

# THE FOOD MAGAZINE

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## FOOD SAFETY: OUR TEN-POINT PLAN

BABIES ON THE  
BOOZE: GRIPE  
WATER

BOYCOTTS:  
COLOMBIAN  
BANANAS AND  
DANISH  
McDONALDS

WOMEN FOOD  
WORKERS

MEP MICHAEL  
HINDLEY'S DIARY

LETTERS

BOOK REVIEWS

RECIPES

SCIENCE ROUND-UP

MORE PAGES  
THAN EVER!

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BSE MAY BE IN OUR  
FOOD

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MILK: THE BRAND  
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'PREMIUM  
SAUSAGES': A PRIME  
RIP-OFF?

GREENHOUSE  
EFFECT: WILL IT  
HAPPEN? WHEN?

POVERTY AND DIET  
IN THE 1980s

THE ORIGINS OF THE  
FOOD ACT

CAROLINE WALKER  
TRUST: ANNUAL  
EVENT

# THE FOOD MAGAZINE

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Its membership represents London's  
community and voluntary groups, food  
sector trade unions, statutory bodies and  
interested individuals and professionals.

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## Wear your badge with pride

**W**ithout hesitation, I bought a badge at the inaugural event of British Food and Farming Year (BFAFY). The event was an exhibition of *Aspects of Agriculture in English (sic) Art* with the title 'This Land is Our Land'.

Besides the obvious stupidity of the title – 99 per cent of us do not own Britain's agricultural land – the exhibition ushered in another rich irony. BFAFY has the scale of publicity sought by its designers, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), and trade friends, but the *nature* of the publicity was surely not what they had in mind.

BFAFY was to be a celebration of British food and farming industries, and to improve public understanding of these beleaguered trades. Unhappily for them, the inauguration was hijacked by public concern about food poisoning. This rapidly led to a national debate on the need to clean up British food and to reform or close MAFF itself.

In three hectic months almost everything the London Food Commission has researched and debated concerning food quality and public health has been in the headlines. Overwhelmingly, public perception is that the food industry and the Ministry are far too close for the public's good health. The usual industry-friendly voluntary Code of Practice offered by MAFF and the poultry industry as the 'solution' was quickly exposed as toothless. We congratulate the Minister for eventually promising regulations with some bite. But will he fund the enforcement? And why does it take a full-blown crisis to get such common-sense regulations?

BFAFY is built on a lie. The publicity says it is to celebrate 100 years of MAFF. In fact MAFF was only formed in 1956 when Agriculture and Fisheries took over (the City analogy is apt) the Ministry of Food.

**T**he Ministry of Food (MoF) was the UK's one experiment with an interventionist, public health-oriented food policy. In the war farmers and food producers, then as now, worked closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. MoF which had closer links to the distributive trades was the 'consumers' champion'. But the



MoF's association with food rationing was to prove fatal, and it was the manufacturers, farmers and agrochemical companies that won the battle for influence in post-war planning. Today, outside the world of Whitehall, it is the retail giants who hold sway (see *The Food Magazine*, Issue 4).

Reform of MAFF is long overdue. Three schemes are being mooted. In the first, MAFF would be completely dismantled and regulation and support for production given to the Department of Trade and Industry and/or the Department of the Environment. Health functions would go to the Department of Health. Proponents of this model argue that the Department of Health could resume the MoF tradition of consumer interests.

**I**n the second model, MAFF would lose its role as simultaneous supporter of both production and consumption interests. MAFF would be responsible in the main for production interests. A new US-style Food and Drugs Administration monitoring agency would be set up to ensure that scientific and public health standards were not hijacked by the interests of producers.

In the third model, a new Ministry of Food would incorporate MAFF. This would modernise MAFF's structures to include regulation of catering and retailing (the former is by far the food economy's largest employer), but give priority to the consumer and public health interest.

The LFC favours a combination of the second and third models: a reformed ministry and a new Food Safety Executive. Whatever emerges it is clear that for the first time since the 1950s, those who argue for the public interest in food policy actually have the public solidly behind them. But the public relations machinery of the food producers is well oiled and powerful. Food interests are still well served in Parliament.

As tax payers we spent £1,946m in MAFF last year. Write to your MP and say what you feel about it.

Make 1989 a food policy year to remember. Wear your BFAFY badge with pride. For just 95p you do at least get something for your money.

Tim Lang



## Boycotts: Bananas and McDonald's

**T**he assassination of over 150 banana workers in the Uraba region of Colombia has led to the call for a banana boycott from international human rights organisations. Those killed were all members of trade unions or active in the opposition group the Frente Popular, and there is speculation that army officers were involved in the shootings.

Colombia is the fourth biggest banana producer in the world, with much of the crop controlled by the multinationals United Brands, Del Monte and Standard Fruit. Details from Colombia Solidarity Committee, Priory House, Latin America House, Kingsgate Place, London NW6 4TA.



### Danish boycott sticker

After negotiating with McDonald's for over a year, the Danish catering trade union faced bitter frustration when McDonald's rejected any collective working agreements.

The union has now launched a boycott and press campaign against the company, and the International Union of Food and Allied Workers has called on members in other countries to prepare for solidarity action against McDonald's.

Enquiries and letters of support to: Bent Moos, President, Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union, Uplandsgade 52 A, 2300 Copenhagen N, Denmark.



## BST - No Thanks!

**A**s reported in The Food Magazine, Issue 1, trials of BST (synthetic bovine somatotropin) - the milk boosting cattle hormone - are being conducted on farms across Britain, and the milk is being put into our national supply.

If you think artificial hormones are best left out of milk production then use this sign to tell your dairy.

Fill in the tab, cut it out and pop it into your empty milk bottle now.

Contact your MP: there are two parliamentary Early Day Motions objecting to the BST trials. Make sure your MP signs them.



## SUPPORT OUR BST CAMPAIGN

☐ I/we support the campaign to halt the licensing of BST until more is known about its effects.

☐ I/we enclose a donation of £5 ☐ £10 ☐ £25 ☐ other £ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to BST Campaign, London Food Commission, FREEPOST, London EC1B 1FX



## Cattle disease in milk?

**T**he Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food is attempting to extend measures designed to prevent the cattle brain disease Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) getting into our food.

Milk from animals suspected of having BSE is to be put under an Order '...prohibiting the sale or use of such milk for human or animal consumption, except for the feeding of the cow's own calf'. Unfortunately there is little way of knowing that a cow has BSE until it dies and it shows up in a post-mortem examination. The forthcoming Order raises the additional question: what has been happening to such milk until now?

The recycling of animal carcasses and offal back into feed for cattle will be prohibited until the end of this year. Despite assurances from feed producers that slaughterhouse waste can be rendered free from disease, the Ministry has been convinced by Oxford's Professor Sir Richard Southwood that:

'...It is not at present possible to be wholly sure that rendering as currently practised would eliminate the BSE agent.'

The BSE virus is notoriously difficult to destroy. It resists most cooking processes and a related virus is known to survive six months' immersion in formalin.

If animals should not be fed recycled meat from possibly diseased carcasses, then what about humans? We are assured by the Ministry that no

MAFF veterinary officers are responsible for ensuring that animals sent for slaughter are free of disease. They have had their numbers cut by nearly a quarter over the last ten years

1979	580	1984	539
1980	578	1985	527
1981	563	1986	506
1982	557	1987	464
1983	549	1988	444

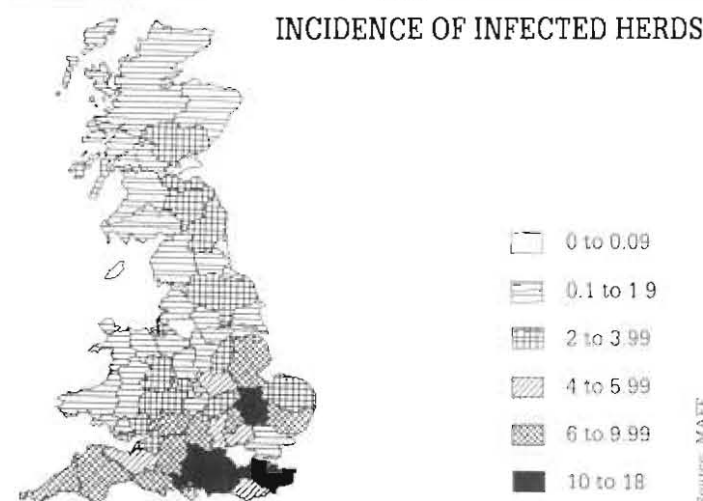
Source: MAFF, reply to Parliamentary Question, 20 February 1989

diseased carcasses should be getting into our food. Farmers are required to notify Government vets if they suspect BSE to be present, and their cattle will be slaughtered and the farmers compensated.

But does this attempt to prevent infected carcasses from getting into human food work? Unfortunately the compensation paid to farmers has been set at half the animal's market value, to a maximum of around £340.

A farmer with forty infected cattle could lose over £10,000 if the disease was reported. There have been unconfirmed reports that some unscrupulous farmers would rather sell their cattle to the abattoir.

The Southwood Report on BSE was published in February 1989, copies available from MAFF.



## BSE in our food?

Despite reassurances from the Southgate enquiry that 'the evidence does not support the view' that BSE-affected animals are entering the food chain, a senior member of the National Union of Farmers is reported as saying: 'It is common knowledge in the industry that infected animals have gone into the food chain.'

The Southgate inquiry itself admitted that 63 suspected animals had been stopped at the market or slaughterhouse in the period from the end of June 1988 to the end of that year, and that 40 of these were confirmed as having BSE. All of these were from herds where BSE had not previously been reported.

We reproduce below a statement prepared by a senior consultant in brain diseases who is concerned about the presence of BSE-infected meats finding their way into human food supply.

The virus of BSE/scrapie (and of two human spongiform encephalopathies - Kuru and Creutzfeldt-Jacob dementia, CJD) has some unique and sinister properties. It survives all the usual methods of sterilisation, it can only be destroyed by incineration or by powerful corrosives, or possibly by autoclaving for at least one hour. Furthermore once an animal is infected there is an incubation period of up to eight years before the disease declares itself. During this long time the infected animal seems quite healthy and there is as yet no test which reveals the infection.

The two naturally-occurring fatal brain diseases in humans - CJD and Kuru - can be transmitted the same way as BSE/scrapie. All three diseases have been passed to other mammals including chimpanzees, after 'sterilising' the inoculum or feed by classical methods. The diseases show similar changes under the microscope: indeed it is possible that they are one disease.

The Southwood Report claims that the risk of humans catching the disease is 'remote'. But the truth is that we do not know if it is remote. Experts doubtless thought the likelihood of cattle catching the disease was remote when they first fed scrapie-infected material to cattle in 1981. What we do know is that it is easily transmitted to all sorts of mammals including chimpanzees. The report recommends that beef offal - including brain - should not go into baby food. But what about other food? The infective brains of all those animals incubating the disease are finishing up in our 'meat products'. There should be an immediate order to incinerate all beef offal until the disease is eradicated which will take some years.

Until all beef offal is the subject of such an order the public should be warned not to consume meat pies, pâtés and tins containing beef protein such as consommé. In addition 'mince' may contain beef offal (illegally) and I recommend that beef be bought whole and minced at home.

And now? We can only wait and see how many of us develop spongiform encephalopathy.

H. C. Grant, MD, FRCP, Neuropathologist, Charing Cross

## Irradiated strawberries

Despite luxury packaging and high-profile point-of-sale promotion, a test marketing of irradiated strawberries in French supermarkets produced a low level of sales.

Consumer rejection of the fruit was put at 60 per cent, indicated by the rate of sales, and only 25 per cent of the original purchasers returned to buy more.

The promotional material guaranteed that the fruit would remain fresh for four days, and the packs were priced at a small premium over regular fresh strawberries.

The marketing strategy by the irradiation company Conservatome is to associate their IONIFRANCE logo with high quality foods, but it appears that many French consumers reject irradiation as an acceptable form of food processing.

(Revue Generale Nucleaire, Sep/Oct 1988)

A new briefing paper *Food Poisoning and Irradiation* by Tony Webb and Tim Lang is available from The London Food Commission, price £1.50 inc p&p.

## MAFF meets the consumers?

In our last issue we noted that only one of the 14 members of the prestigious Government Food Advisory Committee could in any sense be considered a consumer representative, against seven with clear food industry interests.

A week later the Ministry claimed it '...struck a careful balance between the interests of consumers, the need to protect our countryside, the need for farmers and food businesses to make profits, and the concern of taxpayers over how their money is spent.'

We can now reveal something about the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's daily life when it comes to listening to consumer groups. In a written reply to MP David Clark, the Minister acknowledged that during 1988 he had formal meetings with



'Guaranteed Fresh For Four Days' irradiated fruit

specific representative groups as follows:

In Parliament, David Hinchliffe MP accused the Government of 'looking

after certain friends', and claimed the Conservative party received large sums of money from food companies, including Rank Hovis McDougall (£40,000), United Biscuits (£100,000) and George Weston Holdings (£150,000) - all within the last year.

### Ministerial meetings during 1988

	meetings
National Farmers Union	37
UK Agricultural Supply Trade Association	7
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	4
Council for the Protection of Rural England	2
National Consumer Council	2
London Food Commission	1
Royal Society for Nature Conservation	0
World Wide Fund for Nature	0
Friends of the Earth	0
Consumers in the European Community Group	0

## LOOK AT THE LABEL



Two new pamphlets, one from the Department of Health (DoH) and one from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), have been launched for the benefit of the public.

The MAFF pamphlet is a new edition of *Look at the Label*. The first edition went to 500,000 copies. The new one contains similar messages: Additives - the choice is yours; Nutrition Information - helping you balance your diet, and so forth. The 30-page booklet is free and supermarkets are being encouraged to display it.

The 18-page DoH pamphlet *Feeding Today's Infants* provides in a few paragraphs the distilled wisdom of their 1988 Present Day Practice in Infant Feeding, Third Report. It is directed towards 'those who advise parents about feeding their babies and young children', but tends to be vague at the most crucial points.

For toddlers, 'the misuse of sugary food should be avoided'. For infants, 'weaning foods should not contain excessive amounts of salt'. On the other hand, there is one clear statement that has only recently become official policy: 'Samples of infant formula should not be given to mothers'.

Unlike MAFF's uncritical guide to food labelling, which is available free, the DoH booklets cost £1.25.

## FEEDING TODAY'S INFANTS







Parents still ask: Should children eat eggs?

## MAFF knew of egg problem 11 months before Currie

Officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) were aware of the growing problem of salmonella in egg production for at least 11 months before the notorious television statement by Edwina Currie in December last year. And MAFF, the egg industry and the Department of Health (DoH) were preparing 'defensive positions' in joint meetings nearly six months before she made her statement.

Documents seen by the London Food Commission show that as early as January 1988 observers from MAFF were present at a meeting of a working party on salmonella enteritidis, chaired by Dr Bernard Rowe, which heard evidence that not only were many samples of supermarket chickens found to be infected (59 per cent of samples) but that samples of bulk liquid egg were also found to be infected, with 40 per cent of the isolates being phage type 4 – the type which has caused dramatic increases in food poisoning cases since the early 1980s.

A second meeting, in February 1988, agreed that the situation was serious enough to need full scale surveys

of bulk liquid eggs, and pasteurised liquid egg used in bakeries, and to follow up case control studies in as many food poisoning outbreaks as possible.

By May 1988 the DoH, alarmed at outbreaks of food poisoning occurring in hospitals, called a joint meeting with MAFF for 13 June. Twelve ministry officials attended, and the main topic was how to inform NHS caterers that at least two serious outbreaks were caused by raw eggs.

### EGG INDUSTRY

Members of the British Egg Industry Council were called to the meeting and presented with provisional evidence that eggs were being infected by salmonella-ridden hens.

The egg industry expressed doubts about the evidence, and left MAFF and the DoH wondering whether to make the issue public. They agreed to prepare 'defensive briefings' and to focus on poor hygiene practices among caterers (including the House of Lords, where an outbreak had occurred in the canteen).

A food hygiene campaign was announced in July 1988 emphasising the responsibility of housewives to ensure food was properly cooked. NHS caterers were told to be more careful in their use of eggs and to use pasteurised eggs for raw egg products.

During the next few months many more cases of food poisoning related to eggs came to light, and advice was circulated to environmental health officers. Only in November did the DoH issue a public warning, suggesting consumers '...avoid eating raw eggs or uncooked foods made from them.'

Two weeks later Mrs Currie suggested that 'most egg production is, sadly, infected.' With so much attention focused on her statement MAFF could sigh with relief and hope no-one noticed their eleven-month silence.

## Chilled food hazards continue

A survey by food inspectors found a majority of food retailers failing to follow the Government's hygiene guidelines.

In a survey of 97 shops, cafes, pubs and wine-bars environmental health officers from Southwark found that only a few outlets were selling chilled food at the recommended temperature.

