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**“If it’s good for you, it’s good for the nation!”
The Moral Regulation of Nutrition in Canada,
1930 - 1945.**

by

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A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of

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Abstract

This thesis considers the emergence of nutrition as a national concern in Canada in the 1930s and 1940s. It examines how nutrition came to be a site of moral regulation, describing the cooperation and conflicts that developed among the various interested parties, including governmental departments, national and local organizations, and a range of “unofficial experts.”

Two themes are emphasized in this thesis. First, that nutrition work in Canada has historically been initiated and performed by women, and second, that the dissemination of nutritional advice is facilitated by discourses of risk. It is argued that the contributions of Michel Foucault, in particular his concepts of governmentality and biopower, are useful for understanding the moral regulation of nutrition. As Hunt (1999) notes, moral regulation emerges from below and from the middle, as well as above, thus the push toward responsabilization is shown to originate from a range of sources.

It is concluded that notions of risk and morality are fundamental to the problematization of nutrition and its regulation in Canada.

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Those in my life outside of the academic world may struggle to comprehend it, may question the usefulness of the pursuit or wonder about my passion for Sociology. They nonetheless were very supportive throughout this process, and I am lucky to have such a family.

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Introduction

“Delicious, and nutritious too!” “Part of a “nutritious” breakfast.” “Busy? Don’t forget about proper nutrition!” Nutrition has become part of the daily lexicon, but what does it mean to speak of nutrition? Many of us fret about nutrition, but what exactly are we worrying about? And moreover, *why* are we worried?

Overview of the Project

Considering its prominence in contemporary Western society, establishing a satisfactory definition of nutrition proves to be a surprisingly difficult task. Literally, it refers to the process of nourishing or being nourished; in other words, obtaining those nutrients which are necessary for survival. While historically not always the case, our basic requirements are at least theoretically met thanks to the range of foods available to us, and thus the focus of nutrition science has shifted from concerns about “not enough” food to the question of the “right” foods. Nutrition is thus perhaps more commonly understood as the *right combination* of nutrients. Hence, *Canada’s Food Guide* directs us to the recommended servings of grain products, vegetables and fruit, milk products, meat and alternatives. Nutrition labels¹ outline for the consumer the caloric and nutrient

¹ While ingredient listing has been in place for many years, standardized nutrition labeling is new to Canada, the result of lobbying by interest groups such as CSPI (Centre for Science in the Public Interest). The federal government introduced it in 2001.

breakdown of food products. The consumer need only have a rudimentary knowledge of the significance of these contents in order to make an informed choice.

However, medical or scientific definitions cannot capture the divergent viewpoints of what in fact constitutes “proper” nutrition and exactly how this should be obtained. High-carb, low-carb, low-fat, high protein, no meat, all meat, or liquid diet...the arguments are endlessly complicated and contradictory. But as it is not my intention to resolve these differences, the lack of consensus can be left aside for now. What interests me, and thus is the focus of this work, is how and why nutrition emerged as a *social problem*. Leaving the particulars out of the mix, why do people *care* about nutrition? The short answer, I would submit, is that we’ve been *made* to care. We have been taught the importance of eating “properly”, its association with “right” living, and we have internalized this to the extent that even small children know whether something is “good or bad” for them.

This idea of “goodness” is fundamental to this discussion. While food sensitivities may necessarily render certain foods off-limits for some individuals,² very few foods are universally dangerous, and as has been repeatedly demonstrated, ideas about “good” and “bad” foods are both historically and culturally specific.³ However, we must be clear about how these terms are understood. Good and bad, in this context, may be used to convey the palatability of foods, an understanding of their nutritional value, or perhaps a

² The apparent growth in childhood allergies related to food has created another set of social regulations, particularly within educational settings. “Peanut-Free Zones” for example, are commonplace among Ontario schools. As with the larger issue of nutrition, the identification of food intolerances in children (such as celiac, lactose, etc.) may prove to have both physiological and social elements.

³ See, for example, Levi-Strauss 1969; Harris 1985; Michie 1987; Visser 1986; among others.

moral inclination, and these may overlap or contradict one another. For the purposes of this work, the latter interpretations are most significant. But a further clarification is necessary with respect to moral inclination, which should be understood here not in the sense invoked by vegetarians or animal rights activists, nor as communicated through religious proscriptions, but rather, as internalized disciplinary messages which guide our behaviour.⁴

I thus conceive of nutrition as a *process*, involving knowledge of the “goodness” of foods and “proper” eating habits, and the active practice of these habits. The process of nutrition is informed by notions of risk, morality, and discipline; these will be elaborated below.

To consider the history of nutrition is to take on, as Kamminga and Cunningham note, “an enormous subject which spreads across the history of food, its production and distribution, the history of diet and eating habits, the history of laboratory investigations of animal physiology and of foodstuffs, and the history of society, not to mention the history of climate and soil” (1995:1). I do not propose such an ambitious undertaking here. This thesis examines nutritional work in Canada from 1930 to 1945. There are several reasons for focusing upon this particular period: First, increased international attention to nutrition prompts the federal government to formally identify nutrition as a national concern. Second, as the country deals with the effects of the Depression, there is

⁴ Of course, religious beliefs, philosophical decisions, or medical conditions are important factors in dietary restrictions and inclinations. I am, however, using this idea of moral inclination quite broadly, to suggest that if none of the above factors were at issue, nor indeed, economic circumstance, one would nonetheless have a list of foods considered acceptable and unacceptable.

a shift in concern from having *enough* food to greater interest in ensuring *appropriate* kinds of food are available. Accordingly, there is a shift in governance through nutritional discourse. This new emphasis on health through balanced diet becomes especially important as the country goes to war, yet for the most part is independent of the restrictions associated with wartime rationing. Third, women's food activities of the era - as purchasers and preparers of food, and (primarily unofficial) nutrition educators - take on increased public and political significance. Finally, it is during this period that the rhetoric of risk becomes a key part of nutritional discourses that are part of a pattern of the *problematization* of food and nutrition.

Outline of the Thesis

In essence, this is an analysis of *governance*. Who controls information about nutrition, how is it disseminated, and what are the agendas of the various parties? Moreover, how does nutrition become an aspect of *self-care*? To address these questions, several theoretical and conceptual approaches will be employed. Following Foucault, what I propose is a bio-politics of nutrition in Canada during this period. His notions of biopower and governmentality are thus fundamental to this work. To demonstrate the connections between formal government initiatives and their local implementation, I will selectively draw upon Donzelot's *The Policing of Families*⁵, as well as Valverde's examination of women as guardians of both the private home and public health. Both will be considered within the larger body of work on morality and risk. Selected articulations of risk theory are also useful for understanding the subjective nature and popular

⁵ My use of Donzelot's work is limited to his discussions of "Government through the Family". I am not in accordance with the psychoanalytical aspects of the text.

acceptance of nutritional advice. As will be argued below, these respective approaches work most effectively in tandem. Finally, based on Hunt's (1999) articulation, I suggest that nutrition education is in fact a moral regulation project. These respective theoretical approaches are the focus of Chapter One.

A brief overview of nutrition history is presented in Chapter Two. Attention to nutrition has assumed both scientific and social problem approaches, and some key moments of each perspective are described here. The early efforts of the federal government of Canada with respect to nutritional awareness and education proved to be domestically problematic and internationally embarrassing. The dearth of knowledge about what was being done and those responsible for it prompted an official program intended to coordinate and regularize the nutritional messages being directed at Canadians. Chapter Three introduces some of the key organizations involved in nutrition work in Canada in the 1930s, noting women's lengthy history of assuming responsibility for dietary matters, as well as their positioning as the target audience for nutritional advice. These patterns become even more evident throughout the war years, as discussed in Chapter Four. Further, there is a more explicit appeal to notions of risk and ethical behaviour during this period, as poor nutritional habits become constructed as threats to the war effort. The relationship of individual responsibility and social problems is noted throughout this thesis, and is revisited in Chapter Five.

The problematization of nutrition in Canada from 1930-1945 has contemporary implications, both with respect to how the public becomes educated about "healthy" eating and whether the necessary motivations are still part of our national consciousness.

Put another way, what “risks” are we willing to take? Moreover, in terms of their effects, are those risks understood as being individual or social, or both? As this thesis demonstrates, in the 1930s and 1940s, all Canadians, but principally women, were expected to ask the same questions.

Chapter One: **Regulating Proper Nutrition: A Theoretical Overview**

This thesis is informed by and employs the concepts and arguments discussed below. All of these can contribute significantly to an understanding of the emergence of nutrition as a social problem in Canada, and I consider the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Donzelot, Mariana Valverde, and Alan Hunt to be for the most part complementary in approach.¹ The concept of risk continues to expand as a focus of sociological inquiry, and some of the key perspectives are noted here. It is my contention that risk is most usefully understood in tandem with ideas of governance.

Foucault's Biopower

While Foucault does not expressly construct a theory of power (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983; McNay 1994; Ransom 1997), it is nonetheless a key element of his overall work. Foucault offers a conception of power² in the modern era that is markedly different from the “possession” characteristic of monarchical regimes. In contrast, power “circulates...it is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hand, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization” (Foucault 1980b:98). Moreover, there is a transition from negative, repressive power to a power which is *productive*: “it produces reality; it produces

¹ Foucault's lack of attention to gender has been widely critiqued (see for example Bartky 1988, Sawicki 1991, Hekman 1996, Ramazanoglu 1993).

² This term is used for convenience – Foucault himself notes (1984): “I scarcely use the word ‘power,’ and if I use it on occasion it is simply as shorthand for the expression I generally use: ‘relations of power.’ ”

domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault 1979:194). There is a push by the state to centralize information and normalize knowledge through governance of the population (Foucault 2003 (1976): 244). Accordingly, areas of everyday life previously considered private (and thus unregulated) are brought under surveillance for observation and study (and ultimately, regulation, though often under a benevolent guise). Foucault (1980a) refers to this development as the emergence of biopower.

Biopower focuses upon individual bodies (as objects to be manipulated or disciplined) but also involves a broader concern with the human species (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983; Foucault 1980a, 1981, 2003). Using the metaphor of “the flock”, Foucault describes “a strange technology of power treating the vast majority of men as a flock with a few as shepherds” (1981: 231). But it is not enough for the shepherd to be aware of the overall condition of the flock: “That of each sheep must also be known” (1981: 237). Gastaldo (1997: 113) defines biopower as “the mechanisms employed to manage the population and discipline individuals.” There is recognition of the connection between state power and the welfare of the people, and thus a need for concrete knowledge about those issues and actions that may affect the balance.

As these are uncharted territories, it is necessary to establish some standards or benchmarks against which they may be measured. As Hutton (1988:126) points out, “Only as such behaviour becomes subject to public scrutiny does it become necessary to define the boundaries of its legitimacy.” These boundaries are not established through intensified legal restraints or prohibitions; rather, a consequence of biopower is “the growing importance assumed by the action of the *norm*, at the expense of the juridical

system of the law” (Foucault 1980a: 144, emphasis added).³ This is not to say that the justice system becomes irrelevant, but there is a gradual incorporation of judicial law into “a continuum of apparatuses (medical, administrative, and so on) whose functions are for the most part regulatory” (1980a: 144). The historical context is significant – at this point in modernity (eighteenth century), power could concentrate on life, on living beings, as opposed to a sovereign power directed at decisions about death (Foucault 1980a: 141-143; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983:133-140). As Foucault writes:

Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, and individual and collective welfare, forces that could be modified, and a space in which they could be distributed in an optimal manner. For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence” (1980a: 142).

As individuals were learning about “having a body,” it became the focus of analysis under biopower. Through the apparatuses mentioned above, individual bodies are studied to glean information which is used to establish norms and then are in turn fed back to the social body as benchmarks of behaviour for an entire population. Some form of regulation of bodies is detectable throughout history, but unlike earlier forms of (often violent) repression, with modern power bodies are *disciplined*, and this discipline is more subtle and continuous (exercised through the “net-like organization” described above).

As Foucault explains in *Discipline and Punish*:

Discipline makes possible the operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism and which, for the spectacle of public events, substitutes the uninterrupted play of calculated gazes (1979:177).

Techniques or apparatuses are employed to produce “docile bodies” (Foucault 1979:138):

“A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (Foucault

³ See “The Social Extension of the Norm” (1976, reprinted in *Foucault Live*, 1996).

1979:136). One key disciplinary technique is surveillance; an example of this process is the “examination,” which is described by Foucault as follows:

The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them (1979:184).

Beyond the ritualized examination, the “subjects who have to be seen” (Foucault 1979:187) experience a more diffuse surveillance, one which “compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*” (1979:183, emphasis in original). The knowledge collected on individual bodies is used toward governing the population (Miller 1987; Gastaldo 1997). The gathering of this knowledge occurs through a number of means, though Foucault pays particular attention to the importance of writing.⁴ Documentation, through the keeping of records, registers, and so forth, as well as the keeping of journals or notes on oneself, led to the study of individuals as “cases.” Foucault considers the recording of information to be essential to the constitution of the individual as a describable, analyzable object, and further, as facilitating a comparative system “that made possible the measurement of overall phenomena, the description of groups, the characterization of collective facts, the calculation of the gaps between individuals, their distribution in a given ‘population’” (Foucault 1979:190). Or, put more succinctly, “to classify, to form categories, to determine averages, to fix norms” (1979:190). Each individual body, with its unique characteristics, is a “case” which may be compared against a constructed norm: “Individual actions were to be referred to a whole that was to be a field of comparison and a space of differentiation. Individuals

⁴ See especially *Discipline and Punish*: “The Means of Correct Training” and “Technologies of the Self” (1988).

were to be differentiated from one another....Normalisation was to become one of the great instruments of disciplinary power” (Miller 1987:200).

The properties of the individual are not necessarily pre-existing. As John Ransom notes (1997:18): “Disciplines are...a means of inculcating properties in the individual that were not there before.”⁵ “Disciplinary power...*inserts* such qualities into individuals. ‘Individuals’ do not precede disciplinary power – they are produced by it” (1997:17, emphasis in original).⁶ Precisely what qualities are desirable is dependent upon the particular context; in his essay “Body/Power,” Foucault suggests: “One needs to study what kind of body the current society needs” (1980b: 58). The significance of this statement is twofold: it recognizes the social, political, and economic construction of norms, and suggests that these norms are not arbitrary, but in fact serve an important role in preserving the social order. Boundaries are established by the distinction of actions and behaviours as “normal” or “abnormal,” “sane” or “mad,” “harmless” or “dangerous” – a process of “binary branding”(Foucault 1979; Ransom 1997):

[T]he definition of behaviour and performance [is] on the basis of the two opposed values of good and evil; instead of the simple division of the prohibition, as practised in penal justice, we have a distribution between a positive pole and a negative pole; all behaviour falls in the field between good and bad marks, good and bad points (Foucault 1979:180).

These distinctions are further extended from the properties of the individual to the individual her/himself.⁷ As Ransom (1997:53) explains: “The object of assessment is

⁵ Foucault offers this explanation in *Discipline and Punish* (1979:170): “Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise.”

⁶ Ransom makes the point that this is not a total process – there is room for resistance and change: “Disciplines may make individuals, but not completely or finally” (1997:46).

⁷ See *Discipline and Punish* for an extended discussion; also Ransom 1997.

expanded from the restricted area of 'acts' ...to 'individuals themselves' and their 'value,' as to whether they are good or bad subjects." But the individual (or subject) is of interest only "insofar as he [can] contribute to the strength of the state" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983:139). People are a resource; the individual is not only a focus of biopower, but also one of its mechanisms.

Just as Foucault draws distinctions between early and modern forms of power, there is also a shift in his work from the *disciplinary* mechanisms heretofore described, and *regulatory* mechanisms. He asserts that by the latter half of the eighteenth century, we move away from discipline directed at bodies and toward a non-disciplinary power at the species level (2003 (1976): 241-245), or, to use his terminology, from anatomo-politics to biopolitics (1980a:139-141).⁸ As Foucault describes (2003 (1976): 243), "So after a first seizure of power over the body in an individualizing mode, we have a second seizure of power that is not individualizing but, if you like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but at man-as-species."

Foucault identifies several domains of biopower, but of particular importance for this study is how the phenomena of interest come to be regulated.⁹ Intervention may take a

⁸ It is important to note that while regulation (or governmentality) is often presented as distinct from the concept of discipline, Foucault makes clear that these should not be understood as mutually exclusive:

This [regulatory] technology of power does not exclude...disciplinary technology, but it does dovetail into it, integrate it, modify it to some extent, and above all, use it by sort of infiltrating it, embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques. This new technique does not simply do away with the disciplinary technique, because it exists at a different level, on a different scale, and because it has a different bearing area, and makes use of very different instruments (2003 (1976): 242).

⁹ These include knowledge of the population (birth and death rates, longevity, and so on), and control over human relations (with one another, and with their environment) (Foucault 1980a; 2003 (1976)).

number of forms, such as campaigns to promote hygiene, the work of charitable institutions, and eventually more subtle and more rational mechanisms such as safety standards and insurance (2003 (1976): 244). At the collective level, these phenomena may be standardized and made constant, in contrast to the variation and unpredictability among individuals. Nutrition would certainly seem to fit here, as “recommended daily allowances” are calculated based on population data, not individual menu choices. In Foucault’s articulation, nutrition guidelines are not disciplinary, but regulatory. In his view, nutrition educators, for example, are not working at the level of the body, but rather, “using overall mechanisms and acting in such a way as to achieve overall states of equilibration or regularity” (2003 (1976): 246). I would suggest a point of clarification with respect to the distinction Foucault draws between disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms: It seems to me that the *practice* of nutrition involves self-discipline, and indeed, work at the level of the individual body. However, in the education of the public through communication of nutrition advice, individual bodies are not being manipulated, but instead the “power of regularization” is at work (Foucault 2003 (1976)). The entire population is subject to standards applied to all. Thus I would submit that nutrition involves both disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms, though I will focus upon the latter. Similarly, I am more interested in the process of *how* this advice (or to use Foucault’s term, intervention) is disseminated throughout the social body¹⁰ than I am interested in the specific identities of those individuals responsible for the intervention (some of which will be reviewed in Chapters Two and Three). Following Foucault, what is really to be

¹⁰ Foucault has reservations about the term “the social body”: “What we are dealing with...is a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted” (2003 (1976): 245).

investigated are mechanisms of nutrition, but while I agree that these are regulatory in nature, I feel that their success is at least partially contingent upon individual discipline.

Throughout the following chapters, three primary technologies emerge as relevant to nutrition: gendered education and advice, a sense of morality and its enforcement, and notions of risk. A brief introduction to some of the key theoretical issues is offered here.

Moral Regulation: The Contributions of Donzelot, Valverde, and Hunt

Considering Foucault's attention to sexuality and self-care, it is surprising that gender does not have greater prominence in his work. In the 1930s and 1940s in Canada, feeding the family was considered women's responsibility.¹¹ Who better, then, than women to target with the expert advice from doctors, scientists, and dietitians? This is a key element of Jacques Donzelot's *The Policing of Families*. Donzelot contends that the family, through women, is a source of support for the state, an agent for enforcing the norm, upholding principles, and generally assuming responsibility for individuals. This "government through the family" idea removes pressure from the state, and serves to spread the regulatory mechanisms.

According to Donzelot, the professions (medical, educational) "partnered" with women in order to ensure their messages would reach all members of the household: "[T]his transformation of the family was not effected without the active participation of women. In working-class and bourgeois strata alike – albeit by quite different means and

¹¹ Of course, this is true outside of Canada as well, and the expectation is certainly not restricted to these decades.

with different results – women were the main point of support for all the actions that were directed toward a reformulation of family life” (1979: xxii). Donzelot identifies three strategies of government related to the family: moralization, normalization, and contract and tutelage. All are philanthropic, but clearly regulatory mechanisms. For instance, instead of gifts, advice and assistance were offered. Such a response was pragmatic on two fronts: first, it cost nothing, and secondly, by directing this advice to women, the state felt assured that it would be shared with the entire family. Charity was replaced by rehabilitation; the family must be made to recognize its (moral) failings and seek to overcome these. In order to ensure successful communication and ideally implementation of these strategies, there must be surveillance of the family. As Donzelot notes (1979: 69), “the new benevolence projected a line inside family life.” Moreover, the family itself becomes a mechanism (1979:93-95).

