

# CONDITIONS IN THE PACKING HOUSES

Officially Denied They Are as Represented in the Neill-Reynolds Report.

## PACKERS FOR INSPECTION.

Would Much Prefer to Have the Date On Labels or Cans Omitted.

Washington, June 6.—The house committee on agriculture today decided to comply with the request of the Chicago packers to be heard on the Neill-Reynolds report regarding conditions in the Chicago packing houses. The request was made by Thomas Wilson, who said he was an employee of the Nelson Morris company, but in this instance was authorized to speak for all the Chicago packers. Before hearing Mr. Wilson, the committee notified the department of agriculture and Mr. Neill, Secretary Wilson, Dr. A. D. Melvin of the department, and Mr. Neill at once came to the Capitol and the hearing began shortly before noon.

Mr. Wilson made a general denial of the existence of conditions in the packing houses as set forth in the Neill-Reynolds report.

**WHAT PACKERS OBJECT TO.**

Taking up the recommendations of Messrs. Neill and Reynolds, looking to the improvement of conditions, Mr. Wilson said the packers did not object to government regulation of sanitary conditions, but they did object to the secretary of agriculture being made the judge of what is sanitary.

"Why, he might call in outside talent which was inexperienced as to packing houses, and the business of slaughtering just as has been done recently," said Mr. Wilson. "Certainly we should object that there are experts on the question of sanitation and we have no objection to the closest scrutiny from these."

Supervision of every branch of the packing business was not objected to by the packers, said Mr. Wilson. The government may put on as many inspectors as it desires, so long as the packers do not have to pay for them. He said the packing business would be benefited by the inspection of the different branches from "the hoof to the can." Good inspection is what the packers want, he declared.

### DON'T LIKE DATES.

In addition to the question of who shall be the judge of sanitation, Mr. Wilson said that the only other suggestion made by the Neill-Reynolds report to which the packers would have any objection is the requirement that the date of canning be placed on all canned articles. He said that would serve no purpose, except to injure the canned meat business.

"Naturally, a buyer will choose the article with the freshest appearing label," said Mr. Wilson, "when, as a matter of fact, the canned meat does not deteriorate with age."

In speaking of the return of goods, he said that consignments are sometimes sent back to the shippers because a nail had been driven through a can in fastening up a box. This, he said, would cause that can to spoil and the consignee would inquire that the whole shipment had spoiled. Then, in possible rare instances, for air to have gotten into the can, and caused it to swell. He described such cans as "swellies" but said there is no danger of these ever being eaten, and added, with a laugh, "not the slightest." No one asked him why.

"Would it be possible to put in cans meat which has begun to putrefy?" asked Chairman Wadsworth.

"Not unless the meat were accompanied by chemicals such as it would be suicide to eat," replied Mr. Wilson. He declared that the use of bad meat has never been attempted by reputable packers and that it would be suicide to their business.

**WILSON'S STATEMENT.**

Mr. Wilson read a prepared statement to the committee, in which he said:

"That the livestock and packing industries have suffered an irreparable injury by the unjust and unwarranted criticisms of the past week. I am sure it is unnecessary for me to tell you gentlemen, who are in such close touch with the agricultural interests of the country, that the original motive been simply the obtaining of legislation to improve the inspection and sanitary conditions, that say the criticisms have been doubly unfair, especially for the very inception of the investigation the commission and their superintendents were given the assurance of the packers' co-operation, and their personal guarantee was given that any practical recommendations would be welcomed and adopted. We are now and have always been in favor of the extension of inspection, also of the adoption of sanitary regulations that will insure the very best possible conditions, and in this connection I most respectfully call your attention to the recommendations of Messrs. Neill and Reynolds, paragraph viii of their report, all of which except in some minor details has the hearty approval and support of the packers. What we opposed to, and what we oppose to, you gentlemen, is protection against a bill that will put our business in the hands of the orators, chemists, sociologists, etc., and the management and control taken away from the men who have devoted their lives to the upholding and perfecting of this great American industry."

"My denial of Messrs. Neill and Reynolds' report in detail would, of course, imply my opinions against them, notwithstanding my 20 years' experience in the business."

### A DISAGREEABLE BUSINESS.

"There is no question but that the many necessary operations attending the slaughtering of animals, the sight of blood and other煞风景 resulting, would have a very shocking effect on the nerves and senses of two men with the necessary fine sensibilities that such men as Messrs. Neill and Reynolds must have, who have devoted their lives to one line of scientific or sociological work, but men such as this committee made up, with broad and more general experiences, will immediately appreciate how the conditions reported have been exaggerated and that greatest effort is made at all times to handle the product in a clean and sanitary manner. We appreciate that Messrs. Neill and Reynolds' expertise especially equip them to recommend improvement in social conditions, and many of the suggestions made by them were found to be practical and have already been adopted, but we also feel that their two and a half weeks' experience in

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the packing houses does not equip them sufficiently to justify your honorable body in undertaking to legislate independently on their observations alone. For this reason he wanted the committee to make a personal inspection.

