

Toxic food imports leave a nasty taste

Here's a little food for thought: You may want to closely examine that apple before you eat it. Or that pasta salad. Or that filet of fish. Chances are it's the first and last time the food has been through any sort of inspection whatsoever.

The Food and Drug Administration, which is responsible for seeing to it that what we eat is edible, has progressively gotten behind in the area of imported food inspection. According to a report by the House Energy and Commerce Committee, out of one million food shipments imported to this country in 1987, the FDA tested only 2 percent for bacteria and other impurities. Of this 2 percent, an alarming 40 percent did not meet FDA standards.

While congressional hearings began last week to address the already overwhelming problem, solutions will come a little too late for victims of the inadequate inspection system. *The Wall Street Journal* last week reported that 22 Mississippi State University students were poisoned last February after eating mushroom omelets in the school cafeteria. The tainted mushrooms, imported from China, eventually caused the sickness of 100 people in three states before the FDA ordered a recall of the canned item.

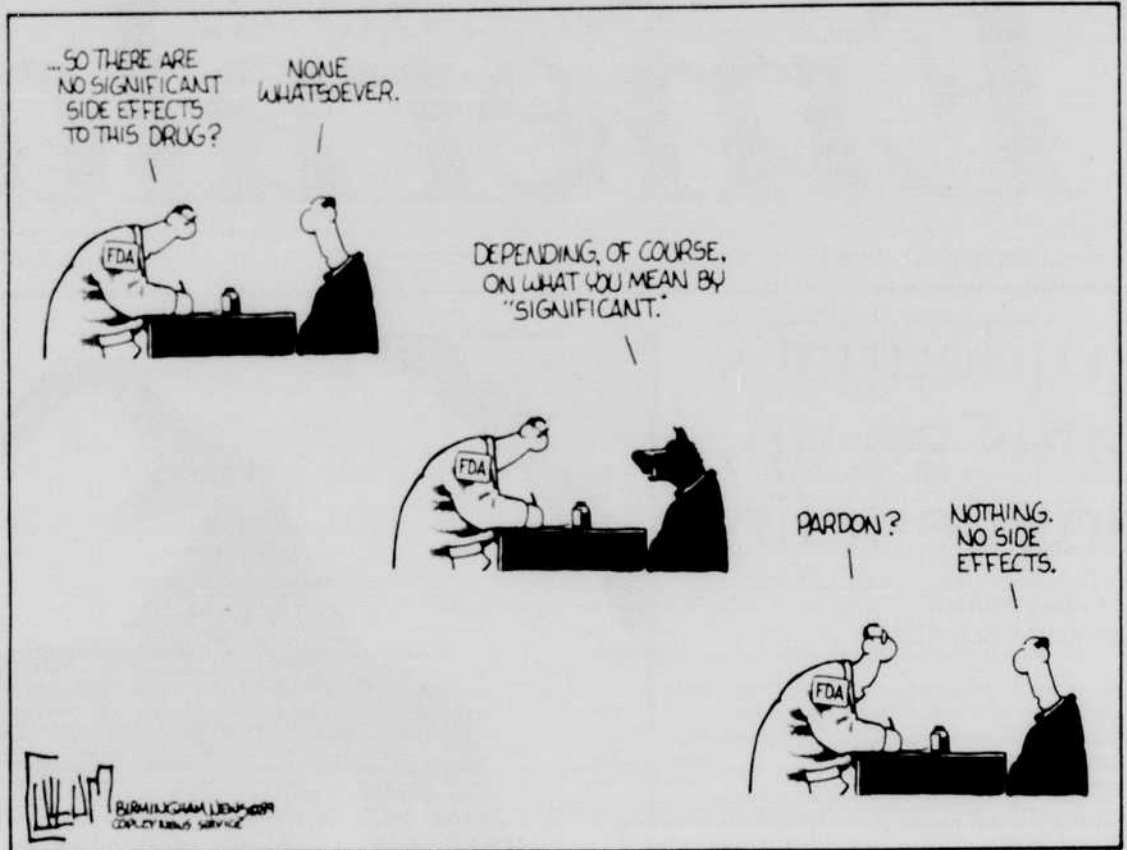
There is little wonder why bacteria-laden food is able to pass inspection at our borders. The fact is, some ports of entry don't even have inspection programs. Until two weeks ago, the FDA had never surveyed what was coming across the Canada-North Dakota border in Pembina, N.D., even though the port is the busiest in the state.

In Nogales, Ariz., one pesticide inspector struggles to inspect 700 trucks of produce per day coming from Mexico. In contrast, there are 85 U.S. Agriculture Department officials posted at Nogales, but they inspecting produce for blemishes and size, not for poisons.

Aren't our priorities a bit twisted here? It seems that most rational people would rather eat a bruised apple than one that will bring about intense physical harm. It's slightly comforting that Congress is addressing the issue, but the statistics that are emerging from the investigation are quite frightening. Anyone prone to paranoia about food contamination may want to ignore the facts in this situation.

