

## THE NATIONAL FOOD REFORM ASSOCIATION.

### SECOND GUILDHALL CONFERENCE.

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The Guildhall Conference on Diet, Cookery, and Hygiene in Public Elementary Schools and Public Philanthropic Institutions for Children and Adolescents was continued on Tuesday, July 1st. Mr. Sheriff Bower opened the Conference, and in the afternoon Lady Edmund Talbot presided.

#### SECOND DAY.

##### SESSION III.

Miss Catherine R. Gordon, Divisional Superintendent of Domestic Economy under the Department of Food Values, Catering and Cooking, gave an account of the teaching of these in connection with the other domestic subjects in the primary schools under the London County Council; and said that every girl attending the London Elementary Schools received lessons in these and other domestic subjects, *i.e.*, laundry work, house work, home organisation, and needlework. This teaching was of great value, because it made for home comfort, physical efficiency, healthy social conditions, and control of self. The lessons had real educative value, because their appeal was to fundamental and vital need for action. It has been found that words without corresponding deeds were ineffectual for character-building; that the nervous system of many persons was unhealthily weak and dependent upon stimulant and excitement, that school experience had been too bookish, often ill-balanced and had to some extent failed to produce healthy persons with a wholesome desire for a wide horizon, together with full appreciation of environment and quiet pleasures. The domestic occupations if wisely treated could do great service in the school curriculum. They showed in a simple, homely way how Ideas by means of well-controlled will in action might become charming and useful deeds.

Miss Gertrude Irons, Woman Inspector of Domestic Economy, under the West Riding County Council, dealt with the same subjects as the former speaker, with special reference to their teaching in the country. The West Riding Education Committee had, she considered, great cause to be proud of the work in connection with the teaching of Domestic Subjects. Although the area was so large, and many of the districts rural, and the schools scattered and difficult to reach, domestic work of some kind was taught in many of them. In some cases it was not possible to employ a teacher at one centre during the whole week, and a number of teachers travelled to three or four centres. The work was chiefly confined to Domestic Centres in Elementary Schools, Lessons in Domestic Subjects in Secondary Schools, Housecraft Courses in Evening Schools, Domestic Subjects in Technical Schools. There was also one Home Making Centre where the girls

from the Public Elementary Schools attended every day for the last half year of their school life.

There were many difficulties in the way of giving instruction in domestic subjects such as provision of centres and equipment; the distances between schools, the limitation of the market, and the problems of the school time-table to meet the special needs of the Half-Timers. In spite of these difficulties the work was growing steadily, parents and educationalists were becoming convinced of the necessity for such teaching and of its immense value in the after school life of the girls who were themselves keenly interested.

##### SESSION IV.

Dr. Edward J. Morton, F.R.C.S., Assistant School Doctor under the London County Council, spoke of diet, cookery, and hygiene in open-air schools, such as that at "Birley House," Forest Hill, which we recently described in this journal, the children in which are drawn from the slums of South London and are suffering from malnutrition, weakness, and anæmia, and in some cases from tuberculosis and other debilitating diseases. Dr. Morton pointed out that the children were made to lead a natural open-air life all the year round, no matter how severe the weather conditions might be, and the result was a rapid tissue metabolism, Nature's method of producing the body heat necessary under the circumstances, and that a healthy appetite was the outcome. These children consumed per child, per day, twenty-seven ounces of "solid" food and seventeen fluid ounces of milk. The average age of the children was ten and a half years, and they consumed three-fifths of a standard adult diet.

Dr. Christine Murrell spoke on the same subject in connection with Special Schools for the Mentally Deficient and Physically Defective, and said that the London County Council was one of the first of the Education Authorities to provide separate schools for children requiring special care. All the children in the Physically Defective Schools must stay at school during the midday interval unless special permission was given by the school Medical Officer for them to walk home. They were encouraged to have the dinner provided at the school at a charge of two pence per head, which in special cases was reduced or even remitted. This dinner was very carefully supervised by the School Nurse working in connection with the Cripple Children's Dinner Committee. Provision was also made for mentally deficient scholars, and school baths were also given to those children who required them a special bath attendant being engaged for the work.

Mr. I. Ellis dealt with the question in relation to the children in certified schools, usually a very low type of child, underfed or wrongly fed from birth. The result of a diet appetising, hygienic and economical was that the children improved in weight and vigour, and were capable of bearing more strain than the average child of their own age.

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