DR. MELVIN,

When the hearing was resumed, Dr. Melvin, chief of the bureau of animal industry, was asked a number of questions concerning ante-mortem examinations of cattle bought by packing houses. He explained that these examinations were all conducted in the stockyards. He was asked if he believed any diseased meat was put on the market in any form, but he would not express an opinion. He explained in detail the disposition of diseased cattle through the stock exchange, but said no such precautions were taken concerning other animals.

### COMMENTS ON CRITICISM.

Mr. Wilson again took up the Neill-Reynolds report, commenting on many of the criticisms. Concerning the condition of the animals' pens, he showed that the floors were properly drained to permit of flushing as often as needed, and he asserted that this was done. The Neill-Reynolds report spoke of 10 dead hogs being found in one place at 15 to 20 in another. Mr. Wilson said some mornings from 50,000 to 60,000 hogs are received, and that frequently dead ones are found in the cars. He did not think there was anything "revolting" about that.

In regard to the interior of the work rooms, Mr. Wilson said that any person would be pleased with their cleanly appearance before the day's killing and dressing is begun, and that persons not used to packing houses might be disgusted with the condition of the same rooms several hours later.

### NO UNWHOLESOOME CONDITIONS.

He contended, however, that there were no unwholesome conditions there. Every day, he said, all rooms, tables, trucks and other utensils of all kinds are washed as clean as water and scrub brush can make them.

Chairman Wadsworth read piecemeal what may be termed the startling features of the report and, as he pronounced each indictment, paused for answers. Mr. Wilson did not attempt to deny that odors arose from the entrails and off the carcasses, but he said they were removed as promptly as possible. He said he did not think that even Dr. Nell would suggest performing this material. He scented the charge that there was any odor from worn or decayed meat, as there was none of either in the operating rooms, to which it compared unfavorably.

So far as Mr. Wilson, representing the packers, had covered the Beveridge amendment in his testimony before the committee, it was apparent that the Wadsworth substitute met the exact objections he raised regarding the Beveridge amendment.

### FILTHY AND DIRTY.

Chicago, June 6.—Building Commissioner Hartson and 12 deputy building inspectors went to the stock yards today to make an inspection of every building in the place. The commissioner declared before leaving the city hall that he would compel the packers to correct every violation of the building ordinances that might be found.

The first place visited was the hospital of one of the large packing houses, and it was found that the stairways and fire escapes were not sufficiently ample for the number of employees and the owners of the plant were instructed to put from one to two stairways in all the buildings of the plant. They promised to do so at once.

Commissioner Hartson personally went to the big killing department of one of the large packing houses and described the conditions found there as "filthy and dirty." He characterized the room as a "dirty hole" unfit for the uses to which it is put. From the hot killing department he went to the portion of the plant where cattle were killed and dressed. Here the walls were covered with carbuncle searching after, After going through this building, the commissioner left for his office in the city hall. He said before leaving the stock yards, that there is not a modern building in the entire district devoted to the packing industry. The majority of them, he declared, are dilapidated, filthy and unfit for such use as it made of them."

He directed that the inspection should be of the most thorough character, and the work will not be completed inside of four or five days.

### REPETING HIS INVITATION TO MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION TO VISIT THE PACKING HOUSES.

Mr. Wilson questioned a charge in the Neill-Reynolds report that a carcase of a hog had slipped from a carrier into a privy and had been picked up and placed with clean carcasses.

He called upon Dr. Nell to state that it did not happen in one of the big packing houses.

"It did happen in one of the big concerns," Dr. Nell replied emphatically.

Although requested by members of the commission to state which one, Dr. Nell refused.

"But some of the very things that Mr. Wilson had just now denied," he said, "happened at Nelson Morris & Co.'s place."

Mr. Wilson took up the comparison with the model New York packing house, which was made in the Neill-Reynolds report, and said that the house was new and built under the strict building and sanitary regulations of the city. The new house of his firm in Kansas City would compare favorably with the New York house.

There were also just as good and sanitary houses in Chicago, and they say the criticisms have been doubly unfair.

Asked about the statement that employees relieved themselves on the floor, Mr. Wilson was inclined to question this entirely. If it was seen it must have been in one of the smaller houses.

"Mr. Reynolds or Dr. Nell would have to stand around a long time to see anything of that kind in a large packing house," he said, "and any man doing it would be instantly discharged."

### ONLY DYES USED.

Reading about the man with a dirty apron and dirty clothes who had no means of cleaning his hands except to wipe them on his dirty clothes, and that there was no water in the room, he said it would be impossible for an person to look clean after being worn for five minutes. The only dyes used were those to color the casings of the sausages, and not for meats.

