REPORT OF WILLIAM WINDER

Chief of the Cheese Division

HON. GEORGE J. WEIGLE,
Dairy and Food Commissioner.

Dear Sir:—January 2, 1920, I was appointed chief of the cheese division with the dairy and food commission. My duties were to consist of various lines of work pertaining to the cheese industry of the state and to act in an advisory capacity to the commissioner on problems connected with the various branches of cheese manufacture and distribution. Particular attention was to be given to the improvement of quality in cheese and other educational work.

While much work as planned has been done, it has become necessary frequently to engage in other work apart from the cheese industry. The duties of the dairy and food commissioner are of such a varied nature and have grown to such vast proportions that the small force employed by the department are at all times inadequate to cope with the work to be done. Under the existing conditions the work of the department with the infrequent visits resolves itself into one of inadequate police duty. It is impossible to give the time necessary for proper educational work at every plant engaged in the dairy work. At present only a hurried sanitary inspection can be made at long intervals.

During the winter months I visited alone and with other inspectors the principal cheese warehouses of the state with a view of becoming familiar with the general quality of the cheese being made. Many samples of cheese were sent to the laboratory for analysis and in several instances prosecution for high moisture cheese resulted.

It became necessary for me to assist in inspection of the city milk supply of Sheboygan, Chippewa Falls, Green Bay and Superior.

Part of my time has been taken up with milk condensery inspection,—a work that would require the services of more than one man continuously to get the maximum results.

I have worked with the inspectors in connection with condensery, cheese factory and creamery inspection and have worked with and assisted cheese makers in solving special problems that at times confront them in their work. This line of work I believe to be especially valuable in promoting greater interest and improving
quality. At times cheese makers have problems to contend with and under such conditions that the services of an experienced man with the authority of law enforcement is invaluable.

It is my opinion that the general quality of Wisconsin cheese shows considerable improvement over that of last year but I regret very much that the improvement is not what I had hoped for. During the winter months the buyers were unanimous in that they were going to buy strictly according to grade and I am pleased to say that many have been more discriminating but as the season has advanced, I find much cheese of inferior quality again going on the market at full price.

So long as inferior cheese can find a buyer willing to accept it at market price, just so long shall we have the inferior grades. A system of marketing whereby Wisconsin cheese shall be paid for strictly according to quality is the only hope of raising the standard or quality of all our cheese to a point where it should be. In some of the best factories in the state under the management of competent makers, I found the cheese to be of weak open body and uniformly so. These makers admitted that their product was not of as fine a quality as they would like to make but in view of the fact that they were receiving the market price they could not afford to sacrifice the yield and extra time required to make a cheese of high quality. I believe, however, that the buyers throughout the state are as a rule showing greater discrimination in prices paid for off grade goods than has been the custom for some time.

That a strict line of grading is not being consistently followed is all too apparent. Those buyers who have built up their business, chiefly upon a quality basis, and in many instances the result of a life time of honest endeavor, fully realize the importance to the future of their own interests and to the cheese industry of securing and maintaining a higher quality of the cheese produced in Wisconsin. Fortunately we have in Wisconsin a large majority of men of this type engaged in the business of cheese dealers and distributors but nevertheless they are handicapped in their best endeavors by a class whose policy seems to be “quantity” as the first consideration. One argument advanced by the dealer when criticised for paying the market price for cheese of inferior quality is that he is able to dispose of it and make a profit. He justifies himself on the ground that he is able to find a market where he can dispose of the off-grade goods at a profit.

It is admitted that our total output of cheese is being placed upon the market and consumed and the question has been asked me “What more can be expected?” It is not an uncommon statement to hear this season that we are having an over production of cheese. It is my opinion that we never have an over production, but the market condition that leads people to make such a statement can best be described by “under consumption.”
The general quality of our cheese is not such as to bring about any increase in the per capita cheese consumption of the country and so long as the public can only at rare intervals get from their grocer or provision dealer good, meaty, clean flavored cheese, just so long will the per capita consumption fail to show an increase. So long as we have marketing systems whereby cheese, a highly valuable and nutritious food, is all too frequently looked upon as a "commodity" which may be bought and sold at a profit practically disregarding quality, just so long shall we have periods of so-called over production.

