HIS 949

Nikki Milano

The Pure Food and Drug Act

The Pure Food and Drug Act was enacted on June 30th, 1906, and set out a law that provided for the federal inspection of meat products and forbade the selling, transporting, and manufacturing of different medicines that mainly contained opiates, foods, and drugs. This act was important because it led to the creation of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).[[1]](#footnote-1) However, when this act was first passed, not everyone supported it. Some did not support it because they thought that it gave the government too much power regarding what the citizens put into their bodies, and therefore violated their individual liberty. The patent medicine industry also objected because now they had to label exactly which drugs were in their products.[[2]](#footnote-2) Sometimes, they didn’t want the population that took the drug to know what was in it because it could have been so bad that they would stop purchasing the drug. Most of the time, these medicines would contain traces of heroin, morphine, and cocaine that would later on be addictive to the prescriber. On top of that, there were no advertising laws on these drugs either, so the drug maker could claim that the drug was pure and could cure whatever upsets a person. The Pure Food and Drug Act took a step in controlling the opiate addiction in the United States during this time.

In the *American Journal of Public Health*, Illyse D. Barkan states, “Over 200 proposals for comprehensive legislation on food and drugs had appeared in Congress between 1879 and 1906.”[[3]](#footnote-3) This shows that not many members of Congress took the time to pass this law and do the research on how bad the food industry was to American’s health. However, the 200 proposals could also show that there was persistent concern over this issue, but the actual law could never be agreed on.

President Theodore Roosevelt began the process of making sure that meat was inspected before being consumed by Americans, with the Meat Inspection Act. Following that act, on June 30th, 1906, Roosevelt signed off on the Pure Food and Drug Act.[[4]](#footnote-4) He signed this act as a result of the book *The Jungle*, published by Upton Sinclair, and the uproar it brought about. This book explained the corruption of the meat packing industry in America, and expressed how disgusting it was. [[5]](#footnote-5) Therefore, Theodore Roosevelt had a “push” towards signing the Pure Food and Drug Act, which is why he was the first president to take initiative and to regulate food production in America.

1. . eNotes, “Pure Food and Drug Act (1906),” eNotes, Last modified 2012, http://www.enotes.com/pure-food-drug-act-1906-reference/pure-food-drug-act-1906 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . Raymond Goldberg*, Drugs Across the Spectrum*, (Cengage Learning 2009), chap. 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. . Illyse D. Barkan, “Industry Invites Regulation: The Passage of the Food and Drug Act of 1906,” *American Journal of Public Health* 75.1 (Jan. 1985), P. 18-26 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. . Newspaper and Current Periodical Reading Room, “Topics in Chronicling America-Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906,” The Library of Congress, last modified February 13, 2012. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/topics/purefood.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. . Pure Food and Drug Act: A Muckraking Triumph, United States History, accessed September 17, 2012, http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h917.html [↑](#footnote-ref-5)