Valverde (1991, 1994) explores how philanthropic efforts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were directed at women and children, as a larger “investment in the future of the nation” (1991:19). The reformers expected a return on this investment, or as Valverde (1994: 221) puts it, moral profit. As much of her research focuses upon religious organizations and/or church-affiliated groups, the emphasis on moral, “Christian” behaviour among these is expected. However, Valverde also suggests that secular reformers invoked similar arguments: “Both religious and secular reformers...shared a belief that social and moral reform were inseparable” (1991:47). Indeed, the synthesis of religion and science (specifically, medicine) proved to be an extremely effective combination for communicating “right living” to the public.

Nutrition “reformers” were less explicitly religious, relying more heavily upon science to lend credibility to their message.¹² However, the moral message was alive and well; eating according to recommended medical guidelines was the right thing to do. As Valverde writes (1994:218):

[Moral regulation] is now more likely to use the language of biomedical science or of social work than the narratives of evangelism or Victorian melodrama: but it remains moral, in the sense of being aimed at the production of individual ethical subjectivity and the reproduction of the nation’s moral capital.¹³

While the respective analyses of Donzelot and Valverde are useful, I find Hunt’s (1999) articulation of moral regulation especially valuable, particularly his broad conceptualization of governance, which complements that of Foucault. Although the federal government fancied itself the voice of nutrition advice, as will be shown, most of their information was gathered from local efforts, and communicated *among* the people, not from a “top-down” approach. I thus appreciate Hunt’s observation that governance is not restricted to formalized relationships, and can in fact initiate from different social positions (1999:5). In outlining the characteristics of moral regulation projects, Hunt contends that they emerge from “below”, most commonly from “the middle” (1999:1-2; 198), voluntary efforts that are rarely formally coordinated.¹⁴ Like Donzelot, Hunt acknowledges the vital role of women in this process.

¹² This is part of a larger shift away from religious to secular approaches, most evident in the creation of the “social worker.” I am grateful to Alan Hunt for this observation.

¹³ Valverde intends this to refer to late 20th century society, but evidence suggests the shift to biomedical models and social reform was strongly in place by the 1930s in Canada.

¹⁴ Nutrition education in Canada is one of those occasions where formal coordination was at least attempted. The government believed itself to be, as Hunt describes, the new authority; whether this view was shared or translated into any practical changes is highly debatable.

Nutrition education in Canada from 1930-1945 shares two other characteristics of moral regulation projects as identified by Hunt (1999:1-4, 16-23). There is a clear link between the governance of self and the governance of others, and in this, one is reminded of the regulatory (and disciplinary) mechanisms of biopower. As Hunt writes, "Moral regulation involves acting on other people and in so doing acting upon themselves" (1999: 19). To use a familiar phrase, nutrition educators had to "walk the walk" not just "talk the talk." In other words, their own feeding behaviours had to emulate the advice they espoused.

Hunt echoes Valverde in his third point, asserting that issues of moral regulation continue to have great significance, though more often than not these are couched in less expressly moral terms, and fall under the mandate of social or medical agencies. This has certainly been the case with nutrition, which as will be illustrated in this work, has historically been fought over by groups insistent on including it as part of their directive.

The efforts of nutrition experts and educators to "correct" the habits of the malnourished Canadian people thus may be understood as a moral regulation project:

Moral regulation involves the deployment of distinctively moral discourses which construct a moralized subject and an object or target which is acted upon by means of moralizing practices. Moral discourses seek to act on conduct that is deemed to be intrinsically bad or wrong (Hunt 1999:6-7).

Moreover, moral regulation is an ongoing process, with "success" or "completion" rarely definable or attainable. This is consistent with Foucault's conception of power as

circulating, held by different people at different times. New nutritional advice emerges daily, and which version enjoys popularity varies almost as frequently. In light of state involvement in nutrition through government agencies, one could perhaps consider nutrition a political project, rather than a moral one. However, nutrition regulation takes many forms, and indeed, the bulk of the practical work is performed without government intervention and by a wide range of interested parties or agents. This corresponds with Hunt's criteria for moral regulation projects (1999:17).

What all the aforementioned authors share is the recognition of the relationship between moral regulation and governance. In his discussion of policing, Donzelot notes that surveillance was intended to improve the quality of the people, to build a stronger population. Valverde's concept of moral capital speaks to the need for the state to develop "character" among its people. To return to Foucault's insight mentioned above, the state requires certain kinds of bodies, and it regulates them accordingly. Hunt states this relationship succinctly: "All practices of governing involve some element of moral regulation" (1999:6).

I agree that governance requires moral regulation. People need to understand that there is a greater purpose for following the directives issued to them. As Foucault asks (1980b: 119), "If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it?" Yet while I concur that moral regulation is fundamental to governance, there is another factor at work that I feel deserves greater emphasis than the work to date has acknowledged, and that is the notion of *risk*. If governance is contingent upon moral regulation, I submit that it is necessarily

contingent on risk, as this is a key component of moral regulation. In the following sections, I explore the concept of risk, and risk theory more broadly, and how it is understood in this work. I also explore its compatibility with Foucault's conceptions of biopower, discipline, and governmentality.

An Overview of Risk Theory

Definitions of "good" nutrition must concomitantly be premised upon ideas of "poor" nutrition. If eating nutritiously is sensible, then ignoring such advice is foolhardy, or *risky*. The concept of risk is one which I contend is fundamental to nutritional discourse. Put simply, it is not enough to state what one should or should not eat; people generally demand an explanation *why* (particularly true of small children, but most adults are equally suspicious). And the stock answer, "because it is good (or bad) for you" is not sufficient. We want to know what will happen to us if we do or do not eat it. Acceptance or rejection of nutritional advice may very well depend on the answer to this question: what are the risks? Or perhaps this isn't the question; rather, the very *suggestion* of risk may itself be sufficient to alter our behaviour accordingly. We may not even question the details; knowing it poses a "risk" may be enough (and as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, this is often the case). In this study, the validity or probabilities of nutritional risks are not assessed. Rather, I am concerned with the *problematization* of risk; that is, how nutritional discourses mobilize concepts of risk, and the political motivations behind this strategy.

It is perhaps useful to begin with a clarification of what is meant by “risk.” An unstable concept, its meaning varies historically and culturally,¹⁵ but several distinctions are worth noting here. While “risk” is used to express “objective” probability, for some sociocultural perspectives risk is no longer understood as the odds of an event occurring; rather, the event itself may represent risk. According to Mary Douglas (1992), the neutrality characteristic of probabilistic notions of risk has been lost as risk becomes increasingly politicized. Wynne (1992:283) sees the term risk as being “laden with political and moral implications,” a description echoed by Beck (1992, 1998). While most sociocultural theorists concur that risk is a political concept, there is less agreement as to whether risk has some kind of objective tangibility, or is entirely a social construction. Dake (1992) posits that risks are always socially constructed, and Luhmann (1993:26) asserts “the concept does not indicate a fact existing independently of whether and by whom it is observed.” The issue is one of perception; as Ewald notes: “Nothing is a risk in itself; there is no risk in reality. But on the other hand, anything *can* be a risk; it all depends on how one analyzes the danger, considers the event” (1991: 199, emphasis in original).¹⁶ Yet others argue there is an empirical, objective element to risk. For instance, Roger Kasperson uses risk to mean “in part an objective threat of harm to people and in part a product of culture and social experience” (1992:158). Otway (1992) concurs that a good notion of risk recognizes the necessity of both subjective and objective components. And Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) and Beck (1992) argue that

¹⁵ For a genealogy of risk, see Renn 1992; Giddens 1998; Lupton 1999. Lupton also identifies six major categories of risk: environmental, lifestyle, medical, interpersonal, economic, and criminal.

¹⁶ This position is supported by Lupton 1995.

risks are both real and unreal, or perhaps as yet unrealized, with plenty of dangers already evident, and an inescapable awareness of potential dangers.

Some of the disagreement on this point may stem from whether “risk” is understood as replacing “danger,” or whether these should be considered separate concepts. Mary Douglas argues the terms have become synonymous: “The original connection [to probability] is only indicated by arm-waving in the direction of possible science: the word *risk* now means danger; *high risk* means a lot of danger” (1992:24, emphasis in original). As a result, Douglas argues, risk represents the negative:

The new sense of the word *risk* works because it can be strongly biased toward emancipation. The context of a shared commitment to emancipation bends its meaning to refer only to danger...now *risk* refers only to negative outcomes. The word has been pre-empted to mean bad risks (1992:24, emphasis in original).

Beck is also characterized as using the terms “danger” and “risk” interchangeably in his work (Giddens 1990; Lupton 1999), although I am not convinced this is a legitimate charge.¹⁷ My own interpretation of risk follows that of Giddens (1990:34), who argues that the two are closely related but not the same. He offers the example of the Middle Ages, a time when life was dangerous, but he contends “there was no notion of risk and there doesn’t seem in fact to be a notion of risk in any traditional culture” (1998:27). For Giddens, risk is a concept produced by a society preoccupied with controlling the unknown. As he writes: “The notion of risk becomes central in a society which is taking leave of traditional ways of doing things, and which is opening itself up to a problematic

¹⁷ In my reading of Beck, he seems to make distinctions between risks and perceptions, as well as threatening possibilities and risk itself. See, for example, Beck 1992: 21, 33-34, 52.

future” (1991:111).¹⁸ Although I find Giddens’ “institutionalised risk environments” a bit restrictive,¹⁹ his concept of “institutional reflexivity” may be applicable to nutritional advice and the efforts toward a “healthier” population. Institutional reflexivity is “the regularised use of knowledge about circumstances of social life as a constitutive element in its organisation and transformation” (1991:20).

While Giddens may underestimate the influence of everyday discourse, in which risk is used to convey the negative, the threatening, or the dangerous,²⁰ his observation above on regulation is important, and is in line with the regulatory mechanisms of Foucault’s biopolitics. Eliminating, or at least minimizing, risk is an important aspect of the process. However, if risks are to be eliminated, people must first know of their existence, and further, believe they are harmful and to be avoided, as opposed to forbidden avenues of dangerous pleasures. In this, the question of the probability of an event occurring is essentially irrelevant. Risk is significant only when it is constructed as related to something dangerous, requiring intervention on the part of experts (and with education, the citizenry more broadly). The association of risk with the negative or harmful – the moral overtones – is evident in three sociocultural perspectives on risk, which are considered below.

¹⁸ In this, I see overlap with Foucault’s conception of bio-power.

¹⁹ Examples of such environments Giddens identifies include competitive markets, such as the stock exchange or product markets.

²⁰ However, as Lupton (1999:148-172) points out, risk may be embraced as positive.

Cultural Perspective

In contrast to probabilistic models of risk, whose focus is restricted to assessment, cultural theories address aspects such as risk communication and risk perception, the politicization of risks, and social responses to risk. Structural and constructivist in nature, this perspective contends cultural factors, particularly institutional structure, social norms and policies determine what is perceived as risk and how the public will respond (Rayner 1992; Renn 1992). The work of Mary Douglas exemplifies this approach. Much of Douglas' work (including her collaboration with Aaron Wildavsky) focuses upon risk perception as a social process. She examines how "particular kinds of danger come to be selected for attention" (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982:8); namely, how cultural patterns elevate certain risks for concern. In this view, shared meanings are fundamental:

A cultural approach can make us see how community consensus relates some natural dangers to moral defects. According to this argument, dangers are selected for public concern according to the strength and direction of social criticism (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982:7).

Although some supporters of this perspective argue that it can be used to predict individual responses to risk (see, for example, Renn 1992), Douglas' work overwhelmingly focuses on groups. For Douglas, questions about risk are asked with respect to dangers to *society*, not the individual. She writes: "The question about risk has to be: how safe is safe enough for this particular culture? Asked in that form the question focuses choice more realistically than when perception of risk is referred to an imaginary culture-free individual"(1992:41-42).

As a result, definitions of acceptable risk or risk to be avoided are collective constructs. Douglas and Wildavsky (1982:174) argue views about risk "are not to be

considered as independent ideas or personal preferences so much as public statements tapping different social structures.” They maintain that most habits or behaviours are social, not individual, and that mutual monitoring in communities helps us to understand (and avoid) the dangers which threaten us:

In a tight community a man [sic] has his work cut out to meet the neighbours’ standards...A real-life risk portfolio is not a selection made by private ratiocination. In real life the social process slides the decision making and the prior editing of choices onto social institutions (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982:85).

This perspective may be interpreted as denying agency to the individual.²¹ Douglas does acknowledge that people have reasons for resisting information about risks, but gives the impression that this too is always a collective response. She argues that in risk perception, “humans act less as individuals and more as social beings who have internalized social pressures and delegated their decision-making processes to institutions” (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982:80). In Douglas’ descriptions (1982, 1985, 1996), rejections of advice pit “the public” vs. “the experts.” Individuals are discussed in respect to risks that are undertaken knowingly (a risk which Douglas and Wildavsky acknowledge to be different), but such behaviours are characterized as private affairs (1982:16-17).²²

In its attention to the influence of social structure and cultural patterns, the cultural perspective is useful in understanding responses to risk. However, its portrayal of the individual as “delegating” decisions to the state oversimplifies the processes of communication, interpretation, and negotiation that the recognition of risk entails. While

²¹ See, for example, Douglas’ discussion on risk communication (1996:187-188) and “isolates.”

²² Yet this is not necessarily the case, as one’s voluntary risks can bring involuntary risks to others. Although Douglas and Wildavsky do seem to recognize this, the issue is not reconciled in their work.

our institutions most certainly do play an important role in identifying (or constructing) risk, the idea that individual bodies (or the social body, for that matter) are mere recipients of information obscures the role of agency.²³ Furthermore, this perspective fails to attend to issues of power and self-interest (Rayner 1992); how/why do certain risks and not others enter the public consciousness?

Risk Society

“Risk society” is a term developed by Ulrich Beck to refer to the transition, uncertainty, and loss of tradition characteristic of late modernity. Beck argues we can no longer take traditional securities for granted, and the less we can rely on them, the more risks we have (Beck 1998:9-13). We experience, in his words, “manufactured uncertainty;” risk becomes an inescapable part of life, and we all face unknown risks. As he writes, “Risk becomes another word for ‘nobody knows’” (1998:12). However, it is unclear whether the risks have actually intensified or if it is our *perception* of risks that has done so. Beck challenges the relevance of this distinction:

Both sides converge, condition each other, strengthen each other, and because risks are risks in *knowledge*, perceptions of risks and risks are not different things, but one and the same (1992:55, emphasis in original).

We are dealing with possibilities, not necessarily real events. Nonetheless, access to knowledge is a key element of Beck’s vision of the risk society. He notes (1992:53) that

²³ Deborah Lupton argues that cultural theory and particularly Douglas’ contributions represent “an important counterpoint to the individualist focus that predominates in the realist perspective” (1999:56). I don’t disagree with this observation, but in dealing with the highly subjective nature of risk perception, I would argue that individuals warrant greater attention within the larger cultural context. I concur with Lupton (1995:88-90) that Douglas’ work is most useful in discussions of “externally-imposed risks” (for example, pollution or other environmental hazards). Note that this is a different meaning than the distinction drawn by Giddens (1998:27-28) between external and manufactured risks. For Giddens, “external” risks are unexpected, “accidents of fate.”

the kinds of information available and the depth of dependency on external knowledge influence how individuals respond to risk. In this, Beck recognizes the effects of wealth and education. Risk distribution adheres to class patterns (1992:35): "Poverty attracts an unfortunate abundance of risks. By contrast, the wealthy (in income, power, or education) can *purchase* safety and freedom from risk" (emphasis in original). Accordingly, risk consciousness and activism are more prevalent among the "protected" groups, not only due to education and the skills to become informed, but also because they can literally afford (the time and money) to do so. Regarding proper nutrition, for instance, one is able to worry about additives or calories only if one has a surplus of food and food choices. Comparing products' nutritional value requires a certain level of literacy on the part of the consumer. Economic circumstance is crucial: it is easier to scrutinize with a full pantry than with an empty stomach.

Beck highlights the role of external knowledge, describing the dangers which "lie in wait everywhere" (1992:54), and contends that we cannot rely upon our experiential knowledge or cognition to perceive them:

[T]he degree, the extent and the symptoms of people's endangerment are fundamentally *dependent on external knowledge*. In this way, risk positions create dependencies which are unknown in class situations; the affected parties are becoming *incompetent* in matters of their own affliction (1992:53, emphasis in original).

Beck argues that in late modernity, this external knowledge (sometimes expert knowledge) has come under scrutiny. In the absence of familiar securities, people begin to ask questions, challenge the way things are done; there is a greater politicization of risk: "This results in the generation of new alliances, of ad hoc activist groups, a new and different form of politics beyond traditional hierarchies" (Lupton 1999:66). In this, Beck

links risk to reflexivity; modernity confronts and critiques itself (Beck 1998; Giddens 1998; Lupton 1999). Beck also outlines the corresponding process of individualization, in which people seek out new certainties, formulate new biographies for themselves (Beck 1992; Lupton 1999). While there are elements of freedom and certainly agency to this process, there is also much risk involved in the loss of traditional certainties. As Lupton writes: "Life becomes less certain even while it is placed under one's control" (1999:71).

Like Beck, Giddens notes the end of nature and tradition, and the role of reflexivity in dealing with the breakdown of the familiar: "As customary ways of doing things become problematic, people must choose in many areas which used to be governed by taken-for-granted norms. Eating is an example: there are no traditional diets anymore" (1998:30). We are forced to engage with knowledges formerly inaccessible to us. However, unlike Beck, for whom reflexivity emerges from the *critique* of expert knowledges, Giddens contends that reflexivity is based upon *trust* in expert knowledges (Giddens 1990, 1991; Lupton 1999:82). In *The Consequences of Modernity*, Giddens writes: "*the nature of modern institutions is deeply bound up with the mechanisms of trust in abstract systems, especially trust in expert systems*" (1990:83, emphasis in original). This is not blind faith, however; Giddens notes that dissatisfaction with an "expert" may impel one to gather knowledge oneself, become cynical toward the field, or disengage from the system (though this is difficult to do and therefore uncommon) (1990:91). We "make a bargain with modernity" in terms of trust: "The nature of the bargain is governed by specific admixtures of deference and scepticism, comfort and fear" (1990:90).²⁴

²⁴ Giddens (1990:134-137) outlines four adaptive reactions to the "risk profile" of modernity: pragmatic acceptance, sustained optimism, cynical pessimism, and radical engagement.

While risk theory as articulated by Beck and Giddens, respectively, has some attractive features, it is not without criticisms. Like the cultural perspective, the risk society is most successful when focused upon global hazards, particularly environmental destruction. Beck's work in particular seems to reflect the 1980s preoccupation with nuclear disaster. This seems odd, considering the attention to the individual within this perspective, but it may be due in part to a problematic view of the individual. The self-reflexive, autonomous subject they describe is, while undeniably attractive, also idealistic. Both see the individual as "actively engaged in shaping his or her own biography and making decisions according to calculations of risk and opportunity" (Petersen 1997:192). However, there are constraints on such reflexivity that Beck and Giddens fail to acknowledge. Beck contends that with individualization, factors such as gender, ethnicity, and class are less influential in determining opportunities (1992:100, 127-138).²⁵ Yet, as mentioned above, the "protected groups" are in a position to be reflexive in ways that other people cannot afford. Deborah Lupton argues that Beck and Giddens' reflexive individual "is a socially and economically privileged person who has the cultural and material resources to engage in self-inspection. Many people, however, simply lack the resources and techniques with which to engage in the project of self-reflexivity" (1999: 114). Further, I suggest that even those who are fortunate enough to be able to aspire to such reflexivity are largely unaware (at the everyday, conscious level) of *all* the influences upon us, or indeed, even those that are most important. It is often much more subtle or diffuse, especially through the communication of advice or

²⁵ See also Lupton (1999:69-72) and Engel and Strasser (1998).

directives to an entire population of which we are part (broader social regulation). It is not so simple as individuals making choices for themselves.

