

A Living Library Project

History of Children's Services

"Bread and Treacle Diet"

Extracts from Documents of the 1930's



The Bread and Treacle Diet

A Collection of Documents from the 1930s
and some talk notes by Ruth Crow

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The Bread and Treacle Diet
Introduction

In April 1992 Ruth Crow was one of the speakers at a Brunswick Historical Society discussion group on reminiscences of life in Brunswick in the 1930s and 1940s. Her talk was mainly anecdotal about her two attempts at tackling the nutrition problem by meals at factories and schools.

Here are her introductory remarks, some facts published in the booklet "Food and Health" and some photostats of documents she used to illustrate her talk.

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Bread and Treacle Diet

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Document 1
Notes Prepared for Talk to Brunswick Historical Society
Ruth Crow, April 1992

Bread and Treacle Diet in Australia
Guns Before Butter in Germany

Preparing for this discussion helped me to realise that the first time I began to "think globally and act locally" was in the mid 1930s when I was caught in three contradiction :-

1. Between what I was being taught as a student of nutrition and real living conditions.
2. On how nutritional knowledge was being used in hospitals to try to cure diseases which could have been prevented if people could have afforded adequate food.
3. The popular support of Nazism despite the starvation in central Europe.

In the midst of the depression of the thirties the prevailing attitude was that malnutrition was caused by ignorance. It could be cured, therefore, through education. There was a preoccupation with government reports working out how people could live on a minimum diet. Imagine my excitement when I read a British report by John Boyd Orr in which estimated that 25 % of the children were in families which could not afford an adequate diet ! He gave this basic definition of malnutrition ;

Optimum dietary requirements are based on the physiological ideal which we define as a state of well-being such that no improvement can be affected by a change in diet.

As regard the second contradiction, I was really inspired with new ideas when the City Health Officer for Melbourne, Dr John Dale, pointed out that children suffered the most from poverty :-

"Modern hospitals had been called the monuments to malnutrition. Not more hospital beds but right feeding, especially of little children, and right education was the thing to concentrate on". (Exhibit 2)

Studies of the history of dietetics showed that as a result of the blockade of Europe, during the First World War, Central Europe, in the post-war years, became a "laboratory for the study of nutritional diseases". Despite the years of starvation the Nazis raised the slogan :-

"Guns before butter".

My convictions lead to two types of action. Firstly, using Boyd Orr's definition I began to collect material on the causes of malnutrition in Victoria. Eventually in 1939 some of this material was used by Marjorie Coppel in the booklet "Food and Health - A Study of nutrition in Australia" which was published by the Left Book Club in 1941.

Secondly I began to help popularise the idea that the practice of dietetics should not be confined to hospital but should be used to provide meals at schools, kindergartens and work places. In those days we talked about "Scientific social feeding".

My advocacy of "scientific social feeding" resulted in me being appointed in 1937, to manage a canteen at a Holeproof in Brunswick where over one thousand textile workers were employed.

During the war the Federal Government through the Department of Labour and National Service established canteens at the munitions factories and on the wharf where dietetically planned meals were available at a reasonable cost. Due to family responsibilities I was not able to directly participate in this expansion of "scientific social feeding". However, in 1943, I was appointed the Secretary Organiser of the Brunswick Children's Centre which was subsidised by the Federal Government. The Centre provided nourishing midday meals for over 100 school children and about 80 children under school age (babies, toddlers and preschoolers).

As regards the third contradiction, my concern about the rise of Nazism lead to me belonging to the movement against war and facsism. The Nazi slogan helped me to clearly see the connection between war preparations, the position of women in society and living standards in our own country.

In the Crow Collection at Victoria University of Technology, Footscray Campus, there is a fairly comprehensive set of labour movement pamphlets from the 1930s and 1940s, a set of Left Book Club publications, documents from the Brunswick Children's Centre and a family budget from the 1930s.

A 1936 definition of an adequate diet.
(Extract from "Food, Health and Income", published 1941)

specific cases they did report direct evidence of poverty being the cause of malnutrition. "All mothers were told of the importance of cod-liver oil emulsion, but many had failed to give it, often, unfortunately, for economic reasons. Children on the dole receive an issue of emulsion up to the age of 12 months, but persons on relief work find it extremely difficult to purchase emulsion."

