

## Bread As A Food

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. MURIEL BELL, Nutritionist to the Health Department).

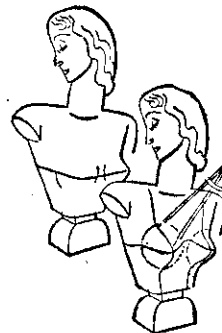
THERE is no doubt that bread is a good food, much preferable to scones, steamed puddings and cakes. Yeast fermentation gives an opportunity for destruction of phytic acid into inositol; in this way it adds to the nutritional value of bread; though the quantity of vitamin B added by the yeast itself is admittedly almost negligible, it is nevertheless a positive contribution, whereas baking powder tends to detract from the vitamin B value.

In a recent article in *Physiological Reviews*, a case is made by a University research worker in a Californian Division of Poultry Husbandry against the artificial fortification of flour with synthetic vitamin B factors (a programme that had been approved by the National Research Council of U.S.A.). The author commends what has been done in England. Going over the questions and controversies that were current in England when they adopted their national flour and bread, he quotes that in a survey made by the Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Food, it was found that in the poorer areas, 41 to 46 per cent of the public ate some quantity of brown bread regularly, while in the richer areas the figure was 65 per cent. Brown bread was actively disliked in about 34 per cent of cases in all classes. If brown and white bread were the same price, 28 per cent of the poorer people said they would buy more brown bread.

The writer then put up a strong plea for trying to overcome people's prejudices against wholemeal bread; for, as he says, there are vitamin B factors other than those with which we are familiar; about the importance to human beings of these newer substances we know very little as yet. Those who are in the habit of consuming wholemeal bread (and including in their diet plenty of milk to counteract any unchanged phytic acid) are taking no risks in respect to these factors; we cannot say the same of the white-bread-eaters. On phytic acid, the last word has not yet been said; for the inositol formed from it during yeast fermentation is itself a member of the B group of vitamins!

Thus the whole story of bread remains as yet untold. Meanwhile, we can adopt only an interim attitude, which to my mind should be this: that those of us who suffer no ill effects from wholemeal bread and those who find it a useful regulatory food are on the right lines in consuming it; that in as far as we can educate the younger generation to like it and to use it, we are also on the right lines, provided that at the same time they are getting a good source of calcium such as milk; that provision of better nutritional value in the white loaf by altering the milling technique is a step in the right direction, because it will improve the intake of vitamin B in the case of the white-bread-eaters; that yeast cookery is preferable to baking powder cookery, and that New Zealanders would benefit by substituting more bread and taking less cake than has been their custom in the past.

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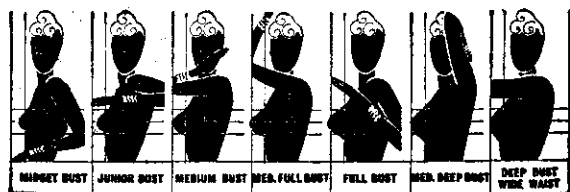
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