The relationship of the individual to the larger social body is more successfully understood through a Foucauldian perspective, as will be discussed below. Indeed, several of the criticisms of risk theory, as advanced by Beck and Giddens' respective formulations, are addressed by Foucault's work on biopower and governmentality, including: the lack of attention to embodiment and the aesthetic dimension of the self (Petersen 1997:190; Lupton 1999:82), as well as simplistic views of modernity. Bryan Turner (1995:224-225) challenges the understanding of risk in modernity as "unique," pointing to the history of epidemics as illustrative of what Beck identifies as "modern" risks.²⁶ In the following chapters, I make a similar claim, demonstrating that early nutrition work was both premised upon, and in turn invoked, notions of risk.²⁷

Risk and Governmentality

Although the cultural and risk theory perspectives each offer some important observations about risk, both are more focused upon responses to risk than the *problematization* of those risks. While cultural perspectives quite rightly emphasize the role of social institutions in our perceptions of risk, the individual self-monitoring that occurs is neglected. Conversely, self-reflexivity is taken to unrealistic levels in the risk

²⁶ Modern risks are characterized as "impersonal and democratic" (Turner 1995:224). However, Turner points out (contra Beck), that lifestyle and class position are (and have *always* been) important determinants of the distribution of risks.

²⁷ There is also a question of what constitutes "late" modernity. In Beck's writing, he seems to focus on the contemporary period in which he is writing (that is, the last 20 years of the 20th century).

theory work of Beck and Giddens. As well, the question of how we are to understand risk continues to be muddy.²⁸ A theoretical framework based on Foucauldian theory may remedy this. Further, Foucault's work is being incorporated into the expanding field of "lifestyle risk discourse," which, although tending to focus on contemporary examples, shares some parallels with nutrition work of 70 years ago.

Foucault did not directly address "risk" in his work, but in his writings on governmentality and bio-politics, the idea of risk is arguably present (Castel 1991; Ewald 1991; Gastaldo 1997; Petersen 1997). From a Foucauldian standpoint, the question of "what is risk?" might best be answered: "it is a political technology." In this I draw upon not only Foucault, but the work of Pat O'Malley, for whom "technology" "broadly speaking refers to any act of social practices that is aimed at manipulating the social or physical world according to identifiable routines" (1996:205). Technologies identified by Foucault take the forms of sovereign, disciplinary, and insurantal (Foucault 1979, 1981, 1988, 2003 [1976]; O'Malley 1996: 205). For O'Malley, "techniques" are distinct aspects of technologies, either components or forms of application. So, for instance, the distribution of nutritional pamphlets in schools is one technique of the larger technology of health promotion or risk management. Following Donzelot, O'Malley argues that technologies "develop primarily in terms of their role in relation to specific political programmes;" they are developed with a particular purpose (1996:192-193). As will be demonstrated in this work, such was the case with federal nutrition initiatives.

²⁸ In fairness, the question "what is risk?" is a particularly challenging one, and one to which I believe there are many possible, equally plausible answers. Further confusion stems from the term's everyday association with the negative, being used as a synonym for danger, which may or may not be accurate.

While I concur with O'Malley's assertion that the "risk society" is not new, I am less comfortable with his claim (1996:202-203) that risk management "has become a much more important social technology than it was half a century ago."²⁹ I would contend it has been an instrumental organizing principle from at least the late nineteenth century, if perhaps not so defined.³⁰ As Ewald (1991) convincingly demonstrates in his essay on insurance and risk, the "technology of risk...becomes the principle of a new political and social economy"(1991:210) by the end of the nineteenth century. Giddens (1991: 111) points out that Machiavelli predicted a world in which risk and risk calculation would dominate "virtually all domains of human activity." O'Malley no doubt realizes the longevity of risk technologies, but as is the case in much of the work on risk, the focus tends toward the latter half of the twentieth century, particularly 1960 and beyond (see for e.g., Brandt 1997; Glassner 1995; Hoban 1995; Katz 1997; Leichter 1997; Nestle 2002). There are, however, parallels to be found in more contemporary analyses and the tone of the nutritional advice of the 1930s and 1940s.

Indeed, the efforts of the federal government to make the Canadian people take charge of their health through proper nutrition resembles what O'Malley calls "prudentialism:" "a technology of governance that removes the key conception of regulating individuals by collectivist risk management, and throws back upon the individual the responsibility

²⁹ I am uncertain as to how O'Malley utilizes this term. If he draws a distinction between "risk management" and "risk avoidance" as Hunt (2003) does (See Chapter Five), then I would concur that risk management has become more important, or at least more common, than was the case during the first half of the twentieth century.

³⁰ Valverde's work on moral reform in English Canada clearly demonstrates the connections of risk and moral regulation, although not so explicitly identified.

for managing risk” (1996: 197). Drawing a distinction between this and actuarial practices, O’Malley argues that in prudentialism, the *moral* aspects are overt, and thus the rational individual also becomes the responsible individual, taking care to ensure not only personal health, but also guarding against risk so as not to present a burden to others (1996:199-200).³¹ This is reminiscent of Foucault’s care of the self. How do we, as individuals, become valuable to ourselves and to the larger community? Put another way, how are disciplined bodies important to regulatory mechanisms? Some common components of the good subject are evident throughout Foucault’s writing: respect for and self-mastery of the body; development of a productive, happy body; adherence to codes of morality; and proper conduct in relation to self and others.

In contrast to the indignities to the human body so vividly recounted at the beginning of *Discipline and Punish*³², discipline characteristic of modern power reveals a respect for the body. It produces practised, docile bodies, and makes bodies more productive. Biopower encourages and enables greater knowledge about the body, and Foucault saw care of the self as emerging out of reason. In his reading of Epictetus (*Discourses*), he notes that with reason comes the “*possibility* and the *duty* to take care of ourselves” (cited in Foucault 1986:47, emphasis added). Caring for the self is not only an obligation, but a privilege. In *The Use of Pleasure*, regimen is described a “a whole manner of forming oneself as a subject who had the proper, necessary, and sufficient concern for his body” (1985:108). All three volumes of *The History of Sexuality* make reference to the benefits

³¹ In making this distinction, O’Malley notes that there are certainly moral elements to actuarialism, that it is never strictly about instrumental rationality, but actuarial technology is *seen* to be amoral, whereas in prudentialism, the moral overtones are clear.

³² The text opens with a detailed (and one might say gruesome) description of the torture of Damians the regicide.

or importance of gaining mastery over oneself; an especially clear statement appears in Volume 2, *The Use of Pleasure*:

Self mastery was a way of being a man with respect to oneself; that is, a way of commanding what needed commanding, of coercing what was not capable of self-direction, of imposing principles of reasons on what was wanting in reason; in short, it was a way of being active in relation to what was by nature passive and ought to remain so (1985:82-83).³³

Such mastery is pursued via “technologies of the self,” which “permit individuals to effect by their own means *or with the help of others* a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault 1988:18, emphasis added).

The idea of a disciplined body being a happy body is not unique to Foucault; Weber communicated similar ideas in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.³⁴ However, for Foucault, contentment is not necessarily to be found in asceticism, but rather, in taking pleasure in one’s body. This attention to pleasure, to finding “delight in oneself” (Foucault 1986:65) and the association of pleasure with ethics is an important and liberating departure from discourses of self-denial.³⁵ Monitoring by others or self-surveillance is not negative in Foucault’s work; gaining knowledge about oneself is an essential step toward happiness: “The individual who has finally succeeded in gaining

³³ In this passage, Foucault is making specific reference to sexuality, as part of bodily regimen.

³⁴ Norbert Elias and Arthur Frank also use concepts of “civilized” or “disciplined” bodies, but their respective articulations lack the elements of agency incorporated by Foucault.

³⁵ In this regard, Foucault’s work complements gay and lesbian scholarship on the body, which has paid greater attention to the possibilities of the body.

access to himself is, for himself, an object of pleasure” (Foucault 1986:66).³⁶ There must certainly be elements of denial or restraint, but self-examination “broadens into an experience in which the relation to self takes the form not only of a domination but also of an enjoyment without desire and without disturbance” (Foucault 1986:68).³⁷ A disciplined subject is one whose body (and life) is useful and happy.³⁸ The collection of knowledge about these individual bodies is then used to eventually control and modify them at the species level (Foucault 1980a).

As Dean (1999a) and others have noted, Foucault shifts his emphasis from discipline to governmentality, examining the relationship of individual action to societal regulation and organization. Accordingly, he considers the question of “morality.” In several interviews, Foucault associates the happy body, taking pleasure in oneself, as an example of moral behaviour.³⁹ But his discussion of morality in *The Use of Pleasure* is perhaps most clear. He acknowledges the ambiguity and multiple meanings of the term, and notes that there are different ways of conducting oneself morally. Ultimately, he offers the following interpretation:

But “morality” also refers to the real behaviour of individuals in relation to the rules and values that are recommended to them: the word thus designates the manner in which they comply more or less fully with a

³⁶ Foucault is referring to sexuality, but I extend this discussion, as others have done (Bartky 1990; Sawicki 1992).

³⁷ I would suggest that Foucault does not adequately explore the tensions between self-gratification and the common good for the social body. At what point does the pursuit of personal pleasure interfere with the broader social body, and how is this reconciled?

³⁸ This idea (expressed in *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*: 105-108) is idealistic, particularly for women, many of whom are decidedly unhappy with their bodies. This point has been effectively made in a number of feminist critiques of Foucault (see, for example, Bartky 1988; Probyn 1993).

³⁹ See “An Ethics of Pleasure” (1982); “An Aesthetics of Existence” (1984); “Ethics for the Concern for Self” (1984), all in *Foucault Live*, 1996.

standard of conduct, the manner in which they obey or resist an interdiction or a prescription; the manner in which they respect or disregard a set of values (1985:25).

Hunt (1999: 8) employs a similarly wide interpretation, noting morality's complexity:

“morality is to be found everywhere: in the workplace, at home, in every activity.”

Clearly, morality requires recognition of what constitutes “proper conduct” in relation to oneself and others. First and foremost, being moral involves taking care of oneself – this takes precedence over caring for others, because: “A city in which everybody took proper care of himself would be a city that functioned well and found in this the ethical principle of its permanence” (Foucault 1984b: 437). Care of the self is not an isolated exercise, but a “true social practice” (Foucault 1986: 51). As the individual turns her or his attention to how others care for themselves (a development only possible if power is simultaneously exercised over her/himself),⁴⁰ there is an “intensification of social relations” (Foucault 1986: 53).⁴¹ There is a sense of a communal goal through individual discipline; a sense of the “common good.” For Foucault’s subject, the adage is not “do unto others as you would have done unto you,” but rather, “do unto yourself and allow others to do unto themselves that which would benefit all.” In other words, there are limits, or regulatory mechanisms, which ensure that one behaves morally.

The cynical question might well be posed: If care of the self is not forced upon individual bodies, that is, if it is a regulatory rather than a disciplinary measure, what keeps people from simply rejecting morality, refusing advice? Certainly Foucault’s

⁴⁰ See p. 438 of “The Ethics of the Concern for Self” in *Foucault Live*.

⁴¹ Whether such an intensification of social relations is necessarily positive is debatable, though Foucault does not take up the argument.

observations about productive power are relevant here, as illustrated in his discussion of dietetic regimen: “[it] was not thought of as an unquestioning obedience to the authority of another; it was intended to be a deliberate practice on the part of an individual, involving him and his body” (1985: 107). Becoming the disciplined, self-respecting member of society that is the “good” subject requires action, diligence, and motivation: “This time is not empty; it is filled with exercises, practical tasks, various activities. Taking care of oneself is not a rest cure” (1986: 51). What is unspoken here, it seems to me, is the quite straightforward idea that we behave morally because of the *perceived risks associated with not doing so*.

The relationship of morality and governance is apparent in Foucault’s work. In his discussion of governmentality, Foucault (1978a:94-95) identifies the “common good” as “a state of affairs where all the subjects without exception obey the laws, accomplish the tasks expected of them, practise the trade to which they are assigned, and respect the established order...”⁴² which bears strong similarity to his aforementioned explanation of “morality.” Just as the success of disciplinary power “is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms. Would power be accepted if it were entirely cynical?” (1980a: 86), “with government, it is a question not of imposing law on men, but of disposing things...to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved” (1978a: 95). The intensification of social relations with the shift from disciplinary to regulatory mechanisms is described by Foucault in *The*

⁴² Though Foucault says this is how theologians and jurists conceive of the “common good,” he does not contest the description.

Care of the Self: “This contact between the domination of others and those of the self I call governmentality” (1988:19).⁴³

Foucault’s references to governmentality are scattered throughout his work, but Petersen (1997: 202-203) offers a comprehensive summary of the concept:

Foucault’s concept of governmentality can be conceived as a contact point between technologies of the self (self-subjection) and technologies of domination (societal regulation). It allows one to recognise the agency of subjects, without recourse to the notion of a fully autonomous self or to voluntaristic explanations of behaviour...The governmentality concept allows one to acknowledge the complexities, subtleties, and micro-negotiations of relations of power, and involves recognition that any project of governance is always incomplete and partial in respect to the objects and practices it governs (1997: 202-203).

I would locate risk among the “complexities, subtleties, micro-negotiations” to which Petersen refers. Although the issue of “risk” is not explicitly identified as a defining characteristic of governmentality, I would argue that it is in fact a most relevant technology, if not the *premise* for the relations of power that Foucault describes. Deborah Lupton asserts that Foucauldian perspectives share the following elements with cultural risk theory: “[R]isk has become an increasingly pervasive concept of human existence in western societies; risk is a central aspect of human subjectivity; risk is seen as something that can be managed through human intervention; and risk is associated with notions of choice, responsibility, and blame” (1999:25).

Although Foucault did not look specifically at risk, his attention to discourses is useful in explaining how we come to understand risk (Turner 1997; Lupton 1999). Robert Castel

⁴³ See Miller (1987) for further discussion of how technologies of the self and governmentality complement and facilitate one another.

(1991) traces the shift from “dangerousness” to “risk,” noting that as early as the mid-nineteenth century, French psychiatrist Morel was using statistical correlations to create “objective risks.” This strategy removes the focus on individuals and replaces it with information about the population more broadly (Castel 1991; Lupton 1999) – in other words, biopower. Through strategies such as medicalization, information is gleaned from individuals (who are essentially case studies) for the creation of a “norm” which is in turn fed back onto the population as the benchmark or standard for which they must aim. In turn, this information gathered “is then often employed in advice to individuals about how they should conduct their lives” (Lupton 1999: 88). Discourses of risk are thus constructed; “risk is problematized, rendered calculable and governable” (Lupton 1999: 87). Mitchell Dean (1999b) argues that risk is part of “regimes of government”:

A fundamental tenet of the governmentality literature, though not always remembered, is that calculative rationalities such as those of risk, have a certain polyvalence, i.e. they can be invested with different sets of purposes depending on the political programmes and rationalities they come to be latched onto (1999b: 145).

The state has an interest in identifying desirable behaviours (beneficial to self and society), and an interest in identifying those “problematic” ones. Experts may identify entire populations as being “at risk” or “high risk,” and thus requiring assistance, protection, or control. As Foucault has extensively discussed, cooperation is not achieved through force or domination, but rather through surveillance and ultimately self-regulation. In this context, surveillance takes the form of preventative policies (Castel 1991; O’Malley 1996; Turner 1997) based on aggregates, rather than actual individuals. “Experts” make predictions and offer advice without direct involvement with the people at whom it is directed. As Castel writes:

[N]ow surveillance can be practised without any contact with, or even any immediate representation of, the subjects under scrutiny. Doubtless the police have long kept their secret files. But the logic of such subterranean dossiers now attains the sophisticated and proudly proclaimed form of “scientific” predetection (1991:288).

Deborah Lupton (1999: 87) describes risk as “a governmental strategy of regulatory power by which populations and individuals are monitored and managed through the goals of neo-liberalism.” Neo-liberalism calls upon the individual to practise self-care, but this should not be confused with demedicalization. Distinctions between “healthy” and “unhealthy” become blurred when everything is a potential source of risk (Petersen 1997: 195). The expansion of health promotion and predetection results in the identification of more risks. The possibilities for intervention are potentially infinite, argues Castel, “For what situation is there of which one can be certain that it harbours no risk, no uncontrollable or unpredictable chance feature?” (1991: 289). But the intervention by experts is indirect; though they create risk profiles and make what Castel calls “administrative assignments” (1991: 290), it is largely individuals themselves who are expected to assume responsibility for risk avoidance: “In this context, the role of government is to provide advice and assistance for the self-management of risks, encouraging the active, free citizen who voluntarily engages in risk avoidance...” (Lupton 1999: 100).

There are many ways of demonstrating oneself to be “risk-minimizing.” In twentieth and now twenty-first century Canadian society, many of these fall under the rubric of “lifestyle choices” – diet, exercise, abstention, and so forth. Avoiding risk is *moral*, the right thing to do for yourself and others (as Foucault outlines). Failure to avoid risk, or

indeed, voluntarily exposing oneself to risk represents a failure for the social body. Individuals are encouraged to meet the “standards” which represent “safety.” Ewald (1991: 207) and O’Malley (1996) thus identify risk as a moral and political technology. Petersen (1997) describes the phenomenon of “healthism,” in which those who do not live risk-free lives are seen as negligent in their duties to the self and others. Again, as Foucault says, caring for the self is a social practice. Lupton (1995: 90) captures all this within what she terms “lifestyle risk discourse”:

Lifestyle risk discourse overturns the notion that health hazards in contemporary society are out of the individual’s control. On the contrary, the dominant theme of lifestyle risk discourse is the responsibility of individuals to avoid health risks for the sake of their own health as well as the greater good of society.

Of course, some of the advice and strategies intended to reduce risk prove to carry risks of their own.⁴⁴ Discourses on risk are multiple and contradictory, and there are different interests behind their promotion. In this, some resemblance to the work of Beck and Giddens is noted: there are no guarantees of security, and people must make choices, gather information, and gain knowledge. However, unlike a “risk society,” in which “society has become a laboratory where there is absolutely nobody in charge” (Beck 1998: 9), the governmentality perspective maintains that we assume this responsibility ourselves. Bryan Turner suggests:

[I]n global terms we live in a more uncertain and risky environment as a consequence of pollution and environmental degradation, while at the everyday level in terms of routine social practices in the life world, we live within a society which is still highly regulated, predictable and controlled (1995; 226).

⁴⁴ For instance, many weight loss techniques such as liposuction, stomach stapling, etc., have serious side effects.

In a society filled with uncertainties, subtle and systematic forms of control are necessary (Turner 1997: xviii). The state has an interest in promoting desirable behaviours (beneficial to self and society), and an interest in eradicating “problematic” ones. Regulatory mechanisms must be employed, and as noted above, risk is an effective technology in this regard. Again, it is not so much risk itself, but rather, as Dean notes, “what risk gets attached to” (1999b: 131). In this study, it will be demonstrated that risk gets attached to the moral regulation project of nutrition in Canada, 1930-1945.

A Brief Note on Method and Sources

As noted, this dissertation is informed theoretically by the work of Foucault and other scholars in this tradition. Methodologically, it is also inspired by Foucault’s work, which is wonderfully diverse.⁴⁵ Foucault himself was not always consistent in his explanations, though to my mind this willingness to change approaches is one of his strengths. As he said, in response to the charge that his approach and opinions vary throughout his writing: “ ‘Well, do you think I have worked like that all those years to say the same thing and not to be changed?’” (1982:379). Where this work aspires to resemble Foucault is through an attention to history as a means of challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and revisiting understandings (Kendall and Wickham 1999: 4). For instance, the concept of risk seems an obvious association with wartime, but as this work will demonstrate, an historical examination reveals the very idea to have been only vaguely articulated.

⁴⁵ Perhaps the plural form invoked by Kendall and Wickham (*Using Foucault’s Methods*) is most appropriate.

Further, in its consideration of the various parties involved in nutrition work, the discourses surrounding nutrition, and the power struggles common to these, this dissertation is genealogical in the Foucauldian sense (1980b: 82-84). Foucault sees genealogy as an emancipation of historical knowledges (1980b: 85), as “entertain[ing] the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory” (1980b: 83). This work reveals the tensions and collaborative efforts that emerged from concerns about proper nutrition.

The historical knowledges seeking emancipation here emerged from memoranda, correspondence, and other documents housed at the National Archives of Canada, particularly from relevant departments of the federal government. In the case of organizations such as the Canadian Dietetic Association or Canadian Home Economics Association, their own records and scrapbooks were consulted. Popular periodicals of the era were accessed through the National Library of Canada. Selected “women’s magazines” were reviewed, with preference given to Canadian sources. However American publications were included where appropriate.⁴⁶

In addition to establishing the history of nutrition as a national concern in Canada, all of the above materials were reviewed in the context of nutrition and risk: How was nutrition described or explained? Was it considered separately from discussions of food or cookery? What sort of tone did the information employ? Who was the target audience? That these were consulted with an already established agenda may have admittedly influenced what was ultimately found. Nonetheless, this dissertation presents evidence of

⁴⁶ That is, publications which were also widely available in Canada.

the lengthy association of risk and nutritional advice, as well as highlighting the gendered nature of the moral regulation of nutrition.