Having restricted the scope of their enquiry themselves, it is strange that the Council should finally have stated that, "Ignorance was the main cause of malnutrition." They were not in a position to select a reason for malnutrition. They had excluded themselves from attributing the chief responsibility to any one cause, although they could rightly draw attention to what seemed on the evidence before them to be important factors.

In addition, they faced another difficulty. They tried to find a standard of comparison which represented something between minimal and optimal requirements. Their attempt to find something adequate, i.e., something between the minimal (or the least possible) and the optimal (or the ideal) may be contrasted with the objective of the Orr survey: "Optimum requirements are based on the physiological ideal which we define as a state of well-being such that no improvement can be affected by a change in the diet. The standard of adequacy of diet adopted is one which will maintain this standard of perfect nutrition." It is rather difficult to discover why the Australian Council aimed at something lower than this unless they had reduction of cost in mind—yet they did not consider cost and income as we have explained. The question always arises in fixing a standard less than the ideal of how to define it. If adequate means "enough," then no improvement can be effected by a change in the diet, and adequate conforms to the optimum or ideal standard. If adequate means "less than enough," then the diet is deficient to that extent.

It is probable that this attempt to find what is

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"adequate" rather than what is ideal, refers not to a readiness to be satisfied with the second best, but to the fact that the physiological requirements of diet established by research allow a wide margin for safety, and that the Council thought that this margin might be reduced with no ill effects at all. For instance, in their estimate of calcium required, they put Stiebeling and Ward's generally accepted standard as too high, and made it lower for Australian requirements. But is the reason for cutting down this margin of safety in the Australian survey to make more of the tested diets conform to it? "A preliminary comparison between the calcium consumed by several hundred Australian families and Stiebeling and Ward's standard showed that only about 3% reached the standard. This fact leads to the conclusion that whereas the standard may be an optimal one, it may be considerably above the minimal requirements for the maintenance of health." The Council accordingly took a figure which was 66% of the Stiebeling and Ward's standard. This seems a most arbitrary treatment of scientific observations.

In any estimate of the amounts of the protective foodstuffs necessary for health, there is another important consideration. It is one thing to attain a broad knowledge of food values. It is quite another to shop and cook for a family of varying ages, and of different tastes, in sickness and in health and to make sure that those food values are obtained for the least possible expenditure. After all, it is not the trained scientist we are asking to do this, but the average housewife. We must allow her a small margin for error, a small margin for waste and even a small margin for personal idiosyncrasy. Shopping centres vary, too, in the prices they charge. Fares to markets, or cheap shopping centres may have to be allowed for. Again, the very wide range of products offered by the shops, and the sometimes artistic, always arresting, display with which they press on her attention, make her task of selection a really difficult one.

All this suggests that a good margin of safety should

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News-clippings about children and malnutrition.

These clippings are from the end of the 1930s when the Depression was beginning to pass, but, as can be seen from these samples, many children suffered from mal-nutrition.

MANY UNDERNOURISHED IN STATE SCHOOLS

Aid By Government Urged

Seventeen per cent of the children at 80 metropolitan State schools, mainly in industrial areas which replied to a questionnaire sent out by the State Schools' Relief Committee, are undernourished.

This "plain and unpleasant fact" was revealed by the secretary of the committee (Mr H. C. Evans) today when he emphasised the need for the State Government to give free milk and food to all undernourished children.

Cabinet decided on Tuesday to defer decision until next month on requests from two deputations seeking State assistance for undernourished schoolchildren.

Mr Evans said that the headmasters of schools to which questionnaires were sent were given the following definition:

"Undernourished children are usually pale, limp and tired in appearance; unresponsive in classroom activities and generally lacking

the zest and vigor of healthy childhood. Only careful inquiry, however, will disclose true conditions at home."

WORST CASES

Among the worst conditions revealed by the returns were:—

| | Under-nourished | Total |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| School A (inner industrial) | 180 | 660 |
| School B (inner industrial) | 216 | 392 |
| School C (inner industrial) | 150 | 470 |
| School D (outer industrial) | 123 | 850 |
| School E (industrial) | 140 | 900 |

In one small school in a bayside suburb where there is much poverty, 35 out of 40 children were considered to be undernourished.

Mr Evans said that at one school in an inner industrial suburb regular milk supplies had improved the position considerably. Last year 134 out of 466 were considered undernourished. The figures today were: 90 out of 460.