Some food poisoning bacteria, including listeria, can breed at temperatures below 7°C, and Department of Health guidelines recommend that cooked foods should be kept at temperatures below 5°C. However, there is no legal requirement to follow these guidelines.

When questioned about the storage temperatures, only 33 shopkeepers could give an

answer, and 16 of these were wrong by at least 5°C. The inspectors then checked 74 refrigeration units and found 43 had no thermometers in them. A further 18 had thermometers that were inaccurate by at least 2°C.

- Sandwiches were the most frequently found items stored above the recommended 5°C: 26 out of 28 samples
- Quiches and egg flans: all seven samples were above 5°C
- Cooked chicken: nine out of 14 above 5°C
- Pies and Pasties: nine out of 15 above 5°C
- Cooked meats: 15 out of 19 above 5°C
- Ready meals: seven out of 10 above 5°C



# FOOD SAFETY: TIME TO ACT

**T**he food safety crisis is the latest of a series of examples of a UK Government failure to set a sound food and public health policy in place.

- **Coronary heart disease** is the UK's number one preventable killer, yet five years after the DHSS's Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy recommended better public nutrition information the continued absence of proper nutrition labelling of food makes a nonsense of the Department of Health's advice to the public to 'Look After Your Heart!'. The National Audit Office has recently joined the critics of Government inactivity on tackling coronary heart disease (NAO 1989).

- **The Food Act** states that food for sale should be of the 'nature, substance and quality demanded'. In 1979 the Public Health Laboratory found 79 per cent of frozen chickens sampled to be contaminated. Yet in 1987, a repeat study still found 64.4 per cent contamination (Hansard 1989). Why has the Food Act not been enforced?

- **Cook-chill technology** has become a serious concern. The LFC published a report on cook-chill catering two years ago (Sheppard 1987) warning of the potential for microbiological contamination. The DHSS Guidelines on pre-cooked chilled foods do not apply to retail foods (DHSS 1981). MAFF has not produced such guidelines despite the huge and fast-growing chilled convenience meals market.

- **The Food Regulations, 1970**, are out of date and in need of revision.

*The food safety affair has brought to public attention the concerns of many observers of UK food policy. It is now time for positive action. The London Food Commission has drawn up a ten-point Food Safety Action Plan.*

For instance, the Regulations generally state that food should be kept below ten degrees Celsius. Listeria grows at four degrees Celsius.

- **Temperature control** is essential throughout the food chain, yet researchers found in 1987 that one in five retail outlets were keeping fresh and frozen chickens at the wrong temperature (Supermarketing 1987).

Another study of storage temperatures of chilled food found only 58 per cent of salads, 40 per cent of cured meat and none of the uncured meats were held at the correct temperature (Rose 1986). The DoH's Food Hygiene Regulations do not cover retail display.

Meanwhile MAFF has exhorted consumers to make sure their fridges work properly, but UK refrigerators are not made with temperature dials. MAFF's strategy, while appearing worthy, ignores the evidence that temperature control before the consumer purchases a food item is likely not to be what it should be. Eggs for example are rarely sold chilled, and we report elsewhere in this magazine on the poor regulation of shops'

refrigeration units.

- **Food quality and adulteration** are of continuing concern. In 1988 the LFC reviewed some key food quality issues and found that:

- a) Ninety three per cent of additives in use are purely cosmetic and have no microbiological (eg preservative) function. The UK permits food colours which other countries ban.

- b) The UK sets no limits on nitrate residues in key foods, such as baby foods, lettuce, spinach and beetroot unlike other European countries such as Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

- c) Of 426 pesticide ingredients approved by MAFF, 164 are reported in scientific literature as being known or suspected of being possible causes of allergies, irritations, reproductive effects, cancers and genetic mutation. Data from the USA shows that, on the basis of annual US usage by weight, 30 per cent of insecticides, 60 per cent of herbicides and 90 per cent of fungicides could cause tumours (NRC 1987).

- d) Mechanically Recovered Meat

(MRM) is a slurry of by-products from carcasses which MAFF allows in meat products without labelling. In 1980 MAFF's Food Standards Committee reported that MRM 'is chemically less stable than carcass meat and presents a greater microbiological risk' (FSC 1980).

- **Democracy and representation** of consumers needs to be encouraged. The Food Advisory Committee, MAFF's key committee, has just one consumer representative on it, compared with seven who are food industry linked (*The Food Magazine*, Issue 4).

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## LISTERIA IN CHEESE

Blaming soft cheeses alone for listeria is not warranted by scientific literature. Pending final publication of the Public Health Laboratory's current listeria research programme, it is known that listeria has been found in a wide range of foods, including cheeses, dairy products and vegetables. In addition, particular attention in UK scientific literature has been given to:

- **PRE-PACKED SALADS**. Four out of 60 salads investigated by the Cambridge Public Health Laboratory were found to contain listeria
- **COOK-CHILL CONVENIENCE MEALS**. Sixteen out of 64 so far tested by the Leeds University Microbiology Department. Bought in cook-chill foods have been found to contain listeria by researchers in Bradford, but none was found in food cook-chilled by a school meals unit. (Armstrong et al 1989).
- **CHICKEN**. Three out of five fresh (raw) chickens and three

out of 31 chicken pre-cooked meals were found with listeria species by Bristol City Environmental Health Dept (Bristol EHD 1989). Twelve per cent of samples of pre-cooked ready-to-eat poultry were found to be contaminated in a Public Health Laboratory survey.

In a study of the diets of 154 listeriosis patients in the USA, twenty percent of the risk was related to just two food sources; under-cooked chicken and uncooked hot dogs (Schwartz et al 1988). Forty three of the patients died.

The fatality rate from listeriosis is reported to be between one in three and one in five (Kerr and Lacey 1989). Not enough is known about the onset of the disease, but it is associated with being in an immunocompromised state, such as pregnancy (Acheson 1989). Of 115 cases of listeriosis in pregnant women in England there were 11 miscarriages, nine stillbirths and six neonatal deaths.



# THE FOOD SAFETY ACTION PLAN

Public confidence in UK food safety has been seriously undermined. With 1992 and the completion of the European internal market on the horizon, now is the time for the UK to put its own house in order. It is in the long-term in-terests of the food industries, public health and consumer confidence to act now. To that end, the London Food Commission has produced a ten-point food safety action plan:

- 1 Consumers on the Government food safety committee** Consumer confidence would be enhanced by independent representation both on and to the recently-announced Food Safety Working Party. This is particularly important if, as is likely, the Working Party becomes permanent.
- 2 A national hygiene drive** This should put emphasis on farmers, manufacturers, distributors, retailers and caterers to ensure that food is fit to eat. Consumers should be the last line of hygiene defence. All food handlers should be trained in basic food hygiene, and a target date for completion set for December 1992, to coincide with removal of European trade barriers. Consumer education should accompany this hygiene drive, and not be a substitute for it. Full consumer education should begin in the classroom. The reduced role given to food hygiene teaching under the new foundation curriculum should be revised and greatly expanded.
- 3 New Regulations** The 1970 Food Regulations should be completely revised. Food hygiene regulations should cover all food whether sold by retailers or caterers so that, for example, retail cook-chill foods are subject to similar regulations to those applying to mass catering. Labelling and 'sell by' dates should be revised to indicate an 'eat by' date.
- 4 Monitoring and enforcement** There should be more centrally funded resources allocated to food inspectors, including veterinary officers, environmental health officers, trading standards officers and public analysts.
- 5 Reform of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food** MAFF should become a Ministry of Food (MoF). Its internal aims and objectives ('minim') should be published and give priority to consumer and public health interests. It should reflect these priorities when dealing with agrochemical, drug, food manufacturing and farming interests.
- 6 A new consumer division** This should be set up within the reformed Ministry. The consumer division should audit the MoF's work, actively promote consumer interests in food and liaise with outside consumer bodies.
- 7 Improved policy co-ordination** A new national food and public health policy co-ordinating committee should be set up. This should include local authority food officers and other relevant bodies such as the Department of Education and Science and health professions.
- 8 Independent food safety body** A new Food Safety Executive, learning from the UK's Health and Safety Executive and from the USA's Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) should be set up. This should be independent of food industry funding.
- 9 Food Research** The Agriculture and Food Research Council (AFRC) should become a Food Research Council, with an appropriate shift of emphasis from food manufacturing support to consumer-led research.
- 10 A change of food policy** A new philosophy for British food policy should put emphasis on openness in place of secrecy, on public health in place of individual responsibility, on independent research rather than food industry-sponsored research, on prevention rather than cure, on harmonising European food standards to the highest level rather than to the lowest for short-term ease of trade, on environmental protection rather than 'clean-ups', on proper democratic representation in decision-making rather than food industry domination and, above all, on pleasure and confidence in food rather than fear and mistrust.

## Fish fingered

Holland, it seems, is rapidly becoming one of the most polluted countries in the world. There are accumulating mountains of pig manure – some of it contaminated with heavy metals. The heavily polluted Rhine completes its journey through Europe's industrial heartland at the Dutch port of Rotterdam, and there is increasing concern that the North Sea fishing industry will collapse if pollution continues.

The Dutch are partial to fish. They have ready-to-eat marinated fish stalls the way Britain has ice-cream vans. But

all this may have to end. A report from the consumer group *Alternatieve Konsumenten Bond* has highlighted the presence in fish of heavy metals (mercury and cadmium), pesticides

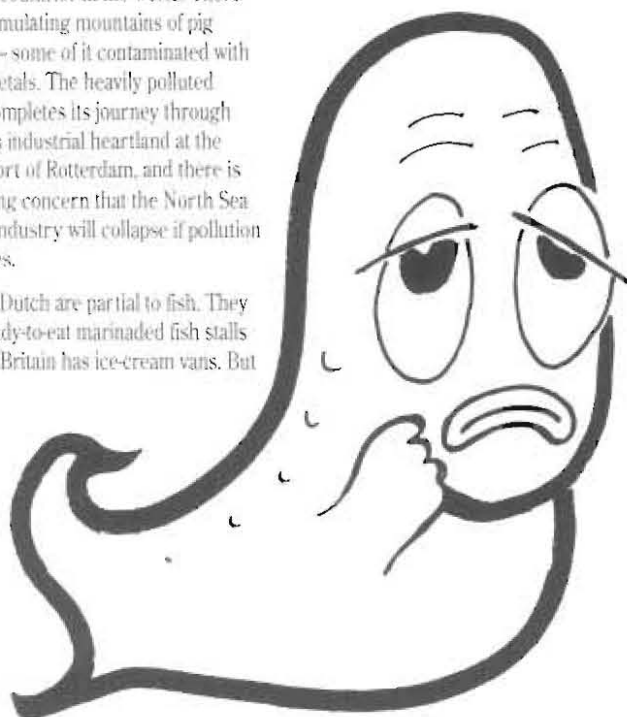
and polychlorinated biphenyls.

They recommend eating fish once a week only, despite its nutritional value. They also suggest that eel and fatty freshwater fish, such as bream and carp, should be avoided altogether.

Meanwhile, similar concerns are emerging in the USA. In a review by the Washington-based Centre for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), they recommend avoiding fish caught in polluted waters and fish that feed from the sea or river beds. Deep ocean fish, such as cod and haddock, are preferred to in-shore fish, such as sardines and herring, which in turn are preferred to freshwater fish.

CSPI recommends fish-lovers to eat a variety of fish, avoid fish caught near industrial zones, eat smaller (younger) fish and trim off the skin and fatty parts. 'Minimise your consumption of raw and under-cooked fish and shellfish, and if you suffer from cancer, diabetes or any disease that impairs immunity, then avoid raw shellfish entirely.'

(*Alternatieve Konsumenten Gids*, Jan/Feb 1989; *Nutrition Action Healthletter*, 15/8, October 1988)



## New pesticide spray warnings

In a re-drafting of the Control of Pesticide Regulations 1986, the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food has outlined new procedures for farmers spraying their crops from the air.

Because airborne pesticide sprays are believed to drift in the wind and affect the neighbouring environment, farmers are now required to give at least one day's notice to people living in the vicinity if they intend spraying pesticides from the air.

Requiring a farmer to give such warning appears to be a major breakthrough ... but the small-print says otherwise. The warnings only have to be given to (a) schools, hospitals and other institutions that come within 167 yards of the flightpath, and (b) owners of buildings, livestock or crops that come within 25 yards of the field being sprayed.

## Green leaflets

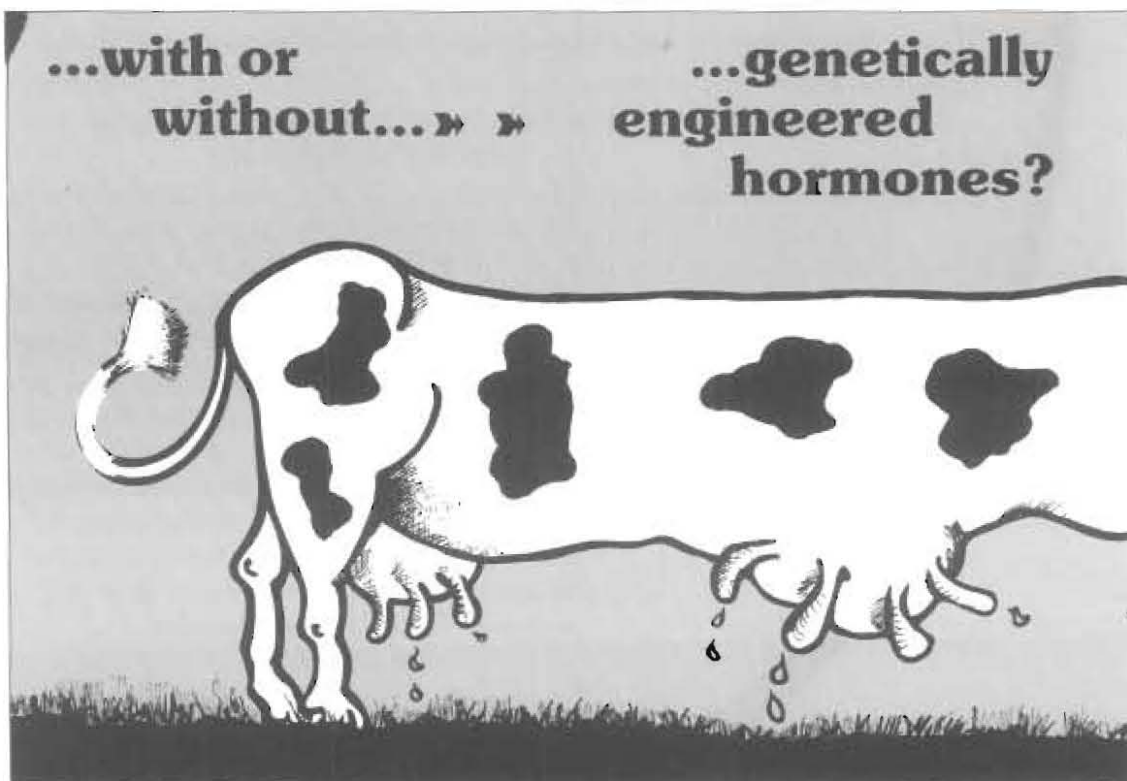
BST, reproductive technologies, patented genetically engineered mice and micro-organisms are the subject of four leaflets just published by the Green Alternative Link (GRAEL) in the European Parliament.

The leaflets, each on eight paper-back-sized pages, give a sceptic's view of the biotechnological miracles promised by the industry. European legislation is being pushed through which would give more power to the chemical companies to control, quite literally, the nature of farming.

Genetic engineering is still an obscure subject to most people. These leaflets discuss, in simple terms, the consequence of the new technology. They will be useful to teachers and all those who are concerned to look at life in the future. For supplies of the leaflets please WRITE to Eric Brunner, The London Food Commission, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR.

...with or  
without... » »

...genetically  
engineered  
hormones?





## Aluminium in baby milks: we name the brands

**T**he Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is reported to be trying to prevent the publication of the actual levels of aluminium that have been found in baby milk formulations. Manufacturers may not wish their products to be named, and no manufacturer has put the levels of aluminium on their labels, but the air of secrecy can now be broken.

Data given to *The Food Magazine* show the actual levels found in different brand-name baby milks (see table).

Although the link has not yet been proven, aluminium is suspected of causing early senility (Alzheimer's disease) and high levels of aluminium are known to cause neural poisoning and brain disorders.

Normally the gut wall prevents the absorption of most aluminium

and the kidneys can excrete much of what does get through. But in the first weeks of life the gut wall may allow aluminium to enter the bloodstream.

Immature or poorly functioning kidneys can lead to an accumulation of aluminium in the body, so very young and premature babies may be at greatest risk.

A zinc-deficient diet may also encourage aluminium absorption into brain and bone tissue. Good sources of zinc include red meats, nuts, seeds and wholegrains.