In speaking of quality, I do not wish to be understood as claiming that it is necessary that all cheese must be of a standard that is perfectly close in body and firm in texture such as would carry in storage for one year or longer. What is needed is cheese of clean flavor, smooth and waxy in texture, and with a make up and general appearance that will make it attractive. On the part of our makers it is a fact that a large majority of them have gotten away entirely from the safe and sane methods necessary for producing a good product, and in very many instances the main object seems to be to give as little time and attention as possible to the work and get the cheese so the buyer will handle them without too frequent reductions in price.

It is true makers today have conditions to contend with that did not exist a few years ago but it is also true that many are not meeting these conditions as well as they might. The coming of the milking machine brought with it an added trouble for the cheese maker. The machine itself is not directly at fault, but the failure of the operator to keep the various parts that the milk comes in contact with in a sanitary condition has been the source of much trouble and loss at many factories. In some cases it has become necessary for the maker to refuse milk from certain patrons using milking machines, due to their inability or lack of knowledge of the proper methods of cleaning.

All of our undergrade cheese, however, cannot be said to be due to inferior milk. At many factories where a supply of good milk is being received, cheese of inferior quality is being produced because the maker does not give sufficient attention to the fundamental requirements necessary for producing good cheese from good milk. In an attempt to secure the maximum yield the maker too often fails to firm the curd sufficiently to insure good texture and hurrying before salting results in flat, insipid flavors and the lack of development of that buttery aroma so essential and characteristic of the best cheese.

Operators of cheese factories in some localities have been forced to discontinue operation due to their inability to meet competition of milk condenseries. Yet in these same localities we have factory owners who have been able to meet this same competition
and still do a prosperous business turning out from day to day a finished product of high quality.

By following business methods and attending strictly to the quality side of their work by cooperating with their patrons have these men been successful. As it is with these individuals, so it is with the cheese industry of the state if we are to maintain our place in the markets of the country and insure the future success of this, the greatest cheese producing section in the world it must be by strict attention to the production of quality goods brought about by greater cooperation on the part of the dealers and by the continued efforts of the inspectors of the dairy and food department.

In many instances it has come to my attention that makers are employed at a salary not consistent with a decent standard of living. Competent makers cannot be kept in the factories where comfortable living quarters are not furnished and certainly cannot be expected to work for less salary than can be obtained under better living conditions in other lines.

It is of the utmost importance that a high standard of qualifications be maintained before a maker can secure a license. I strongly recommend that in the future applicants for license be required to state the length of the time engaged in making cheese and also state what type of cheese was made during this period of apprenticeship. If the applicant can show the necessary experience in the manufacture of American, Brick, Swiss or Limburger, the license should specify that the maker is licensed to make the type mentioned. If his experience shows that all of the preparatory work has been with American cheese, then his license shall so specify that he is qualified to make American cheese only.

After making a very complete survey of conditions throughout the state, it is gratifying to know that the work of the various inspectors show marked improvements in their respective territories. The inspectors are seriously handicapped in their work due to the large territory they must cover and the immense amount of work to be done. What the cheese industry most seriously needs is a larger force of men skilled in cheese work to act as inspectors and with territories of such size as to render it possible for these inspectors to also act as instructors and to aid the makers to cope with and overcome difficulties, that due to various existing conditions make it practically impossible for the factory men to successfully contend with.

With an increased number of inspectors and the resulting smaller territories, conditions will improve rapidly but if the greatest good is to be accomplished those engaged in the business as dealers and distributors must in the future show more united and sincere efforts in paying for cheese according to some well defined standard of grading.
Cooperation between dealers and the inspectors of the department is also an absolute necessity and if the standard of quality of Wisconsin cheese is to be further improved and uplifted, the dealers and the dairy and food department must further increase their cooperative work. It would be folly for us to drift along and carelessly ignore the efforts of other cheese producing centers in their efforts to improve the quality of their goods. Over confidence in the reputation of Wisconsin's cheese industry would eventually result in a calamity and it is necessary that all interested exert every effort to maintain the reputation which we are today enjoying.