DIET DEFICIENCIES

The committee had observed that the real trouble was lack of milk, fruit and vegetables in the diet of many children of parents in the lower-income classes.

Some children had told teachers that they ate meals of this type:—

Breakfast: Bread, jam and tea; cereal and water.

Lunch: Bread, jam and tea; or bread and tea.

Tea: Meat, potatoes, bread, jam and tea.

It had been found that families of five or six were able to buy only a p of milk daily.

Mr Evans said that the committee was able to provide some milk and little food, boots and clothes to the most serious cases.

The Education Department had watched its work and had provided part-time organiser (Mr H. Penros) and a full-time assistant secretary (Miss M. Crooke).

PLIGHT OF POOR CHILDREN

Endowment Urged

Many children produced I.O.U.'s for food, meals provided by the St. Mark's Fitzroy Social Settlement, the Rev. R. G. Nichols told the Parliamentary Select Committee on Child Endowment yesterday.

Mr. F. Hebbard, head master of the George Street State school, Fitzroy, said that he had known of children snatching pieces of food from other children's lunches. "Some of it may be mischievous, but the children are frankly hungry," he said.

All six witnesses who gave evidence yesterday urged that child endowment was a social necessity which would give great benefits.

Mr. Nicholls said that the principal causes of malnutrition were insufficient income in larger families, high rents, wasting of income, and incapacity of parents. A cheap, economical rent was essential. Some owners were taking advantage of the shortage of houses to increase rents, which took too much from family incomes.

Establishment of community kitchens in the industrial suburbs would remove the worst of malnutrition in school children. In the winter hot meals were provided by the social settlement for 1d. for 200 school children each day. With Government help thousands of dinners could be supplied.

MANY CHILDREN UNDERWEIGHT

PERTH, Sunday.—All but a small percentage of Australians received adequate food, but many did not get enough protective foods necessary for proper nutrition, said Dr. F. W. Clements, Institute of Anatomy director, today.

Investigations in various parts of the Commonwealth showed that between 10 and 20% of children were grossly underweight, and that a percentage of these were actually suffering malnutrition. Malnutrition could be caused by chronic tonsillitis, abscess on the apex of a tooth, or other sickness. From men who comprised the first section of the AIF to go overseas 250,000 teeth were removed. Many men had been rejected for bad feet, which, in children, had been traced to poor nutrition. Sugar had replaced cereals in quantity of consumption. Australia had become the greatest consumer of sugar per head of population in the world. That contributed to poor nutrition.

CHILDREN TREATED FOR MALNUTRITION

THE Mayor of Collingwood (Mr. V. Towers), Mr. Tunnecliffe, M.L.A., the chairman of the Charities Board (Mr. T. M. Burke), and the newly elected chairman of the metropolitan committee of the Charities Board (Mrs. G. G. Henderson) will be special guests at the annual meeting of the Dr. Singleton Dispensary, and Welfare Centre this evening.

The president of the committee for the clinic (Mr. F. S. Howard), who is a grandson of the founder, will take the chair. Mr. G. Edward Mayne is secretary, and his report tonight will show that the clinic has extended its activities this year, and is now operating as a full-time out-patient hospital. Doctors report that many of the 4220 children treated were suffering from malnutrition and bad housing conditions, and that medical assistance would be of little use to them unless their home conditions could be improved.

Such cases, it will be shown, have been handed over to the social service department attached to the clinic, and provided with food and clothing from a fund at the department's disposal. On food alone in the one year £2600 has been spent. Arrangements have also been made with the Housing Commission to move many families out of the district and into new houses which the Commission has erected.

The secretary's report will also show that the clinic is doing valuable work in many other directions. During the whooping cough epidemic this year more than 80 children were treated with injections, and all of them made a complete recovery within two weeks, instead of taking the usual six or eight.

MANY CHILDREN UNDERFED

Primary Schools

Many children at primary schools in Melbourne, particularly in the inner industrial areas, are underfed or improperly fed, according to a report made by Dr. John Dale, city health officer, to the City Council health committee yesterday.