High levels of aluminium in baby milks have been reported in the medical press since 1986, but manufacturers have been under no obligation to lower the levels in their products or to declare the levels on their labels.

See also 'Control the Aluminium in Food and Drink' on p19.

### Levels of aluminium in baby milks and weaning foods

Product	Aluminium (micrograms per litre)
Breast milk	under 20
SMA Gold Cap	80
SMA White Cap	85
Wysoy	1210
Osterfeed	100
Ostermilk	360
C & G Premium	190
C & G Babymilk Plus	130
C & G Formula S	800
Prematalac*	170
Nenatal*	590
Pregestomil	1570
Soya milk drinks	up to 800
Ready-to-eat weaning foods	up to 3500
EEC water regulations	under 200

(Sources: *The Lancet*, 1, 157 (1986) and 4.3.89; Warwickshire Trading Standards; Baby Milk Action Coalition)

\*Ready-to-drink. All others made with water containing 35mcg/l Aluminium

## EEC consumer protection

**U**nconfirmed reports have been circulating Brussels suggesting that a new department for consumer protection will be established within the Commission, possibly under Commissioner Van Meer (DG 23).

The first activity for such a body would be the co-ordination of the proposed European Consumer Year; the year running up to 1992 and the unified market.

## AIDS in breast milk

**A** World Health Organisation (WHO) review of infant nutrition and baby milk policies has recommended that in both underdeveloped and developed countries the benefits of breastfeeding normally outweigh the possible risk of transmission of AIDS through breast milk.

The WHO policy document (EB81/21) noted that, although the transmission of the virus is possible through breast milk, there have been very few cases where this has been thought to be the actual route. In most cases of mother-child transmission there is a far greater likelihood that the disease was passed on before or during birth.

Breastfeeding can protect a child from certain infections and only when milk donors are being considered should special precautions be taken: screening of donors and wet-nurses can be undertaken, and pasteurisation of the milk (56°C for 30 minutes) is recommended.

## How do you like your ...milk?



Hormones are vital to life. They regulate many physical functions in humans and animals. However, as far as food production they have fallen into disrepute and since 1986 their use has been banned in the European Community, although, at present, no evidence shows that illegal use continues. The pharmaceutical industry is now producing a new generation of hormones which it describes as 'natural'. These new hormones are produced by genetic engineering which means that they are the result of technical, microbiological manipulation. Genes, which contain certain inherited data, are isolated from the cells of cattle, for example, and implanted into bacteria which would not otherwise have such characteristics. This enables bacteria to produce potential quantities of bovine growth hormone - also called BSH.



What you always wanted to ask about gene technology but were afraid to find out the answer.



## A FEAST fit for a minister

**F**EAST – Fun Eating At School Today – became the campaign cry throughout the country when schools minister John Batcher and actor Peter Howitt (Joey from *Bread*) launched the first national school meals drive at the end of January.

They joined students at Queensmeade School in South Ruislip for lunch to sample a vast selection of tempting and imaginative dishes in an attractive environment to the sound of background pop music.

Seventy-four local authorities and 20,000 schools are taking part in the FEAST marketing campaign which aims to show that school meals can be attractive and appetising as well as healthy.

Six million children will be participating in a healthy eating competition hoping to win the holiday of a lifetime in the USA. The campaign is sponsored by the Milk Marketing Board.

Congratulating the organisers and sponsors of FEAST, the Minister said: 'The Campaign's emphasis on home baking, fresh vegetables and, above all, reduced fat and sugar is a lesson which applies to all of us.'

'But it is particularly important that young people should learn healthy eating habits as early as possible, and if school meals contribute to this it will be a great boost for the future health of the nation. I am very pleased that the campaign has such strong support from dietitians, the Health Education



Peter 'Joey' Howitt shares a meal at the launch of FEAST at Queensmeade School, Ruislip

Authority and The London Food Commission.'

More and more school caterers have been developing a healthy eating policy within their kitchens. Two-thirds of the country's education authorities have, or are about to introduce the NACNE recommendations of less fat, sugar and salt and more fibre.

In 1980 the Government removed nutritional guidelines for school meals and have now imposed requirements on local authorities to put their school meals services out to competitive tendering.

Speaking at the launch of FEAST, dietitian Issy Cole-Hamilton said: 'Compulsory competitive tendering is an opportunity for local authorities to write their own specifications to ensure high nutritional standards.'

## Halal food for Sheffield schools

**F**ollowing our article on halal meals in Halifax (*The Food Magazine*, Issue 4) Sheffield's assistant school meals organiser, Olenka Crane, has written to tell us that race equality guidelines produced by Sheffield City Council require school meals to meet the needs of ethnic minority groups.

'A pilot scheme for halal meat has been introduced into several Sheffield

schools with the involvement of the local community and parents. School staff have been trained in the correct handling and preparation of halal meat to ensure that it complies with religious and cultural requirements. Links were also developed between the schools and local religious leaders.

'To overcome parents' anxiety, the school kitchen opened its doors and demonstrated the arrangements being made for the correct storage and handling of the meat.

'A recipe booklet was compiled adapting traditional recipes to meet Sheffield's healthy eating guidelines.

'After introducing halal meat into one school, the city has extended the service into a further eight. A pamphlet for parents explaining the new service is being prepared with English, Arabic, Bengali and Urdu versions.

'We have found it important to involve community leaders, parents and teaching staff at all stages of this project. Their confidence can in turn give confidence to the children. Staff training in cultural awareness is also important, as is the employment of staff from ethnic minority groups.

'The scheme has shown that there is a need for this service and that it can be successfully provided when the right approach is adopted. The benefits gained by the meals service and by the children cannot be ignored.'

## Fighting food racism

**B**ased on over three years of multicultural activities, the London Food Commission's *Guidelines on Food Provision for Black and Ethnic Minorities*, will be published this spring.

Prepared by Sara Hill the guidelines draw on the practical experiences of caterers, community and voluntary organisations, health educators and training programmes. They are designed to 'facilitate the introduction of black and ethnic minority traditional foods within the mainstream catering services in both the public and private sectors'.

The document aims to challenge both the 'personal ignorance' and

'institutional racism' which have denied the choice of traditional foods to individuals belonging to these communities.

Traditional foods are, it argues, important for both their nutritional and social value – points that need to be made again and again among the white majority of catering staff and nutrition educators.

*Guidelines on Food Provision for Black and Ethnic Minorities* is being published by The London Food Commission and distributed by the Council for Racial Equality, Elliot House, 10-12 Allington Street, London SW1E 5EH. 01-828 7022.

## Black and ethnic minorities resource list

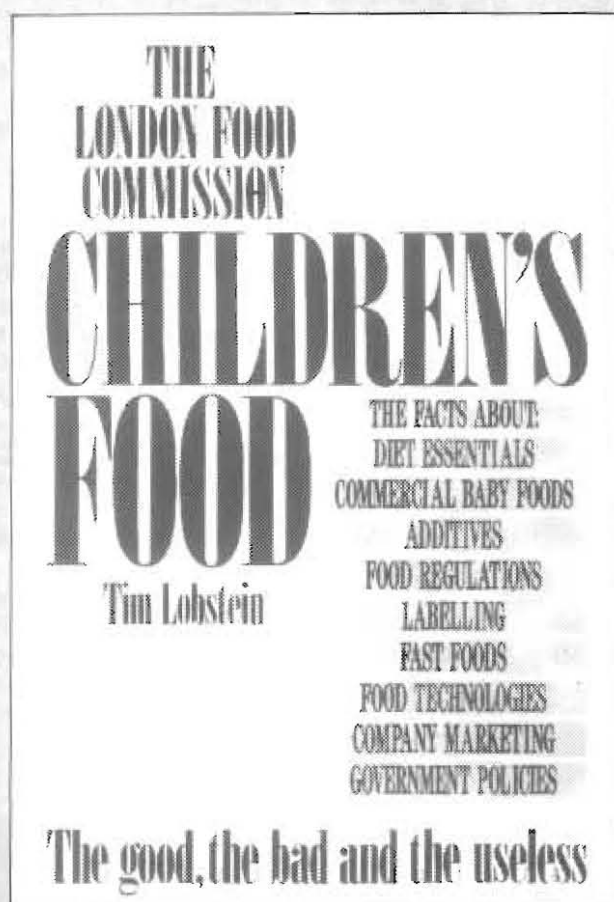
An information sheet produced by the Community Nutrition Group of the British Dietetic Association will be published in late Spring 1989. It provides a summary of religious and cultural groups in different health authorities; information about how to make contact and improve communication with people from black and ethnic minority groups; case studies; ideas on how to evaluate resources; lists of resources including leaflets, videos, posters; tapes and slides about general healthy eating, pregnancy, under-fives and training resources. It also lists useful contacts, reports and books. It will be available through community dietitians



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# TWO BOOKS FROM THE LONDON FOOD COMMISSION



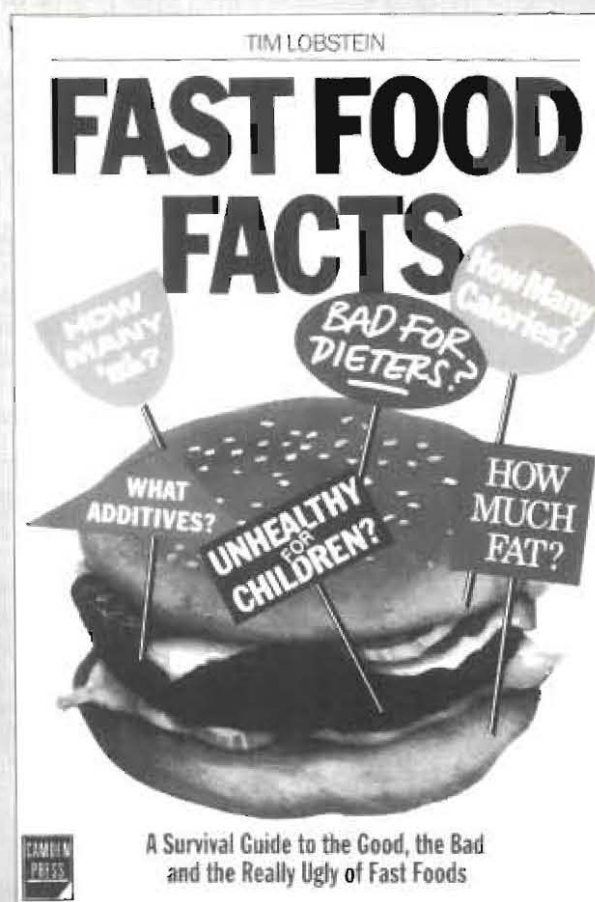
## Children's Food

Teething rusks twice as sweet as doughnuts? Baby foods made of thickened water? Sugar Puffs sweeter than some chocolate bars and fish fingers less than 50% fish? What should a parent be buying?

The book is a catalogue of shame for the food industry and the trouble that may be in store for our children. More than this, the book goes on to help readers look critically at the labels on food products, gives the details about healthy eating and the sources of good nourishment; and provides an extensive section on what can be done in playgroups, nurseries and school meals services.

The London Food Commission's *Children's Food*, by Tim Lobstein (Unwin Hyman).

Order now from the LFC. £3.95 plus 80p p&p



## Fast Food Facts

Beef burgers can be 40 per cent pig fat. French fries may be coloured with azo dyes and fried in beef fat. Fish batter rarely has any egg in it, and milk shakes may have wood pulp and seaweed along with up to eight spoons of sugar in them.

With comprehensive tables of nutrients and additives this book is a unique and highly informative look into the secretive world of fast food catering. Showing the good points and the bad, it helps health-conscious readers find exactly what they want and don't want, and where to get it.

You don't have to avoid fast foods. But you do need to know what is in them. This book reveals the facts the companies want to keep to themselves.

The London Food Commission's *Fast Food Facts* by Tim Lobstein (Camden Press). Available from the LFC. £4.95 plus £1.00 p&p.

Cheques/p.o.s payable to LFC Publications  
Send to: LFC Publications, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR



## Women working in the food industry

Much that has been written and said about women and food has concentrated on women as consumers – from women's eating problems to the psychology of superstores. But as well as buying, serving and eating, women also produce food commercially. Over 40 per cent of food production workers are women.

Women working in the food industry are the subject of a revealing new report from the GMB, Britain's second largest trade union.

*Winning a Fair Deal for Women in the Food and Drink Industries* is a detailed study of the position of women workers at 78 food production sites across the UK. The report covers all sectors of food production.

GMB found that women work mainly in the lowest paid jobs and

rarely progress to higher grades. Typical women's jobs were canteen work, cleaning and packing – hard work that is badly paid.

In contrast, men typically worked as drivers, boilermen and charge hands – higher status, better paid jobs.

Over 20 per cent of food production workers are employed part-time. Most of these are women. The report looks in detail at the discrimination faced by part-time workers in the industry. These workers are often denied access to benefits such as sick pay and pension schemes.

*Winning a Fair Deal for Women* is not all doom and gloom. A comparison with a similar report a year earlier found that significant gains have been made by GMB negotiators, with particular progress on the provision of paid time off for cervical cancer screening, leave agreements that provide time off to care for dependents and the inclusion of part-timers in pension schemes.

The report also looks to the future with a number of suggestions for positive action.

The GMB is pursuing claims for equal pay for work of equal value in food

manufacturing. The union was behind the successful Julie Hayward test case (see *The Food Magazine*, Issue 2) and hopes to capitalise on this.

The report's author, Donna Covey, told *The Food Magazine*: 'The food industry would come to a standstill without the contribution of women workers. It is time that this contribution was fully recognised by employers. The GMB is committed to winning a fair deal for women workers in the industry – using both negotiation and the law.'

*'I usually eat potatoes and rice, potatoes and rice all the time ... by the time I finish doing the shopping there's nothing left to buy fruit.'*

It's not the kind of diet recommended for pregnancy, but like many women, this expectant mother just can't stretch her Unemployment Benefit to buy a variety of healthy foods. Her midwife may recommend that she eats fruit and vegetables every day – she finds it impossible.

Prompted by comments like this from pregnant women on benefits, and also concern expressed by midwives, health visitors and dietitians working in maternity clinics, the Maternity Alliance has been looking at how feasible it is for women with low incomes to follow advice on good eating given out by ante-natal clinics.

Their report, a new edition of *Poverty in Pregnancy*, compares the cost of diets recommended to expectant mothers in leaflets and diet sheets given out at hospitals and clinics with current income levels from wages and benefits.

At 1988 prices the average week's shopping bill for the kind of diet recommended during pregnancy is £15.88. But for those on low incomes, £15.88 may be more than they can reasonably afford.

## Eating for two on a budget for one

Many women are on Income Support, the major benefit for single mothers and women in unemployed



families, and can claim free milk during pregnancy. This cuts the cost of the shopping bill to £14.06 per week, but even this reduced sum represents 42 per cent of Income Support (excluding Housing Benefit) for a single woman

expecting her first baby. How many of us have to spend nearly half our income, after housing costs, on food alone?

Young women under 25 do even worse – £15.88 is 54 per cent of the benefit for a 24-year-old expecting her first baby, and it is 72 per cent of benefit for a 17-year-old, though most 16 to 17-year-olds cannot get Income Support at all until the 28th week of pregnancy.

Before that they may be dependent on wages from a job or YTS placement, or on their families, or they may be receiving the £15 bridging allowance paid to cover gaps between YTS placements. With food costs of £15.88 per week, the bridging allowance is not even enough to pay the food bill for a pregnant teenager.

Changes in benefits make it difficult to compare the cost of an adequate diet for pregnancy in 1984, when the first edition of *Poverty in Pregnancy* was produced. But what is quite clear is that the position of young single women has become much worse.

Even free welfare milk has now been abolished for pregnant women under 18 until they reach the 28th week of pregnancy. Young couples on low wages have also lost this benefit and many now get no extra help at all during pregnancy.

The Maternity Alliance has three proposals to tackle some of the problems of matching low incomes with healthy diets:

- a premium for pregnant women on Income Support to help them meet all the extra costs of pregnancy;
- increased take up of free welfare milk amongst pregnant women on Income Support with posters and leaflets in clinics;
- two conferences – in London on 9 May 1989 and Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 13 June 1989 – bringing together health workers, welfare rights officers and expectant mothers to discuss practical strategies for dealing with the problems of poverty in pregnancy.

Details of the conferences, publications (*Poverty in Pregnancy* £2.50 inc p&p) and campaigns are available from the Maternity Alliance, 15 Britannia Street, London WC1X 9JP; tel 01-837 1265.

## Motoring microwaves

According to Dick Nelson, research manager at Campbell Soup, microwave ovens will soon be offered as standard equipment in cars.

## Additives appeal

The voluntary body *Foresight* has launched an appeal to support studies into the effects of colouring agents on children's health.

