Correspondence between Theodore Roosevelt and Upton Sinclair (1906) – Letter 1

President Theodore Roosevelt and the young journalist Upton Sinclair engaged in some remarkable correspondence about Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*, and about the politics of regulating American capitalism, including the meatpacking industry.

Letter 1

UPTON SINCLAIR TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT

March 10, 1906

President Theodore Roosevelt,

Washington, D.C.

My dear President Roosevelt:

I have just returned from some exploring in the Jersey glass factories and find your kind note. I am glad to learn that the Department of Agriculture has taken up the matter of inspection, or lack of it, but I am exceedingly dubious as to what they will discover. I have seen so many people go out there and be put off with smooth pretences. A man has to be something of a detective, or else intimate with the working-men, as I was, before he can really see what is going on. And it is becoming a great deal more difficult since the publication of "The Jungle." I have received today a letter from an employee of Armour and Company, in response to my request to him to take Ray Stannard Baker in hand and show him what he showed me a year and a half ago. He says: "He will have to be well disguised, for 'the lid is on' in Packingtown; he will find two detectives in places where before there has only one." You must understand that the thing which I have called the "condemned meat industry," is a matter of hundreds of thousands of dollars a month. I see in to-day's "Saturday Evening Post" that Mr. Armour declares in his article (which I happen to know is written by George Horace Lorimer that "In Armour and Company's business not one atom of any condemned animal or carcass, finds its way, directly or indirectly, from any source, into any food product or food ingredient." Now, compare with that the following extract from a formal statement transmitted to Doubleday, Page and Company by Mr. Thomas H. McKee, attorney at law, (111 Broadway, New York) who is a personal friend of Mr. Walter H. Page, and was sent out to Chicago by that firm to investigate the situation:

"With a special conductor, Mr. B. J. Mullaney, provided for me by Mr. Urion, attorney for Armour interests, I went through the Armour plant again. Mullaney introduced me to T. J. Conners, Manager, who called Mr. Hull, Superintendent of beef plant and said to him: 'I have just told Mr. McKee that we have nothing here to conceal and that he can see anything he wants and can stay as long as he likes. Please see that my promise is made good.' I expressed my
desire to investigate two points, 1st, the system of inspection; 2nd, the by-product food industry."

"I saw six hogs hung in line which had been condemned. A truck loaded with chopped up condemned hogs was in my presence (I followed it) placed in one of the tanks from which lard comes. I asked particularly about this and the inspector together with Mr. Hull stated that lard and fertilizer would be the product from that tank. The tanks are in a long room. The East side is lined with tanks for manufacture of lard and fertilizer; the West side with tanks whose product is grease and fertilizer. The grease is for [soap], lubricator, etc. Here is a clear infraction of the law, because it requires that such condemned meat be mixed with sufficient offal to destroy it as food. This seems to be done on the 'Grease' line of tanks; it is not done at the 'Lard' line of tanks. See Department of Agriculture Rules, June 27, 1904, Article IX. The excuse probably is that the inspector has not found the animal unfit for one kind of human food, to wit - lard."

"Of the six condemned hogs referred to two were afflicted with cholers, the skin being red as blood and the legs scabbed; three were marked 'tubercular,' though they appeared normal to a layman, the sixth had an ulcer in its side which was apparent. Two men were engaged in chopping up hogs from this line. The truck load prepared while I stood there was deposited in a lard tank. I asked particularly about the line of demarcation between the carcasses used for lard and carcasses used for grease. No explanation was given by either the inspector or my conductor. 'It all depends on how bad he is,' was the answer. I gathered the impression, however, that not very many carcasses were placed in Grease tanks."

