



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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"CONGRESS' LOOK AT CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS"

REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE (R.-KANSAS)

SIXTH ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE ACTION CONFERENCE
AMERICAN SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE ASSOCIATION (ASFSA)
CAPITAL HILTON HOTEL - CONGRESSIONAL/SENATE ROOM

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 1978 - 9:00 a.m.

I had an opportunity to hear some of your members testify yesterday morning before the Nutrition Subcommittee. It was an informative and enlightening session, and we learned a lot about the legislative concerns of this organization -- as well as your disenchantment with actions and inaction by the Administration.

I understand this is your Sixth Annual Legislative Action Conference, and about half of you present here today are attending for the first time. That's encouraging. It further establishes your reputation as a force to be reckoned with on Capitol Hill. It also tells me that ASFSA is continuing to serve its membership in a constructive manner.

Today I would like to share with you some views on how we in the Congress are looking at nutrition, the child nutrition programs, and related areas.

I. "NUTRITION COMES OF AGE IN CONGRESS"

Two new nutrition committees: One can little doubt that nutrition is coming of age in the Congress. At the beginning of the 95th Congress we reorganized the committee system, and two new legislative subcommittees were established.

On the Senate side this new nutrition thrust became a subcommittee of the now-named "Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee", chaired by Senator McGovern, and I am the ranking Republican. On the House side this new nutrition emphasis was established in the Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition -- chaired by Congressman Fred Richmond of New York.

Nutrition in the recent Farm Bill: In the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977 committee members more than ever before considered the nutrition and health concerns of today's farmers and other consumers. Some of the provisions will ultimately touch the children and families you serve in school food service.

For example, the nutrition education service to food stamp households: state agencies have been asked to display in all food stamp and public assistance offices notices describing for coupon recipients the relationship between the foods they buy with stamps and their health.

Also, the Department of Agriculture was "designated as the lead agency of the Federal Government for human nutrition research" (that is research other than aspects of human nutrition concerned with diagnosis or treatment of disease) in this same piece of legislation.

In recent oversight hearings before the Senate Nutrition Subcommittee, USDA's progress in addressing this mandate was placed on public record. And we were encouraged by the Department's initial actions.

USDA Reorganization Bill: To strengthen the USDA's lead role in this area of nutrition -- research and education -- Senator McGovern and I introduced a bill to establish a "Department of Food, Agriculture and Renewable Resources."

By transferring appropriate bureaus and divisions from DHEW and the Interior Department, this reorganization plan would establish a department to better promote the general welfare of the nation -- by assuring coordinated administration of programs for the production of food and fiber and promoting the best utilization and conservation of the country's renewable natural resources.

This should make clear our commitment to strengthen the Department of Agriculture and further establish child nutrition programs and other federally-supported food assistance programs in the USDA.

Congressional Reports: My office has been inundated in recent months with original, interim, and final drafts of government policy studies about nutrition and nutrition programs.

The Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress completed two studies -- one on the role of the Federal Government in nutrition education and a second on the role of the Federal Government in human nutrition research. Results of these studies presented a pretty sad commentary on the manner in which our tax dollars are being spent in support of improved nutritional status.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) has studied most of the federal food programs, and will soon release a report of "Federal Government Activities in the Development of Nutrition Education Materials". A preview of the findings depicts the same dismal outcome uncovered by the Congressional Research Service reports:

- lack of coordination;
- too much duplication;
- limited evaluation of performance;
- no identification of consumer needs;
- no setting of priority needs;
- and no evaluation.

GAO is also looking at our national approaches to nutrition surveillance -- trying to get at what people are eating, how much they are eating. The study has been initiated and results are expected in early fall.

Administration Reports: In the Executive Branch, the Office of Science and Technical Policy released a report last December which among other things recommended that

- DHEW and USDA establish clear and wherever possible, distinct missions in human nutrition research.

Also included in the report is the identification of 17 high-priority research activities; three of them pertained to the need for nutrition education research to specify:

- factors determining dietary practices,
- indicators of good nutrition practices, and
- an Education Research Planning Commission.

Domestic and International Malnutrition: Congress is also focusing attention on the relationship between food and nutrition, and nutrition and health, both here and abroad. Last February 3rd, the Administration agreed to establish a Presidential Commission on Domestic and International Hunger and Malnutrition, the outgrowth of a resolution Senator Leahy and I initiated in the Senate last September.

The Commission should get underway in May or June. And after 18 months the Commission is to report back to the President and the Congress on:

- the "state of the art" in this whole area of domestic and international hunger and malnutrition; that is what groups are doing what and how?

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- and offer recommendations for administrative and/or legislative action to ultimately alleviate hunger and malnutrition in this world of plenty.

Health Care Costs: As a legislator, I'm concerned about the increasing tax burden of rising health care costs. The nation's spending for health in FY-1976 reached \$139.3 billion, or \$63.8 per person. This total was 14% higher than the \$122.2 billion spent for health in 1975. I find it encouraging that elected officials here in Washington are beginning to give nutrition and health issues higher legislative priority. I must say this group has been among the leading forces in this trend.

II. "NUTRITION FADES OUT IN THE ADMINISTRATION?"

President's Budget: The Congress is currently in the middle of its annual budget process, and the President has submitted his budget for fiscal year 1979. I don't have to tell you this.

You know all about it. And you don't like all you read and hear. The Administration budget proposes to freeze the escalator for non-needy children and plans to increase meal cost to the paying students in order to do this.

USDA has said that:

- for paid lunches, reimbursement rates for all lunches served to children are to be maintained at the current January-June 1978 rate, with no escalator clause included.
- for reduced priced lunches, reimbursement rates are to be lowered to 20¢ less than the free reimbursement rate instead of the 10¢ variable currently used.

Neither of these proposals will work for a number of reasons, and studies have been done to prove it.

In 1973, the Select Committee on Nutrition undertook a survey of state school food service directors to get at "School Food Program Needs". The Committee looked at the impact of increases in the cost of food and labor on the school lunch program, requesting among other things information on the impact of increased school meal costs on participation. You know these figures much better than I do.

Back then, some 5 years ago, responses from state directors stated that if reimbursement rates were not increased many things would happen:

- 12 states specifically mentioned the possibility of schools dropping out of the program;
- others talked about reduced quality, quantity and variety of meals.

The results of this 1973 survey showed that for every 1¢ increase in meal costs, students drop out of the program at a rate of 1%. Testimony from witnesses yesterday -- recognizing that for all practical purposes meal cost will not go up 1¢ but at least 5¢ -- are predicting that if each program in the country were to increase its meal cost an average of 5¢ per lunch, 5-15% of the total participation may drop off.

It's ludicrous to think that a \$30 million cut in the President's budget for these programs, which can lead to an ultimate \$80 - \$129 million loss in the program will be tolerated. Let me say I heard your concerns on this matter yesterday and it was reflected in my vote on the President's budget in Committee just this morning.

Nutrition Education: There is another disturbing thing about the Administration's '79 budget proposal, in addition. The January 23rd budget briefing held by the Department revealed that:

- (1) The Department is proposing a new "Training and Nutrition Education Program" for next year,