

## PUBLIC HEALTH

# "Chamber of Horrors" Built by Food and Drug Bill Advocates

## Death and Deformity Featured in Gruesome Exhibits As Evidence of Harm Caused by Products Now Sold Legally

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This is the second of two articles discussing the New Deal's proposed Pure Food and Drug Law. They are written by Dr. Frank Thone, Science Service staff writer.*

**G**ETTING ready for the campaign that will be necessary to bring food and drug legislation up to date in this country, the Food and Drug Administration staff have prepared, in the Department of Agriculture headquarters in Washington, a "chamber of horrors," consisting of deceptively packaged foods, poison-loaded cosmetics and quack remedies, with attested and photographic evidence of their evil effects.

One of these has already become a classic: the "cure" for diabetes made from a common weed, the glowing testimonials of its users balanced by their death certificates. Perhaps the most pathetic of all the testimonials is one written after the victim was already dead: his widow wrote it; and so touching was her faith in the worthless fluid on which her late husband had wasted his money at twelve dollars a bottle, that she offered to recommend it to other diabetics!

By way of comic relief, there is a "female remedy," known and advertised for many years. Its published claims, and the testimonials of its users, still assert its great value in the cure of many specified diseases. But even under the present law it is not permitted to tell lies on the label, so the bottle itself bears this masterpiece of slippery phraseology: "Recommended as a vegetable tonic in conditions for which this preparation is adapted!" That is, it's good for what it is good for.

### Before and After

The prime horror in the whole collection, however, is not shown to the general public. It is a pair of photographs; the first of a really beautiful young woman, the second taken some weeks later, after a poisonous eyelash dye had nearly blinded her and had permanently disfigured her whole face.

It is so repellent that even the tough-stomached scientists in the laboratory don't care to look at it a second time.

But a short time ago Mrs. Roosevelt, an ardent crusader in the cause of the bill, visited the exhibit. She was given a glimpse of the two photographs. Immediately she commandeered them. And now she is showing that particularly atrocious consequence of the greed of one pirate of business to Cabinet ladies, Senators' wives, business and newspaper women, Junior Leaguers, and any and all who come her way. It may make delicate nerves squirm—but it is surely winning feminine recruits to the support of the Copeland bill.

### Amusing "Slick Tricks"

Slick tricks by food packers of dubious ethical standards, which offer unfair competition to the legitimate trade and at the same time cheat the consumer, have been uncovered by the dozen in investigations carried on by the Food and Drug Administration. Some of them are amusing, in spite of the meanness of the small-time greed they betray, so that visitors to the exhibits on display at the Department of Agriculture catch themselves laughing and frowning at the same time.

There is the paper-thin veneer of white meat laid around the wall of a jar of boned chicken, giving the impression of a really high-quality product; but within it is a mere mass of scraps, mostly rather undesirable-looking bits of dark meat and rice. There is the glass of "peanut spread"—peanut butter liberally diluted with starch. There are jars of preserves, demurely labeled "strawberry flavored," but with vivid pictures of big red strawberries displayed to lure the purchaser's attention away from the fact that content is like the famous "fifty-fifty" rabbit sausages—one rabbit, one horse.

The kid who spends his prized nickel on an ice cream cone may be made the victim of a double "gyp;" sub-standard content of butterfat, and too much air

whipped in to bulk up the ice cream. Legitimately made ice cream contains a little less than a third of its volume in air, but ice creams have been purchased on the open market that contained 56 per cent. of this cheapest of all diluting agents.

One slick trick that has been very irritating to the manufacturers of egg noodles was all done with cellophane. A manufacturer of a cheaper, eggless variety of noodles simply wrapped his product in yellow-tinted cellophane, which gave the customer the impression that the white dough-strips within were a rich egg yellow. At the same time the noodles were packed in very loosely, to make the package look big. Most of the complaints against this practice have come from competing manufacturers, who feel that this is decidedly a chiseler's trick.

### "Let the Seller Look Out"

All these sharp practices, and a lot more like them, petty as individual cases but bulking into millions in their cheating of the public, are strictly within the letter of the present pure food law. To stop them, the new Copeland bill bolsters up present provisions against misbranding, adulteration and misrepresentation; and it adds a new feature, the authorization of the Secretary of Agriculture to set up standards which must be met by manufacturers and packers.

The framers of the new measure believe they are safeguarding the interests of the legitimate industry as well as of the purchasing public. But for the "slick guy" in the business they aim to substitute for the old legal maxim: "Caveat emptor," "Let the buyer beware," a new one: "Caveat venditor," "Let the seller look out!"



### THE POPULATION PROSPECT

an address by

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Wednesday, December 13, at 4:35 p. m., Eastern Standard Time, over Stations of the Columbia Broadcasting System. Each week a prominent scientist speaks over the Columbia System under the auspices of Science Service.