So much for Mr. McKee. For myself, I was escorted through Packingtown by a young lawyer who was brought up in the district, had worked as a boy in Armour's plant, and knew more or less intimately every foreman, "spotter," and watchman about the place. I saw with my own eyes hams, which had spoiled in pickle, being pumped full of chemicals to destroy the odor. I saw waste ends of smoked beef stored in barrels in a cellar, in a condition of filth which I could not describe in a letter. I saw rooms in which sausage meat was stored, with poisoned rats lying about, and the dung of rats covering them. I saw hogs which had died of cholera in shipment, being loaded into box cars to be taken to a place called Globe, in Indiana, to be rendered into lard. Finally, I found a physician, Dr. William K. Jaques, 4316 Woodland avenue, Chicago, who holds the chair of bacteriology in the Illinois State University, and was in charge of the city inspection of meat during 1902-3, who told me he had seen beef carcasses, bearing the inspectors' tags of condemnation, left upon open platforms and carted away at night, to be sold in the city. I quote a few words from Dr. Jaques' statement, furnished to Mr. McKee, and would add that he has written an article which will appear in the "World's Work" for May, and of which a proof could possibly be furnished you, if you cared to see it.

"My education as a physician teaches me that disease follows the same law whether in animals or human beings. An accurate post mortem requires close inspection of all the internal organs together with the use of the microscope before a physician can say there is no disease present. How many post mortems could the most expert physician make in a day? Ten would be a big day's work; fifty would tax the endurance of the most strenuous. It is reported that one hundred and fifty thousand animals have been received at the Union Stockyards in a single day. How many animal pathologists are employed by the government who are capable of making a reliable post mortem and saying that an animal is not diseased? In round numbers, say there are fifty? a
few more or less, for the sake of illustration, are not material. Say there are only fifty thousand animals killed a day at the stock yards. This would be a thousand to each inspector, a hundred an hour, nearly two a minute. What is such inspection as this worth? It is true, there is some inspection that is well done; it is that which is done for the sharp eyes of the foreigner."

"Inspection to be effective should include the entire twenty-four hours. Federal inspection is probably effective in day light. City inspectors work during city hall hours. The railroads and express companies bring animals into the city every hour in the day. When John Dyson has access to every room in the packing houses and knows what is done there every hour in the twenty-four; when his army of inspectors know the disposition of the meat brought into the city by more than thirty railroads; when he knows the destination and use of the refuse which the meat and liver wagons gather after nightfall from Fulton market, south Water street and other markets; when he knows the meat that comes to the city by wagon and other ways, then, in my estimation, he can give something like an accurate estimation of the amount of diseased, putrid meat that is converted into meat in Chicago. Until he has this information, he must confess to the ignorance of which he accuses others. No one has this information. There are a hundred streets and avenues by which diseased meat can enter the city and be put on sale in the markets. The public has made no effort to find out and it is left to the men who deal in this merchandise to dump what they please into the stomachs of the blissfully ignorant public. Neither do any of us know how much disease and suffering this food causes. The diagnosis of the best physicians is so often turned down at the post mortem table that the actual results of diseased food are difficult to ascertain."

Finally, I might add that I have a long affidavit from a man named Thomas F. Dolan, now at the head of the Boston and Maine News Bureau, who was for many years a superintendent in Armour's plant, and has letters to show that he was considered by Armour as the best man he ever employed. He makes oath to Armour's custom of taking condemned meat out of the bottoms of the tanks, into which they had been dropped with the idea of rendering them into fertilizer. It seems that the tanks are [or were then] built with a false bottom, which lets down on a hinge; and that when you stand at the top and see the meat dropped in, you are flooded by blinding clouds of steam which pour up from a pipe down in the tank. When this affidavit was published, Dolan was paid $5,000 by Armour to make another one contradicting himself. He took the $5,000 and went on to give away the whole story, which was published in the "Evening Journal," March 16, 1899. The fact that it is a Hearst story would tend to discredit it; but having investigated the whole thing, and met every man who was concerned in the expos? I am convinced that the affidavit is worth attention.

Baker knows intimately a man who is high in the counsels of Armour and Company, and was present at a conference in which Ogden Armour personally gave the decision to bribe Dolan.

This is a very long letter, but I feel the importance of the subject excuses it. It would give me great pleasure to come down to Washington to see you at any time, but I would rather it was after you had read "The Jungle," because I have put a good deal of myself into that.

