Taylor Earl

12/3/14

History

**The Jungle**

Upton Sinclair was the author of the early 1900’s novel titled “The Jungle”. In this book he talks about corruption in large industrialized cities and the struggles that came with living there. In the section that I’m writing about, he goes into deep detail about the lack of laws and regulations that the meat packing industry had.

Sinclair tells his story through an immigrant named Jurgis Rudkus. In the chapter that I read, he first talks about the political corruption that is going on around him. While trying to learn english, and American customs, he becomes subject to the political corruption that goes on all throughout the United States during this time. A man that works during the night at his factory talks him into going to vote. This man of course tells him exactly who to vote for in exchange for a little bit of money. I feel like this opened up a lot of peoples eyes back in the 1900’s. Even though this book was mainly famous for the food safety things he later talks about, this is still equally as important stuff that he is exploiting.

Sinclair continues to go into depth about the political power that money can buy in these big cities. “It was Scully, for instance,” he said, “who owned that dump which Jurigs and Ona had seen the first day of their arrival. Not only did he own the dump, but he owned the brick factory as well.” Clearly the people with money had power over the cities. He also talked about how Scully would boss the mayor of the city around. Even though there is this government formed around “democracy” its all false. Really the guy that has enough money to pay off people to vote for the guy that he already has under his control is the one with political power.

The main thing that The Jungle is known for, is how it exposed the meat packing industry for how terrible it was. There was no regulation prior to this novel. So the owners of the factories took advantage. Here are just a few experts from his report after learning about what was going on. “De-vyled" ham was made out of the waste ends of smoked beef that were too small to be sliced by the machines..” , “..where men welcomed tuberculosis in the cattle they were feeding, because it made them fatten more quickly..” and even “...as for the other men, who worked in tank rooms full of steam, and in some of which there were open vats near the level of the floor, their peculiar trouble was that they fell into the vats; and when they were fished out, there was never enough of them left to be worth exhibiting,” These were the type of horrifying things that Sinclair exposed to the general public about the meat they were eating.” After Sinclair published this book, he generated enough publicity that he got President Roosevelt’s attention. What came out of all of it was the Meat Inspection Act and the Pure Food and Drug Act (later known as the Food and Drug Administration that we know today). I would like to think that this kind of thing wouldn't have gone on for forever, but there is a possibility that without Sinclair, we wouldn't have the protection we have today relating to the food and meats that we eat.

Thanks to Upton Sinclair, and his novel The Jungle, we now live in a safer America where there are very explicit rules and regulations surrounding the food and drugs that we consume. We don't have to worry about if we are eating the ends of the beef that were too small to be sliced by the machines, rather we can shop and eat knowing that we are protected by the FDA that was a product of Sinclair and his work.