



**White House  
Conference  
on Food,  
Nutrition  
and Health**

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FINAL REPORT

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## White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health

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# MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT

To the Congress of the United States

May 6, 1969

We have long thought of America as the most bounteous of nations. In our conquest of the most elemental of human needs, we have set a standard that is a wonder and aspiration for the rest of the world. Our agricultural system produces more food than we can consume, and our private food market is the most effective food distribution system ever developed. So accustomed are most of us to a full and balanced diet that, until recently, we have thought of hunger and malnutrition as problems only in far less fortunate countries.

But in the past few years we have awakened to the distressing fact that despite our material abundance and agricultural wealth, many Americans suffer from malnutrition. Precise factual descriptions of its extent are not presently available, but there can be no doubt that hunger and malnutrition exist in America, and that some millions may be affected.

That hunger and malnutrition should persist in a land such as ours is embarrassing and intolerable. But it is an exceedingly complex problem, not at all susceptible to fast or easy solutions. Millions of Americans are simply too poor to feed their families properly. For them, there must be first sufficient food income. But this alone would only begin to address the problem for what matters finally is what people buy with the money they have. People must be educated in the choosing of proper foods. All of us, poor and nonpoor alike, must be reminded that a proper diet is a basic determinant of good health. Our private food industry has made great advances in food processing and packaging, and has served the great majority of us very well. But these advances have placed great burdens on those who are less well off and less sophisticated in the ways of the modern marketplace. We must therefore work to make the private food market serve these citizens as well, by making nutritious foods widely available in popular forms. And for those caught in the most abject poverty, special efforts must be made to see that the benefits of proper foods are not lost amidst poor health and sanitary conditions.

The Council for Urban Affairs has for the past 3 months been studying the problem of malnutrition in America, and has assessed the capacities of our present food and nutrition programs. As a result of the Council's deliberations, I am today prepared to take the following actions:

## *1. Family food assistance programs*

The Federal Government presently provides food assistance to nearly 7 million needy Americans through the food stamp and direct distribution programs. Though these programs have provided welcome and needed assistance to these persons, both programs are clearly in need of revision.

The present food stamp program can be greatly improved. I shall in a short period of time submit to the Congress legislation which will revise the food stamp program to:

- provide poor families enough food stamps to purchase a nutritionally complete diet. The Department of Agriculture estimates this to be \$100 per month for a typical family of four.
- provide food stamps at no cost to those in the very lowest income brackets.
- provide food stamps to others at a cost of no greater than 30 percent of income.
- insure that the food stamp program is complementary to a revised welfare program, which I shall propose to the Congress this year.
- give the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to operate both the food stamp and direct distribution programs concurrently in individual counties, at the request and expense of local officials. This will permit the Secretary to assist counties wishing to change from direct distribution to food stamps, and to meet extraordinary or emergency situations.

It will not be possible for the revised program to go into effect until sometime after the beginning of the calendar year 1970, that is to say after the necessary legislative approval and administrative arrangements have been made. The requested appropriations will then permit the establishment of the revised program in all current food stamp counties before the end of the fiscal year, as well as a modest expansion into direct distribution counties, and some counties with no current programs.

This program, on a full year basis, will cost something in excess of \$1 billion per year. (Precise estimates will only become available over time.) This will be in addition to the \$1.5 billion for food for the hungry which I have requested for the forthcoming fiscal year, making a total program of \$2.5 billion. In the meantime, \$270 million is being reprogrammed within the forthcoming budget to permit the program to begin as soon as legislative and administrative arrangements can be made and other necessary measures taken.

While our long-range goal should be to replace direct food distribution with the revised food stamp program, the direct distribution program can fill many short-range needs. Today there are still over 440 counties without any family food assistance program, and this Administration shall establish programs in each of these counties before July 1970. The direct distribution program will be used in most of these counties. In these and other direct distribution counties, the most serious criticism of the program will be met by ensuring that all counties offer the full range of available foods.

To strengthen both current family food assistance programs, efforts will proceed on a high priority basis to establish more distribution points, prompter and simpler certification, financing arrangements, mailing of food stamps, and appeal mechanisms.

## *2. Special supplemental food program*

Serious malnutrition during pregnancy and infancy can impair normal physical and mental development in children. Special effort must be made to protect this vulnerable group from malnutrition.