You ask- "Is there anything further, say in the Department of Agriculture, which you would suggest my doing?" I would suggest the following: That you do as Doubleday, Page and Company did; find a man concerning whose intelligence and integrity you are absolutely sure;
[s]end him up here, or let me meet him in Washington, and tell him all that I saw, and how I saw it, and give him the names and addresses of the people who will enable him to see it. Then let him go to Packingtown as I did, as a working-man; live with the men, get a job in the yards, and use his eyes and ears; and see if he does not come out at the end of a few weeks feeling, as did the special correspondent of the London "Lancet," whom I met in Chicago, that the conditions in the packing-houses constitute a "menace to the health of the civilized world." [The Lancet for Jan 8, 15, 22, 29 - 1905.]

Thanking you for your kind interest, Very sincerely,

[Upton Sinclair]

P. S. I might add that when I was in Chicago I learned a good deal about the connections which the packers have in Washington, so that I think it most likely that before the Department of Agriculture got anybody started for the purpose of investigating Packingtown, word had been sent there to the packing-houses that things [sh]ould be cleaned up. I know positively that this was done in the case of Major Seaman, who went out there for "Collier's Weekly."

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT TO UPTON SINCLAIR (Roosevelt Mss)

Personal, Washington, March 15, 1906

My dear Mr. Sinclair:

I have your letter of the 13th instant. I have now read, if not all, yet a good deal of your book, and if you can come down here during the first week in April I shall be particularly glad to see you.

I do not think very much of your ecclesiastical correspondent. A quarter of a century's hard work over what I may call politico-sociological problems has made me distrust men of hysterical temperament. I think the preacher furnishes his measure when he compares you to Tolstoy, Zola and Gorky, intending thereby to praise you. The abortiveness of the late revolution in Russia sprang precisely from the fact that too much of the leadership was of the Gorky type and therefore the kind of leadership which can never lead anybody anywhere save into a Serbonian bog. Of course the net result of Zola's writings has been evil. Where one man has gained from them a shuddering horror at existing wrong which has impelled him to try to right that wrong, a hundred have simply had the lascivious, the beast side of their natures strengthened and intensified by them. Oliver Wendell Holmes has an excellent paragraph on this in his "Over the Teacups". As for Tolstoy, his novels are good, but his so-called religious and reformatory writings constitute one of the age-forces which tell seriously for bad. His "Kreutzer Sonata" could only have been written by a man of diseased moral nature, a man in whose person the devotee and debauchee alternately obtain sway, as they some times do in successive generations of decadent families or in whole communities of unhealthy social conditions. In the end of your book, among the various characters who preach socialism, almost all betray the pathetic belief that the individual capacity which is unable to raise itself even in the comparatively simple work of directing the individual how to earn his own livelihood, will, when it becomes the banded
incapacity of all the people, succeed in doing admirably a form of government work infinitely more complex, infinitely more difficult than any which the most intelligent and highly developed people has ever yet successfully tried. Personally I think that one of the chief early effects of such attempt to put socialism of the kind there preached into practice, would be the elimination by starvation, and the diseases, moral and physical, attendant upon starvation, of that same portion of the community on whose behalf socialism would be invoked. Of course you have read Wvckoff's account of his experiences as an unskilled laborer of the lowest class. Probably you know him. He was a Princeton man wholly without the physique to do manual labor as well as the ordinary manual laborer can do it, yet in going across the continent his experience was that in every place, sooner or later, and in most places very soon indeed, a man not very strong physically and working at trades that did not need intelligence, could raise himself to a position where he had steady work and where he could save and lead a self-respecting life. There are unquestionably communities where such self-raising is very hard for the time being; there are unquestionably men who are crippled by accident (as by being old and having large families dependent on them); there are many, many men who lack any intelligence or character and who therefore cannot thus raise themselves. But while I agree with you that energetic, and, as I believe, in the long run, radical, action must be taken to do away with the effects of arrogant and selfish greed on the part of the capitalist, yet I am more than ever convinced that the real factor in the elevation of any man or any mass of men must be the development within his or their hearts and heads of the qualities which alone can make either the individual, the class or the nation permanently useful to themselves and to others. Sincerely yours

[Theodore Roosevelt][Handwritten] But all this has nothing to do with the fact that the specific evils you point out shall, if their existence be proved, and if I have power, be eradicated.