One of the most hotly contested points along the whole battle line over the new bill to be presented before the coming Congress will be the matter of advertising. Advertising does not figure in the present food and drug law, because in 1906, when it was enacted, advertising was not such a force in national buying and selling as it is now. The present law merely prohibits untruth in labelling, so that an unscrupulous manufacturer or dealer can tell all the lies he thinks will bring him a profit so long as he does not print any of them on the package.

The new law strikes directly at this weakness, and it takes in plenty of territory while it is at it. An advertisement of food, drug or cosmetic shall be deemed to be false, it states, "if in any particular it is untrue, or by ambiguity or inference creates a misleading impression regarding such food, drug or cosmetic."

It is that latter clause, the ambiguity or inference one, that is raising a particular howl from the ranks of a certain part of the proprietary medicine trade. Manufacturers of products which the present law cannot prove to be fraudulently presented are expert in oblique statements, that create impressions without making straight assertions, and they are rightly afraid of what may happen to them if they are suddenly confronted with the necessity to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Some of their agents have tried to spread their panic to the newspapers and magazines, by the claim that editors can be fined and jailed for printing false or misleading advertising, of whose nature they could of course hardly be expected to be completely informed.

#### Accuracy in Advertising

The sponsors of the Copeland bill disclaim any intention to hold either newspapers or advertising agencies responsible for the factual content of the advertising they print or prepare for printing and they declare their intention to exclude them specifically from such responsibility. But by the same token, they do intend to "crack down" on the Ananias fringe among food, drug and cosmetic manufacturers, whose irresponsible claims work harm alike to advertising media, legitimate businesses, and the long-suffering consuming public.

One new and important advertising

medium will doubtless show the effects of this new demand for accuracy in advertising to a much greater extent than newspapers and magazines. That is the radio. After all, editors have been in the game long enough to know an advertising Ethiopian in the woodpile when they see one, and most of them want nothing to do with advertising that will defraud or injure their subscribers. But radio is a younger business and apparently either less worldly-wise or less discriminating than newspapering, for the stuff that gets into some radio advertising "spiels" makes newspapermen (and the general public, too) hold their noses. It will be most interesting to watch the revision of radio "plugging" if and when the Copeland bill is enacted into law.

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#### ASTRONOMY-PHYSICS

## Arctic on Short Rations Of Ultraviolet Radiations

**R**ESULTS of the recently concluded Polar Year, in which twenty nations with lands or interests in high latitudes both north and south collaborated in the gathering of geophysical and meteorological data, are beginning to be digested. The major findings will probably be the last to be announced to the public, for they require the longest and most tedious labors over the comptometers and sliderules; but in the meantime some interesting facts and figures on conditions in the regions of the aurorae and the midnight sun are beginning to trickle out.

One determination of very considerable practical importance in the everyday affairs of the probably near future is that the Far North is on permanently short rations of ultraviolet radiation. This has been learned from studies of solar radiation conducted at College-Fairbanks, Alaska, by scientists of the U. S. Naval Research Laboratory, under the leadership of Dr. H. B. Maris. It was learned that there is an adequate amount of this physiologically necessary radiation in the Arctic sunlight only when the sun is high in the heavens, and that occurs only during the noonday hours in midsummer. Summer mornings and afternoons, and the whole days of spring and autumn, are deficient or practically null in their ultraviolet

#### PHYSIOLOGY

## Lack of Vitamin G May Cause Eye Cataracts

**C**ATARACTS and other disturbances of the eyes can be brought about, in rats and mice at least, by a diet lacking in vitamin G, Drs. William C. Langston and Paul L. Day of the University of Arkansas School of Medicine reported to the Southern Medical Association meeting. Feeding vitamin G to the animals retarded the development of the cataract and even prevented its maturing, but did not cure the condition brought about by lack of the vitamin. The Arkansas investigators did not state whether this vitamin has any relation to cataract in man.

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concentration; and of course the long winter night, with the sun either totally gone or at most a feeble glimmer near the southern horizon, is a time of ultraviolet starvation.

When, therefore, we turn our attention to the more thorough exploitation of the natural resources of the Far North, or establish permanent aviation bases or weather observatories there, we must give special consideration to the ultraviolet requirement of the men who will do a right-face on Horace Greeley's advice and "go North." The short-lived gold rushes into the Yukon valley brought their vitamin-deficiency problem in the scourge of scurvy. But most of the gold-seekers soon came out again; they presented no permanent problem such as a long-time occupation of lands of twilight and dark will bring.

The conquest of the North must either be carried on by rotating corps of men who will take turns coming south for sun-soakings, or by equipping them with batteries of ultraviolet sun-lamps, or by making up in their diet for what they lack in direct irradiation. Codliver oil by the quart, as the Norwegian fishermen of the most northerly fjords drink it, may have to become a part of the daily tippel of the men of the "Drang nach Norden."

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