The special package program, which provides needy women and mothers with packages of especially nutritious foods, was designed to meet this need. But the program has encountered logistical problems which have severely limited its success. I am therefore directing that a substantial portion of the fiscal

year 1970 budget for this program be used to establish pilot programs that make use of the private food market. Under these programs, needy pregnant women and mothers of infants will be issued vouchers, redeemable at food and drug stores for infant formulas and other highly nutritious special foods. If such a program seems workable, and the administrative problems are resolved, the program will be expanded later on the basis of that experience.

### *3. Administration of food programs*

I am directing the Urban Affairs Council to consider the establishment of a new agency, the Food and Nutrition Service, whose exclusive concern will be the administration of the Federal food programs. Presently the food programs are operated in conjunction with numerous other unrelated programs. The creation of a new agency will permit greater specialization and concentration on the effective administration of the food programs.

### *4. Private sector involvement*

I shall shortly announce a White House Conference on food and nutrition, involving executives from the Nation's leading food processing and food distribution companies and trade unions. I shall ask these men to advise me on how the private food market might be used to improve the nutritional status of all Americans, and how the Government food programs could be improved. I shall also call on these men to work with the advertising industry and the Advertising Council, to develop an educational advertising and packaging campaign to publicize the importance of good food habits.

### *5. Interagency efforts*

Although most of the current food and nutrition programs are administered by the Department of Agriculture, other agencies are critically involved. I am therefore establishing a sub-Cabinet working committee of the Urban Affairs Council to promote coordination between the food and nutrition programs and other health, educational, and antipoverty programs.

At the present time, I am directing the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity to take a number of immediate steps.

I am asking the Secretary of HEW to:

- work with State agencies to insure that the medicaid program is fully coordinated with the special package and pilot voucher programs for pregnant women and infants, so that vitamin and mineral products can be made available to those diagnosed as suffering from nutrient deficiencies.
- expand the national nutrition survey, presently being conducted by the Public Health Service, to provide us with our first detailed description of the extent of hunger and malnutrition in our country.
- initiate detailed research into the relationship between malnutrition and mental retardation.
- encourage emphasis by medical schools on training for diagnosis and treatment of malnutrition and malnutrition-related diseases.

The Office of Economic Opportunity, with its exclusive commitment to the problems of poverty and its unique "outreach" among the poor themselves, has an especial role to play. I am asking the Director of OEO to:

- work with the Secretaries of Agriculture and HEW to establish a greatly expanded role for the Community Action Agencies in delivering food

stamps and commodity packages. Volunteers working in the VISTA program will also aid in the delivery and outreach process, supplementing the efforts of the Agricultural Extension Service.

—redirect OEO funds into the Emergency Food and Health Service program to increase its food, health, and sanitation services for our most depressed areas. Presently, health and sanitary conditions in many of our most depressed counties are so poor that improved food services alone would have little impact on the nutritional health of the population. The Emergency Food and Health Service has provided invaluable services in aiding these areas, and its good work should be substantially expanded.

More is at stake here than the health and well-being of 16 million American citizens who will be aided by these programs and the current Child Food Assistance programs. Something very like the honor of American democracy is at issue. It was half a century ago that the "fruitful plains" of this bounteous land were first called on to a great work of humanity, that of feeding a Europe exhausted and bleeding from the First World War. Since then on one occasion after another, in a succession of acts of true generosity—let those who doubt that find their counterpart in history—America has come to the aid of one starving people after another. But the moment is at hand to put an end to hunger in America itself for all time. I ask this of a Congress that has already splendidly demonstrated its own disposition to act. It is a moment to act with vigor; it is a moment to be recalled with pride.



# STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT

## On the appointment of Dr. Jean Mayer as Special Consultant to the President in charge of organizing the White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health June 11, 1969

In appointing Dr. Jean Mayer as Special Consultant to the President, I would like to emphasize the importance of the responsibility he is assuming. The White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health will be an event of great significance.

Over the years no country has been so closely associated with the science of nutrition as the United States: Pioneers such as Lafayette B. Mendel of Yale, E. V. McCollum of Hopkins, Joseph Goldberger of the U.S. Public Health Service, and Conrad Elvehjem of Wisconsin were founders of the science. No country has ever undertaken such a gigantic and successful task of raising food as was done by this country in World War II. No country has succeeded in providing such a high standard of diet to so many millions of citizens while assisting millions more in less fortunate countries. In calling the White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health, we are both reaffirming our commitment to a full and healthful diet for all Americans and exploring what we yet need to know and do to achieve that goal.

