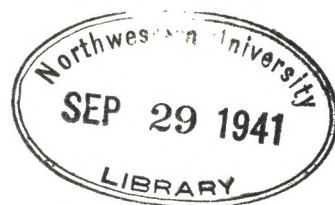


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WPA PLANS EXPANDED SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM AS NATIONAL HEALTH MEASURE

Mrs. Florence Kerr, Assistant WPA Commissioner in charge of Community Service projects, announced today that the nation-wide school lunch program of the Work Projects Administration is preparing to serve more noon-day lunches during the new school year than ever before despite the decrease in the number of WPA employees.

This will be accomplished, she said, by:

Establishment of more central kitchens and bakeries, permitting a smaller number of WPA women workers to prepare more food and distribute it, in many instances, to schools not previously in the program.

Extension of the service to a greater number of children not classified as "needy," who will pay for their food.

Lengthening the period during which lunches are served in schools that previously limited the program to the coldest months.

More than 2,000,000 school children were served daily through WPA at the peak of the program last winter, and the total number of school lunches prepared by WPA workers during the school year exceeded 200,000,000. Both these records will be surpassed in the school year just beginning, Mrs. Kerr believes, with the largest gain, proportionately, in the total number of lunches served. The program last winter reached about 23,000 schools in 2,400 of the 3,100 counties. This was an average of 87 children served by two or often three WPA workers in the typical school at the peak last winter.

Plans to put the expanded program into operation are now being worked out with local school authorities, Mrs. Kerr said, in keeping with the growing interest in adequate school lunches for all children as a national health

measure and in response to project sponsor's requests that WPA food preparation projects not be curtailed.

Applications for the 1941-'42 projects have been received in the Washington WPA office from all States but one. Local school boards, which co-sponsor the units of the State-wide projects, have in many instances already signified their intention of providing the facilities necessary for central cooking and distribution of hot food.

As in past years, food will be provided by the Surplus Marketing Administration of the Department of Agriculture, school boards, non-governmental organizations and the WPA itself. The WPA contribution, Mrs. Kerr explained, is made largely through WPA gardening and food preservation projects, which have been busy during the summer months laying aside preserved food.

Mrs. Kerr noted that school lunch projects for the current fiscal year, looking to the possibility that food surpluses may be reduced in another year by shipments abroad, are being set up to provide for more food production and preservation. Existing gardening and preserving projects are to be consolidated with lunch projects and new units inaugurated where they do not now exist.

"The rejection of a large percentage of army selectees because of physical unfitness has reminded this country abruptly that public health is achieved not as a matter of course but by ceaseless effort in every community," Mrs. Kerr said. "Since child nutrition is a key to adult health, and consequently to national strength and morale, it is natural that the educators, the parents and State and local governments have asked that our participation in the school lunch program be expanded or certainly not curtailed.

"With WPA funds and employment reduced from last year, the prospect of actually enlarging the program would have been discouraging if numerous communities were not translating their concern into kitchens and delivery trucks.

Little school districts are pooling their resources to support county kitchens staffed by WPA women so that nourishing hot food may be fed to children who too often have been bringing inadequate lunches from home. Big cities by similar means are reaching more and more outlying and small school buildings which alone could not operate kitchens. Parent organizations are assuming greater responsibilities in the operation of school lunchrooms to assure their continuance and expansion, and the reports to us indicate that many more volunteers than ever before are ready to step in."

The program will be most extensive where the need for free meals and more adequate diet combine with willingness of school officials to sponsor projects. During January, February and March of last winter the largest State programs were in Tennessee, Georgia and South Carolina, in each of which more than 7,000,000 hot lunches were prepared under WPA projects. More than 6,000,000 lunches were served in both North Carolina and California.

The New York City project served nearly 6,000,000 lunches during that period, and what may well be the largest kitchen in the world daily prepared food for 110,000 children in 700 separate schools. A central kitchen in the District of Columbia prepared food for 10,000 Washington children in 87 schools.

The primary rule in all lunchrooms where WPA women are employed is that all children who cannot pay will be fed. Operating principally in buildings where there are no regular cafeterias, the WPA program provides assistance to schools with cafeterias only to the extent justified by the number of children served without charge. In other schools the authorities are expected to provide, whenever possible, as much help as is necessary to prepare food for those who pay for their lunches.