Mr. Upton Sinclair,
Princeton, N.J.

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UPTON SINCLAIR TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT

TELEGRAM.

The White House,
Washington.

1 A DO JM 122 Paid
4:35 p.m.


President Theodore Roosevelt,
Washington, D.C.
Have received two telegrams from confidential agent in Chicago as follows:

"Important person played entirely false, absolutely necessary you come immediately.

Second telegram. "Columns official whitewash from Washington to Tribune to-day scoring you and book.

Sent by close friend important person. Further official action no effect. Better fight in papers.

I have answered these messages. Do nothing till you hear from me. Have wired the President for explanation. I have played my part according to agreement and consider I have your pledge for fair treatment. If plans have been given away I wish permission to defend myself. I cannot believe that you will allow falsehoods to be telegraphed to Chicago Tribune in your name and feel that I am entitled to vindication.

Upton Sinclair.

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UPTON SINCLAIR TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT

The Jungle Publishing Co.

Publishers of the books of Upton Sinclair.

P.O. Box 2064, New York City.

(Letters intended for Upton Sinclair personally should be addressed to Princeton, N.J.)

[Personal]

Princeton, N.J.

April 10th, 1906

President Theodore Roosevelt,

Washington, D.C.

My dear President Roosevelt:-

I wrote you a couple of days ago that I had sent some one to Chicago to prepare the ground for your investigators. The arrangement was that this person should go among the working-men and get the exact facts as to the practices existing at present, with the names of the packing-houses and the position of the rooms where the practices could be seen. It was understood that the most absolute secrecy was to be observed. My friend has been two days in Chicago, and I have just received her first report. I quote a portion of it as follows: "I talked with A. M. Simons, William Bross Lloyd and Joseph Medill Patterson yesterday afternoon for some time. In the first place, they knew all about the investigation before I came; Simons informed me of it as soon as I struck
his office, Patterson had heard of it, and our friend the Commissioner had talked with Miss McCullough. I saw her yesterday, without telling her my special mission. She has told Simons that the Commissioner was "on the war-path," and Simons advised me not to tell her my mission was for you, until I had learned more of her attitude, etc. In the light of the fact that the news of this commission is leaking out from the other side, they are all very much disposed to doubt the sincerity of the investigation. They all take the view that this clipping from the Chicago 'Tribune' is part of a plan to prepare the ground for a whitewashing. All these men assert vehemently that it will be absolutely impossible for men as well-known as Reynolds and Commissioner Neill to make any really thorough investigation in Packingtown. They will be attended wherever they go the moment they get in Chicago; every movement they make will be known."