For despite our achievements much remains to be done. All of us have been shocked as we have become more aware that millions of Americans are malnourished because they are too poor to purchase enough of the right kinds of foods. We also know that many Americans who have enough money to afford a healthful diet do not have one. Many of our youngsters have erratic diets which may be deficient in certain nutrients. Many more of us eat not wisely but too well.

The White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health is intended to focus national attention and national resources on our country's remaining—and changing—nutrition problems. It will assemble the Nation's best minds and expertise, from our business, labor, and academic communities. I shall ask them to consider the following questions:

1. How do we insure continuing surveillance of the state of nutrition of our citizens?

2. What should be done to improve the nutrition of our more vulnerable groups—the very poor, pregnant and nursing mothers, children and adolescents, the aging, and those such as Indians for whom we have a direct and special responsibility?

3. As we develop new technologies of food production, processing, and packaging, how do we monitor the continued wholesomeness and nutritional value of our foods and insure that the poor, and indeed all Americans, obtain the greatest amount of nutrients for their money?

4. How do we improve nutrition teaching in our schools—from Head Start to medical schools—and what programs of popular education do we need to better inform the public of proper food buying and food consumption habits?

5. What should be done to improve Federal programs that affect nutrition, either directly as in the Armed Forces and the Veterans Administration, or indirectly through programs such as the food stamp, commodity distribution, and school lunch programs?

I shall ask the Conference to prepare specific goals in response to these questions, goals for private industry, for Government policy, and for needed research. Its conclusions and its goals will not be neatly bound and placed on a library shelf and forgotten. They will be the basis for action by this administration and the beginning of a national commitment—to put an end to malnutrition and hunger among the poor, to make better use of our agricultural bounty and nutritional knowledge, and to insure a healthful diet for all Americans.

# REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT

At the opening plenary session  
of the  
White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health  
Sheraton Park Hotel  
December 2, 1969

Members of the Cabinet, Mr. Mayor, all of the distinguished guests on the platform, and all the distinguished representatives to this Conference:

I very much appreciate the opportunity to be here, and before speaking myself, I want to express my appreciation to those who are arranging the Conference, to Dr. Mayer and others, for the introductions that have been arranged.

I understand that Ezra Ellis, who came from my home town of Whittier, Calif., gave the invocation, and I am most grateful for that, and I am most grateful, too, that the mayor of my city, Washington, D.C., Mayor Washington, is here today. I think he is doing a fine job as mayor of this city.

I am not going to talk about the problems of the District, except indirectly, at this point, but as I speak about the legislative imperatives, three of which I will mention in my address, I want you to know that at the very top of the list of other imperatives are the programs for the District of Columbia.

We have offered a number of programs that are new in this field and some that are old, but we have talked about the District for years. It is time to act about the District of Columbia, and under the mayor's leadership we do plan to act, and with your help we will do something.

As all of you are aware, this is an historic conference. It is particularly an historic conference for me because it is the first White House Conference that I have had the opportunity to address as President of the United States. I have addressed others as Vice President. And it is the first that we have had in this administration.

This meeting marks an historic milestone. What it does is to set the seal of urgency on our national commitment to put an end to hunger and malnutrition due to poverty in America.

At the same time, it marks the beginning of a new, more determined and more concerted drive than ever before, to reduce the malnutrition that derives from ignorance or inadvertence.

I recognize that many of you who are here and who have participated in the panels have been under enormous pressure, because you have had a relatively short time for the vast amount of work that it took to put this conference together and to prepare for it.

However, that pressure reflects the priority of the subject we are here to discuss. It reflects the sense of urgency we all feel.

Until this moment in our history as a nation, the central question has been whether we as a nation would accept the problem of malnourishment as a national responsibility.

That moment is past. On May 6 I asserted to the Congress that "the moment is at hand to put an end to hunger in America itself. For all time."

Speaking for this administration, I not only accept the responsibility—I claim the responsibility.

Malnourishment is a national concern because we are a nation that cares about its people, how they feel, how they live. We care whether they are well and whether they are happy.