They want to raise over £4,000 for a research project at the University of Surrey, examining the relationship between colouring agents, such as tartrazine, and the depletion of

The food industry, he predicts, will produce hand-held, easy-open, heat-and-eat foods, opening up a new market in frozen dinners and snacks. (*Canadian Consumer*, 1989 No 1)

children's zinc levels.

The work would extend the preliminary findings showing that tartrazine lowers zinc levels, raises hyperactive behaviour, and that low zinc levels and hyperactivity are related.

For further details telephone *Foresight* on (0428) 794500.

## Voluntary groups to take on food poverty?

The National Food Alliance (NFA), a voluntary sector umbrella group, has produced a discussion paper on food and low income. The NFA working party which wrote the paper is concerned about the role of voluntary organisations in tackling – or more often failing to tackle – growing food poverty in the UK.

Should voluntary bodies distribute surplus EEC food? Should Britain follow

other countries' examples and set up schemes to distribute unsold canteen meals, or supermarket food beyond its sell-by date to the needy? What are the ethics, let alone hygiene implications, of such approaches?

The paper reviews a number of schemes in operation around the world. Details from Janet Hunter, The National Food Alliance, c/o NCVO, 26 Bedford Square, London WC1.

## Third World debt

World Food Day came and went last October with little coverage in the national media. A pity, as one person in particular made some comments that day which might be thought highly provocative.

The head of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), Director-General Edouard Saouma, in an address to mark the occasion, accused Third World governments of dressing up their cities as modern showcases while neglecting food production and the rural poor.

He described the mass movement of young people to the cities in developing nations as an 'appalling mess' and a major cause of world hunger. He said governments had outspent their resources, giving priority to manufacturing and service

industries at the expense of agriculture.

Meanwhile another United Nations body, the UN Conference on Trade and Development, catalogued the current debt among the dozen leading Third World indebted nations:

Country	Debt (US\$millions)
Brazil	114,500
Mexico	105,000
Argentina	49,400
Venezuela	33,900
Philippines	29,000
Nigeria	27,000
Yugoslavia	21,800
Chile	20,500
Morocco	17,300
Peru	16,700
Colombia	15,100
Ivory Coast	9,100

## MAFF: excluding consumers

Two new 'independent short-term consultative' committees have been created by the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF). Both include in their terms of reference the need to look at consumers' requirements and the well-being of the public, yet neither committee has a single consumer representative.

The Poultry Research Consultative Committee consists of six company representatives, four scientists, a MAFF technician, and is chaired by the chairman of a seventh company, A E Beckett and Sons Ltd.

The Fruit Research Consultative Committee consists of ten company representatives (including the committee chair) and four scientists.

Besides concern for consumers' needs and public well-being, the committees are to examine the 'enhancement of the quality of the environment', occupational health, and whether any Government research could be handed over to industry. They are due to report on 31 July 1989.

## Green supermarkets

Tesco's have responded to the criticisms of their 'green' policies with a series of new initiatives.

These include, they say, a series of environmentally sensitive planning proposals designed to conserve the ecology around their new hypermarkets, the introduction of phosphate-free detergents, the expansion of organic vegetable ranges, the refusal to sell bulbs, corms or tubers grown in the wild, and the publication of a leaflet, *Tesco Cares*, printed on recycled paper. For more details phone (0992) 32222.

In the next issue we will report on Tesco's policy on selling South African goods

## BTEC Course

We have received details of the following food-related course:

**BTEC National Diploma in Food Studies:** a two-year full-time course with two blocks of industrial experience and options including product development, retailing, nutrition and vegetarian studies. Details: Department of Hotel and Catering Studies, Westminster College, Battersea Park Road, London SW11 4JR. (01-720 2121 ext 250)

## A.I.S. CONFERENCE Sugars – The Current Debate and Future Action

Eastman Dental Hospital. Thursday 25 May

The Government's COMA report on sugar is due later this summer

The sugar industry is planning an international meeting. All of us concerned with health and diet will find this AIS conference valuable preparation for both events.

Only £15 including lunch and refreshments

Details from Annie Cushing, Action and Information on Sugars, Department of Community Dental Health, St Giles Hospital, St Giles Road, London SE5 7RN



**T**he inspectors targeted local supermarkets and bought samples of four types of sausage: premium (or prime), regular, economy and low fat. They included well-known makes and supermarket own-brands: Bowyers, Walls, Adams, Matthews, Sainsbury, Presto and Tesco.

### Fat

Premium sausages came out with the highest average fat levels. Some were as much as 35 per cent pure fat.

### Lean Meat

Lean meat can describe a wide variety of animal parts, and could include

Type	Average fat content	Highest fat content
Premium	25%	35%
Regular	22%	35%
Economy	22%	23%
Low fat	9%	13%

mechanically recovered meat. Measuring the protein content of a sausage can give an indication of meat levels, but this would be inflated by added soya or milk powder.

One sausage analysed was found to have over a third of its protein from non-meat ingredients. The figures below show apparent lean meat content (ALMC) estimated from the total protein, so they almost certainly over-

# Premium sausages – HOGWASH!

*Supermarket displays and butcher's windows often promote premium or prime sausages, at a premium price. Are they any better than regular sausages?*

*There are no regulations on what the words premium and prime mean, so inspectors from Southwark's Public Protection department went shopping to find out.*

estimate the amount of lean meat.

There is hardly any difference between average meat levels in premium and regular sausages, and some regular sausages had far more meat than the best premium sausage sampled.

### Value for money

With many of the sausages showing well under half their weight in lean meat, a careful shopper might ask whether sausages are a good bargain. For most people they represent the 'meat' part of a dish, but with so much fat, salt and other additives, might it not be both cheaper and healthier to buy a

Type	Average ALMC	Highest ALMC
Premium	44%	48%
Regular	43%	55%
Economy	35%	37%
Low fat	53%	59%

Meat	Price per lb of lean meat
Premium sausages (£1.06)	£2.40
Regular sausages (97p)	£2.25
Economy sausages (71p)	£2.03
Low fat sausages (£1.14)	£2.15
Minced meat	£1.09
Minced steak	£1.29
Pork chump steak	£1.49
Stewing beef	£1.52
Topside beef	£2.18

smaller weight of fresh lean meat?

Assuming the apparent lean meat is all real lean meat, and not a milk or soya substitute, we estimated the true cost of purchasing the meat in sausages and compared it with the cost of fresh meat.

In terms of the meat on your plate the message is clear: sausages are not good value for money. When you add the fat, the generally high salt levels and various preservative, colouring and

emulsifying agents, they appear to be poor value for health too.

There seems to be nothing premium about premium sausages. They tend to be more fatty, have no more lean meat and give poorer value for money, compared with regular sausages. Only the low fat sausages offer a significantly healthier product, but as a form of lean meat they are expensive.

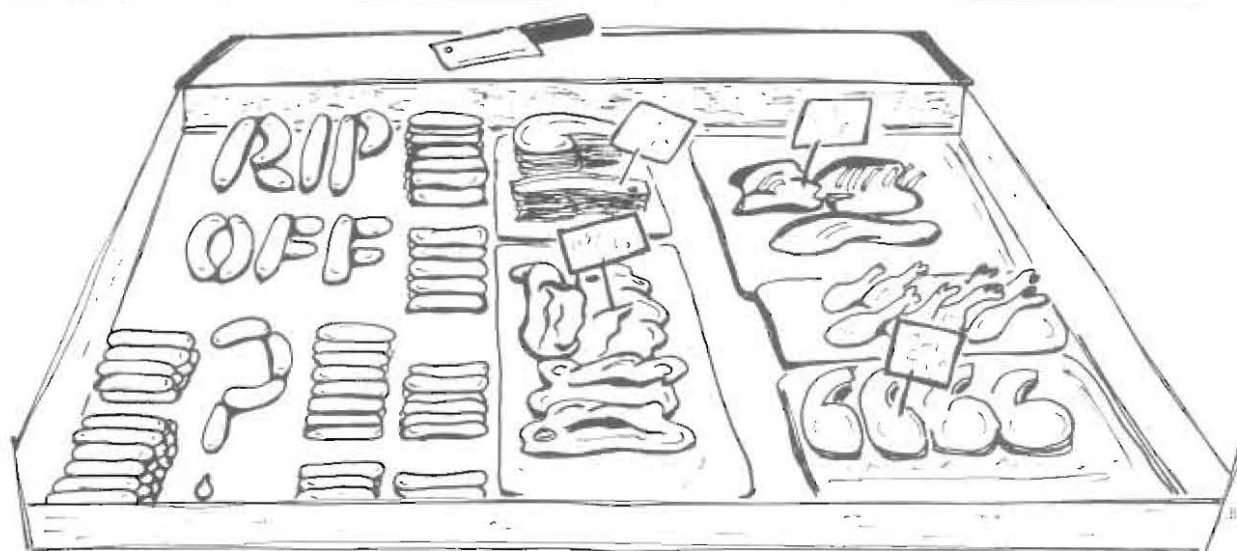
### Standards

Southwark local council and *The Food Magazine* are calling for tougher regulations governing the composition of sausages. The words 'prime' and 'premium' should be better defined, there should be a full declaration of the types of meat used in sausages (including which species of animal or bird they come from) and there should be full details of the ingredients used.

A typical recipe for a butcher's 'home made' pork sausage is:

**For 25lbs sausage meat**  
10lbs pork hand and belly  
8lbs pork fat  
2.5lbs rusk (soda bread filler)  
1lb 'seasoning' (salt, preservatives, colourings)  
3-4lbs water

Cased in sheep or hog casing (intestine) or synthetic collagen casing.



# Traidcraft: Alternatives to

**D**oes it help the hungry to buy their local crops? Only in certain circumstances, argues Mark Winter, Traidcraft's Food Development Manager.

'We have a set of criteria for evaluating food sources. We believe that the key to economic well-being for Third World countries lies in just and equitable trade, and we seek Third World partners who can benefit from our approach.' His aim is to buy foods and beverages from sources which conform to one or more of the following criteria.

- Groups of peasant farmers or labourers, operating for themselves and their local community.
- Groups who process and/or pack foods locally, thereby ensuring that the 'added value' benefits them and their local economy.
- Countries with rural development policies that actively help the poorest: supporting land reform, granting credit and technical assistance and encouraging community organisation among peasant farmers.

## STAPLE CROPS

'We also take other factors into consideration. We would only consider buying staple crops from countries where these are in surplus. Luxury crops should not be competing for land, or for credit assistance, with staple crops unless part of an equitable rural development policy.

'We try to ensure that the crops are appropriate for the ecology and economy of the region, and any processing and packaging should be appropriate too. We also feel it is important that the human rights of agricultural workers in the region should be respected.

'Following these criteria means trading with one of two types of partner: either we work with a local group whom we want to support, even though they may be in a country with unjust rural policies, or it means trading with state marketing boards in countries where we are in broad sympathy with their rural policies. In the latter case it means relying on the marketing boards' support for peasant workers, as we cannot trace back foods to specific farms.'

Traidcraft's activities have won it considerable support. It is now selling food worth over £1.3m annually, with their teas and coffees taking some 70 per cent of sales. They work closely with both Christian Aid and the Catholic agency CAFOD - producing customised versions of the Traidcraft catalogue for their agencies.

Besides direct mail order, Traidcraft has a network of 1400 volunteers organising local orders, and has opened shops in Liverpool, Leeds and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

*With malnutrition endemic among the Third World poor and we eat food from these regions with a clear conscience? If alternative food importers we talk to one person*



## CHRISTIAN LINKS

The link with the churches is not fortuitous. Traidcraft began life as a Christian initiative, founded by the 'Christian socialist' entrepreneur Richard Adams and trading with a Bangladeshi handicraft co-operative.

It formed itself into a limited company and then went public by issuing shares. Not, of course, highly lucrative shares (they have risen about 4 per cent per annum), but ones which clearly pricked the conscience of the nation.

The first issue in 1984 was heavily oversubscribed and raised £600,000. A second issue in 1986 proved equally popular and raised £1.1m. A

'usury-friendly investment' quipped one commentator.

Traidcraft operates from Gateshead, in North East England. 'We see ourselves as a model employer with a 130-strong workforce in a depressed region,' said Mark. 'Although not a co-operative, we have an open management style with two worker-directors on the board, elected by the workforce annually.'

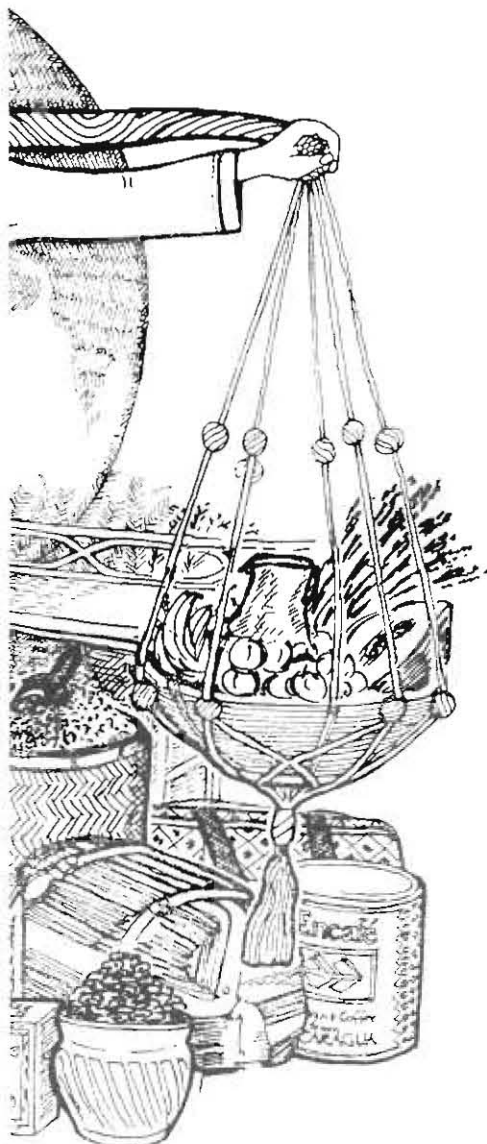
## NON-RELIGIOUS

The Christian approach is by no means apparent in the selection of trading partners. Not only are many of them non-Christian but some - notably China and Cuba - are avowedly non-religious.



# Third World Exploitation

amine affecting many countries, can  
the first of a series of articles on  
who believes we can.



## Traidcraft's main partners

GROUP/COUNTRY	FOOD PRODUCT
Apex farmer co-op, Turkey	hazelnuts
Marketing boards, Mozambique	cashews, sesame
Marketing boards, Nicaragua	sesame, coffee, rum
Gatherers co-op, Peru	brazil nuts
Women's co-op, Bangladesh	coconut
Kurdish family firm, Turkey	apricots
Peasant-supporting processing company, Philippines	banana chips
El Ceibo growing and marketing co-op, Bolivia	cocoa
Craft Aid sugar packing co-op for disabled people, Mauritius	raw cane sugar
Sanjus Nice Foods women's co-op, India	chutneys
Linjat Papad	popadoms
Marketing boards, China	Earl Grey and Lapsang Souchong tea, peanuts, walnuts, beans, apple rings, honey, dates, cashews
Marketing board, Vietnam	whole bananas
Marketing board, Cuba	confectionery
Multi-racial company, Zimbabwe	confectionery
Tabora co-op, Tanzania	honey
Kabompo co-op, Zambia	honey
Marketing co-op, Mexico	honey
Marketing boards, Tanzania	teas, coffee, cashews
Cerro Azul co-op, Costa Rica	coffee
Incoserve Co-op Federation, India	tea
Tantea-Tamil Resettlement Scheme, India	tea
Equitable Marketing Association, India (an alternative marketing organisation trading with tea cooperatives)	tea

'We are not a Christian mission. We have thought long and hard about our trading criteria, and although we are open to advice about our partners, we have felt that the criteria of justice and equality come before faith. We trade with China, Cuba and Nicaragua on the basis of their declared policies on rural development, backed up with the best information we can get on how these policies are put into practice.'

'The same applies to the co-operative groups. We have a co-op in Turkey we are trading with, even though we may disagree with their government's policies.'

On the down side, Traidcraft admits that some of its sources are less justifiable. The teas usually

need blending to ensure consistent quality, and that may mean adding non-ethical supplies. The muesli includes British-grown grains, and the dried fruit mixes include Australian products.

### INTENSIVE FARMS

'We are looking to improve our sources all the time, but a few compromises have to be made. Another type of compromise has to be made over production methods. It would be arrogant of us to demand that the products are only produced according to the latest organic methods, when for years rural farmers in underdeveloped countries have been urged to adopt Western intensive farming methods, encouraged by multinational

agribusiness and, often enough, by their own governments.

'We can make suggestions to these cooperatives but we cannot be totally insensitive to their own histories and their perceptions of how they want to grow and market their produce. It will all take time.'

Meanwhile you can put yourself on Traidcraft's mailing list for their Spring catalogue by writing to Traidcraft plc, Kingsway, Gateshead, NE11 0NE.

