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WASHINGTON MERRY-GO-ROUND:

Army Allocation Policy Blamed in Meat Scarcity

By DREW PEARSON

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It happened behind closed doors, but a lot of housewives would have relished being present when Rep. Clinton Anderson's special food committee quizzed an array of Washington big-wigs.

A lot of star witnesses were present, but the Army, represented by Maj. Gen. Carl Hardigg, of the Quartermaster Corps, chiefly took it on the chin.

War Food Chief Marvin Jones started the ball rolling when he produced figures showing that last year, when meat was plentiful, the Army gummed up the works by failing to take anywhere near the quantity allocated to it. In the fourth quarter of 1944, the Army had asked for 1,250,000,000 pounds of meat. Actually, the Army took 500,000,000 pounds less.

That, according to the closed-door testimony, was the chief reason why ration points on meat were dropped last year and the housewives got a windfall. The public then got back to the habit of eating meat. But today, with meat far less plentiful, the Army has ordered even more than allocated to it last year.

Hardigg was unable to satisfy the Congressmen as to why the Army failed to take up its meat last year, or at least failed to put it in cold storage for later use. Had this been done, Army demands would now be much smaller. Hardigg also was asked to report back to Congress on meat consumption per soldier in the British Army, also in the Russian Army. Congressmen also asked Hardigg to report on how much meat was consumed by U. S. troops overseas, as compared with that consumed by troops in the United States.

Relaxed Meat Inspection

One proposal to ease the meat shortage is to abolish Federal inspection in small local slaughter houses. These slaughterers have to pass State inspection anyway, and most of them are thoroughly reputable. But to sell interstate they must pass Federal inspection, so many now sell only within State limits. This is one reason cattle-raising States are experiencing no meat shortage today.

Hardigg, however, sat on the idea of relaxing Federal inspection. He argued Federal inspection must continue, Jones and War Mobilizer Vinson were not impressed with Hardigg's argument.

"I never tasted Federally inspected meat until I was in my '20s," scoffed Texas-bred Jones.

"Out in Kentucky we did all right without Federally inspected meat," Vinson agreed. "I never had it until I was out of my 'teens."

Anderson, of Albuquerque, N. M., chairman of the committee, then took Hardigg to task for the Army's system of poultry buying.

"Out my way, where we've got plenty of meat," Anderson said, "the Army isn't interested in buying poultry. Here in the East, where meat is scarce, you're taking all the poultry. Why not spread your poultry buying so that in areas where the public has a hard time getting meat it can at least get a little poultry?"

He pointed out the Army is taking 100 percent of the poultry in the Delmarva area—Delaware, Maryland and Virginia.

Vinson supported Anderson, telling Hardigg: "Try to work that out with the War Food Administration, General."