First of all there is a moral imperative: Our national conscience requires it. We must because we can. We are the world's richest nation. We are the best educated nation. We have an agricultural abundance that ranks as a miracle of the modern world. This Nation cannot long continue to live with its conscience if millions of its own people are unable to get an adequate diet.

Even in purely practical terms there are compelling considerations requiring this challenge to be met.

A child ill-fed is dulled in curiosity, lower in stamina, distracted from learning. A worker ill-fed is less productive, more often absent from work. The mounting cost of medical care for diet-related illnesses; remedial education required to overcome diet-related slowness in school; institutionalization and loss of full productive potential; all of these place a heavy economic burden on a society as a whole.

And for many of us, and for me, as I know for many of you, this subject also evokes vivid personal memories. I grew up in the Great Depression. I shall never forget the hopelessness that I saw so starkly etched on so many faces—the silent gratitude of others lucky enough to enjoy three square meals a day, or sometimes even one.

I recall in my native State of California in the 1930's, a family that I knew, that I went to school with, subsisted on bread and gravy, bread and milk, beans. And later on in the 1930's, in North Carolina, families who knew nothing much more than black-eyed peas, turnip greens.

We have come a long way since then, but we still have a long way to go.

The question is: What will we do about it?

We begin with the troublesome complex of definitions and causes.

Experts can argue—and they do—and you will—about the magnitude of the problem: About how many are hungry, how many malnourished, and how severely they are malnourished. Precise statistical data remain elusive and often contradictory. However, Dr. Arnold Schaefer, the man in charge of the National Nutrition Survey, recently made this cautious but forceful observation. He said:

We have been alerted by recent studies that our population who are "malnutrition risks" is beyond anticipated findings, and also that in some of our vulnerable population groups—preschool children, the aged, teenagers, and the poor—malnutrition is indeed a serious medical problem.

We don't know just how many Americans are actually hungry and how many suffer from malnutrition, who eat enough and who don't eat the right things. But we do know there are too many Americans in both categories.

We can argue its extent. But hunger exists.

We can argue its severity, but malnutrition exists.

The plain fact is that a great many Americans are not eating well enough to sustain health.

We see, then, that the problem of hunger and malnutrition is, really, two separate problems. One is to ensure that everyone is able to obtain an adequate

diet. The second is to ensure that people actually are properly fed, where they have the ability to obtain the adequate diet.

On the one hand, we are dealing with problems of income distribution. On the other hand, with problems of education, habit, taste, behavior, personal preferences—the whole complex of things that lead people to act the way they do, to make the choices they do.

The answers to many of these questions are difficult to come by. The very fact that the same question evokes so many different, conflicting answers is itself testimony as to how fragile is the basis of our knowledge.

Assuming we can agree on definitions, and the causes of malnourishment, how do we eradicate it?

Now some will answer that the magic ingredient is money, and money certainly is one ingredient, and a very important one. The more than \$5 billion that I have proposed for new or expanded programs for food and family assistance next year would go a long way toward bringing the problem under control.

In this connection, I would urge each of you in this great conference to enlist yourself in an effort to win passage of three landmark pieces of legislation I have already recommended to Congress.

One of these is what many observers consider to be the most important piece of domestic legislation proposed in the past 50 years, the establishment of a floor under the income of every American family.

For the first time—Mr. Moynihan please notice—for the first time, this new family assistance plan would give every American family a basic income, wherever in America that family may live. For the first time, it would put cash into the hands of families because they are poor, rather than because they fit certain categories. When enacted, this measure alone will either supplement the incomes or provide the basis for the incomes of 25 million American men, women, and children.

Our basic policies for improvement of the living conditions of the poor are based on this proposition: That the best judge of each family's priorities is that family itself, that the best way to ameliorate the hardships of poverty is to provide the family with additional income—to be spent as that family sees fit.

Now, some will argue with this proposition. Some argue that the poor cannot be trusted to make their own decisions, and therefore, the Government should dole out food, clothing, and medicines, according to a schedule of what the Government thinks is needed.

Well, I disagree. I believe there are no experts present in this great gathering who know more about the realities of hunger and malnutrition than those among you who are here because you have suffered from it; or than those among you who are here who do suffer from it, from great cities, from wornout farms, from barren reservations, from frozen tundra, and tiny islands half a world away.

