

(COPY)

Lincoln, Neb., Oct. 23, 1917.

Hon. Gurdon W. Wattles,  
Federal Food Administrator for Nebraska,  
Omaha, Nebraska.

Dear Mr. Wattles:-

I have just now returned from a week at Vicksburg, Mississippi with the participants in the great peace reunion between the soldiers of the Blue and the soldiers of the Grey upon that famous battlefield. It was a happy week with only one incident to mar. I refer to the fact of the criminal waste of food stuffs. The great camp was under direct control of the United States War Department with a regiment of government troops in charge. I have been taught to believe that our troops are paragons of efficiency in all directions, but I feel it my duty to communicate to you, and through you to Mr. Herbert Hoover, or to a higher than he if necessary, the fact that I never witnessed in private life such criminal wastefulness as I beheld there. I saw every day wagon loads of refuse bread, meat, and vegetables carried away for garbage distribution, and all apparently under direction of the military authorities in charge.

In view of the fact that governors of states, defense councils, and myriads of earnest men and women throughout the nation are preaching the comfortable gospel of conservation of our food supply, it does seem to me that our military authorities ought to be setting a better example than they offered to the eyes of civilians at Vicksburg. I make no complaint against any particular military authority; I do not know the name of the military organization in charge of the reunion, nor do I know the personnel of its officers. I only know the fact of the shameful waste of food supplies under their management.

My first thought was to communicate my observations to our own State Council of Defense, but I have decided to lay the matter before you with the request that it may be carried to a source which in your judgment may seem to it that our military people shall be instructed to set a better example to civilians in the matter of food conservation. I have not given publicity to my observations, nor shall I. I am writing to you in your official capacity and with the earnest hope that my writing may lead to an official investigation of the criminal waste of food stuffs at the Vicksburg reunion. Nor do I seek the punishment of any guilty of the enormous offense, but only seek to arouse in army circles a sentiment which will make impossible its repetition elsewhere.

Sincerely yours,

Edgar Howard,

Lieutenant Governor.

EH:LP