



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

New Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 224-6521

REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE TO THE SOCIETY FOR NUTRITION EDUCATION

Thursday, July 14, 1977

Washington, D.C.

The 10 years that your organization has been in existence mark an eventful period in the development of nutrition education -- and in the formulation of national policies concerning the food that we eat.

In this brief time, the Society for Nutrition Education has become an effective and respected voice in our consideration of nutrition legislation. Your commitment as nutrition educators to promote nutritional well-being for all people through education, communications, and educated related- research is well recognized by the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition.

At the beginning of the year, as you will recall, the Senate reorganized its committee system. Against my wishes, the Nutrition Committee will be phased out and its jurisdiction shifted to another committee on which I serve-- the Agriculture Committee. So one day soon the painters will be inserting the word "Nutrition" in the title on the door of what will then be the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

The new word on the door will symbolize what Americans in all walks of life are coming to understand; That food policies and programs must be measured first by a new guiding principle -- how well they contribute to the nation's nutritional health. More and more producers as well as consumers of food are becoming aware of the connection between what we eat and how healthy we are. The American people are concerned, as they have never been before, about the safety and the nutritious value of what they eat and drink. For more Americans, dollar value at the store means nutritional value. And this nutrition consciousness is not about to fade away.

Challenge of Change

The theme of this your 10th annual meeting is appropriate enough -- "Challenge of Change"

The challenges that go along with change are directed at professionals such as yourselves and at policymakers like myself.

As all of you know, the federal government is spending a great deal more for food assistance and nutrition education now than it ever has before. The current Senate bill on child nutrition calls for an increase in the amount for nutrition education and training in school meal programs from \$700,000 this year to \$27.7 million in the next fiscal year.

These activities begin with the WIC program -- the special supplemental food program for women, infants, and children -- which is providing \$250 million in the current fiscal year for supplemental foods for pregnant and nursing women, infants and children under the age of five. At this critical stage, it is important that mothers-to-be and their babies be given access to milk, cereal, fruit juice and other vital foods that they could not otherwise afford.

The appropriation for the food stamp program is over \$5.5 billion this year -- which is eight times more than in 1970 when the program started.

The school lunch program reaches 25 million children every school day at a cost of almost \$600 million this year.

The budget for federally financed school breakfasts is another \$184 million--which is 18 times more than the appropriation in 1970.

Then there is a good donation program for needy persons on Indian reservations--\$8.7 million this year. And under the Older Americans Act \$22 million worth of commodities are made available to the elderly.

-2-

Vending Machine Food

There is a lot Congress and the federal government can do to promote sound nutrition. Part of the Child Nutrition bill recently passed by the Senate and sent to the House was an amendment that I sponsored in committee which would restore the Secretary of Agriculture's authority over vending machine foods in the schools. In 1972, Congress unwisely removed the Secretary's authority to regulate the sale of foods that compete with school meals. Since then, vending machines have become a familiar sight in school lunch rooms, locker rooms, corridors, and study halls. Too often, the quarter intended for a hot lunch is swallowed up by the vending machine instead. Our objective is not to ban vending machines or deprive schools of needed revenue, but to make available more nutritious alternatives such as fresh fruit and dairy products.

If all the problems of our society could be solved by an injection of federal money alone, we would be living in a social paradises.

Unfortunately, it isn't that simple.

One of the big challenges we face all the time in Congress is seeing to it that federal dollars are spent efficiently.

Fund Consolidation

Just before leaving office, President Ford proposed a sensible consolidation of federal food programs. There are now 15 different federal programs which provide subsidies for 49 different types of meals for needy children. Programs subsidize school breakfasts and lunches which include milk, and also subsidize consumption of milk by itself as a separate program. We all want to make nutritious food available to needy children. But program duplications and inconsistencies abound. More money is being spent on more children whose parents can afford to buy their own, while at least 700,000 children from poor families get no help at all.

The budget that President Ford drew up before leaving office recommended the lumping together of these child nutrition programs. But President Carter rejected that approach. He took the position that Congress and federal administrators are better able to prescribe precisely how funds should be spent than the state and local officials who are closest to the problems.

You and I should be reminding ourselves constantly that the taxpayers will support the appropriation of sizeable sums only so long as they are confident that the money is not being wasted. Not all federal programs are well conceived--and few of them are simple to administer. WIC is an illustration. The federal regulations require that "all foods obtained under the program be used exclusively by the recipient and not be shared with other members of the family". The assumption that some family members can eat less well than others while all are seated at the same family dinner table is hardly realistic. There have been some reports of loose administration in the WIC program. I don't know whether that is true or not, but it does underscore the fact that running up the expenditure of federal funds won't solve all public problems by a proliferation of federal programs.

I, for one, would feel much better about Mr. Carter's much advertised government reorganization plans if he understood that it will be easier to consolidate agencies if we first consolidate some of the proliferating programs they administer.

Field Hearings in Kansas

Next month, while the Senate is in recess, we'll hold various field hearings in six Kansas communities to learn how various nutrition education projects and food assistance programs are actually working in my state. This is how we can try to find out whether the good intentions of a federal statute are being translated into effective results at the grass roots level.

Sound nutrition won't be achieved by federal standards and federal regulation -- or federal dollars alone. No one is going to dictate to the American people what they must eat. What we can do is make available more information about the nutritional value of items on food store shelves-- and press ahead for more effective nutritional education.

That's where you come in. That's where your challenges begin.

For example, there should be more nutrition training in medical schools so that doctors rely less on drugs and more on food. We need to provide more attractive basic nutrition courses in our education institutions. Preventative health care services should include nutrition counselling. Once a patient is afflicted with hypertension, diabetes or heart disease it is usually too late for good diet to correct the damage.

-3-

Prudence and good sense alone argue for a greater investment in nutrition education. By 1980, HEW estimates that health care will cost \$230 billion in this country--more than the entire Gross National Product of Canada. Now only 5 to 10 per cent of the health care dollar goes for preventative care. Instead of standing by and watching health-care costs keep going up and up, we should make a bigger investment in preventative care.

Nutrition educators can and should participate not just in the preparation of legislation-- by testifying at committee hearings and tracking the progress of a bill through the legislative process-- but you should also monitor how the program is being administered by the executive agencies at the federal and state levels and Nutrition Service of USDA.

At the beginning of my remarks, I referred to the symbolic significance of the Agriculture Committee's new title.

Link Between Production; Consumption of Food

It seems to me that federal agricultural, nutrition and health officials ought to begin engaging in a policy dialogue. Through education, health considerations can become a regular part of the production and marketing structure for farm products. The production and consumption of food cannot avoid being linked together.

We should stop thinking of producers and consumers as antagonists. Farmers are consumers too. Our food producers and processors have proven to be resourceful. As American eating habits change, food production and processing will also change.

The more American people have access to all the facts about the safety and the nutritional value of foods that are on the market, the more they will make wise decisions. And producers and processors will act accordingly.

For all of us, there is the challenge of change. I urge you to maintain your interest in national and state legislative affairs affecting food, nutrition, and health. These are extraordinary times; many of the resources we have taken for granted, like food, now must be managed with more care. We can no longer afford patchwork food policies without an appreciation for their consequences to good nutrition and health.

With your help and support, we can help create for all Americans a wholesome, healthy nutritional atmosphere--one that will improve the quality of life for all our people.