The task of Government is not to make decisions for you or for anyone. The task of Government is to enable you to make decisions for yourselves. Not to see the truth of that statement is fundamentally to mistake the genius of democracy. We have made too many mistakes of this type—but no more. Our job is to get resources to people in need and then to let them run their own lives.

And now I would stress that all of you who have been so strong and effective in achieving a breakthrough on national awareness on hunger, will become an equally strong citizen lobby for welfare reform. The needs of the poor range far beyond food, though that is often the most visible and heart-rending aspect

of poverty. More basically, they need money with which they can meet the full range of their needs, from basic shelter, to medicine, to clothes for school, to transportation. And they need these resources in a program framework that builds incentives for self-support and family stability.

Let the reform of the bankrupt welfare system be the next great cause of those who come together here today.

Now the second measure that I would especially urge your support for is one that you will be considering in your deliberations. It is the reform and expansion of the food stamp program. I requested this in my May 8 message on hunger. This has been designed to complement the welfare program. While the welfare proposals may be subject to long debate, I hope and expect the Congress will act quickly on the expanded food stamp plan.

The Nation's food programs have been shot through with inequities—notably, the fact that many counties have not participated, and the fact that because food stamps had to be bought with cash many of the neediest were unable to participate.

We are pressing hard to bring every county into one or other of the food distribution programs, and the new food stamp bill would provide stamps free to those most in need—while expanding the program to a level that would reach \$2.5 billion a year when fully implemented.

In a related matter, we already are greatly expanding our school lunch programs, with the target of reaching every needy school child with a free or reduced-cost lunch by the end of the current fiscal year.

Now, there is a third measure, a third measure which at first will seem unrelated, but which is directly related to this conference. I ask your support for the Commission on Population Growth and the American future which I have proposed to Congress and which has been most favorably received, not only in the Congress, but by church and civic organizations throughout the Nation.

America, I believe, has come to see how necessary it is to be responsibly concerned with this subject. In proposing the Commission, I also declared that it would be the goal of this Administration to provide "adequate family planning services within the next 5 years to all those who want them but cannot afford them." There are some 5 million women in low income families who are in exactly that situation. But I can report that the steps to meet that goal have already been taken within the administration, and the program is underway.

Taken together, these three measures would virtually eliminate the problem of poverty as a cause of malnutrition.

Their dollar cost is high, but their practical benefits to the Nation are immense.

I know that your panels have advanced proposals for massive efforts on many fronts. They demonstrate that the goal cannot be won by government alone.

It is for each to ask how he, individually, can respond to the questions being asked here. For example:

- can foods be better labeled, be made more nutritious and be fortified with available additives?
- can industry, the schools, government, and citizens individually join effectively in a program of public education?
- can school lunch programs feasibly be improved?
- can voluntary programs by citizens and community organizations teach people what to eat, to close the knowledge gap?

The fact that so many groups are represented here today is itself evidence of a new sense of community responsibility, of industry responsibility, of individual responsibility. The fact that so many women are represented here, especially, is evidence of an enormous resource, particularly in the volunteer field, a resource that can do so much to ensure our success.

I, of course, in my official capacity, have already indicated legislative programs that I shall be supporting. But speaking now as one who from time to time can act in a volunteer capacity, I know the power of simply dropping a word as to what a President or a potential President does in certain fields.

I recall in your field, about 18 months ago I was being interviewed on a talk show. I was asked how I kept my weight down—that was my problem rather than the other way around. I answered—I thought rather low-key—that the doctor had told me to eat cottage cheese. The difficulty is that I don't like cottage cheese. I said I took his advice, but I put catsup on it.

You can't imagine how many letters I got. The dairy industry wrote and told me that I should like cottage cheese. The catsup industry wrote and told me to try it on my cereal. And others wrote and said catsup with cottage cheese had to be unhealthy. I pointed to the fact that my grandmother lived to be 92 and she ate it all her life, so that was the answer.

I use this facetious example to only indicate that the power of example, not just from a President, but from those in this room in the whole field of not just how much, but how and what we eat with regard to diet can be tremendous.

Now, I want to turn to—with Dr. Mayer's suggestion and his approval—to a very important procedural point, one I discussed with him when he took the position which he is filling and one I wish to speak directly to you about.

We have not attempted to program those in this room. We have not attempted to program you as to the questions you may ask or the answers and recommendations that you will make.

