

lications for studies of memory and learning, for understanding the nervous system's level of flexibility and recuperative powers. ♦

REGULATION NEEDED

Inroads in the Meat Jungle

For more than 60 years the stamp of the U.S. Department of Agriculture purpling the meat sold to the American housewife has been a guarantee of safety. Only in the past few years have some Congressmen raised the flag of caution: while 60-year-old Federal laws may guarantee meat in interstate commerce, state laws (or lack of them) have fallen below the national standards. Meat sold within a state is free of Federal control and, in some cases, of any control.

Representative Neal Smith (D-Iowa) in 1961 began his campaign to get a bill passed that would amend the Meat Inspection Act so that flagrant state abuses of health requirements would be abolished by extending Federal powers. Action on such a bill is expected this year.

The fight now raging in the Congress goes back to 1963, when Dr. M. R. Clarkson, a former USDA veterinarian who is now executive director of the American Veterinary Medical Association in Chicago, issued a shocking review of "certain aspects of state and Federal meat inspection services and procedures." In the Clarkson report, intrastate abuses were pointed up. But no charges were made, and it was not until the fall of 1965 that Congressman Smith again introduced his bill. A similar one was introduced in the Senate, but again, neither got as far as committee hearings.

At last, this year, Congressman Smith's H.R. 6168 has not only had hearings; it has approval of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, believed to be tantamount to passage of the bill. Although it may be watered down to meet the objections of the meat industry, passage should be a blow to the axe to some of the jungle growth surrounding meat processing.

The gaps between federally regulated and state-permitted practices are apparent in reports in the files of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

- Unprotected meat was found in direct contact with the floor. Some of it had been on the floor for two weeks, so that it was necessary to walk over it to get to needed items in the cooler.

- Evidence of spoilage from dirty footwear on some meats and on their wrappers. Everthing was unclean and

there were bad smells.

- A room used to package frankfurters was without refrigeration; weights were inaccurate.

One of the worst conditions was found in Delaware, which has no meat inspection law. (This is one of the eight states with no law. The others are Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire and South Dakota. Thirteen additional states have regulations requiring inspection only if packers request it. In many others, even if laws exist, they are poorly enforced.) "At the risk of creating alarm on the part of all persons involved," the USDA inspector states, "I am forced to draw some conclusions which require prompt remedial action . . . to provide some degree of security for consumers."

At Laurel, Del., there were hides, hair, flies and hog lungs containing parasites in contact with the meat on the floor being readied for sale. At one slaughtering house examination showed a cow with acute inflammatory mastitis, though the cow was destined for steaks and roasts on meat counters. Food handlers were extremely dirty and revolting. Rodents and insects had free access to stored meats. Meats were contaminated by animal hair, contents of the digestive tract, sawdust, flies, rodents and the filthy hands and clothing of the food handlers.

These are admittedly horrible examples. All states with regulations less strict than the USDA's are not that bad. But the fact that some consumers of intrastate meats are so poorly protected is enough to make the point. But the packers are not all happy with Rep. Smith's proposed extension of Federal controls.

L. Blaine Liljenquist, president and general manager, Western States Meat Packers Association, on July 17 said before the House Agriculture Committee Subcommittee on Livestock and Grains holding hearings on Rep. Smith's bill:

"It is obvious that the USDA would like to have H.R. 6168 enacted. It will give them additional power to control the meat industry. But we object to labeling and packaging requirements being left to the discretion of Federal agents. We object to the domination that the Federal Government would inevitably exercise over state meat inspection services."

Even a proposal as moderate as Rep. Smith's offer to use matching Federal funds to help pay for intensified state inspection is objectionable to some of the packers.

"This problem can be solved by the states themselves without Federal intervention, Federal controls and Federal subsidies," says Liljenquist. ♦

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