Chapter Two:
A Brief History of Nutrition in Canada:
Scientific and Social Problem Approaches

The history of nutrition may perhaps be characterized as a series of dichotomies: lengthy yet seemingly recent; collaborative yet competitive; expert versus lay knowledges; and scientific with a healthy dose of the faddish, contradictory, and the downright bizarre. This chapter will consider the origins of nutritional research, its practical implications, and the “official” Canadian governmental response to its findings and recommendations. What follows is by no means a comprehensive or systematic account of nutritional history,¹ but is intended to provide some background to the Canadian situation.

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, nutrition is understood in this analysis as a process of learning and practising “good” and “proper” eating habits, as articulated and regulated by the authorities in the field. Although there is competition among those parties seeking to be that voice of authority, for the most part, there is consistency in the message being delivered.²

In the anthology *Nutrition in Britain*, editor David F. Smith notes the difficulties inherent to the study of nutrition: “[E]xploring the ‘history of nutrition’ can lead in many

¹ For a thorough account, see Elmer V. McCollum’s *A History of Nutrition*, 1957. Toussaint-Samat’s (1987) *History of Food*, while not strictly devoted to nutrition, is also informative. There are any number of texts considering “food” (particularly cultural anthropological studies). Nutrition, while a rapidly expanding academic field, has not yet been so thoroughly explored in the social sciences.

² At least among “mainstream” nutrition educators. Vegetarians and advocates of other specialized diets had different ideas.

directions...from sociology to molecular biology...Nutrition is also an area in which many wider interests intersect... 'Nutrition experts' abound" (1997a:1). Additionally, there has been no linear or consistent attention to nutrition research or advice; rather, it has undergone, as Poppendieck (1995:11) describes, a "periodic 'discovery' and 'rediscovery'."³ I thus feel it useful to distinguish between the history of nutrition as a *science* and the construction of nutrition as a *social problem*. While the two have an undeniably reciprocal relationship, their respective emphases may be considered separately.

The Science of Nutrition

Elmer V. McCollum's work *A History of Nutrition* (1957) documents the "scientific" study of nutrition. McCollum was a Professor of Biochemistry and served as a nutrition advisor to both the American and Canadian governmental nutrition bodies, as well as the League of Nations Commission of Nutrition, beginning in 1935. Many of McCollum's discussions are not for the scientifically uninitiated ("The Physiological Significance of Microorganisms in the Alimentary Tract", for example). But in addition to the highly technical information, McCollum highlights a number of key dietary experiments and discoveries from as early as the sixteenth century,⁴ though he reserves the designation of "research" for the work of early chemists and physicians. McCollum thus identifies the late eighteenth century as the beginnings of nutritional research.

³ Poppendieck's discussion actually focuses on *hunger*, but her description of its typification as a social problem clearly parallels that undergone by nutrition.

⁴ McCollum considers a man by the name of Luigi Cornaro, whose health and longevity were attributed to his dietary experiments.

However, the reliability and validity of some of the “science” conducted during this time has been subsequently called into question. Harmke Kamminga and Andrew Cunningham (1995) suggest the mid-nineteenth century is a more useful starting point, pointing out that “[i]t was at this time that a set of principles and practices were put into place that remained part of nutrition research for the next hundred years; indeed, many of them survive today” (1995:3). Of course, investigation (both formal/scientific and informal) into foods has a lengthier history, but Kamminga and Cunningham identify 1840 as the approximate year in which the answers to the following questions may be found:

Where, then, might one reasonably place the origin of nutrition science of a pattern we are still familiar with today, encompassing concerns and practices that the modern nutritionist and nutrition scientist would recognize as belonging to their tradition? (1995:3)

It was around 1840, they argue, that a “reasonably systematic” (1995:3) science of nutrition emerged, and this seems a fair assessment. The physiological chemistry informing this work was established by this time (Apple 1995; Barnett 1995; Kamminga and Cunningham 1995; Weatherall 1995),⁵ although I would suggest its application has not been all that consistent.⁶

⁵ While the basic science was in place, Kamminga points out, in a separate essay, that the “nutrition science of the mid nineteenth century...is not the same as the science of nutrition that was created as a discipline in the twentieth century” (1995:16). Kamminga is drawing attention to what we might call the “influences” approach of the nineteenth century, in which the respective chemical compositions of foods and body fluids/tissues are analysed, whereas it was not until later that the intermediary metabolism would be investigated.

⁶ See earlier reference to Poppendieck’s work.

The 1840s work of chemist Justus Liebig has been identified as the “beginning of modern nutritional science” (Kamminga and Cunningham 1995:4; Kamminga 1995).⁷ Or, as McCollum called it, “the Newer Knowledge of Nutrition” (McCollum 1957:92-98; Levenstein 1988; Kamminga and Cunningham 1995). Liebig produced *Chemistry and Its Applications to Agriculture and Physiology* in 1840; this text contained assertions which now form part of our basic nutrition knowledge, such as the importance of essential nutrients in soil for successful crop growth. But it was 1842’s *Animal Chemistry* which many have credited as the impetus for all nutrition work thereafter. Physicians in both Germany and England embraced this work (and an 1847 text, *Researches on the Chemistry of Food*), and supported Liebig’s emphasis on meat as the most “truly nutritive” type of food (Finlay 1995:51). Finlay notes that Liebig’s ideas received favourable review in *The Lancet*, and in 1851, at least one prominent physician declared Liebig’s theories to have “important implications for public health.”⁸

And it is this *broader* application of Liebig’s work which makes him such a noteworthy figure in nutrition history. Although some of his nutritional claims have not withstood further scientific scrutiny, his influence upon the *cultural* dimensions of nutrition was remarkable. With the endorsement of physicians (and arguably, without), Liebig’s ideas were embraced by the general public. Indeed (and this is another instance of Liebig’s prescience of what was to become an historical trend), his theories were

⁷ Although his written views would be contested, Liebig’s quantitative approach to the analysis of food intake and excretion was significant to the field. Harmke Kamminga also makes a strong case for the importance of Jacob Moleschott.

⁸ Dr. William Beneke, 1851, cited in Finlay 1995:51.

marketed to the people, through cookery books emphasizing chemical and medical advice, and especially through his own “food” product (meat extract and accompanying recipes).⁹

“Liebig’s Extract of Meat” was a highly successful commercial venture; as Finlay notes: “By 1868 it had established itself in the United States, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Batavia,¹⁰ and nearly every European country. Between 1867 and 1870 production increased from 145,000 to 479,000 kilograms” (1995:59). Such success spawned imitators, many using the Liebig name (illegitimately), but it is Liebig’s response to this wide influence that is most telling. He used his scientific connections to promote his product to government officials, gained endorsements from well-known figures (such as Florence Nightingale), and provided free samples of his extract to food writers and journalists. Liebig clearly enjoyed his fame and actively encouraged it (Finlay 1995; Kamminga 1995), even in the face of counterclaims challenging the nutritive value of meat extract.

Confronted by scientific findings that meat extract contained none of the nutritional benefits of meat,¹¹ the Liebig Company invoked a two-pronged strategy (which exemplifies the adage “If you can’t convince ‘em, confuse ‘em...”): First, the company

⁹ Perhaps the best “contemporary” example of Liebig’s product would be bouillon cubes, such as “Oxo” (which itself has been produced for over 100 years). Oxo’s early slogan was: “It’s Meat and Drink to You” (date unknown). Similar products include “Vegemite” and “Marmite.”

¹⁰ Now known as Djakarta, Indonesia.

¹¹ Finlay (1995: 60) includes this wonderful description by Dr. Edward Smith (1872) who concluded that meat extract was like “the play of Hamlet without the character of Hamlet.”

modified its claims, suggesting that its product might have value as a stimulant or nerve tonic; in this, they appealed to the by-now-established “popular” opinion of the benefit of meat products. Related to this, the second strategy (and one which would become a key aspect of nutrition history) was to appeal to other kinds of “expert” knowledge. As Finlay explains:

In effect, [the company] reshaped the vocabulary and popular notions of nutrition, for it used domestic science writers to promote a *consumer’s* definition of nutrition, rather than the far more demanding definition used by chemists and physiologists...Cookery writers trusted homemakers’ personal experience and impressionistic evidence, rather than chemists’, physiologists’, and physicians’ more rigorous experimental data” (1995:61, emphasis mine).

Of course, Liebig’s primary interest was to ensure the continued popularity of his product. By commissioning well-known cookbook authors and others in the industry (such as proprietors of cooking schools), the Liebig Company ensured its product’s prominence in recipes of the day. But these initial efforts only foreshadowed the expansive mass marketing that would characterize much nutritional marketing for the next century.¹²

Science Sells!

Key to Liebig’s promotions was the aforementioned shift from the scientific viewpoint to that of the consumer. Accordingly, the focus moved almost entirely away from the product itself, instead emphasizing how it could affect one’s lifestyle: “Many [trade cards] identified the product...with traditional themes in national culture, history, or literature, while others linked meat extract with overseas expansion...Many cards

¹² One of Liebig’s most popular innovations was its “trade cards”, introduced in 1872. While other companies also used this advertising medium, Liebig released its cards in series, creating demand for the next and thus increasing sales (Finlay 1995).

ignored nutritional claims altogether...” (Finlay 1995: 63-64). The Liebig Company likely felt pressure to drop any mention of nutritional benefit, as the scientific evidence against such a claim was mounting. However, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters, most nutritional product promotion in the 1930s and particularly 1940s incorporated a combination of the Liebig strategies, continuing to highlight nutritional benefits in the context of what said benefits would do for the individual and the larger society.

Two early proponents of the use of food to cure *societal* ills as well as individual maladies were Upton Sinclair and the especially famous John Harvey Kellogg.¹³ Sinclair’s celebrity as a nutrition expert was paradoxically derived from his critique and ultimate *rejection* of food.¹⁴ Published in 1911, *The Fasting Cure* recounts Sinclair’s own experiences, as well as testimonials of like-minded individuals (who shared their stories with Sinclair through apparently unsolicited letters). Sinclair’s fasting had been documented in a magazine article the previous year, and he proclaimed himself overwhelmed by the response it generated:

I have written a great many magazine articles, but never one which attracted so much attention as this. The first day the magazine was on the news-stands, I received a telegram from a man in Washington who had begun to fast and wanted some advice; and thereafter I received ten or twenty letters a day...At the date of writing, eight months have passed, and the flood has not yet stopped (1911: 5).

¹³ Interestingly, Sinclair himself went to Kellogg’s Battle Creek Sanatorium, though he reported the benefits of its programmes to be short-lived (1911: 15-17).

¹⁴ The fasting cure does not entail a complete refusal of food, though Sinclair claims people have gone 40 to 50 days consuming only water. Generally, however, the fasting cure involves approximately 12 days without food, in order to cleanse the system. Sinclair also recommends hot water (as a beverage) and cool water (as a daily enema). Foods are gradually introduced after this period, though the precise order of these varies among individuals (Sinclair 1911).

Fasting cures were not new, having been practised for centuries,¹⁵ but Sinclair's book seems to have struck a chord with the public.¹⁶ Sinclair is especially interesting because of the dramatic change in his nutritional beliefs within a relatively short period.¹⁷ Several years earlier, he had collaborated on a text entitled *Good Health*, but would later denounce its information on diet as "erroneous": "In those days I believed something, because other people told me; to-day I know something else, because I have tried it upon myself" (1911:7). And this is another key aspect of Sinclair's work: the message of the importance of *self-care*, of taking responsibility for one's own health. This idea would be promoted throughout much of the nutrition work of the twentieth century.

Like much of the dietary advice of the era, Sinclair's writing is infused with an almost evangelical flavour; for example:

¹⁵ See, for example, the work of Caroline Walker Bynum on the lengthy history of religious fasting. Sinclair himself notes (1991:8) that he is not the "discoverer" of the cure, though he assigns credit to research of only 30-40 years earlier.

¹⁶ Though he enjoyed popularity, Sinclair did not earn support from the medical community. Sinclair laments (1911:49): "Of the six or eight hundred letters I have received, just two, so far as I can remember, were from physicians; and out of the hundreds of newspaper clippings which I received, not a single one was from any sort of medical journal. There was one physician...who was really interested...One single mind, among all the hundred and forty thousand, open to a new truth!"

¹⁷ Prior to embarking on the fasting cure, Sinclair had been a strict vegetarian for several years, and as food was gradually reintroduced between periods of fasting, he resumed eating meat, causing conflict for his beliefs: "I set out to try the Salisbury system [broiled beef and hot water]. I am sorry to have to say that it seems to be a good one; sorry, because the vegetarian way of life is so obviously the cleaner and more humane and more convenient. But it seems to me that I am able to do more work and harder work with my mind while eating beefsteaks than under any other *regime*; and while this continues to be the case there will be one less vegetarian in the world" (1911:24-25). Sinclair's conversion was a boon to the meat advocates, whose feelings are neatly summarized in this remark from 1910: "Whatever merits vegetarians may claim for their diet, they cannot produce a single talented or handsome vegetarian, born of vegetarian parents in England, America, or Germany" (cited in Levenstein 1988:86).

PERFECT HEALTH!

Have you any conception of what the phrase means? Can you form any image of what would be your feeling if every organ in your body was functioning properly? Perhaps you can go back to some day in your youth, when you got up early in the morning and went for a walk, and the spirit of the sunrise got into your blood, and you walked faster, and took deep breaths, and laughed aloud for the sheer happiness of being alive in such a world of beauty. And now you are grown older – and what would you give for the secret of that glorious feeling? What would you say if you were told that you could bring it back and keep it, not only for mornings, but for afternoons and evenings, and not as something accidental and mysterious, but as something which you yourself have created, and of which you are completely master? (1911:9).

While fasting is obviously inexpensive, requiring little more than personal commitment,¹⁸ many programmes designed to increase one's control over the body were actually highly regimented and often costly. Sinclair notes that "in the course of my search for health I [have] paid to physicians, surgeons, druggists, and sanatoriums not less than fifteen thousand dollars in the last six or eight years" (1911:50-51). This may be an exaggerated figure, but early incarnations of the contemporary health spa were unquestionably expensive. High fees also ensured the proprietors of the spas (often known as "doctors", though lacking any genuine medical qualifications) a clientele of a particular standing in the community; the people whose patronage and endorsement were valued for the credibility they brought to the nutritional ideas being promoted.

Among those who enjoyed the celebrity of such a following was John Harvey Kellogg. The Kellogg Sanatorium in Battle Creek, Michigan, became (in)famous for its treatment of the wealthy unwell. What set Kellogg's enterprise apart was his innovative blend of nutritional advice, moral guidance, and mechanical inventions designed to

¹⁸ I am not diminishing the challenge of fasting, simply highlighting its potential to be a financially undemanding exercise.

facilitate physical and spiritual health. Although T. Coraghessan Boyle's *The Road to Wellville* is a fictionalized account of the Kellogg Sanatorium, it offers a realistic view of how the institution was viewed:

In the thirty-one years of his directorship, Dr. Kellogg had transformed the San, as it was affectionately known, from an Adventist boarding house specializing in Graham bread and water cures to the "Temple of Health" it had now become, a place celebrated from coast to coast...with four hundred rooms and treatment facilities for a thousand, with elevators, central heating and cooling, indoor swimming pools and a whole range of therapeutic diversions and wholesome entertainments, the San was the sine qua non of the cure business – luxury hotel, hospital and spa all rolled into one (1993:6-7).

In addition to the middle class, upper-middle class, and elite clientele who attended Battle Creek, Kellogg's message was widely disseminated through his publications, the most generally accessible being *Good Health*.¹⁹ Although the "San" created individualized diets, Kellogg also promoted regimens designed to improve the nutritional, physical, and spiritual health of the nation. Central to this was his rejection of meat, which he identified as the source of many ailments, as well as encouraging the social ill of masturbation (Levenstein 1988; Boyle 1993). Regardless of his pseudoscientific background, Kellogg was widely accepted as a leader in North American nutritional circles, and was a popular speaker, adding, in Levenstein's words (1988: 93), "some glitter" to nutrition conferences. But although his "star" quotient was not unanimously accepted by the scientific community, he was welcomed by esteemed institutes worldwide, including the Pasteur Institute in France. Whatever skepticism Kellogg may have engendered, he "function[ed] as living testimony to [his] own dietary recommendations" (Levenstein 1988: 95), reaching the age of ninety-one.

¹⁹ The Kellogg company would continue publishing pamphlets and other materials well into the latter half of the twentieth century.

As Levenstein (1988) rightly points out, there is a danger of overstating the influence of Kellogg and his fellow nutrition advocates. Their popularity and spread of ideas is impressive, particularly when considered from the contemporary standpoint, an era characterized by the almost immediate transfer of information. However, the entire nation did not adopt vegetarianism, nor practise thorough mastication a la Fletcher, nor did they submit themselves to twenty-six feedings per day (as did the “underweight” in the San) or subsist only on grapes (another Kellogg remedy).²⁰

Sinclair and Kellogg are but two figures who might have been mentioned here.²¹ Their inclusion is certainly due in part to their respective popularity and longevity (at least in nutrition circles, and not always favourably, but they nonetheless remain “known” advocates). More significantly, both may be viewed as important figures in the construction of nutrition (and malnutrition) as a *social problem*. It was not only individuals who would suffer the effects of their poor dietary habits, but the nation. Certainly there was an appeal to the spiritual worthiness of the challenge – Kellogg’s operation was premised upon Seventh-Day Adventist doctrine, and Sinclair invoked rhapsodic prose. But fundamentally, this was not only about being a good Christian, but rather, a good citizen. Taking care of oneself was the responsible, moral thing to do.

²⁰ Harvey Levenstein identifies Kellogg as a food “faddist”, a description I consider not entirely fair. While his methods were clearly unorthodox, and his scientific and medical credentials questionable, there is no evidence to suggest that Kellogg was anything but sincere and consistent in his beliefs. Arguably Sinclair, with his oft-changing opinions of proper nutrition, is more deserving of the “faddist” designation.

²¹ For instance, Horace Fletcher’s emphasis on proper mastication gained quite a following. What is perhaps most interesting about Fletcher (aside from his bizarre contention that the mouth contained a filtering mechanism responsible for digestion) is that unlike most of his contemporaries, Fletcher had no scientific training of any sort, yet managed to “ingratiate himself into the realm of ‘pure’ laboratory science” (Levenstein 1988: 87). It is also interesting to note that Upton Sinclair was himself, at one time, a “chewer”; that is, one who practised “Fletcherizing” (Sinclair 1911; Levenstein 1988). See Levenstein 1988 or Barnett 1997 for an interesting analysis of Fletcher’s success.

This was important, for as Poppendieck (1995) points out, when it comes to claims-making, the kind of response generated has to do with *how* the problem is typified. There is also, of course, the issue of *who* is making the claim. Despite the popular success of the likes of Kellogg and Sinclair, their influence was relatively limited. A body which is understood to represent *all* the people, with a vested interest in the well-being of the nation, clearly has greater credibility. If such a body identifies nutrition as a social problem, people are more likely to listen. And this has been the case for both the American and Canadian local and federal governments.

Nutrition as a Social Problem: An American Example

Naomi Aronson (1982) offers a fascinating account of how prominent nutrition scientists and advocates of the late 1800s constructed nutrition as a social problem by tying it to issues of labour reform in the United States. Aronson traces scientist Wilbur Atwater's quest for funding for his nutrition research agenda. A professor of chemistry at Wesleyan University, Atwater studied human nutrition, with particular focus upon questions of caloric consumption and metabolism. Atwater faced two significant hurdles: First, the requisite equipment for such work – a respiration calorimeter²² - was very expensive; and secondly, the University felt Atwater's research was too practically-

²² A respiration calorimeter was a highly complicated, advanced contraption, as Aronson describes: "a room-sized chamber in which the subject lived for several days...equipped with an air-tight door, a ventilation system, electricity, telephones, and tubes to pass food into the chamber and excretory products out...Experimenters inferred the kinds and quantities of nutritional elements required to maintain a person...by analyzing the chemical constituents of foods consumed and wastes excreted and by monitoring subtle variations in body and room temperature" (1982: 476). Aronson notes the annual operating costs were approximately \$10,000 in 1894.

oriented, not in keeping with the Christian/philosophical scholarship of the institution. Atwater's fortunes changed in 1885, when he was asked to contribute to a paper "on the relation between diet, wages, and productivity for the economics section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science" (Aronson 1982: 476). This introduced Atwater to "a loose alliance of liberal economists, statisticians, and policy makers concerned with labour reform" (1982:476). This alliance, Aronson notes, opened up new sources of funding for research on nutrition, and Atwater was also able to argue to his employer that "nutrition, as an aspect of labor reform, was a moral and philanthropic issue" (1982: 476).

