

PUBLIC HEALTH—NUTRITION

Extension of Food Stamp Plan Raises Question of Food Dole

Increase in Employment and Higher Wages Believed Insufficient to Relieve Undernourishment This Year

EXTENSION of the food stamp plan to all families in the United States with incomes of less than \$1000 a year was considered as a nutrition-for-defense measure at the National Nutrition Conference for Defense called by President Roosevelt for May 26, 27 and 28.

This proposal, although being considered as a defense measure now, raises the question of how nearly we are ready as a nation, to consider what might be called a permanent food "dole" for a considerable percentage of the population, in order to insure a minimum standard of nutrition for the entire nation, war or no war.

The number of people eligible for public aid has come down sharply with increased industrial activity because of the defense program. No exact estimates of this number are yet available from any federal government source, but Federal Security Administrator Paul V. McNutt has just stated that increase in employment and higher wages will not be enough to have any pronounced effect on widespread undernourishment in this country this year or next. Because of this, extension of the food stamp plan will be considered as a possible method of improving the health and fitness of the people who are needed to step-up production of airplanes, munitions and ships.

The food stamp plan at present, after two years of pushing ahead as fast as possible, is available to about one-half the families on relief. At the present rate, authorities in charge believe it will take another year or so to extend it to all relief families. The plan increases the family food purchasing ability by one-half. Those eligible can buy a \$16 orange stamp per month per person. These stamps can be used only for buying food. With each orange stamp, a free blue stamp is issued which is good for an additional \$8 per month per person for food from the current surplus foods.

With one exception, this plan has so far been made available only to families certified by local relief authorities as eligible for some sort of public aid, that

is, families whom the social workers have interviewed and continue to interview every three months.

Many people feel that the stamp plan should be extended to those families not on relief but whose income is no higher than that paid through relief agencies to the families on relief. Difficulty of administration is one thing which has held up any such extension of the food stamp plan.

The social worker in direct and frequent contact with the relief families knows when members of the family are employed and no longer eligible for relief. If the food stamp plan were extended to non-relief families there would be no way of knowing, without increasing administrative facilities and personnel, when more members of the family got jobs, or increased wages, and thus

PSYCHOLOGY-ANTHROPOLOGY

Food Habits To Be Studied By Research Council Group

THE business man who makes his breakfast of coffee and a sweet roll and the typist who lunches on a "slimming diet" of pineapple and dry white toast will receive the attention of a new committee of the National Research Council devoted to food habits in their relations to national defense.

Acting on the belief of nutritionists that the American dinner table is the first line of defense for democracy, scientists on the Food Habits Committee plan to find out why America's way of eating fails to match up with what modern knowledge of vitamins, calories and minerals has shown is the best diet for building health and morale for an all-out battle of nerves and steel.

Chairman of the committee is Msgr. John M. Cooper, of Catholic University, well-known anthropologist. Personnel of the committee includes, besides other students of man and his folk-ways, psy-

chologists schooled in a knowledge of how habits are formed and changed.

Plans for attack on this vital problem were discussed at a meeting of the committee on May 23 and 24. The Food Habits Committee is one of two committees formed by the National Research Council to cooperate with the National Nutrition program. The other committee, which deals with the health and agricultural aspects of the program, is the Committee on Food and Nutrition.

The first job facing the Food Habits Committee will probably be to find out by a public-opinion poll, or some other suitable method, the extent to which faulty diets are due to ignorance of modern nutrition, to food superstitions, to individual or group prejudices or to prohibitive prices or unavailability of necessary foods.

With a wealth of oranges and grape-

Science News Letter, May 31, 1941

fruit brimming with vitamin C piled up and going to waste in America, many Americans in remote places have never seen them and have no idea what to do with them. This vitamin is one difficult to provide in adequate amount when citrus fruits are not available. When the Red Cross furnished food to flood refugees in an isolated region of the south, workers found hungry children playing ball with the strange round fruit. One mother complained that she had boiled the grapefruit and she had fried them, but they didn't taste right to her either way.