I expect to read that you had a lively difference of opinion during this conference. As a matter of fact, I have already read about a lively difference of opinion that you have had during this conference and that is as it should be. From an airing of views of all sides, answers and ideas will appear, answers and ideas are what we seek in this process. Obviously, if we knew all the answers we would not have convened the conference in the first place. That is why you are here.

I will say this: I want to speak quite directly. I can imagine in this room are many people who have attended White House conferences before. For 22 years I have been watching White House conferences. I have attended them and I have seen the effort that went into them, an enormous voluntary dedicated effort. I have seen it too often wither away in futility as the reports gathered dust on Government shelves.

Well, beginning with this conference, that is going to change. It will be the policy of this administration to follow up each White House conference, beginning with this conference, with a second meeting 1 year later, bringing together the key participants of the original conference to re-examine its findings and to measure what has been done about implementing them. We believe that is the only proper procedure.

I know that you take your work seriously and we are going to take your report seriously. I expect the results of this conference to be not just words, but action.

This conference marks a coalescing of the national conscience; it marks a triumph of the American system.

I realize that there is a ready disposition whenever we confront an ill that is still uncorrected in America, to cry that "the system" is corrupt, or "the system" has failed.

Our so-called "system" has been under heavy assault, not from one quarter but from many quarters.

But let us remember that that system is what has brought us here together today in this conference. It is a system that embraces compassion and practicality; it has given us the abundance that allows us to consider ending hunger and malnutrition.

Ours is the most productive and the most generous country the world has ever known. Less than 5 percent of our population—according to Secretary Hardin, Secretary of Agriculture—produces enough food to feed all the American people and to supply the needs of millions in other countries as well. In the years since World War II the United States has provided more than \$30 billion in food, in the form of aid, to needy nations and peoples abroad.

I have traveled to most of the nations of the world, in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Do you realize that in most of the world today a conference like this would be meaningless because those nations would lack the resources to produce the food to meet the objectives that this conference may decide should be met or lack the resources to purchase the food which they themselves would not be able to produce?

It is precisely because our system has succeeded so well that we are now able to address the goals of this conference and the fact that we are gathered here is an example of one of the greatest strengths of that same system. It has a capacity for self correction, for self-regeneration; its constant reaching out to identify new or additional needs and to meet those needs, the readiness of its citizens to join in that effort, volunteering their time and their talents, as you are volunteering your time and your talents today.

This Nation has the capacity to provide an adequate diet for every American. The calling of this conference demonstrates that we have the will to achieve this goal. What we need is to find the most effective means for doing so consistent with maintaining the vitality of the system that makes it all possible.

And so I will review your recommendations with great care.

And I will ask you to go about drawing up those recommendations with equally great care.

My fellow Americans, as you begin this conference I commit to your concern the lives of millions of Americans, too young, too old, or too hurt by life to do without your help. I commit to your concern the not less serious task of helping to bring the rest of America to understand what we seek and to join us in adding this new dimension to the concept of American democracy. For at this very moment we are gathered at one of those great historical moments when it becomes possible for all of us to act a little better than we are, and in so doing, to leave this great and good Nation a little better because we were there.



# LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

DECEMBER 24, 1969

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I have the honor to transmit to you the report of your first White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health. You announced on May 6, 1969, that you would call such a conference to advise you, the Congress, and the American people on the development of a national policy aimed at eliminating hunger and malnutrition due to poverty and at improving the nutritional health of all Americans. On June 11, 1969, you appointed me to organize the conference.

A great deal of preliminary work was done during the summer and the fall of 1969 by 26 panels and by eight task forces. The panels were made up of academic, medical, industry, and agriculture experts, as well as citizens chosen because of their particular concern rather than expertise. The task forces represented vast segments of our population such as social action groups, women's organizations, industrial and consumer interests, professional organizations, and religious denominations. All 800 or so participants in the preparatory work were highly conscious of their responsibility and spent considerable time in work and travel to insure that the 2,200 additional members of the Conference be provided with thoughtful and detailed provisional recommendations and background material.