Next issue we look at TWIN Trading's ethical bartering.



## Mother's little helper

**T**he harassed parents of a colicky child will do anything if they think it might cure the colic, and give both the child and the parent(s) a peaceful break. Manufacturers have not missed this opportunity.

One 'traditional' remedy is gripe water. Whether it has an effect on the colic or not is a matter of some dispute. Manufacturers say that it can be effective in relieving colic, settling a stomach and easing wind – but many health workers are dubious of these claims.

What is certain is that it can have an effect on the symptoms of pain through a very simple mechanism: getting the baby tanked up on alcohol.

There is up to five per cent pure alcohol in gripe mixtures. The strength is

higher than many commercial lagers and beers, and the recommended dose for a baby of two months (10ml) can be, weight for weight, equal to an adult drinking half a measure of gin. According to the manufacturers, this sort of dose can be

given eight times a day. For a small body that has never experienced an alcoholic drink the result could be quite stupefying.

Gripe waters are also rich in syrup, which along with the alcohol provides calories with virtually no useful nutrients. The daily amounts suggested for a baby of two months could give it as much as 80 calories – 15 per cent of its daily needs – while giving none of the nutrients a growing body requires.

Parents need to think twice before giving repeated doses of these products. The alcohol may provide a short-term solution to a disturbed night but it is not a substitute for professional advice from health visitors and GPs.

Above all manufacturers should warn parents that the products contain alcohol.

### Sweet booze for babes

#### *Dinneford's Gripe Mixture*

Alcohol	5%
Sugar	25%

#### *Woodward's Gripe Water*

Alcohol	5%
Syrup	15%

#### *Nurse Harvey's Gripe Mixture*

Ginger Tincture*	5%
Syrup	20%

\*Ginger Tincture is 150° proof spirit



**A**luminium poisoning of water supplies is in the news. Aluminium can be very dangerous. For example, the EEC Commission has recommended that water used by kidney patients on dialysis and dialysis fluids should contain less than 30 ng/g (parts per billion) of aluminium, and within five years this figure should be reduced to below ten ng/g<sup>1</sup>.

There are about 100,000 patients on dialysis within the EEC and this action has been prompted by the casualties among these patients from aluminium poisoning. Aluminium in dialysis patients has caused brain disease and weakness of bones leading to fracture and a variety of other disorders.

If aluminium is as poisonous as these figures suggest, does not the aluminium in the food and drink of people not on dialysis also have a damaging effect? The evidence suggests that aluminium speeds up the ageing of adults rather than acting as an acute poison. Only one or two tenths of one per cent of aluminium in food and drink is absorbed into the blood stream and most of the aluminium absorbed is excreted by the kidney, but some finds its way into cells that are not replaced frequently, where it accumulates.

### BRAIN CELLS

Brain disorders including Alzheimer's syndrome have been reported to be associated with accumulations of aluminium in the nuclei of brain cells<sup>2</sup>. Aluminium also displaces calcium in bones causing bone weakness. Aluminium interferes with several hundred bodily processes requiring magnesium, calcium and zinc which it displaces<sup>3</sup>. No evidence has been found that aluminium is needed by any living thing and it is incompatible with



Aluminium-coated sweets available in corner shops

# Control the aluminium in food and drink

*Aluminium – the commonest metal on earth – is suspected of being a dietary hazard. Margaret Wynn and Arthur Wynn argue for new regulations.*

essential life processes.

A Committee on Food Additives of the US National Academy of Sciences estimated that in 1982 four million pounds of aluminium were consumed as food additives. It was added to beer and other drinks, to baking powders used in the production of some biscuits, cakes and breads, to processed cheeses, pickles, frozen strawberries and other frozen fruits to improve appearance. The average consumption of aluminium by US citizens was estimated at 21.5 mg/day and five per cent of them consumed more than 95 mg/day.

There has been an increase in the exposure of humans to aluminium by a factor of ten or even 100 during the 20th century. Breast milk is reported to contain about 30 ng/g. A study of commercial infant milk formulas (made up with tap water containing 40 ng/g) showed a range from 85 to 5,030 ng/g

of aluminium, up to 165 times the figure for breast milk<sup>4</sup>.

It has been reported that children with defective kidneys have been fatally poisoned by the aluminium in a proprietary milk formula. The researchers noted that no-one could say how many children with only slightly defective or immature kidneys suffer damage to their brains or other body systems from aluminium<sup>5</sup>.

### WATER

The case is overwhelming for the statutory control of aluminium in baby milk formulas and weaning foods. But control cannot stop there and must involve everyone. The EEC Commission has set a standard of 200 ng/g maximum for aluminium in tap water but this standard is not observed in the UK and cannot be so long as Water Boards continue to add 100,000

tons of aluminium sulphate to water supplies every year. Enforcement of such food and water regulations would, however, serve little purpose in those households using aluminium saucepans and kettles, which can increase the aluminium content of the cooking water to 5,000 or even 50,000 ng/g (although steaming vegetables does not increase their aluminium content).

Aluminium cans used for beer, soft drinks and tinned foods may be coated with lacquers, similar to those used for preventing tin absorption, but such lacquers will not be used unless there are aluminium content standards to be observed. Next time you open an aluminium can see if the inside has been lacquered.

There will be resistance to the control of aluminium in our food and drink. It will be said that it has not been 'proved' that aluminium is dangerous. The old saying applies that disaster races to meet the

person who waits for proof of danger. The circumstantial evidence that aluminium is dangerous to life and that it accelerates premature ageing is monumental.

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- <sup>3</sup> Ganrot P O. Metabolism and possible health effects of aluminium. *Environmental Health Perspec*, 1986; 65: 363-441, 959 references
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# Greenhouse warming:

*The greenhouse crisis may well be the gravest environmental threat that humanity has ever faced', says Jeremy Rifkin, the US environment campaigner. Eric Brunner looks at the evidence on the global warm-up.*

**B**ritain is only just beginning to pay attention to predictions of severe global warming, yet it could have dire consequences if action is not taken. Melting of the polar ice caps would cause the sea level to rise, flooding coastal areas where many cities are located. Agriculture would also be seriously affected, through changes in rainfall patterns as well as rising temperatures.

According to the greenhouse effect hypothesis, these are just some of the results of the accumulation of industrial waste gases in the earth's atmosphere.

In contrast, North Americans are more aware of the greenhouse effect since last summer when the Great Plains were stricken with severe drought. Though no-one has shown a direct link between it and the greenhouse effect, the devastating slump in the grain harvest brought the greenhouse hypothesis new credibility.

Last June a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) scientist submitted evidence to a US senate committee which suggested greenhouse warming had already begun. Dr James Hansen told the committee: 'Present global temperatures are the highest in the history of instrumental records. The 1980s have seen the four warmest years in the past century.'

A few days later the Toronto Climate



Conference, sponsored by the Canadian government, brought together 300 policy makers, scientists and industrialists to debate the greenhouse threat. The conference called for a complete halt to the production of the worst types of ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) by the year 2000 and a 20 per cent cut in global carbon dioxide emissions.

## CONTROL

The build up of these and other greenhouse gases must, according to weather scientists, be controlled to prevent a severe world warming. The burning of coal and oil, use of artificial fertilisers and production of pollutants such as aerosol and refrigerant CFCs are the main sources of these gases.

Large increases in the concentrations of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, methane, CFCs and low altitude ozone have taken place in the last 200 years (see table). The

continuing loss of tropical rain forests compounds the problem since declining amounts of carbon dioxide are consumed in this habitat.

Over the past 100 years the earth has warmed by about 0.5°C. Does this mean the greenhouse effect is already here? Dr Michael Kelly, from the University of East Anglia, does not yet discount other reasons for this rise. 'It is not proof that the greenhouse effect is already upon us, because the temperature rise may be due to solar activity, changes in volcanic activity, or the distribution of ocean temperatures. Nevertheless, the greenhouse effect is the most plausible explanation.'

NASA's Goddard Institute predicts that if gas emissions continue at the present rate the temperature will rise by 1°C within 25 years (figure 1, plot A). With drastic cuts in emissions the temperature will stop going up over the next ten years (plot C).

The Meteorological Office is the

latest group to publish results from its computer model. The Met Office's worst case estimate is based on the doubling of carbon dioxide in the

**A:** Trace gas emissions continue to grow at current rates of about 1.5 per cent annually, producing an escalating 'forcing effect' for global warming

**B:** The growth rate slows so that the forcing effect remains constant

**C:** Drastic cuts in emissions over the next 10 years. The forcing effect ceases growing by the year 2000



# how much, how soon?



earth's atmosphere. According to this, the world will become 5°C warmer in the next 50 to 100 years at present pollution rates. Winter air temperatures

in the Arctic and Antarctic will rise by 12°C.

A Met Office spokesperson told *The Food Magazine*: 'You would be hard-

pressed to find a scientist who didn't believe the greenhouse effect is important. If the atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration is allowed to double the effect will undoubtedly be a global warming.'

NASA is convinced that historic temperature records already show proof of global warming. More cautiously, the Met Office says: 'At present there is insufficient evidence to confirm the effect.' It seems there will be a five to ten year wait before the magnitude of the greenhouse effect can be agreed.

But one thing is certain - Rifkin's 'greenhouse doomsday scenario' is one which we cannot afford to ignore.

## CLIMATE

Apart from the huge cost of flood prevention required to protect against the sea-level rise of between one and three metres by 2050, we may see some welcome changes if the greenhouse effect develops.

The UK is forecast to become generally warmer, so much so that in the south a mediterranean type of climate is possible. The north, though, is expected to get wetter.

A high-tide coupled with high rainfall would lead to the danger of fresh water flooding in coastal areas. The UK is fortunate not to have extensive low-lying regions, as there are in Denmark and Holland. We may, despite this, have a great deal of flood defence building to pay for in the coming decades.

## AGRICULTURE

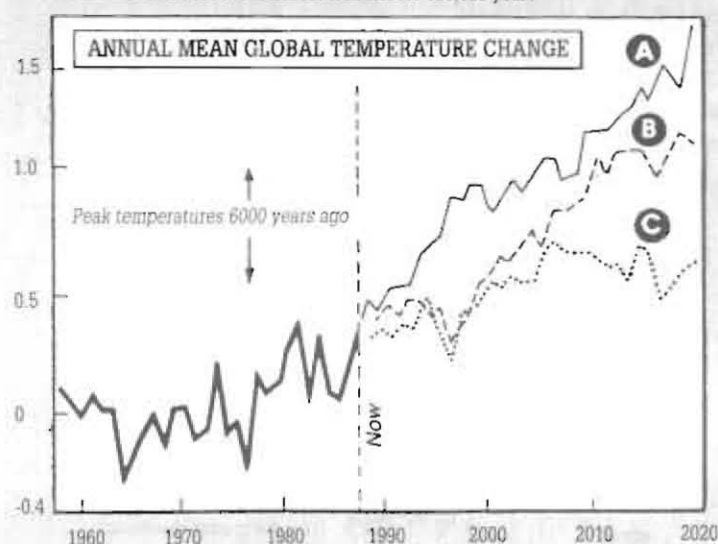
Successful farming is highly dependent on climate, and the greenhouse effect would involve major changes and costs for this industry above all others. However the likely impact of climate change on farming is not entirely bad. Some nations and sectors of agriculture may in fact benefit from it.

In the UK predictions for Arbroath, on the Scottish east coast, are striking. By the year 2030 two crops of raspberries might be produced annually, and new products such as maize and french beans could thrive in Arbroath's balmy climate. On the down side, local farmers rely on cold winters to preserve their seed potatoes in store. Milder weather could wipe them out. Similarly, the Scottish countryside is often dominated by cultivated British Columbian spruce which may not grow well at the temperatures predicted for the next century.

A temperature rise could have a disastrous effect on the prairie wheatbelt of the USA and Canada, which might experience a return to the dustbowl conditions of the 1930s. Grain belts would have to move northwards to find appropriate growing conditions, some of it on land previously uncultivated. The outlook for the Soviet Union is less grim, where crop yields might improve. In Japan, surplus rice would provoke market intervention.

Carbon dioxide is an airborne fertiliser, and so if levels rise most plants will grow faster. However, this applies to weeds as well as crops, so effects on ecosystems are unpredictable.

We are on course for the warmest weather for 100,000 years



# Greenhouse warming (Cont)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is concerned that food supplies in areas such as sub-Saharan Africa will be badly affected. A UNEP report shows yield increases of between a few per cent for clover and rice, to 100 per cent for cotton when carbon dioxide is doubled artificially. These forecasts however assume that water supply and pest prevalence are optimal. The Department of the Environment also reports that wheat and potatoes grown in a high carbon dioxide atmosphere had higher yields when water was plentiful, but these were lower if rainfall remained at present levels.

Agricultural solutions to the greenhouse effect will take a variety of forms. New crop varieties may solve some problems. Irrigation may be necessary in some regions which have adequate rainfall at present.

Perhaps one of the most pressing problems lies with the control of future farming methods. A handful of agribusiness companies around the world call the tune with seed varieties, fertilisers, machinery and pesticides. They have contributed to the greenhouse problem by promoting intensive agriculture based on fossil fuels. Can they be relied upon to offer environmentally sensitive solutions?

## CALLS FOR ACTION

The Toronto and Washington conferences both saw concerted international action as the only means for dealing with the greenhouse problem. This concerted response, they say, would involve a blend of measures designed to control emissions and to facilitate adaption to the changed environment. Last October's Washington Conference recommended the following:

1. Tax incentives to assist rapid transfer from fossil fuels to solar, wind and other environmentally-sound renewable energy sources.
2. Relaxation of Third World debt as an incentive to conserve and replenish tropical forests.
3. Internationally agreed taxes on the burning of oil and coal.
4. Rejection of nuclear technology as a response to the greenhouse problem

## The greenhouse gases

Gas	Time	Increase
carbon dioxide	1800 - 1985	260 - 345 ppm (up 33%)
CFCs	recent decades	6-7% per year
methane	1800 - 1985	800 - 1600 ppb (up 100%)
nitrous oxide	1800 - 1985	280 - 300 ppb (up 7%)
ozone	recent decades	0.25% per year

ppm = parts per million by volume

ppb = parts per billion by volume

Greenhouse gases allow the sun's energy to reach the earth's surface unhindered, but limit the loss of heat energy back to space, just as the glass in a greenhouse retains warmth.

SOURCE: *The greenhouse effect: overview and implications*, PM Kelly & JHW Karas. Climatic Research Unit, Norwich (1988)

on economic and environmental grounds.

5. Tax incentives for the development of alternatives to CFCs.

6. Incentives to encourage industrial and domestic energy efficiency and conservation.

7. A switch from intensive agriculture based on petrochemical fertilisers, into ecologically sound agriculture.

The goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 per cent by the year 2000, and by 50 per cent by 2030, cannot be achieved without fundamental changes in consumption patterns in the industrialised world, and great changes in the economic relationship between developed and underdeveloped countries. The Washington Conference

called for the designation of the 1990s as an environmental decade.

## GETTING MOVING ON THE PROBLEM

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had its first inter-governmental greenhouse meeting in Geneva last November. These meetings aim to develop better understanding of the problem and ways to tackle it. In Europe, the Council of Ministers will discuss the greenhouse effect in June. The Commission's report includes a recommendation for a total ban on CFCs.

In the UK, research programmes

are being undertaken by the Natural Environment Research Council and the Met Office. The Department of the Environment is preparing a 'green' bill for the autumn, mainly in response to Common Market legislation.

Leading British environmental groups, including Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and the World Wide Fund for Nature, have begun to develop their greenhouse strategies, and meet regularly to coordinate their efforts.

Organisations to contact:

Association for the Conservation of Energy: Stewart Boyle, 9 Sherlock Mews, London W1M 3RH; 01-935 1495

Friends of the Earth: Fiona Weir, 26-28 Underwood Street, London N1 7JQ; 01-490 1555

Greenpeace: Andrew Kerr, 30-31 Islington Green, London N1; 01-354 5100

World Wide Fund for Nature: Tessa Robertson, Panda House, Wayside Park, Godalming, Surrey; (0483) 426444

Environmental Information Service: Mick Kelly, Climatic Research Unit, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ; (0603) 56161

Department of the Environment: Mr David Fisk, Chief Scientist, Romney House, 43 Marsham Street, London SW1; 01-276 3000

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: Whitehall Place, London SW1; 01-270 3000

Meteorological Office: London Road, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 2SZ; (0344) 420242

United Nations Environment Programme, UK Committee: 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6LB; 01-630 1981



Illegal? This sloppy label breaks British labelling regulations in several respects: It claims to be orange flavoured which means it should include some real orange. The ingredient list admits that there is no real orange present. The phrase FD & C Yellow No 5 is the term used in the USA for tartrazine (E102) which should be properly declared as such.



