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Advice on Health (No. 90)

FEEDING THE MULTITUDE [III]

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

IN peace-time, relatively small groups—in hotels, in hospitals, in institutions, in boarding schools, in restaurants—are affected by the problems of communal cookery; but in war-time these problems are extended and intensified to affect an increasingly large proportion of the nation, whose enlisted men depend on the military camp kitchens, whose civilian men and women, congregated into factories and workshops for various forms of national service, much depend on restaurants or on some specially-provided communal system of feeding, and whose children, with father in camp, and mother working in a factory, may even need to be provided in increasing numbers with suitable nourishment through the medium of communal meals.

The Chief Pitfall

Canteen cookery, for adults and for children, has increased enormously in England during the war. Here in New Zealand, there are indications that the need is far outstripping the provision of suitably-run restaurants and canteens. For example, overtime prevents numerous workers from getting home to meals. Resorting to filling the aching void with pie or sausage-roll for days on end, with vegetables only during the week-end, is going to play havoc with the health of these workers. Our hospitals are already uncomfortably full. The problem is upon us—and we are in the same boat as Ethelred the Unready.

In England, the matter has received recognition to the extent that it has formed the basis of an all-day discussion by the Nutrition Society. The statement was then made that the particular nutrient likely to be lost in communal cookery is vitamin C. This then, is the chief pitfall of which we have to beware in any undertakings for supplying nourishment to large groups of people. Once upon a time, there were such things as oranges to remedy this defect; but to-day we are reminded of the picture of the little girl in *Punch* asking her mother the question "Mother, do you remember bananas?" We shall soon be asking one another whether we remember oranges. For we have just been warned that there will not be any oranges for civilians in New Zealand this year; they will be reserved for hospitals and for children.

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1/2, 1/9, 2/9 3/6

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NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, FEBRUARY 5