

work or that the associations in a hospital post with diseased states only, will pall, especially where the dietician's responsibility has not been fully established?

All interested in the proper care of the sick will have welcomed the Report of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London (1943) on hospital diets, and the effect that it has had on feeding in hospitals everywhere. It is, nevertheless, unfortunate that the first approach to this problem should have come from the end concerned with disease, and we must seek to redress the balance by creating posts from which can be surveyed the whole dietetic field, including the mass of the people, old and young, healthy and diseased, at home or in hospital, school, factory or workshop. Only when we have done this shall we be placing dietetics in its proper position in the field of social medicine, and The Nutrition Society will make a great contribution to national health by stressing the importance of this work in public health and by recommending the Ministry of Health and local authorities to sponsor the appointment of dieticians in this way.

#### REFERENCES

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## The Dietician in Schools

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It would be advisable to begin with a few figures, though they can in the nature of things be no more than conjectural. When the new measures come into full operation, a midday meal is to be provided free on school days to all children whose parents desire them to benefit from the service. We have not the slightest idea what numbers will attend and how far the attendance will vary from school to school; presumably it depends upon the slow process of change in our social customs and institutions. The level of demand reached in the war years, during which about 85 per cent. of the meals have been paid for at a rate of 4d. or 5d. a meal, is obviously no guide to the level we may expect to reach when meals are free but when, on the other hand, mothers are no longer engaged on war work, and the relaxation of controls has permitted more food to flow into domestic consumption. The Ministry of Education has based its estimates on an arbitrary figure of 75 per cent. of the average school attendance. On that assumption the schools would have to cater during 200 days in the year for about 3,300,000 children, and, since the school dinner is supposed to provide about half the child's daily requirements of protein, fat, vitamins and mineral salts, it follows that we shall have to supply the total requirements of these nutrients for almost 30 per cent. of the child's dietary year.

It is a matter of doubt how far the meals will be prepared in kitchens attached to the schools and how far they will be conveyed to schools from large central kitchens. We may take it for granted that the fairly common war time practice of preparing the meals in central kitchens will have

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to persist for several years. A borough that can serve a dozen or more schools from a central kitchen has certain obvious advantages over a county area where no such solution of the catering problem is possible but, if the borough authorities have the advantage of centralized staffing and management, they are faced with the more intangible problem of providing meals that shall still be palatable after a journey in insulated containers. In both cases education committees in increasing numbers are seeing fit to acquire the services of an official called a school meals organizer, usually provided with two or more competent assistants. There is no question but that in the future every director of education will avail himself of the services of such a team of meal organizers and, since we have at present in England and Wales 146 distinct local education authorities, we are, I believe, safe in assuming that there will be a career open in this direction for 500 to 700 qualified professional women.

We may ask, then, what work these women will be expected to perform. From the catering point of view it is relatively simple. The precise sum to be expended for each meal will be prescribed by the Ministry; dietetically the meals will be uniform in character, graded only in amount to suit the ages of the children. It may be supposed that, while the authorities would take a poor view of any organizer who systematically spent too much, the medical division of the Ministry would reserve its special censure for the education committee which tried to save a few pence on meat, dried milk and dried fruit. Nutritionally the matter is more complex, because we are here dealing with the most physiologically important section of the community to come under the communal feeding arrangements. The twenty thousand meals served in an administrative area may fall within one well defined pattern, but each meal has to be so prepared and served as to retain all its nutrient qualities in the highest measure possible. In selecting an industrial caterer I should look first for a woman experienced in the attractive presentation of dishes; in selecting a school meals organizer I should look for a woman with practical experience in large scale conservative cookery under very varied culinary conditions. I do not mean that the industrial caterer should not know all she can about vitamin values, and I am far from suggesting that the school meals organizer should countenance the service of dull and unattractive dishes. I am thinking purely in terms of relative priority.

In the present phase of the meals service, an organizer's work consists for the greater part in helping to design the lay-out, routine and staffing of new kitchens. The conditions under which the food is stored and cooked are still necessarily very diverse; they call for adaptability and powers of improvisation. Moreover, the head cooks of a hundred village schools may be most worthy souls, but their knowledge of food values may be rudimentary and their contempt for an organizer, who seeks to achieve the impracticable, may be almost beyond expression. To be of the slightest use the organizer must know how to make the spirit of conservative cookery come alive in the most unlikely material, and, to achieve this, she must possess in high degree the qualities of a good improviser and persuasive and amiable manager.

