

PROCEEDINGS OF THE NUTRITION SOCIETY

The Two Hundred and Eightieth Scientific Meeting was held at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School, Cleveland Street, London, on 22 May 1975

COLLOQUIUM ON THE REPORT OF THE ARC/MRC COMMITTEE 'FOOD AND NUTRITION RESEARCH'

The Report of the Joint Committee of the Agricultural Research Council and the Medical Research Council, entitled '*Food and Nutrition Research*', was published by the two Research Councils in the Autumn of 1974 (ARC/MRC Committee, 1974) and was subject to much comment in the scientific press. A Colloquium was arranged to enable members of the Society to discuss the Report and Professor A. Neuberger, who had been Chairman of the Committee, was asked to introduce the discussion. This proved to be very lively.

A number of those present made the point that nutrition is as much a behavioural science as one linked primarily to physiology and biochemistry and that the Report perhaps underestimated the importance to be attached to the social and economic aspects of nutrition. Others thought that the Report should have produced an integrated policy for nutrition, marrying agriculture with food provision and dealing, among other things, with problems of food supply, food consumption patterns and the implications of nutrition in social reconstruction in the developing world.

In reply to these criticisms it was pointed out that the purpose of the Report was to summarize present knowledge in the nutritional sciences, and to suggest to the two Councils what research should now be undertaken. One section had indeed dealt with social and economic aspects of nutrition but only in a UK context.

The Report was also criticized for its apparent emphasis on human nutrition and its rather cursory treatment of animal nutrition, where advances in knowledge had been very considerable.

Another point made was that whereas the review of present knowledge which makes up a large part of the Report was excellent, lack of reference to the literature probably reduced its value: others considered that the lack of references and the clarity of writing ensured that the Report would be read by those most likely to be concerned with its implementation.

Despite the divergence of view about some aspects of the balance of the Report there was general acceptance of the Report's main recommendations to the Councils, namely that research and investigation were needed in three main areas: first, the maintenance of the safety and quality of our food supply in the UK; secondly, the elucidation of the role of nutrition in the aetiology of diseases of complex origin; and thirdly the extension of our knowledge about nutrient metabolism, in order to provide a basis for the further understanding of the role of nutrition in human health and disease.

The meeting terminated at 20.00 hours and the President of the Society thanked Professor Neuberger for his major part in a very stimulating meeting.

REFERENCE

ARC/MRC Committee (1974). *Food and Nutrition Research. Report of the ARC/MRC Committee.* London: H.M. Stationery Office.

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