The diet of these people was limited principally by the fact that they had never encountered most of the wide variety of fruits, meats and vegetables that are available in the city market.

At first they seemed afraid of the unusual diet and refused to touch such strange foods. But after three or four days in the Red Cross camp, they were tasting all sorts of new foods. After six or eight weeks they wanted the recipes for cooking them and, incidentally, reported spontaneously how much better they were feeling.

In the city, national, racial and religious customs give odd turns to the American diet.

Some think the first water in which vegetables are cooked is harmful and must be thrown away. Many believe milk good only for infants or the sick.

The Chinese learned in their own land to drink no milk at all but to feed mothers-to-be on the soft bones of birds or pickled pig's feet. But these people know and like soy beans, an ideal food neglected almost entirely by Americans.

People from the Near East and Poland like a doughnut or bread with coffee for their breakfast.

Food habits are influenced by many other factors besides national or other group customs and folkways. The Food Habits Committee may want to assay the effect of advertising, of food fads, of slimming diets, of popularizing by the movies of boyish-form figures or May West curves as well as the encouragement given certain types of diet by drug-store counters, and handy hamburger shops.

Recent research by psychologists has shown that rats and also men will naturally eat those foods that are best for them and eat as much as they should, provided they have not built up artificial prejudices against some types of food.

Stormy scenes at the table may make young children form dislikes for spinach, carrots, milk and other important foods which well-meaning nurses or mothers

insist on their eating at times when they are not hungry. Unappetizing seasoning, sloppy serving, too much cooking may make many individuals finicky about certain foods.

But not all food habits are faulty, by any means. America is a big land. Through the medium of the new Food Habits Committee, New Englanders may learn ways of eating that are popular in Texas. Those in the mountains of Kentucky or the woods of Michigan may be

told of the golden fruits of Florida and California. Rice eaters will learn of potatoes. Child coffee drinkers will learn about fruit beverages and milk. All will learn that use of the new enriched flour and bread will facilitate planning satisfactory diets.

All America will learn how to arm with physical and spiritual health, the best sort of armor for defense of democracy.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Low Income Farm Families Have Many Physical Defects

Only Five Out of Thousand White Fathers and Mothers Are Really in Good Health; Not One Among Colored

ONLY five out of a thousand heads of low-income farm families and their wives are really in good health—free from physical defects, it was revealed to the Population Association of America, in a report from Dr. R. C. Williams, chief medical officer of the Farm Security Administration.

The accumulation of defects and disabilities affecting these people, termed by Dr. Williams "reservoirs of America's defensive forces" because they contribute so much to the numbers of America's young manhood, was brought to light by a health survey conducted last year by the Farm Security Administration.

"So far," Dr. Williams said, "we have found no dramatic results which would show any great number of them dragging along with one foot in the grave.

"But what we are finding is that they

have an accumulation of defects and chronic conditions which are not serious enough to keep them from carrying on with their activities but which cause progressive debilitation and, in some cases, partial or total disability."

Of 1,005 heads of white families and their wives, only five were free from defects. Of 111 colored husbands and wives, not a single one was in perfect health.

The average person is handicapped by between three and four physical defects, and even children have two or three apiece. Vitamin deficiencies are extremely prevalent.

In Maine, the eye specialist on the survey staff examined about 350 persons with slit lamp microscopy for evidence of past or present riboflavin (one of the B vitamins) deficiency. Every individual examined showed evidence of an old,



UPBEAT, DOWNBEAT

Both are caught by the new stroboflash cameras, that take pictures on exposures of one thirty-thousandth of a second. That speed makes even the sixty-per-second beat of a whirring hummingbird's wings stand still. These two photographs, taken by Edward R. Osterndorff at the New York Zoological Park, are of a rare Brazilian species known as the Green Emerald Hummingbird.