The basic wage and other charges on income
(Extract from "Food Health and Income", published 1941)

the present-day scientific view was that if the mineral content of the domestic basket were sufficient the caloric content could also be deemed to be sufficient." On examination he found the Piddington diet scale, although more liberal than any allowed for in any basic wage, to be deficient in calcium content which, he said, "could only be made up by increased consumption of milk and cheese in particular." Taking into account the cost of buying protective foodstuffs, the Court ordered that 5/- be added to the existing basic wage.

In his judgment, one member of the Court referred to the findings of the British survey in a passage which is worth quoting. "Before leaving the subject of Diet, I would point out that an unbiased study of the table and graphs in this most valuable book, 'Food Health and Income,' (which summarizes the work of Sir John Orr and his Commission) 'should kill the oft-repeated assertion that the wage-earner's wife does not know what is best to buy. The constant rise in the purchase of milk, butter, meat, fish, eggs, fruit and fresh vegetables which accompanies each few shillings rise in income is most marked. In contrast, the amount spent by all income groups in the bulk foods, breads, potatoes and jams is practically the same for all groups. The deduction from the whole is that in the low income the first necessity is if possible to satisfy hunger and after that of each shilling rise in income an increasing portion is spent in the foods yielding the higher priced minerals and vitamins."

OTHER CHARGES ON INCOME

It would seem that if the purchase of sufficient protective foodstuffs is so essential for health, it should take first call on expenditure, and the purchase of other things curtailed if there is not enough income to go round. But this type of budgeting is impossible for the low wage-earner. There are certain items in his expenditure which take precedence over others from

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rigid necessity—in fact, they are bound up with his earning a living at all. The first is that he must have shelter for himself and his family within a reasonable distance of his place of work, and he must pay for transport to take him there if the distance is too great for him to walk. If he saves a little in the rent he pays, he probably has to pay more for transport. The cost of both together in a modern city, where housing has been looked on as a property investment and not as a social necessity, and where factories have sprung up with no planned relation to living accommodation, represents far too high a proportion of the workman's wage, and one which can very rarely be reduced. The rent allowed for in the Basic Wage represents 24% of the income. Of the present-day Basic Wage of £4/6/- plus 10/- endowment for the wage-earner with three dependent children this would take about 23/-, yet to get a reasonably decent dwelling a worker would now pay about 25/- . Before the slum demolition scheme he might have got accommodation of a kind for 12/- to 14/- . To-day, in a house provided by the Victorian Housing Commission, he pays an average rental of 17/6. The actual amount varies with the number of dependent children he has. He gets a rebate calculated on the number of children he has beyond three, and pays so much more the fewer children than three that he has. The range of rentals extends from 8/- at the lowest rebate level to 23/- at the highest economic level. Thus a man earning the Basic Wage to-day and with two dependent children would pay approximately 19/- for a Commission house, while another man on the Basic Wage who had eight children would pay 13/- a week. The Commission's scheme provides cheap housing for the worker with a large family, but not for the worker with a small family who pays close on 20% of his income for rent. This is a practical way in which more of the income can be made available for feeding and clothing a large family. It does not provide the community in general with cheap houses. Moreover, the number of houses provided by the Commission are

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The high cost of protective foods

(Extract from "Food, Health and Income", published 1941.)

quite inadequate to meet the needs of those on low incomes.

Beyond these charges he has to meet the cost of clothing, fuel, lighting and sickness—all essential expenditure. It has been estimated that expenditure on food should not exceed from 38% to 42% of the total income to allow for all other needs. This means that if the income is £4/16/-, then of that about £1/18/5. or 7/8 a head, per week only could be spent on food. If the housewife with three children in more comfortable circumstances measures this sum against her green-grocer's, milkman's and butcher's bills, and her purchases of dairy produce, she will realize that no large amounts of protective foodstuffs could be bought for it. As we have seen, the estimated cost of the dietary presented at the Basic Wage Enquiry of 1940, which did not claim to be ideal but barely adequate, worked out at £2/1/9 on 1940 prices. It is probable that less than £1/18/5 will be available because, in addition to the bare necessities outlined above, there is other expenditure which the wage-earner incurs, not because he is prodigal, but just because he lives in a modern society. Items like insurance, smoking, a weekly trip to the pictures or football match, household utensils, cleaning materials, Trade Union subscriptions, may each be on their own a small item, but they make a substantial total to be paid from the basic wage. There will probably be other charges also on his income in the form of weekly instalments on furniture or wireless. It is easy to say that this or that item is an expense which should not have been incurred. Not one represents a luxurious standard of living. After all, the ordinary citizen lives in a world where people listen to wireless, travel in trains and trams, smoke cigarettes, meet the lights of picture theatres in every main suburban street, and have high-pressure sales talk battering at them through every possible medium. The evil of instalment selling is that the expense of the article bought is incurred in a comparatively prosperous period and the payments must be kept up regardless of

