

EMERGENCY NUTRITION

EXPERTS differ in some details of their views on the feeding of children. But the differences are rather in emphasis than in essentials. Some emphasize more strongly the dominant place of the few most important foods, while others give more emphasis to the doctrine of diversification of the child's diet.

Such differences pale into insignificance when we are faced with the statement on the high authority of Miss Grace Abbott that great numbers of children all over the country are now living in such destitution as cannot but leave them weakened and injured for life.

With needs so urgent, with so many people so near our doors suffering so severely, it is a time for those who *have* to *really share* their means with those who have not. Perfunctory giving is better than none; but not sufficient. There is need for perfunctory givers to rise to the plane of generosity, and for those who have already learned to give generously to raise their giving now, during this emergency, into the realm of sacrifice. A little temporary sacrifice on the part of the more fortunate now can well make the difference between a lifetime of weakness and misery and a lifetime of usefulness and self-respecting Americanism for many a child.

Adequate relief and reasonable security will not be permanently denied. People will give as they come to realize the real need.

Meantime what is the relief worker to advise, or the intelligent but destitute mother to do, in such times and places as there simply is not money at hand to feed a child according to even the more economical of adequate standards?

When and while standards can not be maintained, where and how can retrenchment be made in the feeding of the child

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with least danger of inflicting a lasting injury?

The guiding principle should, I think, be to provide those nutritional essentials of which a shortage tends to permanent injury, and to do this (while necessary) even at the cost of a sacrifice of other features of the dietary which are normally desirable but not absolutely essential. During the acute emergency, all available sources of economical food should be utilized but money need not be spent in diversifying the diet merely for the sake of variety. Let no one be misled by the extravagant phrase "deadly monotony." No deaths are ever caused by monotony of diet if the diet, however simple and cheap, provides the actually necessary nutrients; while shortages of these nutrients do cause all too many deaths, if not directly then by lowering the resistance to disease.

The food problem of the unemployment emergency presents itself primarily in the form of the question, What best to do with an inadequate amount of money?

Advice may, therefore, perhaps best be given in terms of the spending of such money as is at hand. One suggestion which seems to have been widely useful, first formulated, I think, by Miss Lucy Gillett, is:

"Divide the food money into fifths:

one fifth, more or less, for vegetables and fruits;

one fifth, or more, for milk and cheese;

one fifth, or less, for meats, fish and eggs;

one fifth, or more, for bread and cereals;

one fifth, or less, for fats, sugar and other groceries."

It will be noted that this does not propose invariable division into fifths but indicates the direction which variation may wisely take—one-fifth or more for some groups; one-fifth or less for others.

Miss Gillett tells me that her experience indicates that approximate division of the

food money into fifths works well at fairly comfortable levels of expenditure; but that in the food budget of the typical low-income family it is necessary to use more than one-fifth, often one-third of the food money, for milk in order to provide the amount of milk that the children of such a family actually need.

When shortage of money forces expenditure for food to an abnormally low level, more than one-fifth (perhaps one-third) should therefore be spent for milk in some form; and the suggestion of one-fifth for fruit and vegetables should if possible be maintained, but with selection probably limited to the cheaper sorts so as to get the most food value for the money; at least one-fifth (of the reduced expenditure) may well go for breadstuffs and cheap forms of cereal since a penny spent here will go farthest to meet the actual pangs of hunger; the greater part of the retrenchment should fall upon the other two-fifths of the above grouping. One can forego flesh, fish and fowl, and sweets, and most of the sweetened and shortened products of the bakery, and most of the miscellaneous foods bought in the grocery, if one gets enough of milk in some form and of some fruit or vegetable to provide the absolutely essential mineral elements and vitamins, and if to these foods enough breadstuff be added to prevent actual weakness from hunger. Almost always the other foods are less economical in meeting these absolute nutritional needs.

Thus if forced below reasonable standards to bare essentials, we may, in the light of our present knowledge of nutrition, most wisely meet the emergency by concentrating our attention upon efforts to provide these three essential groups of foods: (1) milk and its products, (2) fruit and/or vegetables, (3) bread and other cheap sources of calories.

