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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Saturday, May 1, 1937 2 3 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEWS NOTES FROM WASHINGTON." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Listeners, as you probably know, this is one of the great days of the year. It is a day important enough to be set aside by Presidential proclamation, just as Thanksgiving Day is. May first is our National Child Health Day. And I am about to celebrate it by reading a letter from our correspondent in Washington, D. C.

She writes: "Since this letter will probably reach you on Child Health Day, I think this is the ideal time to report some recent news about the food that has done the most for child health. Of course, that food is milk.

"Of course, you have heard and heard again about the value of milk as food -- the values, I should say, since milk has so many. You have heard that milk contributes more to good nutrition than any other single food because it contains material for building and regulating the body as well as for fuel or energy -- a unique combination of nutrients, in fact. You know, of course, that milk is richer than any other food in the calcium or lime needed for the building and upkeep of bones and teeth; that it is also rich in protein for muscle-building; that it is an important source of the vitamins A and G and contains some of the other vitamins; that it also contains phosphorus and other minerals as well as fat and sugar for energy.

"Now, that collection of values is for whole milk. Not so much has been said about the value of skim milk -- liquid skim milk or dry skim milk in powdered form. But skim milk is also a very valuable food -- and a very cheap food. Though it lacks the fat and the vitamin A of whole milk, it contains most of the other nutrients -- the calcium, protein, and vitamin G, to mention the more important ones. When the family income is small, nutritionists advise using generous quantities of milk in its cheaper forms for the growth and well-being of the family.

"Which brings me to the story I want to tell you today -- a story of what dried skim milk did for some very undernourished Negro children here in Washington recently. Last year women in the Bureau of Home Economics of the Department of Agriculture with the help of colored doctors, nurses and nutritionists from Howard University, the Negro university in Washington, selected 213 Negro boys of 3 and 4 years old for a short study of how dried skim milk, added to a diet very low in milk and other protective foods, affects the nutrition of young children. The boys chosen for the study came from families whose average income was 16 dollars a week and the families were large. About half the homes had members on relief. And about half were living from 3 to 5 in a room.

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"Physical examinations which these children received at the start of the study showed them to be retarded in growth -- below average in height, breadth, and weight for their age. They were probably also retarded in bone development. And most of them had had many serious illnesses such as pneumonia which showed that they were often exposed and had low resistance to disease.

"As for the food which these children had been living on, their diets were far below what the nutritionists call 'emergency' rations of the protective foods like milk, eggs, fruits and vegetables. The mainstays of their meals were starch foods, sweets, and some meat. Most of them had been having less than a cup of milk a day. Not one had anywhere near the milk quota which nutritionists say is necessary for health and growth. In other words, they were living on diets below the minimum requirements for protein, calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin G, and often also for iron and the other vitamins.

"After their physical examinations, half of these boys began to receive dried skim milk each day along with their usual diet. Colored nutritionists went to their homes and showed mothers how to use the powdered milk in making soup, cocoa, creamed dishes and so on. The Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation provided the dried milk, and it was delivered to their homes each week in large enough amounts so that the children would have 3 ounces or more -- enough to make a quart of liquid skim milk.

"Though this dried milk added to their regular diets did not make an adequate diet, it did fill in many of the worst lacks. It provided the calcium so greatly needed, as well as the protein, the vitamin G and, of course, phosphorus. But it could not make up the lacks in iron, or vitamins A, B, or C.

"After 4 months all the children again had physical examinations, and those who had been receiving milk were checked against those who had not. Of course, 4 months is a very short time to expect results in such a nutrition study but the funds were only enough to cover this period. However, the results show some very interesting trends. For example, the children who had been using the dried milk had begun to show more rapid growth than those without it. And the children who had received the milk showed the result of its bone-building values. X-ray pictures taken of a bony center at the wrist, both at the beginning and at the end of the study, showed that better bone-building had been going on in the milk-users than in those who received no extra milk. Multiply the slight effects shown in just 4 months by several years and you will see what this cheap but highly nutritious food may do for growing children on a low-cost diet."

That concludes this week's Department of Agriculture letter from Washington, D. C.
