

February 17, 1960

There is much confusion and overlapping with regard to food and the public health. Some responsibilities center in the Food and Drug Administration, some in the United States Department of Agriculture, and some in the United States Public Health Service. From an administrative standpoint, these responsibilities should be reviewed and redefined for the protection of both the public, the food industry, and agriculture.

In the Food and Drug Administration are many career men for whom the food industry has the highest regard. Yet this agency of the Government, as currently set up, is quite unique and improperly so. It is both the prosecutor and the judge. There is no Court of Appeal open to industry.

Career men, highly respected public servants in the Food and Drug Administration have long known and many times forcefully and openly stated that they could discharge their responsibilities in the protection of public health more effectively by full cooperation with industry. Industry subscribes to this thesis.

And yet the cranberry catastrophe, from which many innocent cranberry farmers are forced to the brink of bankruptcy, was caused by a complete break-down of Government-Industry consultation. A telephone call forty-eight hours before the public condemnation of an entire segment of agriculture can hardly be called effective collaboration.

In summary, the purpose of this letter is to bring before the highest authority the need for providing safeguards for the future, so that this tragic circumstance will not be repeated... for the benefit of the public and for those who supply its food products.

Sincerely yours,



AES:gs

P. S. If you have time to read them, attached are copies of some recent editorials which are more eloquent than I in expressing these views.

A. E. S.

Copy for REC

February 17, 1960

Mr. James C. Hagerty
White House
Washington, D. C.



Dear Mr. Hagerty:

Your press release, as reported on the front page of the NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE of February 13, 1960, under the headline "Eisenhower Looks Into Food Perils" has prompted this letter. It is written with a sensitivity that the press does not always report fully or interpret accurately statements furnished in press releases.

It is laudable that the President, even at this late date, is looking into the matter of food additives and chemicals used in agriculture. But in asking for a report and advice from "Government Scientists," he is not going nearly far enough.

On these matters, in the public interest, and for maximum protection of public health, a continuing program should be provided for consultation with the Food Industry and for consultation with reputable scientists of the highest ethical and professional standing, outside the circle of "Government Scientists."

Had such a program of consultation been in effect, the recent cranberry fiasco would have been avoided, with its resultant massive dose of unnecessary public scare and unfair damage to cranberry farmers.

The Federal Government, and its branches, should not attempt to go-it-alone. The maximum protection of public health can be accomplished only by the fullest cooperation and coordination of Government and industry. When this breaks down, somebody inevitably gets hurt. Many, but apparently not all, good public servants with years of commendable, if almost anonymous, contributions to the public good, have long recognized this as a fact, a keystone of good policy and administration.