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what other expenses crop up, or the article, and the payments already made, are lost. When we consider in detail the way of living of the ordinary man with a family, it is easier to understand how the purchase of the protective foods is found to rise with the income, and how closely linked the problem of malnutrition is with the provision of a living wage.

HIGH COST OF PROTECTIVE FOODSTUFFS

There is another reason for the inability of the wage-earner to buy enough of the protective foods, and this is their high cost. In all parts of the world protective foods are relatively expensive because they are perishable. It is worth while considering whether there are additional factors affecting their high cost in Australia. The first one that occurs to us is the effect of our export trade on the home market. This operates in several ways:—

1. On certain commodities a home consumption price is fixed to subsidize the export trade, so that our butter and other produce can be sold abroad at prices which can compete with those charged by foreign producers. "The principle of a home consumption price is accepted in Australia (and in many other countries) as part of the national economy, but this Council feels that it should draw attention to the possible significance of this principle in so far as it applies to essential foodstuffs." (Advisory Council on Nutrition.) Wheat, rice, sugar, butter and cheese are all sold at home consumption prices. Butter and cheese are, of course, very important protective foods. "The maintenance of a home consumption price for butter has some effect on the consumption of butter in households on lower incomes or with larger families." (Advisory Council.) The Council suggests that an increase in the consumption of milk would decrease the ratio of exported butter to total butter produced and thereby ease the home consumption price of butter.

2. The export trade has another effect on the home

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News-clippings about cost of food for families.

DIET FOR FAMILY
OF FIVE
"£1/19/6 a Week"

An adequate weekly diet for a family of five, including two boys 14 and 8, and a girl 12, would cost £1/19/6, according to evidence given by Miss Elizabeth Wilmot, former dietitian of the Commonwealth Department of Health, at the basic wage inquiry yesterday.

Miss Wilmot said that in compiling her estimate she had selected the most economical foods with due regard to variety. The prices used were collected from numerous inexpensive shopping centres in Melbourne and Sydney over a period of two years.

The details of the budget are:—Fresh milk, 17½ pints weekly, 5/1½; powdered milk, 2lb., 1/9; cheese, 1½lb., 1/5½; butter, 2lb., 3/2; dripping, 2½lb., 1/0½; eggs, 10, 1/5½; potatoes, 13lb., 2/2; cabbage, 2½lb., 4d.; silver beet, 2½lb., 4d.; carrots, 1½lb., 3d.; parsnips, 1½lb., 3½d.; turnips, 1½lb., 2½d.; swedes, 2½lb., 5d.; onions, 1½lb., 4d.; oranges, 20, 1/8; bananas, 5, 5d.; apples, 5, 5d.; rhubarb, 1½lb., 2½d.; split peas, 1½lb., 2d.; haricot beans, 1½lb., 3d.; dried apricots, 1½lb., 7½d.; prunes, 1½lb., 3½d.; raisins, 1½lb., 7d.; oatmeal, 3lb., 10½d.; rice, 6oz., 1½d.; sago, 6oz., 1½d.; barley, 6oz., 1d.; flour, 2½lb., 8d.; sugar, 3lb., 1/1½; treacle, 1½lb., 6d.; jam, 1½lb., 4½d.; cocoa, 1½lb., 1½d.; tea, 1½lb., 1/; tomato sauce, 3d.; salt (baking powder), 3d.; curry powder, &c., 2d.; bread (white), 13lb., 3/; bread (wholemeal), 12lb., 3/; mutton (leg), 3½lb., 1/11; t corned beef, 1½lb., 9d.; stewing steak, 1½lb., 1/2; liver, 1½lb., 6d.; fish, 1½lb., 10d.; bones for soup, 1d.

Miss Wilmot said a child of 14 years would cost about 5/ weekly to maintain in diet, but the cost for a child between five and eight years would be 8/6. A family, with two children, three and 13 years, would cost £1/10/1 weekly. The present basic wage was not far removed from the standard cost for a family of four.