I do not know who is the "Miss McCullough" referred to in this letter; I think it must be Miss McDowell, by mistake. I know Miss McDowell and think a great deal of her, but I do not think that she is a good person to keep a secret of the importance of this one. I have not heard from Dr. Neill since I left Washington, and do not know whether or not it is his intention to go to Chicago under his own name. If so, I think it is obvious that he will not be able to do any secret work in the packing-houses. As to the clipping from the Chicago "Tribune", enclosed, of course I understand that this is not official, and that you are not responsible for what newspaper correspondents say; but I send it to you because it is further evidence of the game which the packers are playing. The Chicago "Tribune" is the paper whose editor, Keely, transmitted to Doubleday, Page and Co. a faked report upon "The Jungle". I also happen to know a newspaper man in New York, from whom he tried to buy some important documents incriminating the packers. He got the man alone in the Chicago "Tribune" office, and Arthur Meeker of Armour and Co. was in the next room. I trust that you will not misunderstand my motive in sending you this; I feel quite sure that you do not feel about "The Jungle" as is represented in this clipping, but I wish you to understand what use the packers will make of your speech if you do not make perfectly clear that it is not "The Jungle" that you have in mind. I think I can fairly claim that I have responded to your invitation to furnish you with the facts. There were many facts in those articles which were sent you by "The World's Work", and there were facts, and nothing but facts, in that article which is to appear in "Everybody's Magazine" for May. (By the way, you told me that you had not had time to read it, so perhaps you do not know what these facts are.) Also there will be an enormous mass of facts put into the hands of your commissioners; these will all be exact and definite statements of practices that now exist, and where they exist, and it will be for your commissioners to see them. For your own satisfaction I will quote some other portions of this letter which I have just received. It is simply a hurried scrawl, but it shows what my agent is doing: "Simons went with me to see P--- (a young lawyer in the yards); he promised to set to work immediately to do things, and he has already done wonders. I saw him again this morning, and he is coming to supper with us at the hotel with more of the 'goods.' My husband was with three of the workingmen whose names you gave me this evening, and he has another at dinner to-night. -------- is coming at 7.30, and all they know, which is a lot, is going on paper this afternoon. Patterson will be here at six; he has some good documental stuff. I shall see that the commission gets facts, places, etc. I have things that are glaring, in spite of the fact that many abuses have been temporarily fixed. Last night Ambrose gave me all his data, and my husband was with the Bohemian working-man this morning; he went through the yards with him and saw everything himself. Shall I commit all this material to the mail, or shall I wait and give it to the commission? The man we agreed to refer to as "our friend" has just given me formulas, location of rooms, etc., where condemned and rotten stuff is used. He has given me in special confidence
other things that I do not want to write about, even to you. Our 'friend' is tracing a man who was a former superintendent, who has been fired and is 'sore'; We shall procure affidavits from him, if possible. Tomorrow I shall see two black-listed men lately fired. Two of the boys tell me that ---- has important things to tell me which he would not tell even to you about canning, etc.; and my husband has found a man who knows everything about the sausage department. The Bohemian cattle-butcher is to take my husband through another plant tomorrow, and says that he can show him things with his own eyes worse than anything told of in "The Jungle".

You will pardon my writing this long letter. I know that the facts are there, and I know the tremendous importance of them; I am only worried for fear that the men you have sent may not be able to see them. I am afraid that they will be shadowed every hour that they are in Chicago, and that the packers will systematically clear a path before them, that is, get the places cleaned up and stop the unlawful practices and so succeed in convincing them that all of my witnesses are unreliable. I can think of nothing to do except to warn you in the matter, so that if it turns out that way you will be in a position to judge. I have perfect confidence in Dr. Neill and Mr. Reynolds, but the point is that they are too well-known, and that too many people have come to hear about the investigation. It is inconceivable to me that under present circumstance (the packers being stirred up as they are) a United States Commissioner of Labor can go to Chicago and make investigations in Packingtown without the facts being known to the packers before he is an hour in the city.

Very truly yours,

[Handwritten]Upton Sinclair

[Handwritten P.S. illegible]

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT TO UPTON SINCLAIR

Personal Washington, April 11, 1906

My dear Mr. Sinclair:

I have received your letter and also your telegram. From the latter you seemed to be a good deal more agitated than the facts warrant. Your Chicago correspondent showed a distinctly untrustworthy habit of mind in his telegram about "columns of official whitewash from Washington." There has been no official whitewash or official anything else sent out from Washington. The information to which he refers came from a Chicago newspaper to their Washington correspondent. Your correspondent shows his caliber when he states that further official action will be of no effect and that you had better fight in the papers. This is enough to prove his utter untrustworthiness. As for Commissioner Neill and Mr. Reynolds, surely you cannot imagine that men as well known as they are could go to Chicago and have their presence remain entirely unknown. All that they can investigate are matters concerning which it would be impossible suddenly to make changes. For example, if there is a big false tank anywhere it cannot be gotten at once. The investigation by a special man to be put inside to find out the exact facts will be something that will doubtless take months, and to have it known that such was our
plan would of course hurt our efforts. So far I have not seen even a hint about it develop. If it gets out it will get out only through your own friends.

