INDIANAPOLIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

DEATH RATES PER 100000 - PRINCIPAL CAUSES
1911 - 1920
COMPILED FROM U. S. MORTALITY STATISTICS - 1920

	Registration Area			Indpls	Cincin nati	Col- umbus	De- troit	Chi- cago	St.L.	Louis ville	New Orls.	Pitts- burg	Roch.	Seat- tle	Los Ang.	Indpls.	
	Total	Rural	City													White	Col.
Death from all causes	1418			1508	1699	1503	1321	1440	1509	1731	2035	1753	1432	978	1408	1430	2140
Influenza & Pneumonia	207.2	179.2	232.5	192.4	219.1	190.3	210.4	229.1	223.5	274	265.6	415.5	178.3	122.9	148.9	175.7	334
Organic Diseases of the Heart	144.3	131.9	166.2	170.1	205.7	150.1	108.9	151.7	143.5	167.1	219.9	131.6	179.3	104.4	166.8	156.5	287.5
Tuberculosis - All forms	142.9	113.5	158.6	180.8	233.7	158	105.4	149.5	145.4	196	274.8	137.7	110.8	98.2	225	180.3	442.5
Nephritis & Brights Dis.	100.2	81.9	114.9	103.9	155.3	81.3	57.6	106.5	167	154.6	238.3	89.2	126.5	65.4	106.2	100	138.4
Cancer	80	68.7	90.7	91	113.4	100.7	60	87.8	98.6	87.9	97	80.9	104.7	81.3	111.6	93.3	71.3
Diarrhea & Enteritis under two years	62.8	48.6	71.9	48.6	51	31.9	81.5	120.7	53.1	38.7	64.9	111.9	68.6	12.9	32.6	46.4	67.7
Diphtheria and Group	16.5	13	19.8	18.1	13.9	9.6	32.9	33.2	26.3	11.8	15.1	25.4	19.1	5.9	7.7	18.6	14.1
Typhoid Fever	14	15.8	12.3	15.9	5.8	11.4	11.8	5.2	9.8	17.3	19.1	12.6	6.1	5.4	7.2	14.8	24.8
Whooping Cough	10.5	11.3	9.6	7.6	8.6	8.3	11.8	5.4	8.2	10.7	8	13.9	8.3	4.8	5.6	6.3	18.1
Measles	9.1	8.6	9.7	4.7	9.1	11.9	9.8	6.5	9.9	13.0	5.5	18.0	7.5	4.5	3.9	5.6	6.9
Scarlet Fever	5.2	3.9	6	4.3	5.9	3	9.7	14.6	8.5	2.5	1	10.5	8.7	2.1	1.8	4.5	2.1