

NUTRITION

Even Poor Rural Communities Can Have Adequate Diet

Experiment in "Applied Economics" Shows Nutrition Level Can Be Improved Without Any Help From Outside

"THERE is no rural community in the United States so poor that it cannot have an adequate diet," Dr. Harold Clark of Columbia University told the Food Habits Committee of the National Research Council.

In an experiment in "applied economics," carried on under a grant from the Sloan Foundation, the poorest communities that could be located in the United States were selected. An attempt was made to improve the nutrition of the people entirely without the expenditure of any money from outside the community itself.

Health tests already indicate an improvement in the health of the people,

reflecting a higher nutritional level, after only five years of the program, Dr. Clark said. This is much more rapid than was anticipated when the experiment started. At first it was not hoped that much could be accomplished within the span of a generation.

Ordinary books on agriculture fail to reach adequately the lowest third of the agricultural population, Dr. Clark told the Committee. In the Southern Appalachian community described by Dr. Clark, where the typical family income is only \$35 a year, textbooks and even demonstrations are often beyond the understanding of the people, he said.

Yet when children in the public schools

were given readers describing in easy words how to keep pests out of the garden or how to store vegetables in the winter, parents demanded that the books be brought home for reading.

Some of these children had actually never in their lives seen milk, Dr. Clark said. But after they had been given a school reader telling how to keep a goat, two goats, almost miraculously, appeared in the community.

That school lunches are profitable to a community was indicated by a report to the Food Habits Committee by Dr. I. H. Moore, of the Georgia Department of Public Health.

Hot school lunches are an important part of the child health demonstration program in Hancock County, Ga. This program has reduced by 40% the number of children who are "kept back" and have to repeat a grade. These repeaters, it is estimated, cost the community as much as \$35 apiece to provide the additional schooling.

Records of eating habits of 100 expectant mothers seen at clinics this year compared with 100 in 1938 indicate that the instruction given in the community during that time has increased consumption of milk, eggs and fresh vegetables. The people still eat fat-back to the exclusion of lean meat, however. No change has been observed in meat eating habits despite instruction, Dr. Moore said.

Science News Letter, June 7, 1941

ANATOMY

Sex Hormones Shape Bones; Account for Sex Differences

EVIDENCE that sex hormones play important roles in the shaping of the long bones of the skeleton is offered by Dr. J. L. Bremer of Harvard University Medical School. The female sex hormone, theelin, has a softening effect, permitting certain wandering cells in the blood to dissolve and remove bone material. If theelin is present in excess, this may give rise to a serious bone-weakening disease. Normally, however, the opposite male hormones, the androgens, check this process before it becomes pathological.

All animal bodies contain a certain amount of the hormones of the opposite sex, although of course those of their own sex normally predominate. This predominance of the bone-softening female hormone in the female body may be responsible for the greater lightness and delicacy of female bones, Dr. Bremer suggested in his report to the American Association of Anatomists.

Science News Letter, June 7, 1941



CONQUERORS OF YELLOW FEVER

The artist, Dean Cornwell, is showing his completed painting to Col. C. M. Watson, Second Corps Area Surgeon, pointing out Dr. Carlos Finlay (in black coat) who with Major Walter Reed (hand on hip) conquered yellow fever and made possible the Panama Canal, vital link in America's defense now. This third painting in the series "Pioneers of American Medicine," was unveiled on June 2 by Miss Blossom Reed, daughter of Major Reed.