

# Mr. Roosevelt and the Meat Inspection Bill

Chairman Wadsworth of the house committee on agriculture made public June 15 correspondence between himself and President Roosevelt with respect to the meat inspection bill. The president's letter to Mr. Wadsworth follows:

—The White House, Washington, June 14, 1906.

—Mr. Dear Mr. Wadsworth: I have gone over your bill very carefully and not only obtained a report from Mr. McCabe, as I told you I would, but also obtained a report from Mr. Reynolds on it. I am sorry to say the more closely I investigate your proposed substitute, the worse I find it. Almost every change is one for the worse, so that it hardly seems necessary for me to enumerate them. Perhaps the amendment as you have now drafted it is not quite as bad as it was when you submitted it to me in the first instance, but it is very, very bad. There seems to be one point in which it is possible that the amendment is even worse than the original amendment, if as seems likely there is no provision for making plants accessible at all hours to the inspectors. In any event, I am sorry to have to say that this strikes me as an amendment, which, no matter how unintentionally, is framed so as to minimize the chance of rooting out the evil in the packing business. Doubtless it suits the packers, who object to a thorough-going inspection, much better than the senate amendment and I have no doubt that not only the packers, but their allies in business and those stock growers who are influenced by them would prefer it.

"But I am convinced it would in the long run be a heavy blow to the honest stock raiser and the honest packer to adopt these provisions rather than the far better ones contained in the senate amendment for, as compared, with the senate amendment, this proposed amendment which you tell me is that of the majority of the house committee, would hamper in the most grossly improper fashion the secretary of agriculture in doing the work which you have appointed him to do and will prevent even so much of this work as can be done at all from being well and thoroughly done. If the bill should go through in the form that the majority of your committee proposes, it might be that I should sign it as working a certain slight improvement over the present law, but if so, I should accompany it by a memorandum explicitly stating how grave the defects were, and I can not even promise to sign it, because the provisions (about the courts as well as about other matters) are so bad that in my opinion, if they had been deliberately designed to prevent the remedying of the evils complained of they could not have been worse.

"It seems to me that the surest way to keep our foreign trade from us, and indeed our interstate trade likewise, is a thoroughly unsatisfactory condition, and to prevent its resuming the position which it formerly had, is to enact the law in the shape proposed in the amendments submitted to me by you.

"Sincerely yours,

"THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

"Hon. James Wadsworth, Chairman Committee on Agriculture House of Representatives."

After this letter had been read and re-read by members of the Agricultural committee, Mr. Wadsworth sent to the president the following more or less heated reply:

"Committee of Agriculture, House of Representatives, Washington, June 15, 1906—My Dear Mr. President: I received your letter last night. You are wrong, 'very, very wrong' in your estimate of the committee's bill. It is as perfect a piece of legislation to carry into effect your own views on this question as was ever prepared by a committee of congress. Every member of the committee is absolutely honest and sincere as yourself in his desire to secure the passage of a rigid meat inspection bill. They all know the meaning of the English language.

"To show you how unreliable the information is upon which you base your opinions of the bill, I call your attention to the following language in your letter: 'There is no provision for making the plants accessible at all hours to the inspectors.'

"If you will turn to page 4 of the bill (copy enclosed), line 2, you will find the following words:

"'And for the purpose of such examination and inspection, said inspectors shall have access at all times to every part of said establishments.' Can the English language be made any plainer?

Turn to page 6, line 16, and you will find this language:

"The secretary of agriculture shall cause an examination and inspection of all cattle, sheep, swine and goats, and the food products thereof, slaughtered and prepared in the establishments herebefore described for the purpose of interstate or foreign commerce to be made during the night time, as well as during the day time, when the slaughtering of said cattle, sheep, swine or goats or the preparation of said food products conducted during the night time.' Therefore in at least one of the two criticisms you make of the bill, you must admit that you are absolutely wrong.

"You say: 'Doubtless it suits the packers, who object to a thoroughgoing inspection.'

"I told you on Wednesday night when I submitted the bill to you that the packers insisted before our committee on having a rigid inspection law passed. Their life depends upon it, and the committee will bear me out in the statement that they placed no obstacle whatever in our way, but on the contrary, gave us many valuable suggestions, based upon their practical knowledge of their business.

"Your other actual criticism of the amendment refers to the 'court review clause.' The worst that can be said of the clause is that it is perhaps unnecessary, that it is already covered by existing laws. I have been taught always to honor the judiciary of my country. I have been taught always to respect the right of its citizens and to respect the right of property, and I can not believe that the mere repetition of a provision which guarantees to the citizen the privilege of the courts of the land when he believes his property rights are threatened can be justly or properly objected to.

"The rest of your letter deals with generalities and a general condemnation of the committee's bill. If you or your advisers will point out specifically wherein it actually fails to accomplish your purpose I can assure you it will be promptly remedied.