Austral Salon will hold a Comforts Fund afternoon, arranged by Miss Amy Lynch, on Monday. Monthly meeting of Travancore auxiliary will be held at the home, Flemington street, Flemington, on August 18, at 2.

16/8/40.
£1/19/6 A WEEK TO
FEED FAMILY
Expert Shows How

A week's food costs for a family of five—an active man, his wife, who does housework, two boys (14 and 8), and a girl of 12—could be reduced to £1/19/6, according to investigations made by Miss Betty Wilmot, dietitian.

Miss Wilmot, who has carried out wide research for the Commonwealth Health Department and the Victorian Railways Department, gave figures yesterday amplifying her recent evidence in the Arbitration Court on family food costs. She emphasised that the figure of £1/19/6 was an estimate of the minimum amount at which an adequate diet could be provided, using the most economical foods. The figure should not be taken as the standard. The actual cost would be much higher, as it could be assumed that the average housewife would not have the knowledge or time to work out such a cheap diet on scientific standards.

If income permitted, much larger amounts of protective food (dairy products, vegetables, fruit, &c.), were desirable. In the figure of £1/19/6, for example, the cost of an adequate diet for a child of 3 was taken as 5/ a week, whereas the optimal, or ideal, diet cost would be between 7/6 and 8/6.

Details of a typical week-day diet for the family specified are:—

| BREAKFAST | | | | | |
|---|----------|-------|---------|----------|--------|
| | Husband. | Wife. | Boy 14. | Girl 12. | Boy 8. |
| Oatmeal porridge (cups) | 1½ | 1 | 1½ | 1 | 1 |
| Milk (cups) | 1½ | 1 | 1½ | 1 | 1 |
| Treacle (t'spoon) | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Fried bread (slices) | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Bread or toast (slices) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Butter (level t'spoon) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Treacle (t'spoon) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Cocoa (t'spoon) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Milk (cups) | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Sugar (t'spoon) | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| LUNCH | | | | | |
| Sandwiches — Wholemeal bread, butter, Types— | | | | | |
| Corned beef (rounds) | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Cheese (rounds) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Raisins (rounds) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Oranges (number) | 1-2 | 1-2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Tea (cups) | 1-2 | 1-2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Sugar (t'spoon) | 2-4 | 1-2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Milk (cups) | 1½ | 1½ | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| DINNER | | | | | |
| Vegetable soup, carrots, onion, turnips, sago (cups) | 1½ | 1 | 1½ | 1 | 1 |
| Bread (slices) | 1½ | 1 | 1½ | 1 | 1 |
| Drained meat, 1lb. (portion) | 1½ | 1 | 1½ | 1 | 1 |
| Potatoes in jackets (about 4 to a pound) | 2 | 2 | 1½ | 1 | 1 |
| Silver beet (table-spoons) | 2 | 2 | 1½ | 1 | 1 |
| Stewed apricots (dried 1oz.) (number) | 8-10 | 8-10 | 8-10 | 8-10 | 8-10 |
| Boiled custard (1 egg to 1 pint) and cornflour or hour (table-spoons) | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Tea (cups) | 1-2 | 1-2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Milk (cups) | 1½ | 1½ | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Sugar (t'spoons) | 2-4 | 1-2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

Bread and Treacle Diet

History of the Basic Wage to the end of the 1930s

How wages were determined

1907 the Harvester Award when Mr Justice Higgins determined the basic wage on "the normal needs of the average employee as a human being living in a civilised community". He examined the expenditure of the average employee to see whether his wage provided "food, and water and shelter and clothing and a condition of frugal comfort estimated by current standards."

In 1919 a Royal Commission, called the Basic Wage Commission, was chaired by A. B. Piddington. This resulted in 1922 in indexing wages according to the cost of living.

In 1931 the Arbitration Court cut wages by 10%. This was based on the principle that industry could not afford to pay any more, "although no serious attempt was made by the Court to investigate industry's returns".

In 1934 the Basic Wage was restored. The Court declared that the 10% special reduction ceased to operate and the wages were once again indexed, with some slight alterations. Unemployment was still very high.

In 1937 a further increase in wages was sought. Evidence was given of the food requirements based on the new scientific outlook on diet. This evidence was ignored.