Panel and task force members met for the whole week starting Sunday, November 30. The full Conference started on December 2, when you addressed nearly 5,000 persons at the opening plenary session. The Conference lasted 3 days during which groups were meeting in 30 different rooms with intense and constructive discussions taking place. Following your instructions, the membership of the Conference—and of each discussion group—was as broad as possible. University professors and students, physicians, old and young, industry leaders and technicians, representatives of consumer organizations, members of all main religious denominations and of minority organizations, members of women's organizations with membership totaling over 60 million women, labor leaders, representatives of health organizations, agricultural and trade organizations, social action groups from all economic levels ranging from the National Association of Manufacturers to various organizations dealing with the very poor—and last but not least, over 400 of the very poor themselves: black, Mexican-American, Puerto Ricans, white, Indians, Alaskan natives, inhabitants of the Pacific Trust territories, and of our Carriibbean dependencies and migrant laborers were brought together to discuss the recommendations submitted to them by the panels and the task forces.

The recommendations which this volume contains were the final outcome of the deliberations of the Conference. As such, their sponsorship is much broader than that of the original groups which prepared the preliminary recommendations.

Because the identification of undernourished and malnourished groups is basic to any corrective program, three panels dealt with various aspects of the surveillance of the state of nutrition of the American people. The surveillance

system they designed can also be used for the monitoring of the effectiveness of Federal and State and local corrective programs. They recommended that prime responsibility for such a surveillance system be placed in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Detailed recommendations concerning administration, methods, standards, and personnel are given in the first section of the report.

Section II deals with the specialized problems of certain specific groups: Pregnant and nursing women, children and adolescents, adults prone to degenerative diseases, the sick, the aging, as well as groups for which the Federal Government has statutory responsibility—inhabitants of Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Trust territories, the citizens of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, the American Indians and Alaskan natives, the migrant workers, inhabitants of the District of Columbia, and the military. All panels of this section emphasized that special programs could only be considered on the basis of adequate provision of food stamps in adequate amounts—including the provision of free food stamps for the very poor, a realistic family allowance, or a combination of the two programs. All panels also emphasized the desirability of better health services with a strong nutrition component. Nutrition education was considered an essential part of all special programs (though it could not replace food or money for food). The panels dealing with children, adolescents, and adults emphasized the need for better facilities for exercise as well as nutrition programs. The requirements for services as well as food or money are particularly apparent for the aging. The fact that a thorough overhaul of the administrative machinery dealing with special geographic groups is long overdue, that greater emphasis must be placed on health and human values will be apparent to you as you read the recommendations dealing with these categories of Americans.

The four panels dealing with various aspects of our food policies all directed their recommendations at simplifying legislation, permitting greater innovation by industry in the development of new and better foods while, at the same time, insuring better protection of the consumer than is available now as regards safety, grading of quality, and meaningful disclosure of content and nutritional value. The recommendations of these panels should lend themselves particularly well to the rapid development of legislative proposals.

Four panels dealt with education at preschool and school, university, and community levels as well as with the use of the various media. The recommendations of panels concerned with school and academic interests should greatly improve the quality of nutrition teaching from Head Start to medical school. Community programs suggested better uses of community aides and of feeding programs in popular nutrition education. The group dealing with the media was particularly innovative in their suggestions concerning the use of radio, television, reading material, symbols and slogans, and suggested constructive ways by which media could cooperate with educators. Again, all four panels predicated their recommendations on the availability of vastly improved food programs, including free food stamps and free school lunches, or adequate cash assistance. A subpanel headed by a well-known judge made important recommendations pertaining to misinformation and deception through the media.

Four panels dealt with problems of food distribution. Commercial distribution of food of good quality at the lowest possible price will be greatly facilitated if the type of Government and managerial assistance recommended is made available to food distributors in poor rural and city areas.

The family is and should continue to be the basic unit for delivery of food. A number of recommendations pertaining to family reciprocity of food, and of services rendered to the family by the Government and the community, and to the continued role of philanthropic foundations were evolved by a far-seeing panel. Recommendations dealing with Government food programs and family assistance were very thoughtfully designed by a cooperative and hard-working panel. They recommend basic improvements in certification, administration, and level of support of the various food programs. In particular, they analyzed the need for self-certification for food stamps, suggested novel and more uniform methods of distribution, and recommended cheaper schedules and free food stamps for the very poor. They described desirable improvements of commodity distribution programs while these still exist. The relevant panel recognized as did other concerned panels, that food programs should be eventually replaced by income maintenance at an adequate level and discussed various estimates of long-term goals. The panel also discussed specific changes in the financing and administration of school lunch programs.

