

HORRORS IN CHICAGO'S PACKING INDUSTRY REPORTED BY REYNOLDS REPORT TO PRESIDENT

Charges of Upton Sinclair in "The Jungle" are Substantiated by the Investigating Committee of the Government—President Sends a Special Message to Congress and Recommends Passage of Beverage Amendment to Agricultural Bill.

Washington, June 4.—The Senate and House of Representatives: I transmit herewith the report of Mr. James Brown Reynolds and Commissioner Charles F. Neill, the special committee, whom I appointed to investigate into the conditions in the stock yards of Chicago and report thereon to me. This report is of a preliminary nature. I submit it to you now because it shows the urgent need of immediate action by the congress in the direction of providing a drastic and thoroughgoing inspection by the federal government of all stock yards and packing houses and of their products, so far as the latter enter into interstate or foreign commerce. The conditions shown by even this short inspection exist in the Chicago stock yards and are revolting. It is imperatively necessary in the interest of health and of decency that they should be radically changed. Under the existing laws it is wholly impossible to secure satisfactory results.

Orders Further Investigation.
When my attention was first directed to this matter an investigation was made under the bureau of animal industry of the department of agriculture. When the preliminary reports brought to my attention they showed such defects in the law and such wholly unexpected conditions that I deemed it best to have a further immediate investigation by men not connected with the bureau, and according to the report of Messrs. Reynolds and Neill, it was impossible under the existing law that satisfactory work should be done by the bureau of animal industry. I am now, however, examining the way in which the work actually was done.

Before I had received the report of Messrs. Reynolds and Neill I had directed that labels placed upon each package of meat and food products should state only that the carcass of the animal from which the meat was taken had been inspected at the time of slaughter. If inspection of most food products at all interstate points is not secured by the passage of the legislation recommended I shall feel compelled to order that inspection labels and certificates on such products shall not be used hereafter.

Packing Houses Unreasonably Dirty.
The report shows that the stock yards and packing houses are not kept even reasonably clean, and that the method of handling and preparing food products is uncleanly and dangerous to health. Under the existing law the national government has no power to enforce inspection of the many forms of prepared meat food products that are daily going from the packing houses into interstate commerce. Owing to an inadequate appropriation the department of agriculture is not even able to place inspectors in all establishments of this kind. The present law prohibits the shipment of uninspected meat to foreign countries, but there is no provision forbidding the shipment of uninspected meat in interstate commerce, and thus the avenues of interstate commerce are left open to traffic in diseased or spoiled meat. If, as has been alleged on seemingly good authority, the disease exists, such as the improper use of chemicals and dyes, the government lacks power to remedy them. A law is needed which will enable the inspectors of the department of agriculture to inspect and supervise from the hoof to the can the preparation of the meat food product. The evil seems so much less in the sale of dressed carcasses than in the sale of canned and other prepared products; and very much less as regards products sent abroad than as regards those used at home.

In my judgment the expense of the inspection should be paid by a fee levied on each animal slaughtered. If this is not done, the whole purpose of the law can be entirely defeated through an insufficient appropriation; and whenever there was no particular public interest in the subject it would be not only easy but natural to make the appropriation insufficient. If it were not for this consideration I should favor the government paying for the inspection. The alarm clause of certain certain quarters concerning this feature should be allayed by a realization of the fact that in no case, under such a law, will the cost of inspection exceed eight cents per head.

I call special attention to the fact that this report is preliminary, and that the investigation is still unfinished. It is not yet possible to report on the alleged abuses of the use of deleterious chemical compounds in connection with canning and preserving meat products, nor on the alleged doctoring in this fashion of tainted meat and of products returned to the packers as having grown unsalable or unsuitable from any or from other reasons.

this making artificial light in portions of even these outside rooms necessary. These dark and dingy rooms are naturally not kept suitably clean.

Ventilation.—Systematic ventilation of the workrooms is not found in any of the establishments visited. In a few instances electric fans mitigate the stifling air, but usually the workers toil without relief in a humid atmosphere heavy with the odors of rotten wood, decayed meats, stinking oil and entrails.

Equipment.—The work tables upon which the meat is handled, the floor carts on which it is carried about, and the tin and other receptacles into which it is thrown are generally of wood. In all the places visited but a single porcelain-lined receptacle was seen. Tables covered with sheet from iron carts, and iron tubs are being introduced into the better establishments, but no establishment visited has as yet abandoned the extensive use of wooden tables and wooden receptacles. These wooden receptacles are frequently found water soaked, only half cleaned, and with meat scraps and greasy accumulations adhering to their sides, and collecting dirt. This is largely true of meat racks and meat conveyors of every sort, which were in nearly all cases inadequately cleaned, and greasy and meat-soaked were found adhering to them, even after they had been washed and returned to service.