Ten years hence we may have acquired a large number of standardized school kitchens, and we may have trained a sufficient number of our girls in the elements of scientific cookery. In the meantime we have to deal

with a service that is still in its early stages of evolution. A successful organizer should thus have been trained rather in kitchen management than in catering; and her training should, where possible, include experience in large scale kitchen management under many varied conditions. I would insist here upon the importance of large scale cooking. Some of the meals organizers are at present drawn from the ranks of the teachers of domestic subjects employed by the education authorities; I should be the last to deny that many of them are temperamentally well adapted to undertake the new tasks, but it is the primary business of the teacher of domestic subjects to train girls in the elements of small scale domestic cooking, and I wish to emphasize that both the art and science of large scale cooking differ fundamentally in quality from those of the domestic kitchen. The problems to be solved are of a different order; the school kitchen should not aim at providing meals that are a poor imitation of the delights of the home cuisine; it should seek to develop subtleties and attractions that are all its own. In brief, the communal school meal should be studied as a new form of food preparation, and the meals organizer should be a woman trained to contemplate large scale cooking as a worthy end in itself. The school meal must not in the minds of the children replace the domestic meal as merely a second best; it must replace it as an alternative form of attraction, just as one of us might weigh the relative attractions of a restaurant meal and a meal taken at the domestic hearth.

A dietician, who enters this branch of the profession, will have first to acquire a thorough knowledge of educational etiquette. She must be aware that the school with its kitchen and canteen is primarily the domain of the head teacher and that the kitchen staff will be in many instances responsible to him. She has thus the task of persuading the head teacher that her recommendations are both useful and practicable, and she must bear in mind that the school canteen has by no means been as yet absorbed into the total substance of the school life. It is a new institution, and the members of the teaching profession as a whole have still to digest and assimilate the fact that their schools have become catering establishments, where pupils absorb something beyond the mathematical tables. To no small extent a meals organizer will probably find herself responsible not only for the selection of kitchen staff but also for the fostering of good working arrangements between, on the one hand, the kitchen staff and, on the other, the teaching staff which is normally concerned with supervising the children at their meals. It may be argued that education committees would do well to accord her a status that fits the work she has to perform in practice. The distinction made by some of the larger authorities between the administrative and the technical officers employed by them is already subject to certain criticism, and there is perhaps a tendency nowadays to give the so called technical members of the staff a wider measure of discretion in advising on administrative changes. In that case the somewhat peculiar function of the meals organizer needs to be recognized. Upon her judgment, as the adviser of the director of education, will depend the growth of the Authority's meal service as a social institution. It is by its nature a complex institution, involving workers and functionaries of many diverse kinds. Human as well as administrative problems have to be resolved, and the organizer is

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frequently the only person so placed that she can appreciate and deal with the subtle adjustments required. The authorities will find it worth their while to attract towards the profession women of high administrative qualities, which is possible only where the salary and status they can offer compete favourably with those of other careers involving a comparable measure of responsibility.

## The Dietician in Industry

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### *Scope of the Dietician in Industry*

The memorandum of the Special Planning Committee of the English Group of The Nutrition Society (Nutrition Society, 1945), which has recently been completed, says in paragraph 1: "We consider that the description of Dietitian should henceforth be confined to such persons as are suitably qualified for registration as Medical Auxiliaries". This seems logical when more than four years have been spent in specialized training, but it is doubtful whether the dietician, in this capacity, can exercise any function in industry. If the factory is large enough to have a medical unit, the doctor or nurse, with the catering manager, should have sufficient knowledge to provide any necessary diets. The very sick would presumably be in hospital. Any analysis of meals could always be made by a public analyst. It would be an unwarranted duplication of staff for the firm to appoint a person qualified as a medical auxiliary.

For qualified and experienced catering managers there is a big demand, and a growing one for catering advisers. The former should be able to control and co-ordinate the canteen service so that it runs smoothly in accordance with the interests of the managerial and operational staffs.

Posts as catering advisers should be sought by dieticians only after managerial experience has been obtained. Such appointments might be made by firms so that liaison could be satisfactorily maintained with a catering contractor responsible for a group of canteens, or a dietician could be engaged to have direct responsibility as catering controller.

### *Training and Experience Suitable for the Dietician in Industry*

In order to be fully equipped for industrial posts, dieticians need sound training and wide experience of technical and business problems, as well as personal qualities. A good knowledge of nutrition must certainly be acquired at some stage of training, and probably this is best done during, or soon after, the preliminary period. There is a definite advantage if the training in dietetics is taken after some practical experience, including that of cookery, has been gained. Such an arrangement enables the student to plan her menus more effectively, and to gain the experience necessary to take over control of the kitchen in an emergency. Having acquired some preliminary experience she is able also to grasp more of the administrative problems being less absorbed by purely technical matters.