Let retrenchment of expenditure take the form, first, of foregoing the purchase of the foods of other groups, and next of selecting the cheaper or cheapest forms or ar-

ticles within each of the three groups just mentioned as essential. This may involve some shocks to prejudices and even to what in normal times we rightly regard as standards; but we are dealing here with the question of meeting a dire emergency. From certain standpoints two forms or kinds of milk may seem worlds apart; but any kind of milk is nutritionally more like any other kind of milk than is any other food. A crisp green vegetable or a juicy fruit may seem much preferable to a potato; but with expenditure forced to a sufficiently low level, the cheapest vegetable to be had can carry the nutritional responsibility for the whole group of fruits and vegetables during an emergency period.

If there are times and places of such dire destitution that sacrifices must be made even among the three bare essentials of bread, milk, and some fruit or vegetable, each in the cheapest available form, what then?

Shall obvious hunger and a starved appearance lead to the crowding out of milk by bread because a penny spent for bread goes farther to still the pangs of hunger? To go too far in this direction is to incur the even greater tragedy of the life-long injuries which result from the "hidden hunger" of the mineral and vitamin deficiencies. "Milk builds bone and muscle better than any other food." And more than this, milk is both the cheapest and the surest protection from the nutritional deficiencies which open the way to diseases and life-long injuries to health, happiness, and working efficiency.

"The dietary should be built around bread and milk." The lower the level of expenditure, the more one must forego other foods and concentrate effort upon providing these two, supplemented by a little of some inexpensive fruit or vegetable.

This is the teaching of our present knowledge of nutrition reduced to its barest terms for the meeting of a real emergency—an emergency such as we must believe and

resolve shall not last long nor recur often—but during which there may be need for a time and in some places, to face frankly the fact that reasonable standards are temporarily out of reach and that while the tragedy lasts one must guide, with what wisdom one may, the expenditure of inadequate funds for food in such ways that the children affected may be brought through without life-long injuries so that even if body weights are subnormal for a time there may still be a basis of sound bone and lean tissue to permit of complete nutritional rehabilitation with the coming of better days.

REFERENCES

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LIBERTY

Liberty is a hard and difficult lesson to learn. It involves the freedom to make mistakes and errors as well as to make successes. It involves meeting the temptation to do wrong as well as the opportunity to do right. Liberty has its dangers and its limitations, but so far as human history goes no form or type of despotism, whether individual or group or social, can for a moment be put in comparison with it.

—NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER.

Under no circumstances can secondary school graduation be accepted by itself as qualifying for admission to college, and the time has now come when the mere possession of a baccalaureate degree is incomplete and unsatisfactory evidence of capacity to make best use of the graduate and professional studies and direction which the university offers.—*Report of the President of Columbia University for 1930.*

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

THE General Assembly, which convenes in January, will have before it many important financial problems, not the least of which will be the problem of reducing expenditures to make up for loss in revenue or else to increase taxation in some form in order to allow expenditures to continue as they have during the past biennium. It is generally conceded that the Governor's budget proposals will contain few provisions for capital expenditures. It is believed, however, that some provision will be made for the State Colleges to continue with approximately the same support they now receive from the state.

Dr. Hall, our newly appointed and very efficient State Superintendent of Public Instruction, has thrown a bombshell into budget considerations by advocating the additional appropriation of \$2,000,000 for the public schools in order that the state may pay a reasonable salary to teachers. Whether the source from which this money is to come should be the state or the locality is a moot question, but nobody who knows the situation in Virginia will question the wisdom of Dr. Hall's plan in trying to increase the funds for our public schools. If the state cannot provide the two million dollars when it is asked for at this time, Dr. Hall has, at least, entered into the record in the proper fashion and has placed himself in the strategic position to get this aid whenever the state is able to grant it.

Many people have discussed free tuition or scholarships as measures that should be abolished at the State Colleges. It is my feeling that there should be a very careful investigation of this matter, at least to provide for equalization in such allowances in our State Colleges. It is rather striking that the range of these allowances varies from \$440 as the maximum at one state college to \$30 per year as a maximum at another.