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### AGRICULTURAL QUESTION.

Lower House of Donora Occupies Day In Discussing Subject.

St. Petersburg, June 6.—The lower house of parliament was again occupied today in the discussion of all-important agrarian problems, though the greater attention on the session was taken up with debate on extraneous matters. Only five orators, four of whom were not interesting, were heard on the direct subject of land, the long waiting list still including more than 100 names. Three of the speakers, who were Poles, reiterated the Poles' objections to the Constitutional Democratic project.

Opipko, the intransigent peasant orator, alone aroused the interest of the house with fiery invective against the plans of the majority. He preached the doctrine of full nationalization of the

surrounding lands and forests.

Asker, the leader of the employers.

Mr. Wilson denied that they were the refuse of humanity or that the recent strike had made any change. Ninety-five per cent of those employed since that strike were union men.

### TREATMENT OF GIRLS.

He denied that girls were compelled to stand while working, saying there were places for them to sit down, but undoubtedly some of them preferred to stand most of the time, that they might do their work more handily. Rooms were provided in which the employees might eat, and all of the big packers included coffee to their employees at one cent a cup.

"I think," he said, "that the people employed in the stockyards are more than the average, a healthy class. There are few cases of tuberculosis; perhaps some who do not know it."

Representative Scott asked if Mr. Wilson had ever investigated packing houses abroad. He had, in England; but he said American methods were superior.

### FOREIGN MARKETS.

"Have you had any difficulty prior to this agitation with your foreign markets?" asked Mr. Scott.

"We are having a great deal of trouble now," replied the witness.

At present about times prior to the present agitation, he mentioned that some trouble was had with Germany, but he did not regard this based on the quality of American meats.

Mr. Wilson then took up the foreign market amendment.

### ON THE LABELS.

"We should very much prefer," he remarked, "if the date on the labels or cans might be omitted." He also suggested that some carcasses might be found unsound and at the same time might be fit for food, or some portion of them.

He wanted the language to common carcasses only when the carcasses are found to be unfit for human food."

To illustrate, he said, a carcass might

be bruised on the shoulder and otherwise all right.

Dr. Melvin was asked for an opinion, and said that as applied to a live animal it might be "unsound" but fit for food.

Mr. Wadsworth said the whole thing was whether the animal was or not fit for human food.

What was the use of burdening the law with a lot of adjectives such as sound, thoughtful, etc.?

Mr. Wilson made the same objection to the use of the words "impure," "unsound," "unhealthful," etc., wherever they qualified the inspection throughout the amendment. The committee spent some time in discussion of the question.

### LABELS.

There would be no objection, Mr. Wilson said, to a sanitary regulation as strong as practicable. He admitted that the names of their products did not contain the article. As an example, he said his firm sold "Oxford" sausage, which was pork sausage sold under the name "Oxford." Another article named "brown" was simply a beef stew.

Representative Lorimer added that "brown" meant beef, pork, potatoes, carrots, etc.

"As a matter of fact," asked Representative Scott, "is anything called potted chicken which is not chicken?"

"No sir, our potted chicken is made entirely of chicken, and our potted turkey is made of turkey."

At this point the committee adjourned until tomorrow morning.

### WADSWORTH SUBSTITUTE.

The Wadsworth substitute for the Beveridge amendment which has been in the process of preparation for some days was made public today. The substitute differs from the amendment of the senate, first, in that it leaves the manner of inspection discretionary with the secretary of agriculture. It omits the adjectives descriptive of meat "fit for human food," these adjectives being "sound," "healthful," etc.

The substitute provides that the courts shall review any grievance in the matter of the enforcement of the regulations when applied to. It places the cost of the inspection on the government instead of on the packers. It exempts the preservative requirements as to food intended for export and simplifies the common carrier provision by allowing railroads to accept for shipment goods marked "inspected and passed" without the further restriction that the common carrier may refuse to take the shipment if the packing and slaughter house from which it comes is unsanitary.

So far as Mr. Wilson, representing the packers, had covered the Beveridge amendment in his testimony before the committee, it was apparent that the Wadsworth substitute met the exact objections he raised regarding the Beveridge amendment.

### INQUIRIES INVITED AND QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

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land, declaring that millions of voices were joining in the cry of "land, land, and for a full distribution of this divine gift."

The Constitutional Democratic project, he declared, was iniquitous because it permitted the existence of private estates, but this would be swept away by the righteous wrath of the people.

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### BRITISH TEACHERS COMING.

London, June 6.—Arrangements have been completed under a plan outlined by Alfres Mossley to send between November and March 500 British teachers to the United States and Canada, to study the educational systems of the two countries. They will be chosen from all parts of the United Kingdom and will represent all the classes in the schools.