In 1940 Child Endowment of 5/- a week was paid for dependent children after the first child. This did not represent the cost of a proper diet for a child.

Document 8
Bibliography from booklet "Food, Health and Income"
Published by the Left Book Club.
1941

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NOTE

This is the fourth of a series of pamphlets to be published by the Research Group of the Left Book Club of Victoria.

Victor Gollancz wrote in the "Left News" of February, 1939:—

"Of all the gains that, outside the economic sphere, men have won, perhaps the greatest is the free, enquiring, independent and sceptical mind. To have access to all the facts: to examine them with ruthless honesty: to form a judgment uncoloured by any desire except that of reaching the truth, and to proclaim the result fearlessly to the world—that is the great heritage, at present very partial and very imperfect, into which men have entered."

The members of the Research Group share this belief. Their object is to learn the facts of matters of immediate importance, and to make these facts as widely known as possible.

The following pamphlet has been prepared by Mrs. Marjorie Coppel from a great many published reports and books and from material gained from interviews with various experts.

Miss Wilmot, besides giving access to her own extensive work on nutrition, gave particularly valuable help in suggesting lines of enquiry and discussing difficulties which arose.

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 - BASIC WAGE INQUIRY, 37 Commonwealth Arbitration Report 691.
 - HARVESTER CASE, 2 Commonwealth Arbitration Report P.3.
 - "COMMONWEALTH YEAR BOOK."
 - COMMONWEALTH LABOUR REPORTS.
 - WORKERS' NUTRITION AND SOCIAL POLICY.—International Labour Office.

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Crow Collection Association
Victoria University of Technology

Living Library Project on History of Children's Services
Funded by the Lance Reichstein Charitable Foundation
Sept. 1991 to May 1992
Booklets Published as Background Material.

1. The History of the Carlton Refuge from 1850s to 1920
First published 1920
2. Two Articles about Health of Women and Children :-
"The Neglected Children's Aid Society"
First published 1911
and
"The After Care Home and the District Nurses".
First published 1925
3. Two Documents about Attitudes to Slums
"Slum Babies and Slum Mothers"
First published about 1914
and
"You can't lift every baby out of the slums
The Slum Abolition Movement in the 1930s
4. History of Children's Services in Melbourne Municipality
1910 to 1980
5. "Bread and Treacle Diet"
Extracts from documents of the 1930s.
6. "Mothers must Work To Win"
Photos and leaflets from the Brunswick Children's
Centre, 1943.
7. "The Deprived West/ The Determined West" an extract from a
report by Ruth and Maurie Crow, first published 1972.
8. Creating Community in the Neighbourhood - Neighbourhood
Houses in the Western Region", transcript of a tape by
Meredith Sussex, 1978.
9. History of the Tweddle Baby Hospital, by Kathleen
Codogonotto
First published 1992
10. The past, present and future - Community Development in
the Western Region, a report by Louise Gianville, 1992
11. "Magic in the Lives of Children, Participation in the
Lives of their Parents" report prepared by Christine
Carolan and Sheila Byard, 1992.
12. Kit on Federal Funding of Children's Services.

About the Project

The Lance Reichstein Charitable Foundation funded the Crow Collection for a Living Library Project on children's services in the Western Region.

A Project Steering Committee has assisted the project worker (Christine Carolan) who has worked with providers of children's services teachers and students in the Region.

The project resulted in the production of a video which includes information on the history of child care, a kit about the way children's services are funded, a series of booklets describing community movements which resulted in initiating some of the present children's services and a display of photos of some of the people who have helped to establish these services in Melbourne's Western Region

A seminar on May 22nd 1992 marked the end of this project but the video and publications can be used well into the future.

About the Collection

Ruth Crow and her late husband, Maurie were involved in movements on urban issues from the mid 1930s. Over the years they built up an extensive collection of documents :- books, pamphlets, posters, photos and working papers.

In 1990 the Victoria University of Technology (Footscray Campus) invited Ruth to donate the collection to the VUT Library.

The Crow Collection includes documents written and/or used by groups and individuals committed to social change. This store of information from the past is being used to generate ideas about the future.

A Crow Collection Association has been formed and incorporated. One of its aims is to enhance the comprehensiveness and accessibility of the Collection through Living library Projects.



The Crow Collection

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