Liberal economists responded to the debate surrounding the adequacy of wages by establishing basic requirements of subsistence items, including food, thus creating a new research question: what were the nutritional requirements for human subsistence?" (1982: 477). In 1885, the Massachusetts Bureau of Labour Statistics sponsored the first dietary survey conducted in the United States (1982: 477). Atwater was responsible for a study of food consumption by the state's factory workers. The findings of this work suggested that "existing wages would be adequate if workers learned to eat scientifically" (1982: 478), leading Atwater to make (what Aronson aptly describes as the "extravagant claim") that the labour problem could be solved through nutrition research.

Extravagant, yes, but attention grabbing and effective. In a series of articles from 1886 to 1888, Atwater urged the U.S. federal government to "instruct the people in the art of nutrition" (1886, cited in Aronson 1982), arguing that "ignorant buying" and "bad

cooking” were the causes of urban poverty. Invoking the “good of the country” rhetoric, Atwater claimed this lack of nutrition education was resulting in “waste enough to sustain another nation as numerous” (Aronson 1982: 478). As summarized by Aronson: “Atwater concluded that the problems of poverty and labor unrest could be solved by teaching the masses to shop and to cook economically” (1982: 479).

Atwater’s articles and other lobbying gained the burgeoning nutrition movement both popular support and financial backing, including a grant of \$10,000 from the United States Congress in 1894. Influential industrialists, philanthropic organizations, and home economists all got behind the idea of nutrition as a social problem. Aronson examines the problematic aspects of Atwater’s research, most notably that nutritionists “applied their theories in a class-stratified fashion” (1982: 483).²³ She further notes that by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, nutritional research focused more upon the biomedical aspect, rather than activism. However, other groups who had joined the nutrition bandwagon continued to view it as a social problem.²⁴

One aspect of Aronson’s account that deserves further exploration is the establishment of a “standard of living”, a benchmark for “proper” nutrition. In this case, it was a local (State) effort in late nineteenth-century Massachusetts. International standards would not come until more than thirty years later, in the years following the

²³ Foods were classified into two categories – for the poor and workers, and for the middle and upper classes. Further, nutrition scientists, despite their lofty statements, could not actually improve the conditions of workers without raising wages.

²⁴ There was a vested interest in maintaining nutrition as a social problem. See Chapters Four and Five for further discussion of this point.

First World War. As Paul Weindling writes (1995: 319): “From the vantage point of its aftermath, the First World War could be viewed as a gigantic nutritional experiment, with those countries better able to mobilize sufficient food resources emerging with higher levels of health.” Moreover, the postwar feeding programmes organized in Europe revealed considerable variation among the respective nations’ nutritional science and conceptions of what constitutes adequate nutrition (Levenstein 1988; Weindling 1995).²⁵

International Focus on Proper Nutrition

By the 1920s, The League of Nations Health Organization recognized the need for coordination of the efforts of the many relief groups, such as the American Relief Administration, the Red Cross Societies, the Save the Children International Union, and other smaller-scale, well-intentioned parties. This came at a time when the focus of nutritional science was shifting from subsistence diet to one “aimed at promoting optimum health, and a new standard of well being” (Weindling 1995: 321; Nestle 2002). League of Nations Health Organization Director Ludwik Rajchman sought to establish international standards of health, and saw nutrition as a key avenue for “establishing scientifically based policies that would transcend the sectional interests of member governments” (Weindling 1995: 321). The League of Nations also wished to stave off competition in the role it had carved out for itself, as the League of (American) Red Cross Societies actively aimed to be the authority in nutrition work (Red Cross Societies, 1944; Smith 1995; Weindling 1995).

²⁵ Some relief organizations accorded provisions based upon calories and expenditure of energy; others simply provided based on surplus. Distribution of food was both haphazard and structured – scientists argued for particular vitamin content to combat disease, while charitable groups (such as the Quakers) simply saw the crisis as one of need (Weindling 1995; Bentley 1998).

Throughout the 1920s, the League of Nations Health Organization sponsored a nutrition program, setting internationally accepted scientific standards for components of a healthy diet (what foods should be included) and the necessary quantity of those components. Particular emphasis was placed upon ensuring diets contained the optimum amount of “protective foods”²⁶ (that is, foods replete with vitamins and minerals; an indication of advancements in nutritional science).

In 1935, the League of Nations formed the Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition, comprised of experts in agriculture, economics, hygiene, and nutrition science. Later that same year, the Mixed Committee distributed to all member nations a series of questions regarding their current nutritional status, in an attempt to determine how these might be supported or improved. Canada’s reply, dated February 22, 1936, is less than impressive, consisting of two pages of little detail, clearly indicating the lack of national attention to issues of nutrition. In response to a question regarding “practical measures to ensure an improved dietary for various population groups,” Canada’s official reply reads as follows:

Public responsibility for food and health rests in the first place with the municipality, and in the second place with the Provincial Governments in supervising and the carrying out of such duties by the municipality. In the real sense of the word, *it is not a national responsibility* (1936, emphasis added).

Considered alongside much more detailed reports from other countries, the Canadian effort is nothing short of an embarrassment. For instance, the United States provided

²⁶ McCollum is usually credited with coining this designation.

complete dietary recommendations of known “protective foods”, and reports outlining the levels of malnutrition in New York City and Philadelphia, respectively. Belgium highlights state subsidies for agricultural and nutritional education, the regulation of sale of certain foodstuffs, as well as some detail regarding the content of courses offered in its field schools of agricultural domestic economy. Poland’s report is an informative twelve pages of detailed observations. In a February 28, 1936 letter to Dr. O.D. Skelton, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, W.A. Riddell, Canadian Advisory Office for the League of Nations, expresses concern about Canada’s response:

The memorandum enclosed in your letter has been duly forwarded to the Secretary General of the League, but I am informed today...that it appears very inadequate and general when compared with the replies received from most other Governments. I explained to him that of course this was a provincial matter...²⁷

The federal government failed to collect more data before the deadline (due in no small part to the lack of information actually held by the provinces); hence Canada’s contribution to the published League of Nations report remained “inadequate and general.”

At the September 1936 assembly at League of Nations, the Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition came to a number of resolutions regarding future nutrition efforts. In its report dated October 5, 1936, the League of Nations reiterates the purpose of the Mixed Committee: “a campaign launched...on behalf of an improvement of nutrition

²⁷ In correspondence from March 1936, it is clear that nutrition is not, in fact, a provincial matter. For example, in a letter of March 17, 1936 to R.E. Wodehouse, Deputy Minister, Pensions and National Health, Dr. J.J. Heagerty, Chief Executive Assistant writes: “It will not be possible to obtain the information requested in regard to nutrition and health from the Provincial Authorities by the middle of April. Moreover, I am satisfied that the provinces have not the information on hand as no investigations of a sufficiently comprehensive nature have been carried out to cover the information requested. I think Dr. Riddell should be advised accordingly.”

through international action.” Having reviewed the contributions to date of its member countries, the League issued the following statement of objectives:

The ultimate object of the work undertaken in this field is, by appropriate governmental initiative within the limits set by political, social and economic conditions, and, so far as the available resources permit, to encourage the adoption of the dietary habits that science recommends men to acquire in order to improve the general standard of health. We have but to imagine the progress that might be made along this line, and we shall at once grasp the consequences of every kind to which it might lead. Apart from the greater social contentment which always goes hand in hand with health and well-being, no one will deny that the forces thus set in motion may gradually, by the slow and imperceptible processes of adaptation peculiar to the life of man, bring about far-reaching changes in the forms of production, trade and consumption. Thus, having once started the movement towards better nutrition in wider and wider sections of the people – having, in a word, come to realise the part which it can play in educating the masses in the principles of scientific nutrition – the State will have to be careful not to impede, but, on the contrary, to facilitate the necessary economic adjustments (Memorandum of October 5, 1936:1).

The report goes on to outline fifteen detailed recommendations, aimed at coordinating nutrition work, and “in the absence of any central authority, to set up a special body for this purpose, in order to secure unity of policy and direction” (October 5, 1936:3).

To facilitate these objectives, the League of Nations recommended member countries establish National Nutrition Committees/Councils. Indeed, this had been an express recommendation at the first meeting of the Mixed Committee in February 1936. These national bodies, “whose composition and methods should be in keeping with the administrative practice and tradition of each country, have an essentially national purpose. Even so, they would, if set up in a large number of countries, make a useful contribution to international cooperation.” (League of Nations memo, October 5, 1936:2).

Canada's Response

Considering Canada's admission that to date, nutrition had effectively been a provincial matter,²⁸ a national Council would seem a worthwhile venture. In a style that may be recognized as typical of Canadian politics, the relevant parties took considerable time to *discuss* forming one. Despite a clear statement in favour of such a committee from the Dominion Council of Health, and indeed, the fact that the Canadian delegation at the September 1936 Assembly had supported the resolution recommending the creation of national councils, the federal government did not make a decision until November 1937, over a year after the League of Nations' recommendation. An official announcement came on November 17, giving the impression that Canada was assuming a leadership role:

A National Council of Nutrition in Canada was announced today by Health Minister Power. It will have a membership of possibly 25 under the chairmanship of Dr. R.E. Wodehouse, deputy minister of the department and will include representatives from 17 national administrative branches or voluntary organizations... The Canadian delegation at the Sept., 1936, meeting of the assembly of the League of Nations supported a resolution which was afterwards adopted unanimously urging members of the league to set up national nutrition committees.

Furthermore, the Canadian government proclaimed its independence in how it would collect "comprehensive" data:

While the program the council will follow will be left for it to decide, it is understood it will follow lines quite different from those being conducted in the United States where general information is being collected from the entire population. In Canada, the council may find it more advantageous to pick out 50 typical families across the Dominion and make an intensive study of their diet down to the last detail, the calories (sic) consumed, the protein content and the like. ("National

²⁸ As the above note suggests, this proved to be a false assumption. The provincial response is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Council On Nutrition Will Probe Food Needs," *Ottawa Citizen*, November 17, 1937).

Far from being on the leading edge, the Canadian Council on Nutrition held its first meeting in February 1938, three months after its announced creation and a *full year* after other countries' national councils had met at an international conference organized by the League of Nations.

That the government took so long to establish a national Council on Nutrition is particularly surprising when one considers that its inadequate participation with the League of Nations Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition was not the only international (nutrition-related) embarrassment in recent memory. On May 4, 1936, the (Canadian) Preparatory Committee for the British Commonwealth Scientific Conference, working under the auspices of the National Research Council, decided to appoint a Subcommittee on nutrition. The role of this subcommittee was to "collect and collate the available information on nutrition," and it would be chaired by Dr. R.E. Wodehouse, Deputy Minister of the Department of Pensions and National Health. Data collected would also be used to furnish a reply to the League of Nations, having as yet been unable to provide the requested information.²⁹ The Subcommittee on Nutrition produced a report by August 1936 (British Commonwealth Scientific Conference, Canadian Preparatory Committee, Report of the Subcommittee on Nutrition, August 1936), subsequently published in the October volume of *The National Health Review* (a quarterly publication of the Department of Pensions and National Health). In advance of

²⁹ This information is outlined in a letter from General A.G.L. McNaughton, President of the National Research Council, to Dr. R.H.Coats, Dominion Statistician, Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

its findings being presented at the aforementioned conference, a copy of the report was sent to every physician in Canada, with an additional six hundred copies made available for general distribution. It is a well-organized and *seemingly* well-researched document, which is surprising in light of Dr. Heagerty's observation only a few months earlier regarding the dearth of information held by the provinces.³⁰ From where, exactly, did the government collect its data?

This question arose a number of times, voiced by concerned groups working in the field who challenged the government's conclusions about the status of nutrition research, education, knowledge, and overall health in Canada. For instance, in December 1936, The Visiting Homemakers Association sent a letter to Chairman Wodehouse and to General McNaughton, Chair of the Subcommittee which drafted this report, expressing serious misgivings about its contents. The Advisory Household Science Committee of the Visiting Homemakers Association, having reviewed the report, issued a damning resolution, excerpted here:

...and whereas the Advisory Household Science Committee of the Visiting Homemakers Association has given careful consideration to this report as printed in the National Health Review, October, 1936, and whereas they have determined that the facts portrayed in this report are frequently inadequate and are apparently based upon unsatisfactory and incomplete surveys, we believe it to be in the best interest of Nutrition that such a misrepresentative report should not be circulated and request that the Board of the Visiting Homemakers Association object to the circulation of such a report. The Board of Directors of the Visiting Homemakers Association further ask for the appointment of members trained and experienced in the field of human nutrition who will reconsider the whole question.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd.) Marjorie Bell, Secretary, Visiting Homemakers Association.

³⁰ See note 27.

(letter dated December 24, 1936).³¹

Correspondence over several months followed among Bell, Wodehouse, and McNaughton, with evidence of growing frustration among all parties. Both McNaughton and Wodehouse acknowledge limitations in the data, but note these are stated in the report, and that the report should be read as an attempt to collect readily available data as a guide to further work. Bell is not easily put off, however, and in a letter of March 2, 1937 to McNaughton, she points out a number of “misrepresentative statements.” For example, the report claims:

Much educational work has been carried out in all parts of the Dominion on efficient administration with very limited family budgets, by university and college extension lectures, and by welfare centres as well as official agencies, municipal, provincial and federal (Report of the Subcommittee on Nutrition, August 1936),

prompting Bell to issue this challenge:

May we be informed in what part of Canada “much educational work has been carried out” and by whom? We, unfortunately, know of no nutrition worker appointed by either the Provincial or Federal Government to do educational work on relief diets or to advise on this matter, and our enquiries corroborate our opinion that exceedingly little educational work has been carried on. (Marjorie Bell, Director and Secretary of the Board, Visiting Homemakers Association).

³¹ The Visiting Homemakers Association was one of a number of organizations and individuals who expressed concern regarding the membership of the National Council on Nutrition. In yet another letter to Dr. Wodehouse (dated November 17, 1937), Marjorie Bell (on behalf of the Visiting Homemakers Association) points out that the Women’s Institutes have much experience in nutrition, particularly in rural districts. She also questions the omission of representatives from Household Science departments of universities across Canada, noting they would be “much surprised not to be included.” The Council was comprised primarily of representatives from various government departments, although some relatively independent organizations were also represented, such as the Red Cross Society, Canadian Association of Social Workers, Canadian Welfare Council, Canadian Dietetic Association, and the aforementioned Visiting Homemakers Association. The announcement of the Council elicited a number of requests for representation from diverse parties - for instance, the Canadian Dental Association - as well as interested individuals who wished to play a role.

The tone of the correspondence (and indeed, Bell's own title) become increasingly formal,³² until McNaughton quells any further consideration with a cursory memo informing Bell that her organization's information has been "placed on file."

However, the Visiting Homemakers Association was not alone in its concerns. The National Council of the YMCA of the Dominion of Canada, Social Work Department, asked the Subcommittee on Nutrition to consider their recent study of relief rates and malnutrition,³³ pointing out its "definite bearing" on the facts presented in the Subcommittee's report. David L. Thomson, Professor of Biochemistry at McGill University and Chairman of the Nutrition Committee for the Montreal Council of Social Agencies offers this blistering critique:

Our Committee wishes to endorse most warmly the statement (p.59) that "there is a great dearth of information on what the people are actually consuming and wherein this is deficient". This is, indeed, strikingly borne out by the fact that the Report quotes no evidence as to the actual health of the people..."(Letter to McNaughton, April 21, 1937).

Thomson then proceeds to point out a host of problems with the report.

Many of the objections to the Subcommittee's conclusions came from organizations (both formal and grassroots) who felt slighted for not having been consulted. But this is in itself a legitimate complaint, as the Subcommittee was supposed to be reporting on the status of nutrition across the country. Who better to consult than those doing the work?

³² At the beginning of this exchange, Bell signed as Secretary, graduating quickly to Director, and Secretary of the Board.

³³ Thomson, on behalf of the Nutrition Committee, Montreal Council of Social Agencies, enclosed a series of statistics from their study of relief rates, clearly contradicting the statements made in the Subcommittee's report. McNaughton's response was to indicate the information would be placed on file.

McNaughton appears never to grasp this point, offering one of his critics the following explanation:

It may be noted that the brief report of the Subcommittee on Nutrition, published in the October, 1936, issue of the "National Health Review", was intended merely to indicate the nature and extent of the readily available information in Canada and to serve as a basis for further studies, if these should appear to be necessary.³⁴

Clearly further work *was* necessary, as the Subcommittee failed to contact any number of relevant bodies, including the Visiting Homemakers Association, the Canadian Dietetic Association, the Canadian Home Economics Association, and nationwide provincial and municipal initiatives.³⁵ Their unawareness of the YMCA study, for example, indicates their information collection to be, at best, selective.

But more serious than these oversights (though likely related) are some of the claims made in the report. For instance, while the report accurately states the supply of essential foods is adequate, it goes on to make the grand statement that with respect to the poor and unemployed, "assistance has been sufficiently extensive to provide those unemployed with enough foodstuffs to carry out the dietaries that have been laid down by provinces and municipalities" (1936:64).³⁶ (Had the Subcommittee consulted the YMCA, a most different picture would have emerged). Even more impressive, "probably no families are

³⁴ This was McNaughton's reply to Winifred Hutchison, Social Work Department of the National Council of the YMCA, dated February 8, 1937. Hutchison had written to McNaughton February 3, 1937, asking the Subcommittee to consider their recent study: "A Comparison of Relief Rates for Single Unemployed Women Living Alone in 33 Canadian Cities", January 1937).

³⁵ Perhaps not coincidentally, some of these organizations were invited to join the Canadian Council on Nutrition, formed the following year.

³⁶ This remark is rendered more unbelievable by the fact that the provinces had indicated to the federal government little if any work had been done.

being missed now” (1936:64). Further, “There has been no indication of malnutrition or of any increased evidence of communicable disease since the depression until the year 1935, when there was a definite cyclical increase in certain communicable diseases, chiefly of a minor nature” (1936:64-65). While improvements in hygiene and sanitation would help account for the decline in disease, the report gives no indication of how the Subcommittee arrived at the questionable conclusion that malnutrition has been eradicated.

In fairness, large sections of the report are acceptable (food budgets, advice for pregnant or nursing mothers, Dominion agricultural statistics, and so on), but overall, viewed in the context of the response it generated and its overly optimistic assessment of Canada’s nutritional status, the Report is seriously flawed. What I find most interesting about the Report of the Subcommittee on Nutrition is that over a decade earlier, the League of Nations had identified nutrition as a social problem. Then, in its role as a member of the League, Canada endorsed the recommendation that each country form a national council on nutrition, yet the Subcommittee’s “findings” rather effectively suggest there is no need for such a council. Of course no one wanted to attend the British Commonwealth Scientific Conference to deliver the message that Canada was nutritionally unfit, but the government missed an opportunity to share challenges with other countries and learn about potential solutions. The “preparatory” committee did nutrition work in Canada a disservice, and as a result, it would be several more years until nutrition as a national concern generated a comprehensive commitment from the federal government.

Chapter Three: Nutrition Work in Canada: 1930-1938

That the League of Nations began emphasizing nutrition as a social problem in the 1930s is unsurprising. The world had experienced a massive economic depression, and while the immediate focus was the issue of whether a country's citizens had enough to eat, the issue of access to "proper" foods (i.e., nutritious) eventually began to emerge as a national concern. If basic subsistence was being met (and according to the government report of the time, it was),¹ the state could turn its attention to ensuring its people were eating the "right" foods – that is, those which would aid in the development of both physical strength and strength of character. At the federal level, Canada was slow to "come to the table", as it were, and its early efforts were denounced as presenting an inaccurate (and overly optimistic) picture of the nutritional status of Canadians. Independent agencies such as the YMCA and the Visiting Homemakers Association sought to curtail the distribution of the 1936 Report of the Subcommittee on Nutrition, requesting that it be withdrawn from the British Commonwealth Scientific Conference, as "it does not present conditions as they exist in Canada."² It did, however, stand as Canada's commentary on the nutritional well-being of its citizens.

