

Minutes of Meeting of Committee on Agriculture, held in Room 32, Chairman Virgil Getto - 55th Nevada Assembly Session - February 5, 1969.

Present: Getto, Dini, Howard, Hafen and Brookman.

Absent: Close and Young.

Chairman Getto convened the meeting at 10:20 A.M. and introduced Mr. L.M. Burge, Executive Director, Nevada State Department of Agriculture; Ernest Gregory, Nevada State Division of Health; Walter Christensen, Nevada State Division of Health; R. Arthur Warden, Webster Hunter, Senator Carl Dodge, and Assemblyman R. M. Prince.

He announced the purpose of the meeting was a preliminary hearing on the meat inspection law, and introduced Mr. Webster Hunter.

Mr. Hunter said that Congress had passed a Federal Meat Act and intended to make it mandatory that the States share a cooperative program, or by December 1969, the Federal Government would move in and take over the State meat programs. He said last year there was a bill put in to the Legislature and it was not acted upon favorably, so we had gone back to our old Nevada Meat Act, under which we are presently operating. He said a budget had been prepared showing the amount of money necessary if Nevada was to participate in this proposed new program. It would cost \$200,735, half of which would be funded by the State and half by the Federal Government. It would include meat inspectors, veterinarians, secretaries, travel, labeling costs, and training meat inspectors under the Federal Training Program. He said he had received a note from the Government people saying they were tabling the funds, and the State Manpower Division is tabling 50%. He said many Nevada people have been lead to believe this will be a Nevada program, but as he sees it, we will be guided by Federal regulations and statutes and Federal people will be in here, merely to see that we tell our people what to do. In other words, we will be a mouthpiece to pass on this information.

Mr. Getto asked Mr. Hunter what was the latest communication from the Federal people, and asked if a lot of things weren't still hanging.

Mr. Hunter replied, "yes, and there are still urgent messages coming in from the Federal people to hurry and sign this agreement; but, of course, we do not agree." He said they had felt that the State Health Department should be in charge at this time, and they were in no position to commit the legislative body to participate in this thing by signing the contract. He said they felt the legislature was the ones to decide which state agency should pursue this program.

## Assembly

Page 2 - Minutes of Meeting of Committee on Agriculture-Feb. 5 69

Mr. Hunter said that if we participate in this program, we are going to pay the 50%. If we do not participate, it will cost nothing, except that the Nevada plants will be inspected, starting this year.

Senator Dodge asked how difficult will it be for Nevada plants to comply with Federal Regulations?

Mr. Gregory asked what will be the specific Federal requirements.

Mr. Hunter said the Federal Government is not being very specific, but had talked about construction requirements for the building of plants. He said that some of the States that have terminated their contracts, such as Ohio, have discovered their plants are not in too bad condition. He said surveys have been made, and they do not look too bad.

Mr. Getto read from a directive from Dr. Amsiejus, who has been designated as the Federal Director for all of the States.

"1. Meat inspection under Agriculture with cooperation of Health Division is acceptable.

2. No new physical plant specifications. Stated that the smaller the operation, the less important specifications would be. No plant in Nevada operating at a capacity that would require all specifications. A one man operation would be allowed the greatest leaway. (Easier for him to tailor his operations). A large plant with fast processing would have to have very close tollerances.

3. Some agreement could be drawn and signed between State and USDA consisting of a so-called Phase I contract. This might provide that statutory provisions now existent would be enforced, rules and regulations enforced, and funds provided for inspection.

4. There is a joint meat and poultry agreement that can be entered into."

Dr. Hunter replied, "yes. They are also requiring meat pathologists to work in conjunction with meat labeling, which would require approximately an additional \$12,000."

Assemblyman Prince asked, "where they are under Federal supervision, the meat packer has to pay the inspector?"

Mr. Hunter answered, "No, the Government pays this".

## Assembly

Page 3 - Minutes of Meeting of Committee on Agriculture - Feb. 5, 69

Assemblyman Brookman asked Mr. Hunter, "With your new administration coming in in Washington, what kind of bearing would all these new meat accounts have? I get the impression from what you have said that they are not answering you."

Mr. Hunter replied, "They are indefinite".

Senator Dodge asked, "How about a bill to create a cabinet appointment for meat inspection? The reason we are not getting answers from the Department of Agriculture is because they do not have the inspectors. In Reno, I understand one man is taking care of 4 jobbers".

Mr. Getto replied that one day, they did all 4 and then went to Yerington.

Mr. Howard stated that, "If we set up the meat program in Nevada, we will be supervised by the Federal Government at the State's expense. It is my viewpoint if these regulations aren't going to effect our producers and packers to such great extent, I see no reason why this body should set up and draft legislation that the Federal Government is going to augment with our own inspections?"

Mr. Hunter stated they had only drafted their legislation to be presented to the States, which is combined. He said we are going to have to take the combined bill or draft our own bills. "Dr. Amsiejus told me Utah has already gone for it, and if you people are going to participate, you will have to live by these Federal rules".

Senator Dodge asked how many people here in the legislature really feel that we would have any hope of getting the people in this State to pick up this table? Do you have any hope of getting the money committees to review this table? Mr. Howard answered that this is the underdog of the Federal Government doing our work.

Senator Dodge said there weren't that many plants around, and that there are only 7 slaughter plants scattered around Nevada.

Chairman Getto said the processors had to be considered too.