# Caroline's work continues

**T**ributes to the work of nutritionist and campaigner Caroline Walker, who died last year, continue to flood in. 'I felt so inspired and happy when I heard the radio programme about her', writes Richard Austin of *Rainbow Wholefoods*. 'We shall always be grateful for the confidence-building Caroline supplied', write Richard and Elizabeth Cook, authors of *Sugar Off?*

Natalie Cormack writes from the Isle of Eigg: 'I have been considered a bit of a fanatic about additives on this island (pop 65) bringing my so-called 'green' ideas up from the South ten years ago. However, looking at the shelves in the only shop yesterday, I noticed the change that has evolved due to the demands of us like-minded folk. Even my children (ages seven-and-a-half and five years) are aware of Caroline's work, and her life and death. They, our future, fully appreciate the worth of sensible eating/living/husbandry, and of sticking to one's principles.'

Mrs D Mooney writes from Surrey saying: 'As a mother of three children who is extremely concerned about the quality of our food, and even more concerned about future prospects - technology, irradiation, etc - I am



**FoE's Jonathan Porritt, inaugural speaker at the forthcoming awards ceremony**

immensely grateful to Caroline Walker.' The distinguished cookery writer Yan-Kit So writes: 'I'll always remember her gentle smile when we had a conversation about Chinese vegetarian food on the train platform at Notting Hill Gate.' And an old friend from the Department of Nutrition at Queen's

College, University of London, June Waters, writes: 'As a direct result I have now applied for an MA in Health Education and hope to add my small contribution to Caroline's cause.'

The simplest and most direct word is from Ruth Maxwell, writing from Chiswick: 'Please continue her good

work.'

Encouraged by these wonderful tributes (writes Geoffrey Cannon) Caroline's Trustees have met and made the first decisions on how best to continue Caroline's work in her spirit. A booklet on good food and good health will be published later this year, developed from the work Caroline did for the BBC Food and Health Campaign in 1985 and 1986. We hope that this new booklet will carry the stamp of approval of the charities and associations Caroline worked with most closely, including the Coronary Prevention Group and The London Food Commission.

The main event planned is an annual lecture which this year will be given by Jonathan Porritt, in honour of Caroline; together with awards which we hope will include the 'Sock'n'Sausage' awards. Everybody who has contributed to the Trust will be the first on the invitation list to the lecture and awards, which will probably take place in central London.

Anybody reading this who can help make Caroline's special evening one to remember, please write to the Trust at 6 Aldridge Road Villas, London W11 1BP 01-727 6751.

## The Caroline Walker Trust

Very many thanks to readers of *The Food Magazine* and *Living Earth*, the magazine of the Soil Association. Total donations to Caroline's Trust amounted to over £13,000. Since the last issue donations have been received from:

Jonathan Aitken MP  
Sarah Allday  
R I Atkinson  
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# Poverty and diet

*'One of the most urgent problems of our time is how to ensure that each member of the community receives a diet that will satisfy his or her physiological needs. It is clear that to achieve this end, many barriers - poverty, unemployment, apathy, ignorance, prejudice, habit - must be surmounted, and many interests - agricultural, industrial and economic - readjusted', Sir Robert McCarrison, 1936.*

Fuelled by the publication of the LFC's report *Tightening Belts* in 1986, and remarks made over the last few years by Edwina Currie, there has been considerable debate about the problems faced by people with low incomes in following healthy eating advice. The professional associations of health visitors, dietitians and welfare rights organisations have all campaigned on the issue and this Spring the Health Education Authority is publishing its own report.

The general consensus in 1986 was, and still is, that without more money in their pockets people with low incomes find it increasingly difficult to eat a healthy balanced diet. During the mid 1980's food poverty in Britain has worsened.

## THE COST OF A HEALTHY DIET

Establishing the exact cost of a healthy diet is impossible. Individuals' tastes, skills and facilities vary widely, cultural and regional influences are strong and food prices are inconsistent. What is an interesting healthy diet for one family may be totally unacceptable to another.

The cost of the same food in different shops in the same town varies. There are price differences both within and between major food retailers. Small corner shops tend to be more expensive than larger superstores.

A woman living in Chelsea in London finds it possible to feed a family of four on £28.00 a week, although she has heartfelt advice for politicians who might use her experience

*In June 1986 the London Food Commission (LFC) published *Tightening Belts*, a major report on the impact of food poverty in Britain. Three years later Issy Cole-Hamilton begins a series of articles on how the situation has changed.*

to argue that benefit levels were adequate.

*'I do have a question to ask any smart politician who may wish to wield the Benefit Book in such a way, and that is, quite simply, do you and your family manage on £28 per week? For any man who quoteth the Benefit Book should live by the Benefit Book.'* Bernadine Lawrence, from her book *The Benefit Book* (Thorsons) 1989.

She bakes her own bread, makes her own breakfast cereals and enjoys spending one and a half to two hours a day cooking for her family. Her family is happy to eat plenty of vegetarian and pulse based dishes and her children have resisted the pressures to join the convenience food, on-the-hoof eating culture.

On the other hand a healthy diet for one adult costed by dietitian Kathy Mooney in Hampstead, North London in 1988 was £14.20 for a week<sup>1</sup>. Other examples of costed healthy diets for a week are:

• £35.60 for a family of three based

on 'average' eating patterns for a 'modest-but-adequate' diet<sup>2</sup>

• £35.00 for a family of four using all Tesco's own-brand foods<sup>3</sup>

• £45.00 for a family in Scotland

**TABLE 2**

People with low incomes spend less money but a higher proportion of their income on food

	1986	
	Food expenditure per week	Per cent of total expenditure
Low income households	£35.84	22%
High income households	£63.36	14%

Source: *Family Expenditure Survey 1986*, HMSO, 1988

based on 'average' eating patterns<sup>4</sup>

• £10.29 for one adult from personal experience<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt that for most people with low incomes the cost of a healthy diet is considerably more than the money they have available to spend on food. Even making small changes such as decreasing the amount of fat used in frying will lead to extra expense. Calories from fat are cheap and replacing them with calories from starchy foods and fruit is much more expensive (see Table 1).

Little has changed, it seems, since the 18th century:

*'As income falls, foods characteristic of higher earnings disappear until the poorest have to support life on foods providing the most calories on the least money.'* J Burnett, *English Diet in the 18th & 19th Centuries*, 1976.

## INCOMES AND BENEFITS

Even before the Social Security changes came into effect in April 1988 provision

for food within benefit levels was inadequate. Now the situation is worse. Dietitian Kathy Mooney found in Hampstead that a healthy diet can cost more than 40 per cent of the weekly budget for people on Income Support<sup>1</sup>. A 'modest-but-adequate' diet costed for the Family Budget Unit would take more than 50 per cent of the disposable income of a family of three on Income Support<sup>2</sup>.

Other research has indicated that benefit rates for children are inadequate and not geared to the needs of growing children. It has been established that even if full claims are being made for free school meals and milk, the rates only allow for 86 per cent of the most basic needs of a five-year-old and 68 per

cent of the needs of an eight-year-old.

Over the next 12 months Housing Benefit and allowances for homeless families will change and a family in bed and breakfast could lose £50 a week. This

will have major effects on the diets of this already nutritionally deprived group of people.

## THE FOOD BUDGET

The amount of money spent on food is closely linked to income. Whilst low income households spend much less on food than high income households, the proportion of their income this represents is considerably higher (see Table 2).

Wealthier people tend to spend more money than those less well off on eating out as well as on foods eaten at home, but there is little difference in the way the food budget at home is divided up.

Both rich and poor spend about two thirds of their home food budgets on basic foods. However, low income households spend relatively more on the cheaper foods. The disadvantage of this is that to buy cheap calories it is necessary to eat more cheap fats which tend to be highly saturated (Table 3).

**TABLE 1**

Calories from fat are cheaper than those from other foods (1986 prices)

Food	Cost of portion giving 1,000 kcal £
Lard & other cooking fats	0.11
Potatoes	0.22
Pasta - white	0.22
brown	0.23
Bread - white	0.26
wholemeal	0.37
Apples	1.61
Carrots	1.71
Oranges	1.99
Bananas	2.05

Source: *National Food Survey 1986*, HMSO, 1987



# in the 1980s

**TABLE 3**

Foods high in saturated fat tend to be cheaper than those low in fat (December 1988 prices, Tesco, Brixton)

	Price per lb	Saturated fat per 100 g
Beef products:		
lean beef	£2.39	2.1 g
fatty mince	£1.20	7.3 g
beef sausages	£0.72	10.8 g
Pork products:		
lean pork	£2.08	3.0 g
fatty pork belly	£0.99	15.1 g
pork luncheon meat	£0.64	10.9 g
Margarines:		
polyunsaturated margarine	£0.41	20.0 g
soft margarine	£0.34	25.0 g
hard margarine	£0.30	30.0 g

Source: London Food Commission

## VALUE FOR MONEY

In general, people with low incomes get better value for money both in terms of quantity and nutrients. In 1986 low income households got over 30 per cent more of each nutrient (except vitamin C) per pound spent on food than those with high incomes.

Having insufficient money to spend on food means that people tend to eat very little fruit and vegetables; relatively small amounts of lean meat,

fish and poultry; white instead of wholemeal bread and drink whole milk rather than reduced fat milk.

On the other hand they eat more cheap calorific foods including processed meat and meat products, lard, sugar, jam, cakes and biscuits and fried foods. Although there have been some changes in eating patterns during the mid 1980s with reductions in the amount of spreading fats, biscuits, cakes, sugar and preserves eaten, there

has been no increase in the amount of vegetables and fruit eaten by people with low incomes.

Whilst overall expenditure on food has risen, food price rises have been uneven. The cost of food encouraged in a healthy diet has gone up faster than that of food not encouraged (see Table 4).

*'People in lower income groups will more readily accept healthy dietary changes which also save money'* Professor Aubrey Sheiham, *The Food Magazine*, Issue 3.

The problem for most people with low incomes is that they do not have enough money to lead what could be described as a 'modest-but-adequate' life-style. Until this intolerable situation is confronted head on and incomes rise sufficiently, the problems of food poverty in Britain will not go away.

The Health Education Authority's report on food and low income is to be published in Spring 1989.

## REFERENCES

- 1 Mooney K. 'A Healthy Diet - who can afford it'. *The Food Magazine*, Issue 3, vol 1, 1988
- 2 Nelson M. *Construction of a budget standard for a model household* (working title) pending publication, Kings

**TABLE 4**

In the mid-1980s the price of foods encouraged in a healthy diet rose more than for other, less recommended foods

	Price rise 1982-1986
Fish*	37%
Fresh fruit*	32%
Fresh vegetables*	31%
Poultry*	26%
Biscuits and cakes	23%
Vegetable oils*	20%
Bread - wholemeal*	19%
Whole milk	17%
Bread - white	15%
Meat products	14%
Sugar	13%
Butter	9%

\*indicates foods recommended in a healthy diet

Source: *National Food Surveys 1982 and 1986*, HMSO, 1984 and 1987

College London

3 Tesco, *Guide to healthy eating on a budget*, Tesco Stores Ltd, 1987

4 Milburn J et al, *Nae Bread*, Argyll & Clyde Health Board, 1987

5 Pentlow J. Written communication to the London Food Commission 1988



**Stark contrasts: a light snack for some is a week's benefit for others**



# **St. George the Martyr,**

## **SOUTHWARK.**

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**PREVENTION OF ADULTERATION OF FOOD AND  
DRINK, AND OF DRUGS ACT, 1872.**

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### **NOTICE.**

**THE ANALYST** for this Parish, appointed by the Vestry under the above-named Act is **Dr. JOHN MUTER, OF THE SOUTH LONDON SCHOOL OF CHEMISTRY AND PHARMACY, No. 231, Kennington Road, S.E.**

**THE INSPECTOR** appointed by the Vestry under the Act is **Mr. JOHN EDWARDS, Inspector of Nuisances**, who attends at the Vestry Hall, in the Borough Road, at 11 o'clock in the Forenoon, to whom any application in relation to the above Act should then be made.

Any purchaser of any article of food or drink or drugs in this Parish is entitled, on payment to the Inspector appointed under this Act of a sum not less than two shillings and sixpence nor more than ten shillings and sixpence, to have any such article analyzed, and to receive a Certificate of the result of the analysis, specifying whether such article is adulterated, and also whether, if it be an article of food or drink, it is so adulterated as to be injurious to the health of persons eating or drinking the same; and such Certificate duly signed by the Analyst is made to be, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, evidence of the matters therein certified, and the sum paid for such Certificate may be deemed part of the costs.

By Order of the Sanitary Committee of the Vestry.

Vestry Hall, Borough Road,  
February, 1872

**DANIEL BIRT, Vestry Clerk.**



# Trading on public health

**T**he practice of selling substitute, inferior or doctored goods at inflated prices is as ancient as trade itself. Wherever food is bought and sold the opportunities to make profits from adulteration are present. Even the citizens of ancient Athens had to appoint a special inspector of wines – an early version of our trading standards and environmental health officers.

Records from 11th century England show bakers, brewers, pepperers and vintners accused of corrupt practices. Early action to suppress such adulteration was taken not by the public authorities but commercial trades guilds who saw a sales advantage in maintaining the good names of their members.

These forms of voluntary self-regulation proved insufficient and the need for legal regulation was recognised. The Assize of Bread in the 13th century controlled the price and composition of bread. A 17th century act introduced fines for adulterating tea, coffee and beer. But even statutory controls were ineffective in the face of growing opportunities for food fraud.

Systematic adulteration of food boomed in the 19th century as new techniques were developed. The practices were even published in trade booklets:

*'Burnt sugar gives a fine amber colour from the lightest shade to the deepest of old brandy; oak chips the same and also an astringency. Yellow saunders a fine citron colour and grateful aromatic scent. Sassafras, a strawberry colour and a fine aromatic but peculiar scent.'* Shannon, 1805

## FREE MARKET

But perhaps the most significant contribution to the growth of adulteration in the early 19th century was the widespread acceptance of a free market policy.

*The medieval control over food standards by national and local regulation came to be abandoned – partly because of administrative difficulties but, more fundamentally, because of a changed conception of the role of the state and a doctrinaire belief in the efficacy of free competition to ensure the best interests of the consumer. These changes, coinciding with*

*As the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food proudly celebrates its centenary year, we shall be looking at the history of food legislation and the links between legislation and commercial interests. In this issue Melanie Miller looks at the early food laws.*

*unparalleled inflation and shortages during the French wars, combined to produce a situation in which it was, for the first time, easy, safe and profitable to adulterate.'* Burnett, 1966

Frederick Accum's publication of *A Treatise on Adulterations of Food and Culinary Poisons* in 1820 marked a turning point in consumer attitudes to 'free trade'. Here was evidence that adulteration was not only fraudulent but could pose a serious health risk. Red lead was being added to cayenne pepper and sauces. Pickles were 'greened' with copper.

## POISON

Accum called for government intervention:

*'It is really astonishing that the penal law is not more effectually enforced against practices so inimical to the public welfare. The man who robs a fellow subject of a few shillings on the highway is sentenced to death, while he who distributes a slow poison to a whole community, escapes unpunished.'*

Yet the government of the period held back, asserting that free competition would eventually best serve public interest.

In 1850 a chemical analyst, Dr Arthur Hassall, and the editor of *The Lancet*, Thomas Wakley, set up the Analytical Sanitary Commission. Systematic food fraud was revealed month by month in *The Lancet* and spread by popular papers. The majority of foods were being adulterated in some way – even the rich could not buy pure food. Hassall described 'virulent poisons' used in tea, sweets and spices. He identified several deaths from coloured confectionery – and the possibility of long-term hazards from

slow accumulation.

A government-appointed committee recommended protective legislation. The food industry argued that the best route was to 'leave buyers to take care of themselves' (the caveat emptor principle).

Between 1857 and 1859 there were five unsuccessful Parliamentary Bills on adulteration. The campaign was sustained by the Social Science Association in Birmingham and other public and scientific groups. It took a public outcry following the death of seventeen people from adulterated lozenges to force the first anti-adulteration act, in 1860, despite the fact that the new Whig government was not in favour of food legislation.

The act allowed local authorities to appoint public analysts who would examine any products brought to them by members of the public (who had to pay up to 10s 6d).

The *Lancet* campaigners noted drily that the act had been considerably weakened during its passage through Parliament and had itself become 'a somewhat adulterated article'.

But publication of the names of offending traders encouraged others to reduce the use of poisonous mineral colours, although fraudulent adulteration continued unabated.

## PROSECUTION

Between 1868 and 1871 four unsuccessful attempts were made to amend the act by making provisions for enforcement or introducing strict liability. Only after several private prosecutions and aggressive campaigns by the Anti-Adulteration Society and local authorities was the appointment of public analysts made mandatory in

1872.

