

## NUTRITION

# Snacks Speed Work

Eating between meals has speeded up production in war factories. Authorities feel habit of three meals a day will persist after the war, however.

► THE WAR has made between-meal snacks G.I. in many factories, and many war plants are serving food at odd hours from mobile kitchens. This raises the question whether we, as a nation, will have our eating habits changed and become habituated to four or five light meals instead of three squares daily.

Housewives growing faint or frantic at the prospect of having to cook or wash dishes postwar more than three times daily may take heart. The housewife of the future may get away from dishwashing by using paper cups and dishes, now employed so widely by war industries and armed forces that they are unavailable to civilians.

But even so, it seems improbable that our eating habits will be revolutionized. Six nutrition authorities polled by *Science Service* telegraphically on this question feel that the general population will stick to meals three times a day, although there seem to be advantages in some cases for more frequent eating.

Between-meals snacks in factories are probably here to stay, because they have been shown to increase production. This discovery, incidentally, was made by the British during the last war and a number of reports have been published on the subject. One nutrition authority points out, however, that when we return to shorter working hours after the war, there may be neither time nor need for between-meals snacks in industries.

Whether the increased production is

due to the food or to the enforced rest and diversion from monotonous or tedious work that benefits the workers and steps up production is not clear. In the cases of workers who do not eat enough at their regular meals, skip breakfast, or, more rarely, burn up their food at faster than normal rates, the extra feedings are undoubtedly helpful because of the calories they supply.

Dr. Henry Borsook, professor of biochemistry at the California Institute of Technology, states succinctly what seems to be the opinion of most of the authorities consulted, as follows:

"Between-meals snacks are not revolutionizing American eating habits. At best they are only a useful supplement. A change from three square meals to light meals plus a snack would be a bad change even if it were possible which it is not.

"Too many people do not eat enough calories now. Between-meals eating at specified periods for workers is advisable: (A) As means of improving the quality of the diet; (B) To supply calories; (C) As a contribution to the establishment of rest periods in industry. These recommendations are only for industrial workers."

One of the authorities, however, differs somewhat from this view. He is Dr. Robert S. Goodhart, expert on nutrition in industry of the War Food Administration. "It is much better to eat several small meals than to put all your food down into three meals a day," he said.

Although Dr. Goodhart thinks the change to four or five meals a day would be good, he doubts whether it will come. The real revolution in eating habits, he points out, came long ago, with the beginning of the industrial age and the growth of cities, when people changed from eating whenever they could to three meals a day as a matter of convenience. In nations which are largely agricultural, the inhabitants still eat four or five times a day.

A look at the crowds before soda fountains and snack bars at almost any hour of the day, especially at mid-morning and mid-afternoon, leads one authority to suggest that a good many Americans,

whether they work in war plants or not, have the habit of between-meals snacks, unless they are just catching up with the breakfast or lunch they skipped.

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## MATHEMATICS

## Prime-Pairs Problem Of Euclid Is Solved

► EUCLID, the great ancient Greek mathematician who lived 2,200 years ago, presented a classical problem that he was unable to solve and which remained unsolved until the present time. A solution was presented at the meeting of the American Mathematical Society in Wellesley, Mass., by Dr. Charles N. Moore, professor of mathematics, University of Cincinnati. The total number of unsolved theoretical mathematical problems is now decreased by one.

Euclid, Dr. Moore stated, proved that there exists an infinite number of primes, that is, numbers such as two, three, five and seven having no divisors but themselves and unity. Succeeding generations of mathematicians have guessed, but have never been able to prove, that there likewise exist an infinite number of prime-pairs, that is, successive primes which differ by two, such as 11, 13; 17, 19; 41, 43; and so on.

At the meeting, Dr. Moore presented an involved but convincing paper giving his proof of the infinitude of prime-pairs.

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## PLANT PHYSIOLOGY

## Chemical Makes Lettuce Sprout in Hot Weather

► LETTUCE SEED, notorious for its reluctance to sprout after warm weather sets in, has shown an average germination of 87% at midsummer temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit after being soaked in a solution of the chemical compound known as thiourea, Dr. Ross C. Thompson of the U. S. Department of Agriculture states (*Science*, Aug. 11). Control plantings from the same lots of seed, left untreated but otherwise handled in the same manner, did not even show 1% germination.

"There is reason to believe," Dr. Thompson comments, "that the thiourea treatment may have a practical application for assuring satisfactory germination where it is necessary to plant when the soil temperature is too high for germination of most commercial lettuce seed."

*Science News Letter, August 26, 1944*

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