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Congressional Record S. 8429 - The Federal Meat Inspection Act

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That custom operations at any establishment shall be exempt from inspection requirements as provided by this section only"; so as to make the bill read:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Federal Meat Inspection Act (34 Stat. 1260, as amended by the Wholesome Meat Act, 81 Stat. 584), is hereby amended by deleting the proviso from paragraph (a) of section 23 of the Act, and the colon preceding said proviso, and substituting therefor the following: "nor to the custom preparation by any person, firm, or corporation of carcasses, parts thereof, meat or meat food products, derived from the slaughter by any person of cattle, sheep, swine, or goats of his own raising, or from game animals, delivered by the owner thereof for such custom preparation, and transportation in commerce of such custom prepared articles, exclusively for use in the household of such owner, by him and members of his household and his nonpaying guests and employees: Provided, That in cases where such person, firm, or corporation engages in such custom operations at an establishment at which inspection under this title is maintained, the Secretary may exempt from such inspection at such establishment any animals slaughtered or any meat or meat food products otherwise prepared on such custom basis: Provided further, That custom operations at any establishment shall be exempt from inspection requirements as provided by this section only if the establishment complies with regulations which the Secretary is hereby authorized to promulgate to assure that any carcasses, parts thereof, meat or meat food products wherever handled on a custom basis, or any containers or packages containing such articles, are separated at all times from carcasses, parts thereof, meat or meat food products prepared for sale, and that all such articles prepared on a custom basis, or any containers or packages containing such articles, are plainly marked 'Not for Sale' immediately after being prepared and kept so identified until delivered to the owner and that the establishment conducting the custom operation is maintained and operated in a sanitary manner."

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. President, I wish to thank the distinguished majority leader (Mr. MANSFIELD) for calling up S. 3592. He has been very helpful in this matter. This measure means a great deal to our rural areas. The bill was introduced by me to meet a very urgent problem. The measure is cosponsored by Senators HRUSKA, BELLMON, BURDICK, DOLE, JORDAN of North Carolina, YOUNG of North Dakota, PROXMIRE, MCGEE, and MANSFIELD.

This legislation is greatly needed. The enactment of this bill will not in any way hinder or thwart the objectives of the Wholesome Meat Act, which is now the law. The enactment of this bill is necessary in order to make that law workable and to make it do justice, particularly in rural areas.

Section 23 (a) of the Federal Meat Inspection Act at present exempts from inspection custom slaughtering. This is as it should be. Custom slaughtering can be defined as that slaughtering that is performed for hire by a slaughterer who kills and perhaps processes hogs and cattle and other meat animals for the owner of such meat animals, and all of the meat and meat products are returned to that owner and used by him in his own house-

hold. In other words, just as an owner can kill his own animal and eat the meat without being subject to the Federal inspection, he can hire someone else to do the work. It was sound and right that custom slaughtering be exempt from the Meat Inspection Act that was passed sometime ago.

The problem arises by reason of the proviso to that section which prohibits custom slaughterers to engage in the business of buying or selling any carcasses, parts of carcasses, meat or meat food products. In other words, if an individual is a custom slaughterer, he cannot under existing law engage in either the retailing or wholesaling of meat. The effect of this proviso is to make it impossible for thousands of small businessmen to continue to operate. The income from custom slaughtering is not sufficient to make their business economically feasible. They need to continue to have the opportunity of selling meat to the public as most of them have been doing through the years.

Unless this legislation is passed we will see the closing of a great many small businesses—particularly in the rural areas—but the problem does not end there. Those businesses are a necessary and important part of their community. If those businesses close, it will bring hardship and possible closing upon other businesses, and it will be a setback for our small communities at the very time that it is the policy of our Government to promote the economic opportunities of rural America.

Mr. President, the bill S. 3592 has been carefully worked out. It will fully protect the public. It is a compromise measure. It will not give to every local meat processor all that he desires. It will enable him to survive. At the same time the public is assured clean and wholesome meat to the same extent as it is now under existing law.

Here is what this bill would do. It would permit a custom slaughterer, who also very likely might be operating a locker plant, to engage in the buying and selling of meat, but the meat that he sells to his customers must come from an inspected plant.

This means that the passage of this bill will not authorize 1 ounce of uninspected meat to be sold, either at wholesale or at retail. The public will be fully protected.

The measure is supported by the Department of Agriculture and numerous farm organizations. It is supported by locker plant operators, custom slaughterers, and merchants. As shown by the report it is supported by consumers, and one group of well-organized consumers, the Consumers Federation.

The amendment was agreed to.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, read the third time, and passed.

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote by which the bill was passed.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

THE FEDERAL MEAT INSPECTION ACT

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill (S. 3592) to amend the Federal Meat Inspection Act, as amended, to clarify the provisions relating to custom slaughtering operations which had been reported from the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry with an amendment on page 2, line 13, after the word "basis", insert a colon and "Provided further,