Sanitary Conventions.—Nothing shows more strikingly the general indifference to cleanliness, sanitation and sanitation than do the privies for both men and women. The prevailing type is made by cutting off a section of the building, and erecting a partition rising to within a few feet of the ceiling. These privies usually ventilate into the workroom, though a few are found with a window opening into the outside air. One located in the inside corners of the work room, and thus have no outside opening whatever. They are furnished with a row of seats, generally without seats. These rooms are sometimes used as cloakrooms by the employees. Lunch rooms constructed in the same manner, by boarding off a section of the workroom, often adjoin the privies, the effect of which is the general insanitary state of the atmosphere.

Abominable as the above-named conditions are, the one that affects most directly the sanitary cleanliness of the food products is the frequent absence of any lavatory provisions in the privies. Washing sinks are either not furnished at all or are small and inadequate. The towels, soap or toilet paper provided. Men and women return directly from these places to plunge their unwashed hands into the cans, tubs, and other receptacles for food products as sausages, dried beef, and other compounds. Some of the privies are situated at a long distance from the workrooms, and men relieve themselves in the hallways or in the corner of the workrooms. Hence, in some cases the fumes of the urine swell the sum of nauseating odors arising from the dirty blood-soaked, and filthy floors, and the beds for the disease germs of men and animals.

New Buildings.—It is stated that many of the unsanitary conditions are due to the practice of erecting old and have been built by piecemeal, and that in the newer buildings, erected from time to time, the defects of the earlier structures are being remedied. This contention is borne out by the facts. One of the large plants erected within recent years has most of the defects of the older buildings, and the other large model buildings have been erected, but one is an office building, while the other two contain only cooling, storage and sales rooms. No model buildings for the preparation of food products has been built in the stock yards of Chicago.

Treatment of Meats.
An absence of cleanliness was also found everywhere in the practice of meat being prepared for the various meat-food products. After killing, carcasses are well washed, and up to the time of cutting the carcasses are handled in a fairly sanitary and cleanly manner. The parts that leave the cooling room for treatment in bulk are also handled with regard to cleanliness, but the parts that are sent from the cooling room to those departments of the packing houses in which various forms of meat products are prepared are handled with no regard to cleanliness. The carcasses of some of the largest establishments sides that are sent to what is known as the boning room are thrown in a heap, and the workers are frequently seen to climb over these heaps of meat, and frequently throw them down upon the dirty floor beside their working bench. Even in cutting the meat on the bench, the work is usually held pressed against their aprons, and these aprons were, as a rule, indescribably filthy. They were made in most cases of heavy, rough, uncleanly cloth and bore long accumulated grease and dirt. In only a few places were suitable oleicoid aprons worn. Moreover, the men were frequently seen to stand, and with shoes dirty with the refuse of the floors, on the tables upon which the meat was handled. They were seen at the lunch hour sitting on the floor, and in places in which the meat product was handled, and all this under the very eye of the superintendent of the room, showing that the men are completely careless.

Meat scraps were also found being shoveled into receptacles from dirty floors where they were left to lie until again shoveled into barrels or into machines for chopping. These floors, it must be noted, were in most cases damp and soggy, in dark, ill-ventilated rooms, and the employees in utter ignorance of cleanliness or danger to the disposition of the meat after they have passed inspection on the killing floor. It might all be treated with chemicals, mixed with other meats, turned out in any form of meat product desired, and yet the packages or receptacles in which it was to be shipped out to the public would be marked with a label that their contents had been inspected by the superintendents of these matters. It was always the reply that this meat would afterwards be cooked, and that the other receptacles into which it is thrown are generally of wood. In all the places visited but a single porcelain-lined receptacle was seen. Tables covered with sheet from iron carts, and iron tubs are being introduced into the better establishments, but no establishment visited has as yet abandoned the extensive use of wooden tables and wooden receptacles. These wooden receptacles are frequently found water soaked, only half cleaned, and with meat scraps and greasy accumulations adhering to their sides, and collecting dirt. This is largely true of meat racks and meat conveyors of every sort, which were in nearly all cases inadequately cleaned, and greasy and meat-soaked were found adhering to them, even after they had been washed and returned to service.