Part of the criticism surrounding this document stemmed from its authors' failure to consult on what nutrition work was actually being done across the country. This was a repeat error for the federal government, whose submission to the League of Nations earlier that year had been considered too vague and thus unhelpful. At the time, those

¹ This was clearly inaccurate – see Chapter 2 for responses to this claim.

² Excerpted from Letter to McNaughton from Bell, Visiting Homemakers Association, March 2, 1937.

responsible attributed this to the fact that nutrition was a provincial matter, and they had not had the time to collect detailed information from the various regions. However, the correspondence regarding this matter reveals that there was perhaps very little to collect. Dr. J.J. Heagerty, Chief Executive Assistant, Department of Pensions and National Health, wrote to Provincial Health Officers, as well as the Health Officers of principal cities, requesting copies of any printed matter regarding nutrition their respective offices had produced, and details about any educational efforts undertaken. Only a few responses appear to have been received,³ but all are variations on a theme:

Replying to your favor of May 6th and its enquiry re pamphlets or other material on the subject of "Nutrition and Diet", I regret to say that we have not anything in print dealing specifically with these matters, our references usually being in the form of brief incidental remarks in the course of articles dealing with general hygiene, et cetera.

(Letter to Heagerty from Dr. J.P. Jackson, Medical Officer of Health, Department of Public Health, City Hall, Toronto, May 8, 1936).

In answer, I beg to inform you that we have no publication of general concern on these subjects. Nevertheless, I am enclosing you copies of an article on Vitamins and circulars concerning diet for nursing mothers and infants.

(Letter to Heagerty from S. Boucher, M.D., Director, Department of Health, Montreal, May 9, 1936).

And one particularly succinct reply:

This Department has issued no printed matter on the subject of Nutrition and Diet.

(Letter to Heagerty from A.J. Douglas, M.D., Medical Health Officer, City of Winnipeg, May 12, 1936).⁴

³ At least according to the files maintained by the National Archives; however, these may be incomplete.

⁴ This was indeed succinct – this sentence is the entire letter!

Several other responses directed Heagerty to publications that were indirectly relevant, such as "The Mouth is the Gateway to the Body" (promoting oral hygiene), courtesy of the Chief Health Officer of Halifax; "Home Nursing, Feeding the Sick", the one and only publication by the Minister of Public Health, Saskatchewan; and "Minimum Food Budget", a one-page document supplied by the New Brunswick Department of Health (who acknowledge it was based on material issued by the Child Welfare Bureau several years earlier).

Another interesting trend is the reliance upon literature provided by insurance companies. W.H. Hill, Medical Officer of Health for the City of Calgary, writes (May 11, 1936): "In so far as this department is concerned we have no literature of our own on this subject. We rely on literature supplied through the Provincial Board of Health and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company." Hill's comments are echoed by F.T. Cook, Health Education Division for the Department of Public Health for the Province of Alberta: "We use any material that is sound on the subject, such as the Metropolitan Life pamphlets." (Letter of May 12, 1936). Medical Health Officer for the City of Regina, W.R. Coles also reports obtaining information through "some of the insurance companies" (May 16, 1936), as does Anna E. Wells, Health Education Service, Department of Health and Welfare (again, publications from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (May 18, 1936)). Heagerty thus called a meeting on the subject of nutrition, including the following plea in his invitation: "The Canadian material on nutrition is scanty, and if you have any particular information in this respect that you think will be of use, please bring it along."⁵

⁵ Memo from Heagerty, Chief Executive Assistant of the Subcommittee on Nutrition, dated May 18, 1936.

As will be illustrated in this chapter, nutrition work was clearly being done, particularly by independent groups, but there was a dearth of published material, and there was no coordination or mutual knowledge among government departments or other agencies. Nutrition information was housed within such departments as agriculture or child welfare, but the kinds of information were quite specific. Broader knowledge of nutrition, particularly practical advice, tended to be the purview of disparate local groups, Household Science Departments of universities, as well as some national organizations that the government failed to consult in any meaningful or sustained way.⁶ Some of these are considered below.

The Housewives' Association of Canada was a voluntary, non-political, non-sectarian organization that formed in the 1930s to address the rising cost of living, and in particular, the rising cost of food. It was, in essence, an early consumer advocacy group which recognized women's role as the primary shoppers in families. Their mandate was as follows:

- a) Reduce the high cost of living.
- b) Facilitate and advance the interests of housewives.
- c) Give to its members the most advanced and improved knowledge on purchase prices.
- d) Be a Bureau for the practical distribution of information relating to every aspect of household economy, to the mutual advantage of its members.

⁶ Some of these organizations would eventually be consulted by, and gain representation on, the Canadian Council on Nutrition.

- e) Collect all available information regarding the prices of food products, fuel, rent, articles of clothing and commodity prices in general and to devise ways and means to reduce these prices to a minimum.⁷

Although its directive was clearly consumer-oriented, seeking “greater cooperation between producers and consumers,” through its focus upon the escalating cost of food, and the lack of a concomitant rise in wages, the Housewives’ Association brought attention to the social problem of malnutrition:

The inability of the housewife, as a consumer, to balance her budget in the face of increased food costs on reduced incomes has created a situation whereby the health of many of our people are being seriously affected through malnutrition. Relief recipients receive the same cash vouchers for relief as they did in 1933, which means that they now receive 30% less for food than they did in 1933. This condition is not in the best interest of the citizens of Canada, nor are people who lack the necessities of life in any position to avail themselves of employment even when work is available due to their run-down physical condition (April 25, 1938:2).

The brief submitted to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations (1938), (of which the above forms a part) illustrates the political and social awareness of this group. Using the report of the 1935 Royal Commission on Price Spreads, the Housewives’ Association points out the burgeoning monopolies within food manufacturing, critiquing the price-fixing practices of the meatpacking industry, milling and baking industry, milk and dairy producers, and canning companies. They also note the ineffectiveness of government regulation: “[A]s at the present time in Canada all governments, Federal, Provincial and Municipal, have increased their bonded debt and also their taxes from year to year it would thus seem impertinent for any such government to show any industry how to operate on a more efficient basis until such time

⁷ Brief of The Housewives’ Association of Canada, To The Rt. Honourable Newton W. Rowell, Chairman of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, and to the Members of the Committee, April 25, 1938.

as they put their own house in order" (1938:6). In light of these remarks, and their suggested legislative changes, it is perhaps not too surprising that the government did not seek the input of the Housewives' Association.

However, if the political activism of the Housewives' Association made the federal government uncomfortable, there were less threatening organizations, some of which had already forged working relationships with the various levels of government.

The Red Cross began community nutrition work through its Ontario division in 1929, in an effort to help families on relief. However, the Society soon realized that malnutrition crossed income categories, and education was needed among women of all social groups (Red Cross nutrition classes were offered specifically for women). Over the next decade, the Society was assisted by graduates in Household Science, who taught the classes. These were generally six or eight lessons, covering such topics as nutritious and economical meals on a relief budget, and proper food storage and preparation. The volunteer work of these women was crucial, as from 1929-1937, the organization of lectures and demonstrations was all done by one woman, Supervisor of Nutrition, Miss Margaret McCready. Other nutritionists helped when available, but upon the departure of McCready, the Red Cross ceased its nutrition work until the outbreak of war necessitated a renewed focus.⁸

The Women's Institutes are well known for their willingness to rally around a cause, and the economic crisis of the Depression was one of the many challenges they readily

⁸ "The Canadian Red Cross Society Nutrition Program, 1929-1944." Undated memo, circa 1944.

accepted. Between 1929 and 1938, there were 1,366 branches of the WI in Ontario alone, with over 42,000 members. Gladys Luck Hall, of the Inman Road Women's Institute, nicely captures their mandate in this 1934 piece:

There's a band of willing workers
 Scattered throughout the land,
 Who stand prompt and ever ready,
 To lend a helping hand.
 To the weak and heavy laden,
 Who stumble along life's way –
 Their labour of love and protection
 Continues from day to day.

Wherever the call of suffering,
 No matter the class or creed –
 Their ears are always open,
 To the cry of the ones in need.
 This band of Christian women,
 To no call of distress is mute,
 And the home of these tireless workers
 Is the Women's Institute.

(excerpt from "The Women's Institute" by Gladys Luck Hall (1934); reprinted in Ambrose 1996: 111).

While the provincial and federal governments debated responsibility for relief, the WI forged ahead, arranging systems of distribution of foodstuffs, sending money and supplies to other branches in need of support, and devising ways for "members to help themselves, as well as their neighbours, in a system of mutual aid." (Ambrose 1996:111). Thus it was not simply about charity, but an effort to restore some dignity to those on assistance. Indeed, Ambrose (1996) found that some WI members were themselves relief recipients, yet continued to help others whenever possible. In addition to donations of goods for which there was an immediate need, the WI took a philanthropic approach (Donzelot 1979; Valverde 1991, 1994) emphasizing practical education to improve the

circumstances of the people over the long term. Through the WI, the Department of Agriculture offered lectures and short courses at minimal charge, as well as literature on nutrition (1996:117-120), earning the WI the nickname “the rural university” (1935, cited in Ambrose 1996). Courses were popular among women, who had a vested interest in running their households as cost-effectively as possible. By the late 1930s, the Women’s Institutes had assumed domestic science education as their primary role, and members were reminded of their priorities: “Although their activism in community projects was commendable, the Institutes were, first and foremost, ‘an educational, not a charitable or money-raising organization’” (Ambrose 1996:120). Courses were offered on a range of topics, including meal planning, health and diet, the causes of constipation, and “self-development,”⁹ as well as monthly schools in Home Economics. Although very popular, these educational opportunities would be necessarily scaled back when the war forced the WI to reassess its priorities.

The Canadian Home Economics Association formed in 1939 as the national association of professional home economists in Canada. Besides its interest in promoting its profession, CHEA saw itself enhancing the daily lives of Canadians through application of the wide range of knowledge its members possessed. Of the various groups involved in nutrition work, home economics educators place particular emphasis on the connections between medicine and morality, identifying “worthy home membership” as a

⁹ The Superintendent of the WI explained “self-development” in this way: “We strive, to make women better homemakers and to make homemakers better women” (1937, cited in Ambrose 1996: 124).

key objective,¹⁰ and expanding the conception of homemaker to include such areas as family relationships, maintenance of health standards, home nursing, nutrition, and economic management (Allen 1935). Prior to CHEA's formation, home economics education was already part of the primary school curriculum, thereby extending its reach throughout the social body (Donzelot 1979).¹¹ In a 1935 article, Mabel Allen reminds us of the power of the home economics educator: "it is her responsibility to make her pupils feel so keenly the importance of right food habits that their homes will be influenced also" (1935: 65). In turn, the pupils (who were female) will assume responsibility for their families. As Anne Cameron, inspector of vocational education for the Ontario Department of Education (from 1929-late 1950s) writes: "A homemaker's responsibility for any girl is her *personal relationship* with her own family, classmates, and friends" (1938: 74, emphasis added). The Canadian Home Economics Association, and especially school-based home economics education, would remain important proponents of domestic and by extension social health for most of the twentieth century.

Formed in 1935, the Canadian Dietetics Association was, like CHEA, a professional body with a directive to help improve the quality of life among Canadians. In a report of the Interim Committee on Nutrition (1937), the CDA declares its members ready and able to help Canadian citizens learn about nutrition. Unlike some of its counterparts, the CDA was very willing to collaborate with other groups in spreading the word about nutrition,

¹⁰ The basic objectives of home economics education, in addition to worthy home membership, were basic vocational preparation, health knowledge, civic, moral, and social development, and productive use of leisure (Allen 1935).

¹¹ Peterat and DeZwart (1995) note that home economics was not universally accepted as a credible school subject. They cite several published derisive remarks in this regard, particularly regarding the idea of home economics or domestic science as a university degree programme.

and considered community education one of its important tasks. As Dr. W.W. Chipman praised the members of the CDA at its 1937 convention: “they were working for the health of the nation in establishing food values, and there was no more important business...for after all, the right food is the chief treatment in any disease, nine times out of ten.”¹² Most often, the authority of the CDA was felt through the efforts of its members who worked as dietitians in other organizations, in hospitals, institutions, the commercial sector, and the service industry (cafeterias, hotels). Perhaps the CDA’s greatest influence was its promotion of dietetics as a career for women – indeed, the job description produced by the CDA was expressly intended for women.¹³

Popular Magazines: Articles, Editorials, and Advertising

In addition to the advice and assistance available from organizations such as these, throughout the 1930s one key source of information about proper food and nutrition was popular magazines, particularly those with a predominantly female readership. Although the federal government did not embrace nutrition as a national concern until late in the decade, articles about nutrition and especially the science behind it were featured from the early 1900s.¹⁴ Magazines such as *Canadian Home Journal* and *Chatelaine* were

¹² “Proper Exchange of Ideals Urged: Dr. W.W. Chipman Addresses Dinner at Dietetic Convention.” Newspaper clipping (source unknown) from CDA Scrapbooks, 1937, National Archives of Canada.

¹³ “Trained Dietitian Need Not Lack Job: Positions Await Qualified Women.” Newspaper clipping (source unknown) from CDA Scrapbooks, 1937, National Archives of Canada.

¹⁴ Cookery was always a feature of these magazines; my investigation begins at 1930.

successful examples of the era,¹⁵ and may be identified as significant purveyors of nutritional advice.

Alongside the standard “Summer Meals” and “Fun with Strawberries” articles, the August 1930 edition of *Canadian Home Journal* notes the growth of domestic science in its article “Housekeeping as a Science: Well Trained ‘Angels of Kitchen’ Blaze New Trail.” Mixed metaphors notwithstanding, this subtitle nicely incorporates the moral overtones associated with the domestic role. Miss Barbara Blackstock of the Red Cross is quoted at length about the content of the programme, how it is taught, and so on, but what is particularly interesting is the early recognition of the importance of nutrition (early by government standards, preceding the League of Nations Assembly). In Miss Babcock’s words:

One of the greatest needs disclosed has been in regard to this basic family problem, nutrition. And although our Housekeepers go to all classes, the ignorance of this science is not by any means confined to the women in poor families. You will recall, that when clinics were held on school children in our cities, it was found that there was quite as much malnutrition among those of the well-to-do classes as among the poor. This nutritional work ought, indeed to be much further extended than we find possible when our Visiting Housekeepers have so much other work to do, but we are always hoping that when housekeeping centres expand to meet the need everywhere experienced, we shall be able more thoroughly to teach the science of nutrition. It is the only safe background for individual or family health. Its close relation to maternal, baby and child welfare is apparent, but the average mother knows far too little about it.

At our own Centre, we need a bigger staff and a number of specialists in this line,

¹⁵ *Canadian Home Journal* was published from 1895-1958, at which time it was absorbed by the still existing *Chatelaine*, which began publication in 1928. In October 1930, *Canadian Home Journal* had a paid circulation of 130,000. By January 1931, it had grown to over 150,000, and by the following year, it claimed the “Largest Magazine Circulation in Canada”, with over 175,000 net paid monthly. It also managed to secure some important contributors, including Magistrate Emily Murphy, who asked, “Do Women Oppose War?” (November 1930), and author Margaret Lawrence, who explored “Do Canadian Universities Teach Atheism?” (June 1931). The magazine seems “before its time” with respect to issues raised, including a November 1931 feminist piece “Are Women Sheep?” which invited and received some interesting responses, and a report on Kingston’s Prison for Women (October 1933).

if we are to successfully instruct the many women and girls in this fundamental household science, but meantime we are just doing what we can to meet the need of the well-trained “kitchen angel” where she is most pressingly required.¹⁶

A January 1937 article, “Let’s Eat Well!” also reminds women of the dangers of poor nutrition, and the importance of becoming educated on the subject:

Here in the Home Service Bureau, through our contacts with Canadian women, we see the necessity for a real understanding of what diet can do for the family health. We feel that every one of you would profit by a brief month-to-month study of one or another phase of this vital problem of nutrition. The discussion can be made to touch each of you personally – and so, reach each individual member of your home.

You must keep two things in mind, when planning your family’s menus. Not only should you cater to taste, by providing appetizing food – but at the same time, you should plan carefully to give them the health-promoting foods they require. (You’ll glory in being such an important factor for making your family’s health a positive thing, rather than a mere freedom from disease). (Gagen 1937a: 82).

This article is also prescient with respect to the political arena, stating: “If Europe is dictator-conscious, America is diet conscious” (1937a: 82). This was the first in a series of articles Gagen wrote for *Canadian Home Journal* over the next five years; readers were encouraged to save “this new series of informal chats, for reference now and again” (Gagen 1937a: 82). Gagen covered a range of topics, including the challenges of eating properly when busy (aimed especially at students); caloric values; benefits of vitamins, proteins, and carbohydrates; and meal planning. By the 1940s, Gagen’s focus shifts to the challenges presented by wartime,¹⁷ but her 1930s articles already impress upon women

¹⁶ Miss Blackstock, Red Cross Society, as quoted in *Canadian Home Journal* 27, 4: 50).

¹⁷ See Chapters Four and Five for examples of Gagen’s wartime articles.

their *duty* to feed the family properly. In “Eat to be Cool”¹⁸ (August 1937), Gagen remarks: “Though I hope you enjoy feeding your family, I know this meal-getting is a grave responsibility because it means so much to family health...you’ll find the responsibility real (sic) fun, when you see how well-worked-out menus can contribute to coolness and comfort” (Gagen 1937e: 36). She is even more direct in the following article:

It devolves upon you homemakers to understand what food principles are essential, and how you can make sure that the family gets its full quota of all of them. Knowledge of food values will not only make meal-planning an exciting game for you – you actually *owe that* knowledge to those whose food is your care (1938a: 92, emphasis added).

This sense of duty, of something owed to the family, was part of a larger effort to reform maternal and child care (Arnup 1990, 1994; Comacchio 1992; Ladd-Taylor 1992; Strong-Boag 1982).¹⁹ Katherine Arnup traces the shift in attitudes toward mothers over one hundred years, from their portrayal as almost angelic figures to the 1930s image of uneducated, incompetent women desperately in need of guidance:

The trouble is that the home today is the poorest run, most mismanaged and bungled of all human industries...Many women running homes haven’t even the fundamentals of house management and dietetics. They raise children in the average, by a rule of thumb that hasn’t altered since Abraham was a child (*Canadian Home Journal*, May 1932, cited in Arnup 1994: 32).

The *ideal* of motherhood remained intact; Arnup makes reference to the Canadian advertising of the British Chemists Company as a representative portrayal: “The relations of mother and child are the highest, holiest, most important in existence. The duties and

¹⁸ Gagen uses this term (“cool”) quite literally, though there is also the suggestion of being comfortable and collected.

¹⁹ Maternal and infant care had long been (since the nineteenth century) a cause of moral reformers concerned for the physical and spiritual health of children. It was felt that mothers (especially those of the “lower” classes) required education and supervision to ensure they “properly” cared for their children.

responsibilities of motherhood are of most vital consideration...To make the race beautiful, pure, strong and good, is the high and holy mission of MOTHERHOOD.”²⁰

What was changing was the perception of good mothering. The once glorified maternal “instinct” began to be challenged by scientific authorities who declared parental training a necessity. Women were encouraged (indeed, pressured) to become educated in the “new and improved” methods of family care, including knowledge of what to feed husbands and children – “scientifically appropriate” meals (Apple 1995). To fail in this task had greater implications than disappointing the family or worse, damaging their well-being; the health and future of the nation was dependent upon their success. As Apple writes (1995: 138): “A mother delinquent in the feeding of her family chanced sending out into the world disgruntled, maladjusted husband and children. Moreover, she risked dissolution of home and family.” In a 1938 article published in *Ladies’ Home Journal*, Dr. Herman Bundesen warns mothers of “The Menace of Malnutrition,” pointing out that forty percent of men examined for [United States] Army service during the [first] World War did not meet the required physical fitness standards, a finding Bundesen attributes to poor nutrition. For both its American and Canadian readers, dealing with economic depression and the threat of growing hostilities overseas, this is a particularly sinister illustration of the importance of proper nutrition, and for women, a potent reminder of their duty: “we are faced with a problem of national significance. It is apparent...that his problem will largely be solved in the home” (Bundesen 1938: 54).

²⁰ British Chemists Company advertising pamphlet (1900) as cited by Arnup 1994:35.

