

# WAS NUTRITION A PRIORITY?

By Bonnie Lacroix, Food & Nutrition Specialist.

To the 95 respondents who answered the "Help Wanted" section in the Spring 1975 issue of *Home and Country*, goes a great big thank you! For those who don't remember, we, the Foods and Nutrition Section of the Home Economics Branch asked for help in evaluating one of our programmes, a day-long workshop called "All About Nutrition". The evaluation was designed to tell us whether you remembered and used any of the information — and if our tools and techniques used in the presentation were effective.

## General Impression

Most people (81%) felt that the amount of information given in that day was just about right and almost all (90%) felt that the day-long workshop was about the right length in duration. We realize that in many instances, the hall used was the only one available and thus there was little to be done with regard to physical facilities. However we asked questions about lighting, acoustics, ventilation and so on as a cross check with other questions. (If you are so cold all you can do is listen to your teeth chatter, you won't take in much, no matter how good the presentation is.) It is interesting to note that 80-90% thought the physical facilities were adequate or better.

A number of people sent along notes of apology, explaining they couldn't remember very much about the workshop as it was held several months previously. Actually this was one of the main reasons for waiting to publish the questionnaire. We wanted to see what impact we had had on you.

## The Presentation

When asked "What was your reaction" to the different activities, over half really liked them. (They ranged from the highest, at 79% for the shopping trip, to the lowest, 56% in the case of the food additives.) There was one exception: only 22% were interested in the idea of undertaking a community project.

The majority of people (about 80% or better) were able to see the visual aids such as overhead projections, the building blocks, bar charts and so on.

When asked "What section of the workshop did you learn the most from", 16% indicated food nutrients and their functions, followed by food additives (14%), health protection of the consumer (12%), information on government agencies (11%) e.g. Health Protection Branch of Health and Welfare Canada and Consumer and Corporate Affairs and labelling (10%).

With regard to the lists of agencies available for help, over 1/3 (36%) have followed up by contacting someone.

About 80% have at least read the books we gave out at the workshop with a number of people indicating that they had passed them on to others. I find this very encouraging.

Only 28% said that they would have learned more if we had supplied a booklet specially designed for the workshop. Because well written booklets like "Food and Fitness" and "What to Eat to be Healthy" were available, we decided to put our limited time, energies and budget into developing activities like the building

blocks. These thoughts were reflected by 42% responding that maybe they would have learned more and 28% said no, they wouldn't have learned more by having such a booklet.

Most people thought the specialists who gave the presentations spoke clearly (71%), were easy to understand (96%), encouraged questions (97%) and clarified points most if not all the time (96%).

Group participation and discussion (27%), question and answer periods (25%), and a talk given by the home economist (20%) are your 3 most preferred methods or techniques of learning as indicated by your replies.

## Family Food Practices

As a result of the workshop, 65% either glance over or carefully read the labels on prepared foods and 30% make different food choices as a result of the reading.

Many people (83%) have taken a careful look at their family food practices with 55% making changes and 31% making no changes because they feel they aren't necessary. The kinds of changes made involve buying different foods because of nutrient value (35%) and 33% avoiding the purchase of empty calorie foods. It is of noteworthy interest that 19% have made no changes at all because, in their opinion, any changes are unnecessary.

Also of interest is that 31% have changed their cooking methods to preserve the nutrient of foods and 40% are paying more attention to cooking and storing of food. Again about 18% made no changes because they aren't needed. It is unfortunate that 25% have thought little about making changes and another 25% have made no changes for one reason or another.

Only about 1/3 of those answering the questionnaire are aware of nutritional problems in the Canadian community as cited by Nutrition Canada; 22% don't know if problems exist, and 36% think perhaps there are problems. However, only 1/4 (24%) have taken specific action — either individually or in a group effort.

Preference for workshops seems to be for the daytime. Over half, 53%, indicated all day, with 8% wanting morning only, 10% desiring afternoon programmes. Many people added comments like "evening is best" especially in areas where many women work or "how can we get young mothers out".

## Conclusions

All of this information gives us an idea of what you thought about the workshops. While we recognize that this survey is somewhat biased, it was not designed to be a highly technical study. The numerical values indicate trends, and gives some concrete basis for planning future programmes.

This survey also showed that many in rural Ontario, especially those in the Women's Institutes, are most enlightened people who do care enough to put "good" food on the table for their families and so teach basic food habits in the home.

Almost 4000 people, women, a few men and a sig-

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