A particularly glaring instance of uncleanness was found in a room where the best grade of sausage was being prepared for export. It was made from carefully selected meats, and was being prepared to be eaten fresh, and not to be cooked. The meat was then thrown out upon a table, and the employee climbed upon the table, handled the meat with his unwashed hands, knelt with his dirty apron and trousers in contact with the floor, and then proceeded to stuff the casing. He had finished his operation, again took hold of the dirty handles of the wheelbarrow, went back for another load, and repeated this process in a room where there was no water in this room at all, and the only method the man adopted for cleaning his hands was to rub them against his dirty apron or trousers. As an extreme example of the entire disregard on the part of employees of any notion of cleanliness in handling food products, the employee had just been killed, cleaned, washed, and started on its way to the cooling room fall from the sliding rail to a dirty wooden floor and slide part way into the street. The employee was picked up by two employees, placed upon a truck, carried into the cooling room and hung up with other carcasses, no effort being made to clean the floor.

Treatment of Meat After Inspection.
The radical defect in the present system of inspection is that it does not go far enough. It is confined to the inspection of the cleanliness of the healthfulness of animals at the time of killing; but the meat that is used in sausage and in the various forms of canned products and other prepared meats, and in the various processes, in all of which there is possibility of contamination through insanitary handling, and further danger through the use of chemicals. There is no government inspection and no assurance whatever that these meat-food products are wholesome and safe for the consumer. In all these products, when sent out, bear a label stating they have been passed upon by government inspectors.

As to the inspection of the alleged use of dyes, preservatives, or chemicals in the preparation of cured meats, sausages, and canned goods are not yet prepared to report. We look to the government for the handling of the meats being prepared for the various food products. The results of our observations have already been partly given. Other instances of how products may be made up, and still secure the stamp of government inspection are here given. In one well-known establishment, the meat was packed in some instances into barrels and a regular proportion being added of stale scraps of cooked scraps of beef and pork, and the meat was packed in scraps were dry, leathery, and unfit to be eaten; and in the heap were found pieces of pigskin, and even some bits of rope strands and other refuse. The meat was packed in the admission from the man in charge that this was to be ground up and used in making "potted ham."

All of these canned products bear labels of which the following is an example:
ABATOR NO. —
The contents of this package have been inspected by government inspectors at the Congress of March 2, 1901.

IN QUALITY GUARANTEED.
The phraseology of these labels is such that the government inspectors pass only upon the healthfulness of the animal at the time of killing. They know nothing of the processes through which the meat has passed, and they know nothing of the temperature to which it has been placed in the cans in addition to "inspected meat." As a matter of fact, they know nothing about the "contents" of the packages, and the packers place these labels—do not even know that it contains what it purports to contain. The legend "Quality Guaranteed" is entirely meaningless following the statement as to government inspection is wholly unjustifiable. It deceives and is plainly designed to deceive the average purchaser, and to give the impression that the label that the government guarantees the contents of the can to be what it purports to be.

The contents of the establishment piles of sausages and dry-milled canned meats, admittedly several years old, were found, which the superintendent told us would be tanked and converted into grease. The disposition

to be made of this was wholly optional with the superintendents or representatives of the packers, as the government does not concern itself with the disposition of it after they have passed inspection on the killing floor. It might all be treated with chemicals, mixed with other meats, turned out in any form of meat product desired, and yet the packages or receptacles in which it was to be shipped out to the public would be marked with a label that their contents had been inspected by the superintendents of these matters. It was always the reply that this meat would afterwards be cooked, and that the other receptacles into which it is thrown are generally of wood. In all the places visited but a single porcelain-lined receptacle was seen. Tables covered with sheet from iron carts, and iron tubs are being introduced into the better establishments, but no establishment visited has as yet abandoned the extensive use of wooden tables and wooden receptacles. These wooden receptacles are frequently found water soaked, only half cleaned, and with meat scraps and greasy accumulations adhering to their sides, and collecting dirt. This is largely true of meat racks and meat conveyors of every sort, which were in nearly all cases inadequately cleaned, and greasy and meat-soaked were found adhering to them, even after they had been washed and returned to service.

Another instance of abuse in the use of the labels came to our notice in two different establishments great stocks of old canned goods were being put through a washing process to remove the old labels. They were then subjected to inspection and "liven up" the contents—to use the phrase of the room superintendent. After this, fresh labels, with the government name conspicuously placed upon the cans, and they were to be sent out bearing all the evidence of being a freshly put up product. In one of these instances, by the admission of the employee in charge, the stock thus being relabeled was over two years old. In the other case the superintendent evaded a statement of how old the goods were.

The lack of consideration for the health and comfort of the laborers in the Chicago stock yards seems to be the direct consequence of the system of administration that prevails. The various departments are under the direct control of superintendents who are given no authority in dealing with the employees who seem to ignore all considerations except those of the account book. Under this system proper care of the products and the health and comfort of the employees is impossible, and the consumer suffers in consequence. The insanitary conditions in which the laborers work and the feverish pace which they are forced to maintain constantly affect their health. Physicians state that tuberculosis is disproportionately prevalent in the stock yards, and the victims of this disease are certainly made more comfortable by the system of administration that prevails. The various departments are under the direct control of superintendents who are given no authority in dealing with the employees who seem to ignore all considerations except those of the account book. Under this system proper care of the products and the health and comfort of the employees is impossible, and the consumer suffers in consequence. The insanitary conditions in which the laborers work and the feverish pace which they are forced to maintain constantly affect their health. Physicians state that tuberculosis is disproportionately prevalent in the stock yards, and the victims of this disease are certainly made more comfortable by the system of administration that prevails.