One of the “solutions” to this “menace” was to educate women (and girls) in science, with a gender-appropriate curriculum. While these initiatives seem to have been popularly received (Apple 1995; Ambrose 1996; Peterat and DeZwart 1995) they also had the effect of inculcating the messages of duty and responsibility among very young girls. One could speculate that the rhetoric of risk would be potentially frightening for them, though undoubtedly most effective, especially in changing their own mothers’ feeding practices. Further, these children were made aware of their own fate, should their family not eat nutritiously: One advertisement of the period features an enlarged photograph of a sad young girl, eyes unfocusedly gazing into the distance, and in large typeface, “85% of this heavy toll is exacted from little children.” One has to read the fine print to discover what exactly this toll is (contagious disease), but the overall effect is disconcerting.²¹

This theme of placing responsibility on the shoulders of women is common to magazines of the time. For instance, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, an American publication that was also distributed in Canada, promoted this idea in a 1932 editorial: ‘It’s Up to the Women.’ Clearly this exhortation was related to the ongoing effects of the Depression, when massive numbers of men were unemployed and families had to make do with relief measures. In 1930, *The Chatelaine* asked: “Shall We Accept the Challenge That Faces the Women of Canada?”:

If in the magical way of the old fairy tale, some stranger were to come and offer us one of two gifts, health or education, there’s not a moment’s doubt as to which gift we would choose. For every one of us realizes the importance of health; yet how many of us ever think much about it?... We are complacent about it; indifferent to the poison that eats at the heart of a

²¹ Thankfully, Cream of Wheat can restore this “abnormal blood condition resulting from an energy lack in the diet.” (Advertisement in *Ladies’ Home Journal* January 1933: 59).

nation's vitality. We are grown to full maturity here in Canada, and our responsibilities have grown with us. How long shall we take the well-being of our people for granted? Let anyone ask us about our health as a nation, and I wager we'd all answer, in effect, "Fine! Fine climate, and wonderful health standard!"...Here are truths which most of us have never realized; statistics to shake us out of our complacency; health losses which are appalling in their utter waste. *Here is an article for women – for is not the health of a country in its women's keeping?* (1930: 16, emphasis added).

The Chatelaine (becoming simply *Chatelaine* in June 1932) was a close competitor with *Canadian Home Journal*, with similar circulation numbers.²² A monthly feature, "The Modern Chatelaine: A department for the housekeeper," provided helpful hints on food purchasing, meal preparation, and so on, though not specifically on nutrition. Similar to *Canadian Home Journal's* Home Service Bureau, this magazine had The Chatelaine Institute, whose director, Helen G. Campbell, wrote about the latest trends in food, acknowledging in May 1930, that "The old-fashioned tonic has gone before a greater knowledge of food and food values" (1930: 21).

Chatelaine included articles on health in every issue ("For a Healthy Canada"), and these often included nutrition in an indirect way, such as the importance of teaching children the value of nourishing food, as poor nutrition is a predisposing factor in the spread of tuberculosis (December 1930: 9). Like *Canadian Home Journal*, *Chatelaine* would begin promoting nutrition more expressly once the country was at war, but throughout the 1930s, the writing is informed by the early (1930) editorial cited above. And while *Chatelaine* was less political than *Canadian Home Journal*,²³ it nonetheless

²² In March 1930, *Chatelaine's* net paid circulation was 120,000 per issue. By September of the following year, this had increased to 130,000; by January 1933, more than 180,000 (outpacing *Canadian Home Journal*).

²³ This is a relative distinction, as *Canadian Home Journal* is not exactly a hotbed of political commentary, but it did on occasion take on issues that are surprisingly controversial.

had its moments of challenging the government. In April 1933, the magazine published a critique of the administration of unemployment relief in Canada, following the National Council of Women's call for greater (officially recognized) involvement by women:

The feeding and clothing of families have been for generations women's special province. Even today, when her interests and sympathies are widening in so many directions, her chief work remains in the home. Both experience and training have qualified her to understand the needs of growing children, the balancing of diets, husbanding of good health, and economical buying...The care and feeding of helpless people is a task of colossal and vital importance. Why are there so few women officially engaged in it? ...the remedy lies not with the Federal Government. Nor can it be justly said to rest in the hands of the provinces. Does it not rather depend upon women themselves, in their own municipalities? (Jordon 1933: 19, 74).

Women were thus encouraged (if not commanded) by the editorial staff of their popular magazines to learn about nutrition, to become experts (or "angels in the kitchen"), not just for the sake of their own families' well being, but for the nation as a whole. Indeed, articles such as Jordon's above may be read as commentary on women's social and political status in Canada, in the guise of a "domestic" piece.

While articles such as these were useful ways of reaching women in the home, the advertisements in these magazines are especially persuasive in reinforcing the idea that poor eating habits are a social problem, but thankfully, the science of nutrition (to which the particular company in any given ad seemed to have the exclusive claim) could help restore us (as individuals and as a nation) to good health. 1930s food advertising invokes ideas of risk, the remedy to which is the knowledge that comes from science, and thus women must become educated in this very important field.

The influence of science and the medicalization of food are part of the larger social hygiene projects of the time. Sanitary kitchens, food preservation, and safe food handling were emphasized – challenging standards to meet when large proportions of the population were surviving on relief measures. The growth in nutrition science from the turn of the century (particularly in Britain) made available considerable amounts of information regarding vitamin requirements, caloric intake, and the effects of certain foods on the body (Horrocks 1995, 1997; Milles 1995; Smith 1997b). Accessible “scientific” texts such as Sherman’s *Food and Health* (1934) emphasized the intelligent use of food, including sanitary considerations and the aspects of nutritional need. “Engine and fuel” analogies were popular means of illustrating the body’s response to good nutrition (Milles 1995), and through its association with the ability to labour, was another reminder of the moral significance of proper feeding. Horrocks (1995, 1997) has demonstrated the relationship between nutrition science and the food industry in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s. As she notes, it was during this period that large-scale manufacturers expanded their science divisions,²⁴ and by the 1930s, their research was being marketed to the public. In Canada, by the early 1930s, food manufacturers were following the commercial trend of emphasizing the “science” behind their products, and moreover, the dangers associated with using “inferior” brands. One classic campaign along these lines was for Scott (toilet) Tissue. These advertisements featured an imposing man dressed in surgical garb, grimly pointing out “the trouble began with harsh toilet tissue.” To offer a few food-related examples: Fleischmann’s featured Dr. Friedrich

²⁴ Horrocks acknowledges that research into infant feeding was standard prior to this time.

Kraus, “Germany’s most beloved medical figure,”²⁵ extolling the virtues of yeast.

Companies such as Post, Quaker, and Kellogg emphasized the therapeutic aspects of cereal as the solution for digestive troubles, constipation and low energy; the former often considered the cause of the latter. Indeed, Kellogg’s bran flakes were called “Pep” for many years, suggesting vitality. Wheatena touted its ability to fight the dreaded “hidden hungers”: “the hunger of the body for minerals, vitamins and other food elements absolutely needed for health and growth.”²⁶ Quaker’s Muffets Whole Wheat Biscuits claimed to provide the same ultra-violet benefits as an hour in sunshine. This “Sunshine Vitamine D” was promoted as exclusive to Muffets:

Now in Muffets – crispy, flavory Whole Wheat Biscuits – that element is embodied. And the fact that it is embodied so attested by University of Wisconsin Laboratories. Only certain foods are permitted to employ this process. And they, for public protection, only by direct license from The Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation. Thus there can be no question as to the scientific value of this new food creation.

To further bring home the goodness of science, Quaker claimed that the inventor of the technology had refused \$1 million for his discovery, “in the interest of humanity,”²⁷ instead giving it to the world (or at least, to the University of Wisconsin Laboratories). Ovaltine was marketed as “a remarkable discovery from Switzerland, leader in child-welfare research.”²⁸ Cream of Wheat ran a particularly intimidating campaign about “Morning Ketogenesis” in children and how it might be overcome: “Cream of Wheat builds-in sturdy resistance...Little bodies are better able to ward off colds, biliousness,

²⁵ Ad appearing in *Canadian Home Journal* 27, 1 (May 1930).

²⁶ Wheatena Ad, *Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1930.

²⁷ Muffets Ad, *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1930, April 1930.

²⁸ Ovaltine Ad, *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1932.

and even more serious ills.” Put simply, Morning Ketogenesis is lack of energy from not having a proper breakfast, but the Cream of Wheat Corporation exploited the perceived risk, reminding mothers of the “extra-danger” years, that 85% of all contagious diseases occur among young children, and that “*Many of them start with a common cold!*”²⁹ And of course, the “Breakfast of Champions,” Wheaties, whose advertising began with this impressive preamble: “Every Statement in This Advertisement Accepted as True By The Committee on Foods of The American Medical Association, the Highest Authority in the Land.”³⁰

It should be noted that the advertising of the era was quite elaborate; many advertisements involve testimonials to the product, story telling and illustrations. In this sense, they resembled articles. Many were also written with a particular audience in mind: women, and in particular, mothers. The text is often written as an address to them, highlighting a problem that they need to get a handle on (be it whites that aren’t white enough, breath that isn’t fresh enough, or the focus of this discussion, families that are not being properly fed). There was no “soft sell” among these campaigns; they pointed out flaws that demanded remedy, and while the manufacturers promised to have the cure, it was women’s responsibility to heed their advice and make the “right” choices.

It wasn’t all fear tactics, however. As Gagen reminds us above, the responsibility should also be seen as enjoyable, though she perhaps overstates this idea:

Who says there’s no romance in foods? Surely nobody would make such a rash statement now-a-days, for if any subject in the world is filled with excitement and interest, it is surely the study of nutrition (1939a: 43).

²⁹ Cream of Wheat Ads, 1933-1934, as appeared in *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Chatelaine*; emphasis in original.

³⁰ Wheaties Ad, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, April 1935.

Further, while keeping in mind the importance of nutritious meals, women should remember to *please* those they are feeding. For example, Libby's Mustard pointed out "If You're Clever, You Liven Up Flavours for Men."³¹ Kellogg's featured the character of Anne Barlow, whose husband was a "breakfast grouch!" "But what can you expect when you feed a man the same dull breakfast every day!"³² Fortunately Anne wakes up to the variety of cereals available, and restores happiness to her family's table. In a similar ad, Helen (last name unknown) faces scrutiny from both husband ("Gee, I'm sick of this same old breakfast!") and son ("So am I, Mom. I don't blame Dad."). Once again, thanks to Kellogg's, the image of Helen cowering at the table is replaced by a smiling, cheerful Helen, whose happiness come from her family's happiness.³³

The responsibility and perceived duty of women to become educated in matters of nutrition and proper diet was certainly reinforced by popular magazine content, but clearly has lengthy historical roots. Women were already performing this role long before the 1930s, but during this decade, from the effects of the Depression to the commencement of the Second World War, the concept of risk becomes more explicit with respect to the issue of nutrition and women's place in ensuring the well being of others.³⁴ More significant than the specific risks being communicated by the food manufacturers is the overall message of risk: that is, what happens if women fail to do this work? Beyond the temper tantrums of the Barlow family, what happens to the nation

³¹ Ad in *Canadian Home Journal* July 1932 (29,3).

³² Ad in *Chatelaine* February 1939.

³³ Ad in *Chatelaine* March 1939.

³⁴ See Chapter Four for examples of this risk-based campaign.

if women cannot come up with solutions to problems of nutrition? Is *Chatelaine* correct, and the health of the country is in its women's keeping? Though the government did not fully recognize their contribution, women were considering these questions at least several years before nutrition became an "official" concern. As a result, they would prove to be an invaluable resource over the next decade, when dietary challenges would truly become a matter of national importance.

The fact that the majority of nutrition education and advice was organized and distributed by women cannot be ignored when considering the federal government's failure to collect much information. As feminist research has demonstrated, women's caring work (be it nursing or feeding others) has historically been viewed as an extension of women's "natural" roles.³⁵ Indeed, the existing literature from the 1930s and beyond indicates that many women themselves viewed their efforts in this way. There are few examples of blatant bias in the archival records of the nutrition programmes in Canada, but they do periodically emerge. For instance, the creation of a national Council on Nutrition involved much deliberation in regards to representation. Many groups were deemed worthy of inclusion, but interestingly, the number of female representatives (already very small) was further restricted by the organizing committee:

It was finally agreed that Dr. Wodehouse should write all of the organizations mentioned in the letter from the Department of External Affairs, and the additional ones listed above, asking them to nominate one representative to the Council. However, before writing to the last two, namely the Federated Women's Institutes and L'Association des Femmes Canadiennes Francaises, he was to make inquiries as to whether these might not be adequately represented by the person nominated by the National Council of Women.³⁶

³⁵ See, for example, Neysmith 2000.

³⁶ Memo from R. Newton, "Canadian Council on Nutrition", dated November 9, 1937. The organizations to be considered for representation include: the Departments of Pensions and National Health, Agriculture, and Labour; National Research Council and the Bureau of Statistics; Canadian Medical Association;

In other words, the possibility for three female representatives from these organizations was reduced to one. This decision also reveals an ignorance of the different mandates of these groups; the Women's Institutes were particularly attuned to the agricultural and nutritional status of rural women, whereas the National Council of Women dealt with larger political issues for all women. Furthermore, the League of Nations Society recommended that national nutrition councils be comprised of diverse representation, including an "adequate number of independents - members who represent consumers and the interests of the poor, or even middle classes, to whom cheap food is a matter of vital necessity."³⁷

Though their efforts all too often went unrecognized, nutrition work nevertheless provided opportunities for women. The science of nutrition, while creating new pressures for women in the domestic sphere, also created new opportunities, both within the home and in the public sphere. As mentioned above, dietetics was promoted as an appropriate career choice for young women, and school and university programmes in home economics were considered good training for a range of fields (Blakestad 1997; CDA Scrapbooks). Science was (and continues to be) considered a masculine field, but as Apple (1995: 129) notes, "one science, nutrition, both enhanced women's position in the domestic sphere and gave women an arena in which to practise science." Apple argues

Canadian Dietetic Association; Canadian Welfare Council; Canadian Association of Social Workers; League of Nations Society; Canadian Red Cross; Canadian Public Health Association; and Trades and Labour Congress. It was thought that this would be too large a council to meet frequently, and thus an Executive was proposed as a more convenient solution. This was to be comprised of the representatives from the Subcommittee on Nutrition, the technical advisory committee from the Dominion Health Council, as well as three individual scientists/professors from several universities.

³⁷ "National Nutrition Councils: Notes on Their Status, Composition, and Functions." Undated memorandum (circa 1938) produced by the League of Nations Society in Canada.

that if we leave aside the male scientists whose names became synonymous with nutrition (such as McCollum), the overwhelming contribution of women is undeniable:

[L]ooking beyond those few men to those who worked as researchers in the laboratory, who applied the findings of nutritional research to the American diet, who taught Americans about nutrition, and who were learned in nutritional standards, we find a world of women (1995:129).

Although Canada trailed behind the nutrition science of the United States and particularly Europe, Apple's observations have no less resonance for this country. Women responded to the ideology of duty and took responsibility for teaching themselves and others about nutrition, and as Canada went to war, this commitment would become essential. The threat to national security required both regulatory and disciplinary measures, as the interests of individual bodies and the social body became one.

Chapter Four: **Nutrition Work in Canada: 1939-1945**

By the late 1930s, the official stance on nutrition had shifted from concerns about adequate amounts of food to the availability of the *right kinds* of food.¹ Efforts centred on educating the public about “protective foods”, with a view to the prevention of poor health through diet. Having concluded (at least publicly) that there was no serious malnutrition among Canadians, and that Canada was reputed to be among the best-fed nations of the world, there was an interest in maintaining this impressive standing. This chapter considers the promotion of nutrition as a national concern, including what kinds of work were being done, sources of funding, and the motivational strategies at work. Women play an especially significant role, as both educators and as the target audience for nutritional advice, and thus receive particular attention here.

A National Campaign

In a 1938 address broadcast across Canada, Sir Edward Mellanby,² secretary of the Medical Research Council of Great Britain, praised Canadians for their superior “nutritional condition”,³ but also cautioned officials that a coordinated national

¹ Of course, as rationing measures took effect, questions of amounts would have a renewed importance, but still paramount was ensuring the population “ate right” within these restrictions.

² Mellanby was well known in health circles, having years in the research field, holding the position of Chairman of the Technical Committee of the League of Nations on Nutrition, serving as a member of the League’s Mixed Committee on Nutrition, and, as one government release describes him, “one who has done so much in a public way.”

³ He continued: “Superficial observation also suggests to me that your nutritional condition is, in some respects at least, better than in England. For instance, you seem to me to have much better teeth and straighter legs.” (Address at the Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, September 1938).

educational effort was needed, a call which, as will be seen below, would be echoed by many interested in Canada's national health. In his speech, Mellanby confirmed what the Canadian government had heretofore if not denied, downplayed: that many Canadian families did not have access to adequate nutrition, despite the country's ample resources. Mellanby noted that the body instinctively seeks sufficient nourishment, but warned that same instinct may prove dangerous when it comes to *quality* of food:

Instinct is a poor, and is often a bad, guide and yet this and purchasing power controls for most people the choice of dietary ingredients... [But quality] can only be controlled *by knowledge and intelligence* (Mellanby 1938, emphasis added).

There *was* plenty of "knowledge and intelligence" about proper eating, but this was largely found within specialized national organizations (such as the Red Cross, Canadian Dietetics Association (CDA), or Canadian Home Economics Association (CHEA)), or randomly distributed at the local level (where the quality and accuracy of the information varied). Even the national bodies experienced discontinuity in their messages as communicated by local branches. It is difficult to determine the impetus for a coordinated national effort – that is, did the federal government take the initiative, or did it come from the groups who were already involved in nutrition education?

One clue emerges in a letter from University of Toronto's Dr. E.W. McHenry, a valued consultant to the government in matters of nutrition, hygiene, and health. Having been invited to speak to the Canadian Public Health Association on the subject of dietary deficiencies, he asks Dr. Wodehouse of the Department of Pensions and National Health for his editorial approval of his planned address: "I had in mind pointing out the need for

a national effort along educational lines. I am most anxious to refrain from saying anything which might embarrass you or your department.” (Letter of May 31, 1941). In this address, McHenry follows the argument introduced by Sir Edward Mellanby several years earlier, assigning less significance to the economic causes of malnutrition,⁴ asserting instead that a lack of information is the key reason for poor dietary choices:

Undoubtedly many households have great difficulty in purchasing large enough supplies of food; it is of the utmost importance that information be available to guide them in securing the most nutritive value that can be secured for the money available. Perhaps nothing can be done about the economic factor; the second cause can be overcome. The dietary surveys have shown that there is an urgent, wide-spread need for education in nutrition. (McHenry 1941:6).

McHenry was not alone in recognizing the importance of educating the public about nutrition, nor was he the first. At their annual meeting of May 22, 1941, the National Council of Women passed the following resolution:

That this National Council of Women petition the governments involved to give their support to attaining immediate instruction in food values and efficient meals in every home in Canada by the appointing of a specially trained nutritionist in our Federal Department of Health and a nutritionist in each province whose sole duty will be to co-operate in such tasks. And be it resolved that the governments be asked to give this problem their immediate consideration as an urgent war measure (emphasis in original).⁵

⁴ McHenry writes: “We cannot gainsay that the economic cause is important, but in my opinion, undue emphasis has been placed upon it...” (1941: 5).

⁵ This resolution was subsequently endorsed by the Nutrition Committee of the Canadian Home Economics Association in July 1941, who in turn notified the following of their support for this initiative: The Prime Minister, the Federal Department of Agriculture, the Department of Pensions and National Health, the Canadian Council on Nutrition, and the Nutrition Committee of the Canadian Medical Association. On July 29, 1941, The Catholic Women of Manitoba also endorsed this resolution, as did other members of the Catholic Women’s League of Canada. This resolution would also be referred to in application for the Swift Fellowship in 1942.

Other groups, including the CDA and the Canadian Red Cross, also expressed support for a centralized nutrition division. However, as noted in the resolution, their interest was in the creation of a governmental service that would *support the work already being done*, not one which would assume a leadership role, and from which they would be expected to take direction.

At the same time, the federal government, aware of a nationwide drive by their American counterpart to improve nutrition in that country, was considering the feasibility of a "nation-wide campaign" of its own, "to improve the knowledge of housewives in the choice and purchase of foods (particularly Canadian produced foods) and their utilization to the greatest advantage, from her weekly budget."⁶ In November 1941, the federal government created the Division of Nutrition Services⁷ within the Department of Pensions and National Health.⁸ As a member of the Canadian Council on Nutrition, the Director of the newly formed Nutrition Services, Dr. L.B. Pett was aware of the conflicts the former organization had encountered when selecting representatives to the Council. Consequently, this time around, Pett sought to include individuals and groups who were not formally represented on the Canadian Council on Nutrition. In the months leading up to the official announcement of this new body, both Pett and Wodehouse (Deputy

⁶ Unsigned memo from "Deputy Minister" (R.E. Wodehouse, Department of Pensions and National Health) to "The Honourable the Minister", May 20, 1941.

