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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, February 13, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MORE SCHOOL LUNCH NEWS." Information from the Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture.

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One of the best jobs ever undertaken by women's clubs is promoting a hot nourishing lunch for school children. And one of the women's organizations that have done the most for this cause are the home demonstration clubs in the different States. At least, they are the groups of women that have looked after noon lunches for rural children, often the worst sufferers from cold lunches. The home demonstration clubs got busy on this problem way back in 1921 and have been at it ever since. And their work has shown results all down through the years. Over and over again the reports from the schools show that when youngsters have the right kind of food at noon, their health, and school work and behavior improve.

In the recent hard years, school-children all over the country have needed these nourishing lunches more than ever. So in many communities relief organizations have joined forces with home demonstration agents and club members to provide the noon meal at the schools.

An agent in Georgia reports that in her county last year they managed the school lunch problem this way. In rural schools, the agent supervised the project; in the city, the Red Cross nurse looked after it. The women who prepared the food were good cooks who happened to be on relief.

The relief agencies contributed milk, cheese, butter, canned beef, salt pork, and lard for the lunches. Children brought vegetables and some other supplies from the farms. Every school served one hot nourishing dish a day. And most schools also served a raw vegetable, milk and fruit at noon.

At the end of the year ninety-five percent of the children had gained in weight. And a large number of youngsters who had started by refusing vegetables and various other foods soon learned to enjoy everything that was served them. Carrots, both cooked and raw, were among the most popular foods. Along with these lunches the children had a free course in good table manners. According to reports, they enjoyed this, too.

In one county in Maryland last year the home demonstration agent and club members arranged for hot lunches for 2 thousand children in 9 rural schools and gave employment to 17 needy women who prepared and served the lunches.



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The Red Cross in this county helped first by giving the money for garden seeds. Boys in 4-H clubs raised the vegetables from these seeds; 4-H girls and home demonstration members canned them, and also put up meat and soup for the school lunches. The rest of the food was a gift from the Red Cross or from parent-teacher organizations and other rural women's clubs.

Many of the children in these schools came from very poor homes and had little or no breakfast to start the school day on. Moreover, some of them were gone from home each day ten or eleven hours, getting to school and back. Reports from all the schools showed that most of the children improved in health after the lunches started and that they also did better school work.

In another county in Maryland the home demonstration agent gave parents and teachers a series of lessons on lunches for school children. Visits to the various rural schools showed that many children came to school each day with no lunches, or very poor lunches, or lunch boxes filled with the wrong kind of food. The result was a good many undernourished pupils on the rolls.

As a result of these talks to parents and teachers together, the lunches from home improved and many of the schools arranged for a hot dish for the children at noon or put in equipment so that children could heat food they had brought from home.

In a 3-room school in Minnesota, a butcher and janitor are both helping the children get a good hot lunch every school-day this year. The butcher got interested during the summer when the women in the neighborhood, members of home demonstration clubs, were all busy putting up vegetables for the school. So he offered to provide a soup-bone twice a week during the winter so the vegetable soup could have a good meat-stock foundation. Then the janitor of the school offered to heat the food every day and help the teachers with the cooking. The children do the serving. Here again teachers report that classes are easier to handle and children's marks are better when they have good warm food at noon.

In North Carolina one agent reports that relief agencies, teachers and home demonstration members all cooperated to see that 13 schools in the county served free lunches to children that needed them beginning in December. The previous summer, women in the county had canned some 8 thousand quarts of vegetables for the school. And during the winter, these women also volunteered help in preparing the food at the school.

Teachers in all these schools all reported favorable results from these lunches. Reading through their reports, you come on phrases like this: "Physical condition of children improved.... Increased interest in school work.... Makes them more alert mentally.... Fewer dull and listless children.... Attendance better, especially on cold days.... Better order in the school room.... More sociability in school.... The lunch encourages better eating habits and interests children in having variety in the home diet.... Good opportunity for teaching children food values."

Those are just a few illustrations, taken at random, of the school-lunch jobs that home demonstration clubs have done with the help of extension agents and specialists. Now if your club should happen to be looking around for a worth-while project this year -- well, I've told you the stories. They ought to speak for themselves.

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