Several of the larger and more progressive companies saw adulteration as unfair competition undercutting their markets. Tighter legislation could be to their advantage. By 1875 *The Times* was thundering:

*'It would be a prodigious gain if the influence of the law could bring the adulteration of necessities to be regarded no longer as a 'usage of trade', but as a disgraceful offence.'*

Under public and trade union pressure a new Food Act was drafted that year, and its core has remained enshrined for over a century:

*'No person shall sell to the prejudice of the purchaser any article of food or any drug which is not of the nature, substance and quality of the article demanded by such purchaser of the food or drug, or conceal the inferior quality thereof.'*

## LIABILITY

Key clauses were open to wide interpretation: enforcement officers and courts defined 'nature, substance and quality' and 'injurious' in a multitude of ways. Were excess water or substitute ingredients in meats, butter or jam legal? The government refused to list banned or permitted additives and would not establish compositional standards to control fraudulent substitution.

By 1880 textile dyes from coal tar had replaced the poisonous mineral colours, because they were technically superior, cheaper and were assumed safe. But in 1886 animal tests cast doubt on the safety of some coal tar dyes and started a debate about the safety of and need for colour additives – a debate which would be familiar to anyone today.

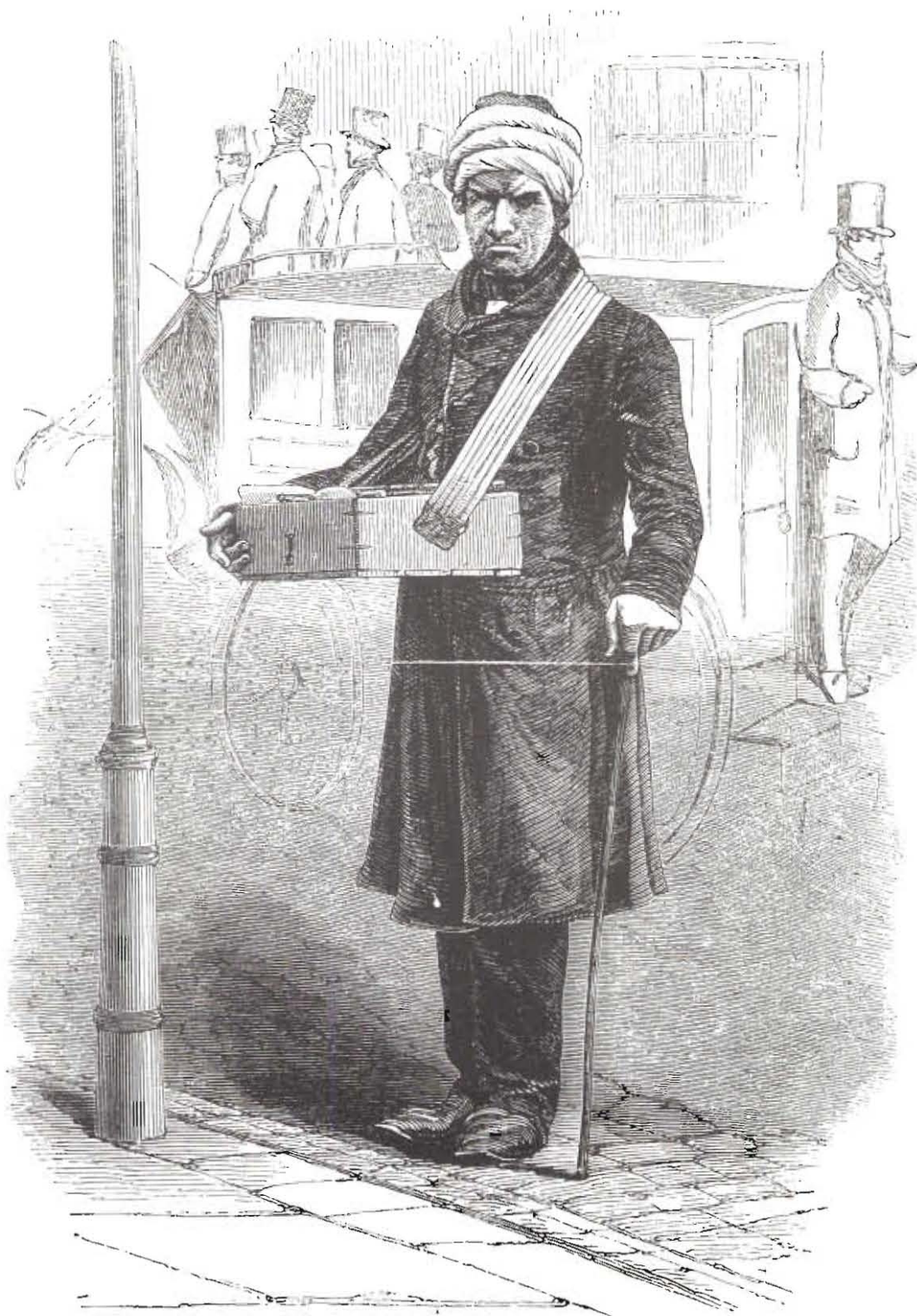
Many methods which may have been fraudulent but which were not clearly seen at the time as threats to health continued and gradually became incorporated as customary trade practices. The result was a new era of legalised adulteration which has continued throughout the 20th century.

## FURTHER READING:

Ingeborg Paulus *The Search for Pure Food*, Martin Robertson, 1974

John Burnett *Plenty and Want*, Methuen, 1966

# FOOD FROM THE PAST



## THE STREET RHUBARB AND SPICE SELLER

'Never in my life I put no tings wit my goods. I tell you de troot, I grind my white pepper wid my own hands, but I buy me ginger ground, and *dat* is mixed I know. I tink it is pea\* flour dey put wid it, dere is no smell in dat, but it is de same colour - two ounces of ginger will give de smell to one pound of pea flour.'

\*split peas From Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, 1851.



## BSE beef

Only one person will acknowledge that human beings could catch the cattle brain disease BSE by eating beef and he is Dr Tim Holt, the junior doctor whose *British Medical Journal* article first raised the current concern about the disease. He has given up eating processed meat – so sure is he that there is a connection. I too wouldn't be surprised if a link was proven.

I am the honorary chairman of a parent group whose children received human growth hormone during the 1970s – a preparation alleged to have caused eight patients to die worldwide. In this country the hormone was withdrawn 'overnight' in May 1985 when the deaths confirmed specialists'

fears that a slow virus induced the neurological disease, Creutzfeldt Jacob Disease (CJD). They knew it to be a virus for which there is no screening and no cure.

The CJD virus is akin to that producing scrapie in sheep and, since cattle have been fed the remains of sheep, might it not be possible for humans to pick it up by eating cattle? As a television producer by profession I am not qualified to provide an answer, but I am sceptical of those who are.

My scepticism is based on ministerial inaction following the withdrawal of the growth hormone in 1985 and I see the same kind of inaction following the identification of BSE. Within days of the human hormone being taken off the market, specialists

established that no patient who had been treated should be allowed to be either an organ donor or give blood – yet the DHSS issued neither instructions to bar them from it, nor attempted to trace the 800 young adults affected who could be donors. The official reason appeared to be that any announcement would cause panic, but I am very concerned that more CJD deaths might occur because of the silence. The donors themselves might never die from the disease but act as carriers. The final CJD death toll may still not come to light until the turn of the century.

**Tam Fry**  
ChairChild Growth Foundation

## Meatless economy

Having read the article 'Low Income Spending Survey' in Issue 3 of *The Food Magazine*, I wonder whether Issy Cole-Hamilton included any vegetarians or vegans in her survey of food purchasing by people with low incomes.

Although vegetarianism/veganism is commonly perceived, with some justification, to be a predominantly middle class (and therefore middle income) phenomenon, I firmly believe that a wholefood vegetarian or vegan diet can not only comfortably meet the dietary guidelines of NACNE, but also prove very economical.

The main problem is a lack of awareness of a) the nutritional value of wholefoods, and b) how to cook/prepare them. Perhaps this is a problem to which the LFC (in conjunction with The Vegetarian and Vegan Societies, retailers and other interested parties) could address itself.

**Paul Appleby**  
Secretary, Oxford Vegetarians

## Primary schools

I am a primary school teacher compiling a database of organisations which produce information and/or resources for use in primary schools.

If yours is such an organisation please could you send me details of the resources which you produce.

**J Carrick MSc**  
Cornhill-upon-Tweed

*If any readers can provide information, please send it to J Carrick MSc, c/o The Food Magazine, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR*

## Full fat subsidy

I would like to comment on the high profile being given to the promotion of dairy products in schools in the UK, and the subsidy system which encourages schools to purchase products high in saturated fats.

There is no doubt that the National Dairy Council (NDC) is putting massive resources into materials to encourage the uptake of milk products. Their growing association with sports sponsorship and teaching materials for schools needs to be looked at critically, especially at a time when most health authorities are involved in 'Look After Your Heart' programmes. These include urging people to cut down on their saturated fat intake. Readers may be aware that the UK has some of the worst figures in the world for deaths from coronary heart disease and nationally on average, we have higher blood cholesterol levels than that recommended by the World Health Organisation.

The message concerning fat reduced products is there, if you look for it, in the NDC materials but what is worrying is the present system of EEC school milk subsidies which gives a much higher subsidy on whole milk – that is with all its saturated fat – thereby encouraging education authorities to purchase this. Whole milk is subsidised by 13.55p per pint and semi-skimmed milk by 8.23p per pint; skimmed milk products are not included in the scheme. It is also interesting to note that only full-fat cheeses are subject to subsidy. Edam and cottage cheese are not eligible.

Maybe it is time the EEC subsidy system was challenged and changed to make it cheaper for schools to offer fat reduced products to children and at the same time greatly improve nutrition education, especially where the prevention of cardiovascular disease is concerned, and put the recommendations of the 1984 COMA report to the DHSS into practice.

**Joan Richardson MBE**  
Worcester & District Health Authority

## Bottle headspace

I was a little disappointed to note an error and omission from the article entitled 'BSI bottles out' in Issue 3 of *The Food Magazine*.

## Back issues - a few still available!

There are still a few copies left of the celebrated first three issues of *The Food Magazine*

### Issue 1 includes

- ★BST – what are they doing to our milk?
- ★Jumping on the bran wagon – the inside story on added bran in our diets
- ★What's in canned meat – we take the lid off the canned meat industry
- ★How natural is natural – are misleading labels a trading standards concern?

### Issue 2 includes

- ★8-page Food Quality Supplement – the hidden hazards of eating healthy food
- ★Soft-serve ice-cream – the inside story
- ★Homeless and hungry – preview report
- ★Chernobyl after effects – the world trade in contaminated foods

### Issue 3 includes

- ★6-page Fast Food supplement: the missing labels revealed at last
- ★School dinners and the launch of the FEAST campaign
- ★The costs of eating healthily: we look at inner city shopping
- ★1992 – what might it mean for UK consumers?

### Issue 4 includes

- ★Healthy snack bars: are they misleading?
- ★Supermarkets: we rate them for green awareness and nutritional labelling
- ★The Caroline Walker Trust is launched
- ★Weaning food: how to read the small print

£2.50 inc p&p per copy, cheques payable to LFC Publications. Order from Subscriptions Dept, The Food Magazine, 88 Old Street, London EC1V 9AR.

1 In the penultimate paragraph there is a statement that lacks accuracy as it implies that I have been recommending a *maximum* one per cent headspace. I have consistently recommended a *target* of one per cent which is not the same.

2 In the last paragraph you refer to a photograph which I submitted to you several months ago. Clearly your artist got in first with his comical cartoon which left out the photograph so that there is an inconsistency of context in your article.

Otherwise, what you say is very much to the point.

**Edward M A Willhoft**

Independent Consultant - Food & Drink

## Aluminium panned

Many people must be worried about the safety of using aluminium cooking utensils and foils following the results of recent research linking aluminium intake with Alzheimer's disease. Conventional wisdom is that aluminium for such uses, and in beer cans or other commercial uses, is not a health hazard because the metal is highly insoluble, as is the oxide film with which it is coated on exposure to moist air.

Warnings have been given, however, against cooking acidic fruits or rhubarb in aluminium pans.

Aluminium for domestic pans really took off 50 years ago. Adverse effects or prolonged intake of minute doses on a 'homoeopathic' level could be showing up now. Is the apparent increase in Alzheimer's disease linked with this?

I think there is a need for public guidance from the health authorities on the safety of aluminium and for new research-based work on the question.

**Bill Wainwright**

London SW6

## Middling fare

As a very new subscriber could I please ask for more specific terms about foods in articles such as 'Fast Food Guide' (*The Food Magazine*, Issue 3). For example, what does 'fairly occasionally' mean? Once a year, once a month or in between? Half the foods mentioned fell into this category and I wondered how to interpret the comments.

**Miss B Reed**

St Albans

*Yes, but... it all depends on what else you eat. Just looking at the list of fast foods you mention, if you ate one of them once a week, fine. But if you ate each of them once a week, disaster! The ratings we gave were to try and indicate a bad, middling and a good range. Unfortunately many fast foods were only middling. (Ed)*

## Organic meat

I am writing to enquire if you have any information on free range meat. I am very concerned about the factory farming of cattle, pigs and chicken - if you could send me perhaps a list of places where I might be able to obtain free range and hormone-free meat, or the address of somewhere that may be able to supply me with such information, I should be very grateful.

**Kathy Hunt**

London SE23

*Two guide books might be useful: The New Organic Food Guide by Alan Gear, Dent Paperbacks, 1987, £3.95 and The Real Food Shop and Restaurant Guide by Clive Johnstone, Ebury Press, 1985, £6.95.*

*We cannot take responsibility for the details in these books, but let us know if you find them helpful. (Ed)*

## Co-op's Nutritional Labelling

*In The Food Magazine, Issue 4 (Do They Help Us Shop For Healthy Food?) we omitted to indicate that Co-op Baked Beans declare their dietary fibre content. Their own-brand sausages were absent from the published table as our local Co-op had none, but it turns out the fat content is declared on the label (though not the saturated fat or salt levels).*

*The Co-op have assured us they are planning major improvements in nutrition information for their products, and are also proud of their unique Consumer Care label panels which give extra nutritional guidance 'in plain English'.*

*Their spokesperson challenged our approval of added sugars declared by some companies, arguing that total sugars is more useful nutritionally. Do you, our readers, agree?*



## NO MEAT FOR ME, PLEASE!

by Jan Arkless, Elliot Right Way Books, 1988, pp 192, £1.50

**Y**es, a paperback for £1.50. Or rather a Paperfront, as the publishers like to call their books, at a price that one expects only with a food company subsidy. But no, this is a small publishing house doing its best, it claims, to provide books at the lowest possible cost rather than the highest the market will bear.

With cookery books experiencing a slump, the book may need more than a mere price advantage. This one does have more: it is a simple user-friendly guide to the basics of cooking sensible meals without using meat. It is, it says, for 'the vegetarian in the family', and provides a range of easy recipes for one or two people.

Nothing pretentious, and coming from the author of the wonderfully titled *How to Boil an Egg*, it offers many of the basic procedures that other books forget to mention. Simple methods for cooking rice, making salad dressing or stuffing a pancake, are mixed with more intriguing, but equally simple recipes for curried millet pite, stuffed aubergines and egg and mushroom burgers.

My only quibble concerns what the

book leaves out, rather than what it includes. There is hardly any mention of the nutritional values of the foods. For anyone newly embarking on a non-meat diet it can be helpful to know what nutrients you might go short of, and how to replace them from non-meat sources (eg mixing grains and pulses for protein complement, where to find vitamin B12 etc). It might have been worth another ten pence for the extra pages!

**Tim Lobstein**

## SNACK PACK

**B**irmingham's Health Education Department has produced a lively 30-minute video called *Snax*. It aims to help school children choose healthier snacks (apples instead of chips) and the video will be distributed to Birmingham secondary schools with teaching materials.

It features 'The Snax Rap', interviews, quiz games, phone-ins, jokes, questions to 'snax-perts' and helpful cooking tips. If you would like to buy or borrow a copy of *Snax*, please contact Jayne Howard, Central Birmingham Health Education Department, St Patricks, Highgate Street, Birmingham B12 0YA, tel 021 440 6161.

**Anita Green**



## PESTICIDE USERS' HEALTH AND SAFETY HANDBOOK

by Andrew Watterson. Gower Technical Press, 1988. pp 504. £30 hardback

Andy Watterson has long been concerned about the effects of pesticides. As warden of a nature reserve with a long career in trades union education he has gained first-hand knowledge of the effects such chemicals have on the environment and our health. With a network of international contacts he has established an unmatched system of scientific reports on possible pesticide dangers. This book opens his files to a far wider audience.

Following a discussion on pesticide toxicity and the dangers of particular application methods, the major part of the book consists of data sheets on the toxicity of chemicals. Each sheet covers the often bewildering range of names for a chemical, an outline of its uses and the associated toxic effects (complete with referenced sources), and details of the restrictions placed on its use internationally. The book ends with a series of appendices and includes comprehensive pesticide and subject indexes.