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that are entirely unnecessary and undesirable, and which are a constant menace not only to their own health, but to the health of those who use the food products prepared by them.

Government Inspection.
We observed that after the inspection before slaughter, the inspection after slaughter on the killing beds, the more minute examination of animals tagged on the killing floors, and the microscopic examination of the carcasses. Inspection before slaughter appears to have little value in most cases. That undue advantage is taken by inspectors taken by outside parties is charged, and opportunities for such are abundant, but no specific evidence was presented to us. That this important and superficial examination should be compulsory under the present law, whereas the more scientific examination after slaughter is only permissive, indicates a serious defect in the law.

Inspection After Slaughter.—Inspection after slaughter appears to be carefully and conscientiously made. The government inspectors are maintained that it is adequate, insisting that a passing examination of certain glands, of the viscera, and of the general condition of the carcass is sufficient to ensure that the meat is safe for consumption. It is urged constantly on this work, to detect at once the presence of disease, or of abnormal conditions. On the slightest indication of disease or abnormal condition the carcass is tagged and set aside for a later and more careful examination. There should, however, be more precautions taken to insure that the inspection must be kept antiseptically clean.

Microscopic Examination.—The microscopic examination of hogs to be exported to Germany appears to be made with great care, and it may fairly be asked why the same inspection is not made of hogs killed for the American market. The statement that, perhaps, an assurance that are frequently made in Germany, are not so used in America, is not strictly true. Large numbers of our foreign-born population eat ham and pork comparatively carelessly, and need the protection; and, further, much of this pork goes into sausage to be eaten without being cooked.

Number of Inspectors.—The present number of inspectors is certainly inadequate, as the secretary of agriculture has often complained. We noted that some large establishments had an obviously insufficient force. A few small concerns in Germany, however, may well be asked why the same inspection is not made of hogs killed for the American market. The statement that, perhaps, an assurance that are frequently made in Germany, are not so used in America, is not strictly true. Large numbers of our foreign-born population eat ham and pork comparatively carelessly, and need the protection; and, further, much of this pork goes into sausage to be eaten without being cooked.

Legislation.
1. Examination before slaughter is of minor importance and should be permissive, and not compulsory. Examination after slaughter is of supreme importance and should be compulsory.
2. Geats, now exempt from inspection, interstate commerce, should be included in the list subject to the inspection of the bureau of animal industry, and should be equally controlled by the regulations of the secretary of agriculture.
3. The examination of all meat products intended for interstate commerce, at any stage of their care or preparation, and for interstate commerce, should be included in the list subject to the inspection of the bureau of animal industry, and no mark or sign declaring that inspection has been made by government officials should be allowed on any can, box, or other receptacle of parcel containing food products unless the same has been subject to government inspection at any and every stage of the process, and the date of inspection should contain the date of issuance, and it should be a misdemeanor to erase, alter or destroy any such labels. Meat products, and food products, should be inspected when sent from any packing or canning establishment, if returned to the same, should be subject to such further inspection, regulation, and isolation from other food products as the secretary of agriculture may prescribe.
4. Power should be given to the secretary of agriculture to make rules and regulations regarding the sanitation and construction of all buildings used or intended to be used for the care of food products for interstate or foreign trade, and to make such regulation as he may deem necessary to otherwise protect the cleanliness and wholesomeness of animal products, prepared and sold for foreign and interstate commerce.

It should be forbidden to any person, firm, or corporation to transport or offer for transportation from one state to another any meat or meat food products not inspected and labeled.
General Suggestions.—1. The number of inspectors should be largely increased, so that special assignments may be made for night inspection, for the examination of animals at the platforms of stock yards, for the following of dead animals to their alleged destination, and for other special work.
2. Special government inspection should be carried on continuously to prevent violations of the law and general abuses, and to secure evidence when necessary.
3. A careful study of the standards of inspection in other countries should be made, and the results of the study should be published and circulated for the public information.
4. Consideration should be given to the question of specific selling of all carcasses sold as fresh meat, which, upon examination after slaughter, show signs of disease, but are still deemed suitable for food.

JAMES BROWN REYNOLDS,
CHAR. F. NEILL,
Washington, D. C., June 2, 1906.