

PUBLIC HEALTH

Food and Drug Inspection

Supreme Court hears arguments in case hinging on whether or not government inspectors have right to enter and inspect factories and warehouses.

► THE PURITY of our foods, drugs and cosmetics and our protection from dangerous drugs are to a large extent at stake through a case argued before the Supreme Court.

Depending on the Court's decision, the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Law may have to be changed by Congress. During the delay this would occasion, an important provision of the present law could not be enforced.

The case hinges on whether Food, Drug and Cosmetic Administration inspectors have or do not have the right to enter and inspect factories and warehouses and take samples of products and examine shipping records.

The plaintiff, Ira D. Cardiff, operator of a food processing plant in Yakima County, Wash., claims they do not have this right. He points out that in one place in the present law, inspectors are given this right to enter and inspect at reasonable times only after first obtaining permission from the management authorities.

When he refused permission on several occasions, the Food and Drug Administration took the case to the courts. The District Court decided in favor of the FDA because another place in the law makes it a prohibitive offense to refuse entry to FDA inspectors. But the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals declared it had to decide in favor of Mr. Cardiff because a criminal offense was involved.

FDA officials think the intent of the clause about obtaining permission to enter was to allow arrangements for inspection at a reasonable time when the plant or warehouse manager could be present.

Without the right to enter and inspect, FDA officials would not be able to tell whether or not a factory or warehouse for food, drugs and cosmetics was run in a sanitary way. They would also have difficulty in establishing whether a food, drug or cosmetic had been shipped in interstate commerce. FDA has jurisdiction only over products shipped for sale across state lines.

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whether a food package had remained frozen all the way.

The indicator is a label made of a substance highly sensitive to water called sodium carboxy methyl cellulose. Printed on the label is: "This package has not been thawed." Directly under the label, printed on the package, is the word: "Thawed."

When the package is thawed, moisture collects on the outside from the surrounding air, and on the inside from the product. The moisture so distorts the material from which the label is made that the printing disappears and the label becomes transparent, allowing the customer to see the word "thawed" underneath.

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ENGINEERING

Now Prestressed Ceramics

► YOU HAVE heard of prestressed concrete. Now it is prestressed ceramics.

Experiments by F. R. Shanley and W. J. Knapp of the University of California at Los Angeles' department of engineering point toward a new, low-cost building process that may eliminate steel framework, mortar and painting in certain phases of construction.

Prestressing means that steel wires are run through a series of ceramic blocks, clamping them tightly together as you would hold several blocks together between your hands.

Prestressed ceramics are actually stronger than structural steel when loaded so as to eliminate tension, the U.C.L.A. engineers point out. In the laboratory small, light-weight beams of tile blocks and tensioned steel have proved capable of supporting enormous loads. In another phase of the research, a large section of tile blocks proved adequate as a wall for houses or flooring for bridges.

The tile section has tensioned cables running both lengthwise and crosswise. Pressure is exerted by simply tightening bolts at the end. No mortar is needed to hold the blocks together as pressure does this. Asbestos gaskets are used between the blocks to help distribute pressure evenly.

Painting may be eliminated because glazed tile, preprocessed in almost any desirable design or color combinations, can be used.

An abundant and inexpensive supply of ceramic raw materials makes the process economically attractive. Ceramic materials are also resistant to corrosion and such prestressed structures are expected to be resistant to earthquake and blast effects.

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INVENTION

Frozen Food Package Thaw Indicator Devised

► PROTECTION FOR the housewife from buying a package of quick frozen food which has inadvertently been thawed somewhere between the factory and the store's food locker is provided with an indicator recently invented. Charles C. Chapple, Wyndmoor, Pa., received patent number 2,617,734 for it.

Mr. Chapple points out that some quick frozen foods, when once thawed and then refrozen, are not satisfactory products. Sometimes they even spoil in the thawing process and become dangerous. Before his indicator, Mr. Chapple says, neither the customer nor the storekeeper could know