For the reader who wants a general introduction to the problems of pesticide residues and food, the chapter on pesticides in The London Food Commission's *Food Adulteration and How To Beat It* will probably suffice. For anyone who then wishes to investigate a particular pesticide or to limit their overall exposure to such chemicals this book is the ideal introduction to further study.

The book's strength lies in a) its remarkable collection of international health and safety literature, b) its reader-friendly checklists on toxicity and application methods, and c) its understanding of the practical problems which face a non-specialist in assessing the safety of chemicals.

This book fills a long-standing need within pesticide literature. It should become a standard reference for anyone responsible for protecting the health of those using dangerous chemicals as well as being vital reading for the users themselves.

Peter Snell

## UNGREENING THE THIRD WORLD: Food, Ecology and Power

*Race and Class*, 30, 3. January-March 1989. Institute of Race Relations. pp 108. £2.50

Ecology and environmental concerns are now sufficiently mainstream to receive the attention of heavy-weight theorists, so I turned to the special issue of *Race and Class* with interest.

I was disappointed. The volume illustrates both the strength and weakness of imposing a theoretical framework onto the complexities of today's food and environmental crises. James Connor attempts to squeeze ecology into his Marxist theory of uneven development in a manner which infuriates green thinkers (read Jonathan Porritt and David Winner's *The Coming of the Greens*).

It also reads woodenly, but despite the verbiage, Connor has something. The development of societies, like his own USA, has not happened in a straight line of inexorable progress. Different parts of the globe have been raided and pillaged for the wealth of others. Today's ecological threat to Amazonian rain forests is due to the pursuit of wealth for a few.

I turned to the essay on US food power in the 1990s. This heightened my gloom. Kevin Danaher's message was well written and clear. US farm policy is dominated by attempts to tackle massive surpluses. Measures such as set-aside (paying farmers not to grow crops) and conservation schemes only encourage intensification on the acreage that remains. Intensification leads to further ecological damage. Less developed countries, Danaher argues, must impose their own environmental standards – and aim for food security. Just like that!

Another grouse. I do find it misleading when US writers lump all food interests under one heading, 'agribusiness'. The agribusiness model denies the complexity of the modern food economy. Thankfully, some agricultural economists are beginning to abandon their obsession with agriculture. Roll on the day when academic departments are renamed Departments of Food Economics and

Food Policy. Capital intensive food economies like the USA's or the EEC's have powerful retail and catering sectors whose interests are not necessarily at one with farming, agrochemicals or forestry.

Perhaps the theoreticians could at least sub-categorise agribusiness into 'progressive' and 'die-hard' tendencies. There is little or no recognition that most Third World groups the LFC liaises with are concerned about precisely the same issues as we are: food quality, access, poverty of diet, consumer choice, advertising, and so on. A new analysis is needed from the theoreticians, I fear.

Tim Lang

## NEW GCSE TEXT BOOKS

*Cooking Explained* (3rd edition) by Jill Davies and Barbara Hammond, Longman, 1988, pp 340, £6.95

*Interlink – Home Economics and Food* by Flo Hadley and Margaret Jepson, Blackie, 1989, pp 166, £4.95

Two new, but very different, food books aimed at GCSE have recently hit the bookshops. *Cooking Explained* is filled to the brim with information, particularly on the 'commodities' and 'equipment' sides of food studies. It also has plenty of recipes. However it is weak in its approach to food and health, and what little information there is, is way above the understanding of GCSE level students.

Considerably more effort could have been put into making the book a multicultural resource, although it would be useful as a reference book for A level and BTEC course – its other claimed audiences.

*Interlink – Food* on the other hand, provides a balance of information and detailed guidelines for investigative work. Its approach is lively and exciting and it covers most requirements of GCSE Food and Nutrition. Unfortunately it takes a 'nutrient' approach to healthy eating and little space is given to the practicalities of combining different types of food to ensure a healthy balanced diet.

Issy Cole-Hamilton

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**I**t couldn't happen in Europe surely? All this talk about our own Ministry of Agriculture being in the pocket of the farming and food industry lobby may have the ring of truth in Britain, but surely the European Commission is above such things...?

The Commission is equivalent to our own civil service, which is to say that they busy themselves with a whole load of things and only occasionally have to go to the European Parliament (EP) to get approval for what they do. The Commission may like to think that the EP is little more than a rubber stamping machine, but last December they got a rude shock.

Every year the EP is expected to agree to the Commission's annual 'Hilton' beef farce. There is, it seems, a surplus of highest quality beef, the kind that is eaten in Hilton hotels round the world. (My own impression, confirmed by my local butcher, is that less than best quality beef is being eaten in my constituency.)

Under a free market system, supposedly the corner-stone of the EEC, a glut of such beef should bring the price down. But to keep traders happy quality beef is bought into the notorious EEC intervention stores – and this is only the beginning of the tale.

Each year the EEC gives permission to open up the quota for imports of 'Hilton' beef from certain non-member countries, notably Brazil, for them to earn hard currency. Brazil is clearing her rain forests, evicting Indians off their lands and disturbing the world's ecological balance – to rear beef cattle which end up swelling the groaning EEC stores.

However, this imported meat could increase the downward pressure on prices, so the EEC orders an equivalent amount of EEC 'Hilton' beef to be released from our intervention stores at knock-down prices to the food industry and for export. Where to? Back to Brazil. Not to feed their poor, but to feed the clients in the Rio Hilton.

And this is not the end of the beef cycle. Brazil does a roaring trade in processed meat. In answer to my Parliamentary question the EEC Commission assured me that we would not get our 'Hilton' beef back in the form of corned beef – but they would not give any assurances that this had not happened in the past!

Some Brazilian 'Hilton' beef does, I believe, end up in European Hiltons (though I have not checked as there isn't one in my constituency). Some of it goes cheap to the food processing industry and ends up in hamburgers. The food processing industry has a very wide range of products and I wonder what my cat has been eating ... could it be?

So, the Hilton clients are happy. The food processing industries in the EEC and Brazil are



## Michael Hindley's Diary

*Labour's MEP for Lancashire East contributes a view from Strasbourg*

happy. The profiteers and cold storage owners and shippers are happy. Beef and money are flowing. But the rain forests and Indians are disappearing, and the poor are increasingly undernourished in Europe and Brazil.

Last December the Commission included the Hilton beef renewal among a whole list of 'Urgency' items, presented to the EP as dawn was breaking in the hope that it would be nodded through. But to their horror it was voted down.

After years of telling us how important Parliament's opinion is, the Commission blithely announced it did not need Parliament's approval, the renewal was automatic under GATT trade rules. MEPs are now quite upset. There are mutterings of 'constitutional impropriety' down the corridors of Strasbourg.

In my five years in Strasbourg, the outstanding subject of constituents' anger has been the obscene contrast between the EEC food mountains and the starving in the Third World. People still think the issue can be solved by shipping our surpluses to Ethiopia. It is difficult to grasp that food is a commodity. People understand overproduction in manufacturing but find it difficult to accept that there can be overproduction of food. The terrible waste of public money, known as the Common Agricultural Policy, thrives on this naive misconception that

the food industry is in business with some altruistic intent to feed people.

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Many years ago a German anglophile published a delightful book entitled *The English, are they human?* which contained a gem:

'The English with their tidy minds  
Divide themselves into different kinds'

I am reminded of this when I travel on BA with its Club and Economy sections. For £32 extra you get free alcohol and a newspaper in Club with your snack during the fifty minutes from Manchester to Brussels, but no extra leg-room. But what businessman of self esteem will travel with the tourists in the Economy section?

The general consensus is that food and service are best on Lufthansa, the West German airline. Also, there is more leg-room, about two inches according to Norman West, MEP for Yorkshire South, who has a former mine-worker's keen appreciation of space in a tight corner. In an interesting reflection of relative social values in the UK and West Germany, the Lufthansa planes have only a First Class, real luxury for a very few, and all the rest travel equivalent to BA's Club service, free alcohol and newspapers too.

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We have recorded a significant victory in the continued war for access to information. The UK's Intervention Agency which administers the food stores, has casually announced that the location of EEC food stores is open to the public. This certainly came as a pleasant surprise to Eddie Newman MEP and myself. When we asked where the stores were in our constituencies we were told this was 'classified' information for reasons of 'commercial confidence'. So Eddie posed as a meat trader and I as an ice-cream manufacturer and asked where we could get cheap food for the food processing industry. Lo and behold, the 'classified' lists arrived post haste. Naturally both of us made a great splash in the press about this and 16 members of the British Labour Group published the complete list of stores.

The Government has now changed its policy. But priority access to 'classified' information for profiteers tells you all you need to know about 'democracy' in this country.

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You may ask why I posed as an ice-cream manufacturer. Well, the stockpiled EEC butter becomes unfit for consumption as butter after a while. The Intervention Board sells off job lots to the food processing industry, including the ice cream industry, when the butter has been in store for two years. Enjoy your next ice cream.



# RECIPES

## Hearty red bean stew

This dish has many pluses – it's quick to prepare, nourishing, filling, economical and loved by children. Red kidney beans are used in this recipe, but any type of cooked beans can be substituted.

- 350 g (12 oz) cooked red kidney beans
- 4 medium-size tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 300 ml (1/2 pt) vegetable stock or water
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 bay leaves
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) freshly chopped parsley
- 1 sprig fresh thyme
- 2.5 ml (1/2 tsp) paprika
- pinch of allspice (optional)
- 100 g (4 oz) white cabbage, chopped
- 1/2 green pepper, chopped
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) soya sauce
- small, dried chilli, crumbled
- salt, to taste
- 50 g (2 oz) cube of creamed coconut

Sauté the onion and garlic in the oil, then add all the ingredients, except creamed coconut. Cook until the cabbage is done. Add the creamed coconut and a little extra

liquid if necessary. Stir well and simmer for five minutes longer. Serves three to four.

Suitable accompaniments to this stew are hot garlic bread, boiled rice, potatoes or cornbread.

CORNMEAL is made from dried ground corn kernels. The type most commonly used is yellow, fine or coarse-grained meal. The fine kind should not be confused with the yellow flour which is also usually labelled fine cornmeal. The fine cornmeal used in this recipe is coarser than flour. Cornmeal can be used to make cakes, breads, porridge and as a coating for frying fish or chicken.



*Rosamund Grant's book Caribbean and African Cookery has recipes for all seasons. Here's something to warm you through on a cold day.*

## Cornbread

Piping-hot golden yellow cornbread with a touch of spice is what you are about to achieve – with ease.

There are many different ways of making cornbread but this recipe is simple and quick. The cornmeal is quite dense and requires a large quantity of baking powder.

- 225 g (8 oz) plain flour
- 225 g (8 oz) fine cornmeal (see box)
- 50 ml (10 tsp) baking powder
- 2.5 ml (1/2 tsp) cinnamon
- 2.5 ml (1/2 tsp) salt
- 70 ml (4 tbsp) sugar
- 425 ml (15 fl oz) milk
- 2 eggs (these will be thoroughly cooked)
- 50 g (2 oz) butter

Sift the dry ingredients together, to mix in a large bowl. In a separate bowl whisk the milk and eggs together and add to the flour mixture. Melt the butter and add to the mixture.

Pour into a 900 g (2 lb) loaf tin and bake in a pre-heated oven at gas mark 5 (375°F/190°C), around the middle of the oven.

Bake until lightly browned; test with a skewer. Serve hot and lightly buttered. Serves six.

From Rosamund Grant's *Caribbean and African Cookery* published by Grub Street, 1988, £10.95



# WHAT THE JOURNALS SAY

*Calorie needs of children, pesticide information, antibiotics in meat and aluminium in the brain.*

*ERIC BRUNNER reviews the journals*

## BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL

### IODINE DEFICIENCY ASSOCIATED WITH SOYA MILK

The term 'muesli belt malnutrition' has been bandied about for some time. Without published evidence, certain nutritionists have warned parents of the dangers of wholefood or restrictive diets for their under-fives. These, they claim, may not provide adequate nutrients for optimal growth. This claim is now supported by a single documented case. It is however a very exceptional one.

A four-year-old boy who was not growing properly had, for 19

months, been on a diet which excluded the following: cows' milk, dairy products, goats' milk, eggs, chocolate, sugar, food additives, fish, beef, lamb and pork. He had been diagnosed as having sensitivity to all of these by an alternative therapist after GP referral.

The boy was found to have a very low intake of iodine and a low blood level of the iodine-containing hormone thyroxine which is necessary for growth. His growth returned to normal within two months of starting a diet containing cows' milk and supplemented with iodine. Dairy products are an important source of iodine, and soya milk, which he was drinking, may have contributed to his deficiency by causing iodine depletion. Manufacturers please take action.

■ Labib M et al, 'Dietary malpractice as a cause of hypothyroidism and short stature', *British Medical Journal*, 1989, vol 298, pp 232-33

## THE LANCET

### NOT SO MUCH EGGSAGGERATION

Two letters in *The Lancet* shed some light on Mrs Currie's ovoid offence. Last year Exeter's public health laboratory tested eggs from six flocks identified as sources of salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 infection. At the first test 8.8 per cent of the 194 eggs were found to be infected. Two to four weeks later a further 274 eggs were tested and all were salmonella negative.

Two points emerge: infected flocks have the capacity to lay a high proportion of infected eggs but, it seems, this may occur only intermittently.

The other letter, from the public health laboratory in Hull, goes further. They admit that isolating salmonella in eggs presents technical problems which could lead to many false negative results. Several explanations are advanced.

Only small numbers of the organism may be present and these may be unevenly distributed in the egg. The infective dose may be small because of the high fat content of the yolk, as in a 1983 outbreak of *S. napoli* caused by contaminated chocolate. Storage before testing may allow antibacterial substances in the egg to kill the colony.

The authors point out that the 'microbiology of the egg may not be as straightforward as that of other types of food'. Mrs Currie no doubt agrees.

■ 'Salmonella enteritidis phage type 4 and hens' eggs', *The Lancet*, 1989, vol 1, pp 280-81

### CASE HARDENS AGAINST ALUMINIUM IN DRINKING WATER

Evidence is growing that Alzheimer's disease, or pre-senile dementia, is caused by a high intake of aluminium. A comparison of aluminium concentrations in water supplies over the past ten years with rates of the disease in under-70s within English and Welsh counties shows an effect even below the standard set by the EEC.

Risk of the disease was found to be 50 per cent higher in areas where the average aluminium level exceeded 0.11mg/litre than in areas where levels were below 0.01mg/litre. The EEC drinking water standard is 0.2mg/litre.

■ Martyn C N et al, 'Geographical relation between Alzheimer's disease and aluminium in drinking water', *The Lancet*, 1989, vol 1, pp 59-62

## CHEMISTRY & INDUSTRY

### MAFF FOOD RESEARCH INADEQUATE

According to a Lords committee, food and agricultural research has suffered financial and scientific neglect at the hands of the Ministry of Agriculture over the past 13 years.

The report, produced by the Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, finds: 'Contractors have not been persuaded that the Chief Scientist Group has either sufficient skilled personnel or an appropriate structure to allow it to interact adequately with research scientists or to provide proper guidance and advice'.

■ 'Lords slam MAFF R&D contracting', *Chemistry and Industry*, 6 February 1989, p 46.

### VITAMIN E MAY HELP PREVENT ATHEROSCLEROSIS

Lipid peroxides, formed in the body by the free radical oxidation of unsaturated fatty acids, are linked with existing arterial disease and may be important in the development of atherosclerosis.

Blood levels of lipid peroxides in a study of 225 men and women aged between 38 and 76 were higher in those with coronary heart disease or peripheral vascular disease than in controls.

Vitamin E, the fat soluble equivalent of vitamin C, is an antioxidant which inhibits lipid peroxide formation. Rich sources of vitamin E include wheatgerm, oily fish, vegetable oils, margarines, and egg yolk.

■ Stringer M D et al, 'Lipid peroxides and atherosclerosis', *British Medical Journal*, 1989, vol 298, pp 281-84

## COMING SOON IN THE FOOD MAGAZINE!

Issues 6, 7 & 8 of *The Food Magazine* will include:

#### ★ Should junk food have added vitamins?

Fortified crisps, ice lollies, soft drinks – are these the answers for worried parents?

#### ★ Training trade unions A forthcoming trade union pack on food

#### ★ The last Ministry of Food

Amid calls for radical changes to MAFF we look at an earlier consumer-oriented Government food department

#### ★ Hungry and poor

Housing benefit is to be cut for the homeless, yet even now it is not enough for a healthy diet

#### ★ What is a fruit juice drink?

Some fruit drinks are under 10% real juice. Even a 'hi-juice' squash may be only 15% juice

#### ★ Plus: your letters and questions, science round-up, recipes, guest writers and news.