As for attacking "The Jungle" in my speech next Saturday, I have no more idea of doing so than I have of attacking in that same speech the packers on what "The Jungle" contains. I shall of course do nothing until I have data on which to base action.

Let me repeat that both you and your correspondents must keep your heads if you expect to make your work of value. You say you "cannot believe" that I will "allow falsehoods to be telegraphed to the Chicago Tribune in my name," and that you feel you are "entitled to a vindication." Most certainly you need not believe that I will permit such conduct, for I have not permitted it and should not dream of permitting it. Nothing has been telegraphed to Chicago in my name so far as I am aware, and so I do not know what you would expect to be "vindicated" about. I am really at a loss to understand what it is to which you refer.

Sincerely yours,

[Theodore Roosevelt]

Mr. Upton Sinclair

Princeton, N. J.

P.S. Since writing the above I have received your letter. In it you take exactly the right position. I have not spoken to the Chicago Tribune correspondent on the matter and have not the least idea what the Tribune has said, but it cannot be any quotation from me because I have said nothing. Keep quiet, just as I shall keep quiet, and let the investigation go on. I have been trying to find out from the Department of Agriculture if anybody gave out from there any information as to the alleged report of the Department. I was not satisfied with this report, as it did not seem to me full and specific enough, and have notified the Department that I shall consider it merely as a preliminary report and that it is not to be given out in any way or shape and that I wish it verified. Neill and Reynolds will help verify it. All I can say, my dear Mr. Sinclair, is that I intend before I get through to be able to have authoritative reasons for saying "proved," or "unproved," or "not susceptible of proof," or "probably true," or "probably untrue," of each specific charge advanced against the packers. I cannot afford to be hurried any more than I can afford to be stopped from making the investigation. It may take months before we can get a really satisfactory statement.

[Handwritten] P.S. no 2. Your second telegram has just come; really, Mr. Sinclair, you must keep your head. It is absurd to become so nervous over such an article. Hundreds appear about me all the time, with quite as little foundation.

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT TO UPTON SINCLAIR

Personal
Washington May 29, 1906

My dear Mr. Sinclair:

I have received your letter of the 26th instant together with your telegram of the 27th, and I have now seen your articles in the New York Times of May 28th and 29th. You have of course committed no discourtesy in the interview you have given. You are not bound to me by any agreement or understanding not to make public anything you see fit. I must add that you do not seem to feel bound to avoid making and repeating utterly reckless statements which you have failed to back up by proof. But my own duty is entirely different. I am bound to see that nothing but the truth appears; that this truth does in its entirety appear; and that it appears in such shape that practical results for good will follow. The results of the investigation are not yet in final form, nor is the investigation itself finished. Until these investigations are finished and until the results are in final form, I should most emphatically object to having them made public unless it should become necessary to make a preliminary and unfinished portion of them public in order to secure the passage of some measure substantially like the Beveridge amendment. Such hasty and premature action could be justified if it became necessary in order to secure a remedy for the evils. What I am after is this remedy. The time when publicity is to be given to the report is not in itself a vital matter. The vital matter is to remedy the evils with the least possible damage to innocent people. The premature publication that you request would doubtless cause great pecuniary loss not merely to the beef packers and to all those responsible for so much of the conditions as are bad, but also to scores of thousands of stock-growers, ranchers, hired men, cowboys, farmers and farm hands all over this country, who have been guilty of no misconduct whatever. Some of the men thus hurt would be wealthy men. Most of them would be poor men. If it is necessary ultimately to hurt them in order that the reform shall be accomplished, then they must be hurt; but I shall certainly not hurt them needlessly nor wantonly. My object is to remedy the evils. The facts shall be made public in due time, but I shall give no preliminary report to the public unless it becomes necessary in order to bring about the result aimed at.

