Federal Meat Inspection Act

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1. **Introduction of the Law**

The meatpacking industry in the United States’s main target was worker safety in the industry and also ensure consumer safety. The Federal Meat Inspection Act allowed the Secretary of Agriculture to examine, and censure, any meat product that could have been inadequate for human consumption. This program was created to work with other programs like Pure Food and Drug Act. The Secretary of Agriculture examined all animals before being slaughtered for consumption. The shipment of meat was also a subject of federal inspections during the whole process of meat making. Theodore Roosevelt, president of the United States passed the Meat Inspection policy in June 30, 1906. A couple of months before the Federal Meat Inspection Act became a law, in April 18, 1906 there was a major earthquake in the city of San Francisco. It wasn’t just a simple earthquake. It was a massive earthquake that left lots of disaster. This earthquake killed 3,000 people and destroyed about 28,000 buildings. Not only that but the earthquake also destroyed the city’s water mains and the firefighters had no way of controlling the fires that were also one of the many disasters caused by the earthquake. The city burned for a couple of days leaving most of the city consumed. People were left homeless and the damage done in that time is estimated to be about 500 million dollars.

1. **Need for the Law**

The Federal Meat Inspection Act came into law for many reasons. The harsh working conditions of the meat packing industries. Also, the need of food increased dramatically every single year. Then, the cans of meat weren’t labeled so people never knew what kind of meat was in the can or what other things the meat could’ve included. Furthermore, the meat industries lacked sanitary conditions, some industries were even infested with rodents or roaches and they wouldn’t even care about it. People would often obtain diseases because of the lack of hygiene in all the industries. There was also an awareness on addictions to patent medicines. Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, a chief chemist from the Department of Agriculture found a large amount of destructive preservatives in the meat-packing industries. This bill was addressed for all the people in the United States, including babies, children, adults, elderly and their health.

1. **Debates Over the Law**

Upton Sinclair published his book, “The Jungle”. This story was about Jurgis Rudkus and his family. Immigrants came to America in search of a job and many of these immigrants worked in the meat-packing plants of Chicago. The people working in these industries had to go through difficult working conditions, poverty and hunger, people were taking advantage of them, as well as politicians who passed laws that supported this. This story reflected the reality that some people were facing. After the book was published Sinclair sent a copy to Theodore Roosevelt. Right after, Theodore Roosevelt pushed Congress into protecting American's health by passing the Meat Inspection Act. During 1906 many bills concerning human health were passed. These bills were the Pure Food Act, Drug Act, and the Federal Meat Inspection Act. The Meat Inspection Act was passed in the United States House of Representatives, 240 representatives agreed to these bill and only 17 representatives were against it, turning the bill into a law. Journalists started reporting the lack of hygiene of the country’s meat industries, mainly the ones in Chicago. The people wouldn’t complain about the sanitation that was needed in the manufacturing plants until “The Jungle” was published because started to realize the situations that the industry’s workers were facing and the danger of consuming food without knowing where it was really coming from. The bureau had made some standards for food collaborations in 1903, just three years before the Meat Inspection Act and it still continued after the act but the courts did not agree on the standards that were taking place in these corporations, so, they created different laws that were focused on specific foods such as: apples, butter, and any canned food.

1. **Impact of the Law**

The Meat Inspection Act improved the life of the people living in the United States in many ways. This law created a better economy and not only that but it also changed some aspects of society. It created a better economy because the people started trusting the meat industries again and they started buying more meat because they liked what they were buying. The social aspect of industries changed because people started seeing the industries cleaner since the items were now being individually inspected before making any shipment.

**V.** **Recent Events**

Now a days, which ever person or industry that violates the Meat Inspection Act policy will be given three opportunities to correct their violations. During the first opportunity, the companies have the chance to fix the violations during the routine and inspection process. If they don’t succeed then the license holder will be required to attend a “Office Conference”. When the industry is given a second opportunity, the industry must correct their violations right away following the Office Conference. If they feel, the license holder must attend an “Informal Hearing”. During the third and last opportunity, the industry must fix any violations following the informal hearing. Then, if they fail the health department has to make a decision on whether to limit, suspend, or take away the service establishment license.

Source List

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