Significant Dates in Food and Drug Law History

Since the beginning of recorded history, men who have organized themselves into civilized societies have been concerned about the purity of the food and drink offered to the public.

In 1202, King John of England proclaimed the first English food law, the Assize of Bread. This prohibited adulteration of bread with such ingredients as ground peas or beans.

The history of food and drug measures as it has developed in the United States is set forth in the following chronology:

1784. Enactment by Massachusetts of the first general food law in the United States.

1824. Flour Inspection Act for Alexandria, then in the District of Columbia.

1844. Dr. Harvey Washington Wiley was born October 18 at Kent, Ind.

1848. Edwards law passed to prohibit the importation of adulterated drugs.

1850. A pure food and drink law was passed in California, one year after the gold rush.

1879–1906. During these 27 years more than 100 food and drug acts were introduced in Congress.

1879. Chief Chemist Peter Collier, Division of Chemistry, Department of Agriculture, began a food and drug adulteration investigation.

1880. Peter Collier recommended enactment of a national food and drug law.

1883. Dr. Wiley became chief chemist of the Division of Chemistry of the Department of Agriculture on April 9. Immediately he assigned some members of his staff to study the problems of food and drug adulteration.

1883. The Tea Importation Act was passed, providing for inspection of all tea entering United States ports.

1890. Acts were passed prohibiting importation of adulterated food and drugs and providing for certification of certain exported meat products.

1891–1895. Partial protection of domestic consumers was effected by acts requiring inspection of animals for diseases before slaughtering.

1902. Sherman Act, passed by Congress on July 1, prohibited the false branding of food and dairy products. In this same year appropriations were made by Congress to establish pure food standards.

1906. The first Federal Food and Drugs Act (34 stat. 768), the Heyburn Act, passed Congress and was signed June 30 by President Theodore Roosevelt. The President also signed the Meat Inspection Act on that day.

1907, January 1. The Bureau of Chemistry of the Department of Agriculture, headed by Dr. Wiley, began administration of the Food and Drugs Act of 1906.

1912, March–December. Dr. Wiley was succeeded by Dr. Carl L. Alsberg as chief chemist of the Department of Agriculture. Regulatory and research functions were separated.

1913, March 3. Gould amendment (37 stat. 732), requiring that quantity information on food packages be correct, passed.

1919, July 24. Kenyon amendment (41 stat. 271) passed. It applied net-weight labeling to wrapped meats.

1921, July. Dr. Alsberg was succeeded by Walter G. Campbell, who became acting chief of the Bureau of Chemistry.

1924, July. Mr. Campbell took over all regulatory work of the Bureau of Chemistry as a separate function, as Dr. Charles A. Browne became chief of the Bureau.

1927. A separate law-enforcement agency was formed, first known as the Food, Drug, and Insecticide Administration; then, in 1931, as the Food and Drug Administration. Mr. Campbell became Commissioner of Food and Drugs.

1930. The canning industry supported the McNary-Mapes amendment, authorizing standards of quality and fill of container for canned foods.

1938. The Copeland bill was passed by Congress. It was known as the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938, and contained these new provisions, among others:

- Extended coverage to cosmetics and devices.
- Required predistribution clearance of safety on new drugs.
- Prohibited addition of poisonous or deleterious substances to foods, except where required or unavoidable.
- Provided for tolerances for unavoidable or required poisonous substances.
- Authorized standards of identity, quality, and fill of container for foods.
- Authorized factory inspections.
- Added the remedy of court injunction to previous remedies of seizure and prosecution.

1940, July 1. FDA transferred from the Department of Agriculture to the Federal Security Agency.

1944, May 1. Dr. Paul B. Dunbar succeeded Mr. Campbell as Commissioner of Food and Drugs.

1945, July 6. Federal act amended to require certification of the safety and efficacy of penicillin. Later amendments extended this requirement to other antibiotics.

1948, June 24. Miller amendment (62 stat. 582) affirmed United States jurisdiction over products adulterated or misbranded after interstate shipment.

1951, June 1. Charles W. Crawford succeeded Dr. Dunbar as Commissioner.

1951, October 26. Durham-Humphrey amendment (65 stat. 648) specifically required that drugs which cannot be safely used without medical supervision bear the prescription legend on the label and be dispensed only upon prescription.

1953, August 7. Factory inspection amendment (67 stat. 476) clarified previous provision regarding mandatory factory inspection, and required the issuing to manufacturers of written reports on inspections and analysis of factory samples.

1954, April 15. Hale amendment (68 stat. 54) simplified method of promulgating food standards where no controversy was involved.

1954, August 12. George P. Larrick succeeded Mr. Crawford, who retired as Commissioner.

1955. Secretary Oveta Culp Hobby of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare appointed a committte of 14 distinguished citizens to study the adequacy of the Food and Drug Administration's facilities and programs.

1955. The Citizens Advisory Committee reported on June 30, recommending a substantial expansion of FDA's facilities, a new building for FDA, and more use of educational and informational programs by FDA.

1956. The 50th anniversary year, a year of tribute and rededication on the part of government and industry to the cause of effective food and drug protection.

THE BIRTHDAY SEAL

Adopted by the Association of Food and Drug Officials