The panel dealing with mass feeding programs, which had a high level of competence in this specialized field addressed itself to schools, hospitals, Veterans Administration, military and penal feeding systems, and suggested measures which would insure large possible economies as well as detailed improvements in existing methods of feeding communities.

Panels entrusted with advising Government emphasized the need for more concentrated and centralized authority concerning nutrition: They recommended that an officer at subcabinet level head nutrition activities of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and that coordinating nutrition activity be continued in the Executive Office of the President.

The panel dealing with agriculture made far-reaching recommendations concerning, among others, vocational technical training of workers in agriculture, modernization of land use, tenant contracts, farm credit, agricultural extension, aid in establishment of cooperatives to meet the needs of deprived small farmers in America, and suggested other measures to bring net income for producers and farm laborers to the level of others in the U.S. economy.

Industry leaders were most cooperative and forward-looking in their consideration, in four panels, of problems of food manufacturing and processing (including the preparation of enriched and more nutritious foods), of retailing and distribution (with particular emphasis on those measures which would help poor consumers), of packaging and labeling (including the meaningful description of significant nutritional information) and of promotion and advertising (including the launching of large-scale effective nutrition education programs.)

The panels dealing with voluntary action by farmers and industry as well as the primarily professional panels emphasized the need for urgent measures to combat the more acute problems of hunger and malnutrition due to poverty, to improve the outreach and quality of existing food programs and to ensure an increased buying power for our poorest citizens.

Very much the same type of concern was expressed, in somewhat more detailed and forceful language, by task forces representing citizens groups. A joint resolution was presented by the community action task force, the women's organization task force, the student's task force, the consumers' task force, the religious action task force, and the health organizations' task force. This joint statement was presented for a vote to the Conference as a whole at the closing plenary session, not for specific approval of all points but for a

general expression of the groups on order of priorities. The health task force and many professional persons were strongly in favor of free school lunches as soon as possible for needy children but not for all other children who could afford to pay. A very large part of the audience, while enthusiastically in favor of the concept of family assistance and desirous of seeing support at a realistic level permitting good nutrition as well as the acquisition of other necessities, was not willing to be committed to a single target figure, unrelated to geography, work incentives, and minimum wages, and unaccompanied by any order of magnitude of time of achievement. The final vote had, therefore, a symbolic significance only, representing essentially an endorsement of principles. In some ways, this may well increase its significance. The first priority—need for urgent action—was one which received universal support from panels, from the task forces and from the Conference. You were gracious enough to converse at length on this point with some of the delegates from the Conference. I know that they and their colleagues deeply appreciated the fact that their President shares their concern.

While the recommendations of the Conference are arousing active interest within your Executive Office, in the executive departments, at State level and in both Houses in the Congress of the United States and while I know that under your leadership tremendous strides will be made in the implementation of many or most of them, I believe that the greatest contribution of the Conference may well be of a different order.

The demonstration that, at a time when divisions and confrontations are common in our land, forceful and sometimes militant Americans of all walks of life and persuasion can be brought together and, after spirited discussion, agree on common priorities in the service of the country and of one's fellowman, is deeply reassuring. The fact that conservatives could be shown to display compassion, and a desire for reform, that liberals could be shown to display restraint and responsibility, that the young could work with the middle-aged, that academics could speak in intelligible fashion to the poor, that minorities could see the common interest, that the majority could demonstrate a new concern for the minorities—all this made the meeting, in the words of an eminent bishop, a member of the Conference, "as close to a mass religious experience as any event in [his] lifetime." Scores of letters from participants received since the end of the Conference confirm that this was a very general feeling.

Let me conclude this letter of transmittal by thanking you for the honor you bestowed upon all nutritionists in the Nation, and upon me personally, in asking me to organize the Conference. I want also to express my gratitude for the complete freedom you gave me in selecting the detailed topics and the membership of the Conference, for your continued counsel and support, and for your trust in the soundness of the results. I can think of no historical example of a presidential conference as completely divorced from any partisan influence, as broad in its membership, and as free in its expression as this, the first White House Conference of your administration. All of us who had the privilege to participate in this unique venture hope that you will find its long-term achievements worthy of your confidence.

Sincerely,

JEAN MAYER,

*Special Consultant to the President.*

THE PRESIDENT,  
*The White House,*  
*Washington, D.C.*