"You say further along in your letter.

"'And I can not even promise to sign it, because the provisions are so bad that in my opinion, if they had been deliberately designed to prevent the remedying of the evils complained of, they could not have been worse.'

"I regret that you, the president of the United States, should feel justified, by innuendo at least, impugning the sincerity and the competency of a committee of the house of representatives. You have no warrant for it.

"Very truly yours,

"J. W. WADSWORTH.

"To Theodore Roosevelt, president of the United States."

The appeal and review which the packers wanted, and which the president criticised, is provided for in the following clause of the House substitute:

"That any inspection of cattle, sheep, swine or goats, the meat and the meat food products thereof directed to be made in this act, shall be subject to appeal from the decision of the inspector making such inspections to the chief inspector in charge located at such establishment in which such inspection so complained of is made, and from the decision of said chief inspector in charge an appeal shall lie to the chief inspector in that locality, and from his decision an appeal shall lie directly to the chief of the bureau of animal industry of the department of agriculture at Washington:

"Provided, that the secretary of agriculture may, upon his own motion, at any time, consider any case so appealed or may direct the chief of the bureau of animal industry of the department of agriculture to so consider any such case, and the decision of the secretary of agriculture or of the chief of the bureau of animal industry, acting under his directions as herein provided, shall be final and conclusive.

"Provided, however, that nothing contained herein shall deprive any person, company or corporation claiming to be affected injuriously by any of the rulings or decisions provided for in this act, affecting the rights of property or interests of such person, company or corporation, from appealing from such ruling or decision and from having the same reviewed and testing the legality or constitutionality of such ruling or decision in the circuit court of the United States in the district or circuit in which said ruling or decision is first made, and the right to take such

appeal to test such ruling or decision is hereby conferred."

Two minority reports were filed in the house. One was signed by Lamb of Virginia, Bowie of Alabama and Chandler of Mississippi; all democrats. This report declares in favor of the Beveridge amendment, "after correcting certain minor provisions." This report also objects to the placing of the cost of inspection on the government; protests against the court review clause, and the waiving of the civil service law for one year in the selection of inspectors. After stating that the packers are to blame for existing conditions, the report says:

"Can it be tolerated that those whose acts endangered the public health and undermined the public confidence shall escape from the condition which they have created without penalty of any kind and with the added premium of two million dollars annually from the treasury of the United States to pay the expenses of correcting their own wrongs?" The court review provision of the substitute is characterized as "a sword over the heads of the inspectors engaged in the discharge of their duties and to cripple materially the efficiency of the service." Under this provision the report says a federal circuit judge can review the findings of any inspector and of the secretary of agriculture, whether on a point of sanitation or with respect to the condition of any meat or meat food products, and "thereby have the inspection system of the United States, intended to protect the public health, to be tried and controlled by the federal circuit courts. We assert that it is not a proper judicial function which they have attempted to impose on the courts." The waiving of the civil service provision is declared to be an "unsound and vicious policy." The inspectors appointed within the period named, it says, will hold office for life.

A second minority report was filed, signed by Representatives Haugan of Iowa and Davis of Minnesota, republicans. These gentlemen believe that the government should pay the cost of the ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection, but they think that the packers should assume the cost of such further inspection as may be necessary. In this second reply criticism similar to that extended by the democrats is registered against the court review clause, and the civil service provisions.

On June 16 President Roosevelt replied to Chairman Wadsworth, and reiterated his objections, particularly as to the court review clause.

## WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?

The Washington correspondent for the Pittsburgh Dispatch says that during the discussion of the conference report on the Indian appropriation bill in the senate Senator LaFollette cited a case in which one firm of lawyers in Indian Territory had been paid \$750,000 for services to the Indians.

"Another case in which the cornfield lawyer failed to attend to business," remarked Senator Spooner, glancing mischievously at Senator Tillman, who replied:

"The cornfield lawyer can't attend to all the stealing; if he did, he would never sleep."

The "cornfield lawyer" has done very well, and because of his faithful services has won the respect and confidence of the people. It would seem that some of the other of the many lawyers in the senate would be able to do something in the way of protecting the public treasury.

## THE QUANTITATIVE THEORY

The New York Press, republican, said something about Mr. Bryan's "abandonment of the free silver fallacy." Referring to the Press' statement, Louis F. Post, writing in the Public, Chicago, says: "Mr. Bryan has not abandoned what the Press calls 'his free silver fallacy,' which consisted in the quantitative theory of money—the theory that the value of money is determined by supply and demand. He was for silver coinage in order to increase the supply of money when gold was scarce; he has not concerned himself about silver recently because the increase in the supply of gold has augmented the quantity of money more than he had hoped for from the free coinage of silver. In other words, nature has supplied the quantity of money in gold which Bryan demanded of the government in silver. To say, then, that he has changed his position is a misrepresentation."