I think I ought to make two comments upon your interview in this morning’s paper. In the first place it is to my mind an absurdity to have advocated any investigation by the Federal Government at all if the Federal Government has not power to take action. You say in effect that the Beveridge amendment, and indeed, any legislative act of the kind, must be inoperative. Of course if I supposed you were right in this it would have been hardly worth while to go into the investigation. To give the people the facts, as you put it, without pointing out how to better the conditions, would chiefly be of service to the apostles of sensationalism and would work little or no permanent betterment in the conditions. Now what I intend to bring about is just precisely this permanent betterment, and what is more I intend to bring it about by the establishment of a Government body which shall not only insist upon decent conditions, but which shall at any and all times keep the public informed when the conditions are not what they should be in any given instance.

In the second place, I ought to tell you that for many of your more startling statements there is not as yet any justification whatever in the way of proof; there are many things that you have asserted which should under no conceivable circumstances have been asserted unless you were prepared to back them up with testimony which would satisfy an honest man of reasonable intelligence; and hitherto in these cases no such testimony has been forthcoming. On other points
you have furnished facts which enables us to test what you have said. On some of these points
you have furnished facts which enabled us to test what you have said. On some of these points
we have already tested the accuracy of your statements by investigation. On other points we
intend so to test them; but as yet the examination is not finished and is not in shape to be made
public.

Sincerely yours,

[Theodore Roosevelt]

Mr. Upton Sinclair,

Princeton, N.J.

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SINCLAIR TO ROOSEVELT, May 29, 1906.

Sinclair, U.

NEW AMSTERDAM HOTEL [CROSSED OUT, HANDWRITTEN: EVERETT HOUSE]

New York City, May 29, 1906.

President Theodore Roosevelt,

Washington, D. C.

My dear President Roosevelt: -

Having been away from home for two days, and having failed for some reason or other in all my
efforts to get my mail, I do not know at this hour what, if any, reply you have made to my last
letter. I sincerely hope that the disturbance I have been making has not been an annoyance to
you; I was taken unawares by this situation, and I had to make up my mind quickly. Knowing
your attitude in the whole matter I concluded that you had been put in an embarrassing position
by the effort [crossed out, handwritten: offer] to pass the Beveridge Bill -- that it had taken away
from you your reason for publishing the Neill report, which I feel sure you must believe contains
facts that should be given to the public. I concluded, therefore, that I would not greatly displease
you if I used my position as a free lance to produce a popular demand for exact information.

Of course I appreciate to the full the delicacy of this situation; I should not expect from you any
statement that I have guessed correctly, but unless I receive from you an emphatic denial, I shall
retain the suspicion that I am understood.

Last night I gave a newspaper reporter a letter which I had written to you three days before -- I
grope in the dark about these matters, as I know nothing about official etiquette. A friend tells
me that I should have telegraphed Secretary Loeb to obtain permission; I thought that the letter
being three days old, and being of an entirely impersonal character, it would be all right. I trust I
have made no mistake; of course it would be impossible for me to continue a correspondence with you in case my letters were open to the suspicion of being disguised proclamations; accordingly, I beg to say that I shall not do this again, and that anything you may see fit to write to me in the present crisis will be considered absolutely confidential.

You know that I am heart and soul in the work of forcing a reform in this matter; I have sweat blood over it for two years; I have thought about little else than your commission for the last two months. You know, and they know, that I did everything in my power to enable them to get the truth. I did it because I thought if it was being gotten for the public it might be set forth authoritatively. I believe that there are urgent and decisive reasons why this should be done, and why no bill can be effective without it. I think that the share which I have taken in the work entitles me to ask of you a promise, that before you arrive at a decision in this matter you will grant me an interview. I will leave for Washington at any time, and whatever you say to me will not be for publication. I simply want an opportunity to present to you personally my side of the case.

Very sincerely yours,

[Upton Sinclair][Handwritten]