Even if poisoned food is discovered during an inspection, there is a good chance it will get across the border anyway. It seems that some importers blatantly ignore rejection by the FDA and simply ship their product across at another port, one that probably won't look twice at the food. A recent FDA survey found that Americans end up eating 12 percent of food that had been rejected at some point.

Is it lunchtime yet?



Hurricane caught government sleeping

Hurricane Hugo is now nothing more than a memory, but the destruction it left behind will be felt for years to come.

When the hurricane slammed into the South Carolina coast early last week, it was called the most destructive storm in a quarter century. It lived up to its billing, killing an as yet undetermined amount of people, and doing anywhere from \$1 billion to \$3 billion in damage.

Now, coast residents of North and South Carolina are picking up the pieces of their lives and trying to move on. Conservative estimates say more than a quarter of a million people are now unemployed because of Hugo. Most will be getting their jobs back when the businesses they worked for reopen. But some, like commercial fishermen, have no business to go back to.

Hurricane Hugo just reaffirmed that man is no match for the most destructive forces of nature. But while we cannot beat a storm, we can at least be prepared for it. The one grim fact left over from the hurricane is people were not as ready for it as they could have been.

The hurricane leveled St. Croix, an island in the U.S. Virgin Islands, days before it hit the Atlantic seaboard. Looting and robberies became popular pastimes of the island's inhabitants, including local police forces detailed to stop it.

Troops were finally dispatched to end the looting, but for a few days, anarchy

reigned. This was not only avoidable, it was inexcusable.

The federal reaction, both in South Carolina and in the Virgin Islands, was pitifully slow. Victims of disasters need immediate help, not the half-hearted, piecemeal support the government has provided.

George Bush has said many times his administration would "watch over" the environment. First came the *Valdez* incident, where millions of gallons of oil spilled from the tanker onto Alaska's coastline, and now this. Both times, the Bush administration was caught flat-footed and unaware.

There are a lot of comparisons between Hugo and the *Valdez*. Both proved to be far more destructive than originally thought, and both could have been handled better.

Bush's personal \$1,000 pledge to the hurricane victims was a nice touch of public relations-conceived sentimentality, but will do little to clean up South Carolina, let alone rebuild it. Economic relief will need to be measured in the billions, not thousands, to do any good.

Hurricanes are part of life to South Carolina's citizens. The sad fact is some of the damage could have been avoided. Experts are saying it will take a decade to shrug off the effects of the storm.

We are left with the inescapable conclusion that the government should have been better prepared.

Letters

Snowstorm

Regardless of the subject at hand, Bert Tryba seems to bring his entire agenda of ideas with him. Trying to respond to him is a bit like trying to fight a snowstorm with a shovel. Boiling down his latest piece of writing (*ODE*, Sept. 26) has convinced me of two things — first that he believes he is right, and second, that he believes people he agrees with are right.

To explain my use of the term "human" in referring to the fetus, I repeat a portion of my essay that Tryba refers to. In October, 1967, the first International Conference on Abortion brought together respected authorities from around the world in the fields of medicine, law, ethics and the social sciences.

The first major question this

secular group of experts considered was "when does human life begin?" They concluded that they "could find no point in time between the union of sperm and egg ... and the birth of the infant at which point we could say that this was not a human life.

"The changes occurring between implant, a six-weeks embryo, a six-months fetus, a one-week-old child, or a mature adult are merely stages of development and maturation."

If we are determined to hold onto views, values or behaviors that ignore or deny plain reality, we do not cause that reality to stop being true. We merely set ourselves at odds with it, and in so doing, we sacrifice our integrity.

William Moore
Staff, music

Theology

For nearly 1,200 years theology was called "Queen of Sciences." This description suggests the application of early wit.

Theology is a word formed from the Greek words "theos" (God) and "logos" (word). Hence theology is the study of the "word of God" or "holy scripture." The word "Science" is from the Latin word of "scientia" (knowledge).

The Queen is the consort of the King. Kings represent power and wealth. Thus, theologians are the consorts of those who wield power and wealth. They exploit their "knowledge" and skills for their own benefit as well as the benefit of the masters of powers and wealth they serve.

The theist concept "God" is

a human, fictional construction. "God" is no more real than "Superman" or "Batman", and similarly, accommodates infantile imagination.

Theology is an art, not a science. The power theist religions succeeded in foisting on masses of ignorant people suggests theologians' intellectual and social value lies somewhere between that of an expert on Shakespeare and a used car lot's fastest talking salesman.

China achieved a high civilization and its people lived mor-

ally and ethically for 2,500 years under atheistic Confucianism. The Golden Rule — "Do not unto others that which you would not have them do unto you", advocated by Confucius is the foundation for peaceful, harmonious society.

Confucius said: "Never have anything to do with those who pretend to have dealings with the supernatural. If you allow supernaturalism to get a foothold in your country the result will be a dreadful calamity."

Bert Tryba
Eugene

Letters Policy

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