Mr. Hunter said there are 23 meat processors in the State. He said, "When the processors tried to pin down Dr. Amsiejus, he told them he didn't know, and to ask Mr. Hunter."

Senator Dodge: "I think what we must do once more is to call these packers in here and find out if in fact we could not prevail on the legislature whether they feel there is any way we could update the financial cost of our plants in order to comply. I don't know what we could do for them if they said they could not".

## Assembly

Page 4 - Minutes of Meeting of Committee on Agriculture - Feb. 5, 69

Getto: "1. Whenever you have straight Federal control, it is a long way to the source; ie a case in California, a fairly large plant - before they got through, the cost was \$35,000 before they fired the guy. He had mental problems.

2. Whenever you talk about the "Feds" taking over, this money does not come out of the sky. It is still our tax money. When we put it in the laps of the "Feds", it isn't our problem anymore".

Mr. Hunter said if we take too much time in reviewing, we won't make this legislative session, and our time will run out and they will then sieze our plants.

Mr. Burge asked is this act was basically the same as the 1967 Act. Mr. Getto said the Poultry Act only effects the jobber. Mr. Hunter stated we have no poultry slaughter houses at the present time. "None of this is on the retail level."

Brookman asked if one inspector takes care of all plants in Nevada. Dini answered "Four inspectors take care of Reno and also Yerington. He asked, "How many inspectors are required?"

Hunter: "The Federal Government will decide".

Senator Dodge asked how many Federal inspectors do we have in Nevada now. Mr. Hunter replied "We have 2 now. They only inspect the Federal plants; one slaughter plant and 4 meat processors. There is one inspector in Southern Nevada and one in Yerington that takes care of the Federally inspected slaughter house.

Mr. Burge stated it is difficult to get the Federal Government to lay out guide lines to follow. Mr. Hunter stated they were doing their best. Their superiors haven't designated to them, so that they know what they are going to do. This is a brand new program, and they do not know themselves. He said he thought this body should know that the Nevada State Health Department had prepared this budget to save and that "you people" could reject or accept it. "It was prepared under the Health Division and eliminated from the Governor's budget. If you decide to go with it, you will have to go from scratch."

Chairman Getto said he had been in contact with the Governor's Office, and it has been made clear that if we can come up with a workable program, he will put it back in the budget. The Governor said we had no program to offer, and that was why it was dropped. He said we must get the people from the money committees behind this bill.

Senator Dodge suggested going to the Ways and Means Committee with it and see if they will appropriate.

## Assembly

Page 5 - Minutes of Meeting of Committee on Agriculture - Feb. 5, 69

Chairman Getto, regarding the budget, asked if we can go over that again regarding the strict regulations we have to comply with, how many plants can be taken care of by inspectors.

Mr. Hunter said when the budget was made, the thinking was very liberal on how many plants we could have. The Federal people took a good hard look and decided it could not be. Then we had to tighten it up a little.

Walter Christensen stated the guide lines were set out by the Federal people - one inspector for every three plants. Where travel was concerned, you could not very well pro-rate 1/2 a man.

Getto said these were lay inspectors and they would have to be trained. They would be Federally trained and would be sent to school for a 6-weeks course, and then 2-weeks orientation at another training center.

Mr. Burge stated that was at State cost.

Mr. Getto said it omitted a pathologist, and they would have to add another \$12,000 to the budget. Mr. Hunter concurred.

Mr. Getto suggested holding a hearing, and asked the committee guests to come in with their proposed budget. He also said the Federal representatives should be contacted and have them here and have the industry come in also. Also meet with the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. Hunter stated that Dr. Amsiejus was aware of the meeting presently in session and would welcome an invitation to appear before the committee at any time. He asked if the committee would like to have him at the hearing and said that Dr. Amsiejus had said he would be present if he could be notified 2 hours before the plane left Arizona, and he would be on it.

Mr. Getto asked who was the man they had had last year from San Francisco, and Dr. Hunter replied, "Mr. Thorndike". Further, he said, "You can call Summers from Washington, if you prefer". He said he could route this request through Dr. Christoferson, who is third highest on the ladder.

Dr. Hunter said that Dr. Amsiejus felt that we are making progress and doing all we could, prior to this Legislative Session, and he (Dr. Amsiejus) will extend the Dec. 69 deadline if necessary.

Chairman Getto stated this would be fine as long as Dr. Amsiejus was in this position, but if he was replaced, then they would be in trouble.

Hunter asked what advantages we can give to our people running these plants by passing any type of legislation. What is in it for the State of Nevada, the producer, and the slaughter house? He said State plants don't have the rights that Federal plants would have. He said interstate laws would be more lenient.

Getto asked if Federal people take over plants, can they go interstate, and Mr. Hunter answered, "yes, if they go completely". He said that in the past we have had our own State laws according to our own statutes and we have been operating legally. However, Congress has passed laws on the National level which we cannot meet, and they are giving us 2 or 3 years to comply with these regulations. In the first place, we do not have anti-mortem inspections. We only have post-mortem inspections. The new Federal law says we must have both anti-mortem and post-mortem inspections.

Mr. Getto asked Mr. Hunter how much time would be required to get these people here for a hearing.

Mr. Gregory answered, "About one week".

Mr. Getto then announced that a hearing would be held on February 25th, Tuesday, at 10:00 A.M. and said that industry would be present, the Ways and Means Committee, and he would also invite the Senate Finance Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 P.M.