⁷ The exact title of this department varies within the correspondence, but this is the most common. The Division itself experiences confusion with its name, as evidenced in the following excerpt from a letter by its director, Dr. L.B. Pett: "For some reason or other we are a service rather than a division. In other words, we are a division in everything but actual name. Just why I don't know but that is the situation." (Letter dated May 15, 1943).

⁸ The mandate of Nutrition Services was to extend and act upon the findings of the Canadian Council on Nutrition, founded in late 1937, itself a spin-off from the Dominion Council of Health and building upon the National Nutrition Council (early 1937) formed at the request of the Mixed Committee on the Problem of Nutrition - League of Nations (1935).

Minister of the Department of Pensions and National Health) solicited suggestions of suitable candidates. Interestingly, though not surprisingly, it is women's organizations that are most frequently recommended. Multiple nominations are received for the National Council of Women, the Federated Women's Institutes, the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, the National Y.W.C.A., and the Canadian Home Economics Association. Others included the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the Lyceum Club and Women's Art Association of Canada, and the Health League of Canada, which is noted as having "more experience in conducting nutrition classes for housewives than any other group in Canada."⁹

By inviting a wide range of representatives to join the Nutrition Services effort, the department gained access to a wealth of information, as the nutrition work being performed by at least some of these groups was already well established. Provincial governments were also requested to provide information and resources that they might have. In a practical sense, Nutrition Services became a "clearing house" for nutritional information, but also the producer of the "official" stance on nutrition, created by taking the work of the many individuals and groups already engaged in this work, and repackaging it as advice "endorsed by Nutrition Services."

Despite the expressed support for, and interest in, this department there nonetheless was some reservation about the scope of its purview. Some of this resulted from a misleading newspaper report that characterized the new initiative as a "nation-wide education programme" complete with a suitably generous budget. This prompted the following correspondence to Deputy Minister Wodehouse:

⁹ Letter from E.W. McHenry to Dr. R.E. Wodehouse, June 23, 1941.

We all know that the \$30,000 you have available is just a drop in the bucket, and I am afraid that this announcement if it is publicized will tend to stop voluntary effort throughout Canada. Yesterday the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal, who as you know are planning a nutrition campaign in January, were greatly upset because they interpreted this newspaper statement to mean that the Government was now going to take over this work...if the Women's Canadian Club in Montreal reacted in this way, will not all the other organizations tend to simply sit back – as we said last June – and look upon the Government as Santa Claus. (Letter from Dr. Frederick Tisdall, November 7, 1941).

In his response of November 10, 1941, Wodehouse notes that the “most important women's organizations in Canada have been awaiting and hoping” for such a program, and have made clear that they do not expect financial assistance, but rather, expert leadership.¹⁰

In order to provide leadership, to assist and coordinate efforts to improve nutrition in Canada, the Division of Nutrition Services had to learn what was in fact being done. To that end, a series of questions were sent to “all organizations at present carrying out such work”¹¹:

1. What classes or other activities for improving the nutrition of the public are you and your organization conducting?
2. How many people are being reached now, and how many do you expect to reach this winter? If you did the same last winter, how many did you reach?
3. How can this Division help you in your present activities?

¹⁰ However, the women's organizations expected to be involved in said leadership.

¹¹ Letter from L.B. Pett, Director, Division of Nutrition Services, November 14, 1941. Sent to Canadian Red Cross Society, Canadian Dietetic Association, Department of Education (Home Economics), Health League of Canada, Canadian Public Health Association, Canadian Medical Association, and the National Council of Women.

4. How can we help you in future work that you would like to carry on, along these nutritional lines?

5. Would you be willing to assist our effort to coordinate and unify nutritional education by using information which we might send from time to time? If so, do you think such information should be in the form of mimeographed news letters or pamphlets? Could you suggest any other means of distributing it?

6. Would you be kind enough to send me names and addresses of all organizations carrying out nutritional work in Canada, that you think would cooperate? Please do not avoid mentioning some because you are sure "I will know about them", since, thus, some may be missed.

Minutes from meetings of both Nutrition Services and the Canadian Council on Nutrition emphasize the need for any nutritional program to include contact with the public, to go beyond distributing flyers which people may not bother reading to providing in-person education which is less easily ignored. For example, the following statements from the June 19, 1941 meeting of the Canadian Council on Nutrition¹²:

Mr. Reed: You can publish all the pamphlets you like and one in a thousand may be effective. Pamphlets by themselves get you nowhere. You must establish contact between the women in the kitchen and the experts if you are really going to do a job in this country... Those who were not interested previously in nutrition have gradually become more and more interested and are now very enthusiastic.

Miss Brodie: We know everybody is interested in nutrition – so much so that we cannot keep up with the demands; we have the trained people who can carry out the nutrition plans – thousands have taken four-year courses, mainly in nutrition and dietetics (not all of these are available, of course). We need the *machinery* and the *money* to carry out a programme such as this (emphasis added).

¹² It was at this meeting that the resolution was passed to create what would become the Division of Nutrition Services.

Additionally, they needed *motivation*, among the would-be educators – many of whom, as Brodie notes, already worked full-time, and among the public, who were not always receptive to their efforts, despite Brodie’s optimism.¹³ It is worth noting that by the time of these discussions, Canada had been at war for two years, yet the importance of nutritional education as part of the war effort was not being explicitly emphasized (with the exception of the resolution presented by the National Council of Women).¹⁴

However, as the war progressed, the machinery, the money, and the motivation would all be found. By “machinery,” I include here all the people (individual and collective) who lent time and effort to ensuring Canadians could make informed choices about food. These efforts were financially supported by a number of private industries – hence, “money.” But of particular interest to this study is the question of motivation: How do you engage people in calculating protein levels and daily allowances? How are people mobilized to follow governmental guidelines? Why do women accept the challenge that “the health of a country is in its women’s keeping”?¹⁵

It would seem obvious to suggest *risk* as a powerful motivator during wartime.

Canadians were acutely aware of the risk to our soldiers fighting overseas, and of the risks to our freedoms and those of our allies. But it is also during this time when risk is

¹³ The scrapbooks of the Canadian Dietetic Association contain a number of newspaper editorials and published letters reflecting this view. A sample remark: “on the whole, the Canadian diet is a good one, but...it will deteriorate in proportion to the extent that dietitians have anything to say about it. It is better to have an unbalanced meal you can eat than a balanced meal that is uneatable.” (“Dietitians Bedevil Our Meals”, *Globe and Mail* June 15, 1946). During Windsor’s Wartime Food Fair, Dr. Pett was challenged by an audience member: “Our forefathers got along without all this fuss about nutrition; why can’t we?”

¹⁴ The United States’ national nutrition programme coincided with their year of entry into WWII, but in Canada, it was individual agencies (such as the Red Cross) and groups (notably the Women’s Institutes) who were already doing nutrition work who were most prepared to take on the responsibility of wartime feeding.

¹⁵ See full quote in Chapter 3.

employed as a political technology, as malnutrition is characterized as a *social* risk that must be addressed at the individual level. There is a reintroduction of what Brandt (1997: 56) calls the “moral valence”, centring upon individual responsibility for the prevention of ill health through protective diet. The risk of malnutrition becomes a sort of metaphor for the enemy – like the German threat, it will invade our nation, leaving us weak and defenceless. It must not be allowed to gain a foothold, so like our soldiers, we too receive training on how to defeat the enemy.¹⁶ But while all Canadians were asked to join the fight, it was women who were *expected* to rise to the challenge, and indeed, to demonstrate how to win this “other war.” As will be discussed below, they not only responded, but in many instances, had anticipated the need and were already in the fight.

Women in the Nutritional Trenches (The “Machine”)

With the creation of the Canadian Council on Nutrition in 1937, and subsequently, Nutrition Services in 1941, the federal government began receiving unsolicited inquiries from young women across Canada who were interested in employment opportunities. Most were graduates or soon-to-be graduates of Household Science Departments at Canadian universities, many had relevant employment experience as hospital dietitians, teachers, and cafeteria administrators. Some had graduate degrees, and most already performed volunteer work through non-governmental agencies. The publication of an

¹⁶ And in the cases of both soldiers and civilians, we trust our leaders will provide us with the necessary tools to do so.

editorial¹⁷ on the problem of nutrition during the war generated even greater interest, as women offered their knowledge and experience as their contribution to the war effort.¹⁸

From the onset of war there had also been great response from women who might not yet claim dietetic expertise, but who took to heart the exhortation, "It's up to the women." The Health League of Canada noted "with pleasure that 5,000 women have registered in the [Nutrition in War-Time] classes in the City of Toronto and its surroundings."¹⁹ The Red Cross reported having provided instruction in nutrition to nearly 10,000 women in 1941 alone, with 3,600 having taken the regular course of eight lessons on Wartime Economy.²⁰ The Victorian Order of Nurses was an important messenger for Nutrition Services, bringing up-to-date dietary advice into the homes of its clients. Lesser-known groups were also important: the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada contacted Nutrition Services in 1942, seeking permission to edit and translate government pamphlets (permission that was enthusiastically granted). Local bodies such as the Council of Women in Swift Current, Saskatchewan offered classes in nutrition and organized demonstrations of proper food preparation and storage. A group of citizens in Medicine Hat, Alberta formed the Medicine Hat Nutrition Council. The Community Nutrition Council of Kingston was established "to improve nutrition for every man, woman, and child." The Nutrition Program of the Little Women's Club in Chatham,

¹⁷ In the *Toronto Daily Star*, July 8, 1941.

¹⁸ Hiram McCann, Baker and Confectioner, reported a similar response after publication of his essay in the June 14, 1941 issues of *Saturday Night Magazine* ("Our Bad Diet is Hitler's Ally").

¹⁹ Excerpt from letter from Dr. R.E. Wodehouse to Dr. Gordon Bates, General Director of the Health League of Canada, March 1, 1941.

²⁰ The Red Cross began its nutrition programme in 1929, eleven years before any concerted effort on the part of the government. Arguably, because the Red Cross was so successful in this, the federal government could justify its lack of involvement.

Ontario²¹ produced monthly menu plans for the community. Requests for government information came from district branches of the Women's Institute, the I.O.D.E., and others. Many letters received by the government were from individual women interested in establishing their own nutrition classes. A typical letter:

Dear Sirs,

I am looking for material of any kind to help me in studying nutrition in helping to teach it to a group of women. I took a course last autumn and have become very much interested in it. Can you send me any material?

Thank you very much.

Very sincerely,

Mary Proud (Mrs. Henry Proud), Palermo, Ontario.²²

Within groups whose membership was not exclusively female, the common trend was to strike a nutrition committee, staffed by women, though occasionally having a male director. Overwhelmingly, the practical educational work was done by women. Perhaps recognizing this, the federal government established the Division of Women's Voluntary Services, with the following aim:

The co-ordination of the voluntary efforts of the women of Canada and to encourage the organization of women's voluntary services on a community basis with a view to their best utilization for the needs of their communities, the maintenance of national morale and the furtherance of the welfare of the nation.²³

The government was not the only recipient of requests for information. Interest in nutrition among women is evident in letters to popular magazines of the day, newspaper columns, and household science departments. For example, Katherine Middleton of *The*

²¹ One presumes the name refers to the size of its membership, not the size of the members themselves!

²² Letter to Nutrition Services, April 7, 1942.

²³ Letter from Mrs. W.E. West, Director of Women's Voluntary Services to Dr. L.B. Pett, Director of Nutrition Services, May 13, 1942.

Winnipeg Tribune began devoting her “Winnipeg Home” Column to nutritional matters after receiving a request from a reader (“Housewife Wants Food List to Stop Frequent Ordering” May 2, 1942). *Chatelaine* and *Canadian Home Journal* offered similar advice as a regular feature. By 1943, the University of Saskatchewan College of Household Science was providing the Division of Nutrition Services with weekly shopping lists to meet the public demand.²⁴ Recognizing that not all women were “housewives” or mothers, the Visiting Homemakers Association undertook research to determine the appropriate calorie allowance for single women, living alone, with only a grill and no refrigeration.

This was a departure from the setting of standards for the population with respect to caloric intake based on age and gender, incorporating a social element that recognized different lifestyles. While the official standards sometimes took activity into account (for instance, rural individuals were allotted more calories), they were generally based upon age and sex.²⁵ The specific requirements will not be considered here, but I raise the question of setting guidelines for the population as a classic example of biopolitics. The federal government conducted surveys of Canadians’ eating habits,²⁶ the availability of foods in certain regions of the country, and based upon this data and previously gathered scientific recommendations, established Canada’s Food Guide in 1941. The establishment of norms is part of governmentality. Furthermore, once the “proper” foods have been identified, not to eat accordingly is inviting the risk of malnutrition. As one

²⁴ The Division of Nutrition Services would continue to make these lists available until the end of the decade.

²⁵ These standards were further based upon averages among white, middle-class individuals. Weight, which is now standard to these determinations, was not commonly used prior to 1948.

²⁶ See discussion of Swift Fellowship later in this chapter.

government release explained, "Good nutrition is essential for good health so the individual should not impair his usefulness and risk becoming a charge on society through failing to eat the recommended foods."²⁷ The dissemination of this message will be explored later in this chapter.

The setting of standards was also important for the success of a national nutrition programme. As outlined in a government memo,²⁸ prior to the formation of bodies such as the Canadian Council on Nutrition and Nutrition Services and their mandate to coordinate research and information, educational work was being done "without any very definite ideas as to what was wrong with the Canadian dietary."²⁹ Even with the creation of these governing bodies, there continued to be little uniformity among the provincial approaches, and the need for a definitive benchmark of nutritional health was apparent. Sir John Orr, Director of the Imperial Bureau of Animal Nutrition, Rowett Institute, Aberdeen cautioned the Canadian government that each "medical man" has a different standard and that standard varies based upon the last patient seen:

We have therefore gone all out for definite objective signs which can be measured. I suggest that you might take some of these, e.g., height, weight, signs of previous rickets, and teeth, the number you would take depending upon the time which can be devoted to clinical examination.³⁰

²⁷ "Foods for the Family." Undated release from Information Services, circa 1945.

²⁸ "Report on Nutrition Work in Canada for Dominion Council of Health." Undated memo, circa 1941.

²⁹ Perhaps the government was not all that clear on this point, but the women's groups who had been dealing with nutritional issues for years had some insight as to the challenges women faced in feeding their families, particularly issues of regional accessibility. On this latter point, the WI was instrumental in mobilizing its members to share resources across the country (Ambrose 1996).

³⁰ Letter from Orr to Dr. C.A. Morrell, Department of Pensions and National Health, May 14, 1938.

The head of the Department of Animal Nutrition at the Ontario Agricultural College expressed similar concerns, noting “the desperate need in Canada for a bulletin of a somewhat technical nature and yet readable, to deal with human nutritional requirements...I can assure you it is needed and I feel that it would do a great deal of good in so far as Health Education in Canada is concerned.”³¹

Existing correspondence indicates some of the difficulties encountered in the process of establishing a dietary standard for Canada, in no small part due to competing interests and opinions, but more significantly, due to the fact that a certain percentage of Canada’s foodstuffs had to be reserved for export to Britain. Further, civilian requirements had to be settled before rationing plans could be made. In December of 1942, the Department of Pensions and National Health launched a promotional campaign concerning food and the standards of nutrition. About this time, the dietary standard, called “Canada’s Official Food Rules” was introduced.³² Following the suggestion of Branion and others, this was in an easy to understand format, explaining how much of the “important” foods the average person should eat. A standardized set of food rules was a central component of the national effort, and one of the most practical contributions to come from the federal level. It also represents an important step in the government (through the Division of Nutrition Services) becoming the perceived *authority* on nutrition, rather than the advisory role it had been asked to play.

That the Division of Nutrition Services became powerful is not surprising. With a budget provided by the federal government, the Division produced a wide range of

³¹ Letter from H.D. Branion to R.E. Wodehouse, January 10, 1940.

³² The dietary standard for Canada would be revised many times over the years, but the presentation of the recommendations (“the food groups”) would be consistent.

publications that would become the “official” statements on Canadian nutrition. Agencies such as the Victorian Order of Nurses had neither the time nor money for such materials, so they relied upon the government to provide them, and in turn, the official message reached an even wider audience. As expressed in a governmental review of the day: “Nutrition Services...is spreading the gospel of healthy eating throughout Canada by a variety of methods.”³³ Some of these methods include: advertisements and editorials (placed with the cooperation of publishers), promoting the Food Rules on street car panels, calendars distributed to homes, and on hotel menus, newsletters to community groups, window displays, contests for slogans, “Score Sheets” and “Colour Charts” for meals (rating how well they correspond to the Rules).³⁴

Of course, the most important method of spreading the gospel was the local work of women, who not only educated others, but themselves. The Information Services Division of the federal government outlined four aspects of health education that volunteer messengers should understand: health propaganda, health information, health instruction, and self-education. Acknowledging the stigma of the term “propaganda”, nutrition workers must understand the importance of marketing the product: “Selling health may not be as easy as selling cigarettes,” and the value of advertising in this regard should not be underestimated. As for health information, “we all know how little the public at large know of the very simple things.” Schools are considered one of the most important venues for health instruction, along with health clinics. And finally, “the last

³³ Department of Pensions and National Health Memorandum, 1942.

³⁴ The “scoring” of lunches was often conducted in munitions factories and other canteens, grading them for the protective foods they contained. If a lunch contained all three kinds of food (protein, fruit or vegetables, milk), it earned a score of “Good.” Two kinds, “Fair,” one kind, “Poor.”

one is health education in its real sense – and that is self-education. Nobody can educate anybody else if that person doesn't want to be educated. We must realize that education, especially adult education, means that people have to change."³⁵

Once the national nutrition programme had been publicly announced, most local nutrition work sought to coordinate its efforts with the government, and indeed, with the national war effort. Several studies had been undertaken before the government became involved, testaments to the industry of Canadian women. In 1940, the Local Council of Women in Weston, Ontario held a series of classes on nutrition, subsequently producing a detailed and very useful report ("Nutrition in War-Time") on how the project was organized, how it was publicized, what was successful, and recommendations for establishing similar classes elsewhere.³⁶ The Toronto Branch of the Health League of Canada also produced a report entitled "Nutrition in War-Time," with a subtitle that captured popular sentiment: "Second Line of Defence."³⁷

Certainly there was a lack of coordination and an overlapping of effort among those doing nutritional work in Canada, and while independent groups were pleased to be consulted by the government, they sometimes felt their own work to be more directed and thus of greater practical value. Such a situation arose within the Canadian Home Economics Association after its Wartime Conference of 1943. President Frances I. McKay sought to reassure CHEA's membership: "These tasks may seem unimportant to some; to others, too much work – some may feel they are going down a blind alley. Not

³⁵ Undated transcript of a speech by representative from Information Services Division (circa 1942).

³⁶ Their findings were presented to, and endorsed by, the National Council of Women in 1941.

³⁷ Referred to in Nutrition Services memo, 1941.

knowing why they were asked or how the findings will be used. The executive hopes for confidence in its judgment. It is only after careful consideration that we have agreed to do any particular job.”³⁸

The most influential group recruited by the government (at both the provincial and federal levels) was the Canadian Red Cross. Nutrition had been a central focus of its Ontario branch community work since 1929, and so prior to the national governmental campaign, the Red Cross had served as the authority for many other groups and individuals. Through the volunteer efforts of Household Science graduates, the Red Cross offered classes in food and nutrition in Ontario, gradually expanding this to the national level in 1942. They saw themselves as performing eight key tasks: conducting surveys and collecting data, organizing lectures and demonstrations, creating displays and exhibits, the preparation of educational material (both for adults and children, through the Junior Red Cross), supervision of nutrition in industry, supervision of nutrition in farm service camps, consultation work with other agencies, and developing school lunch programs. Its national policy mandated a close association with all national organizations interested in nutrition, including knowledge of their policies and the ways in which to cooperate to best advantage (1944: 3-4)

On this last point, Red Cross nutrition workers were reminded that: “a spirit of co-operation will bring better results than trying to be a ‘lone wolf.’”(1944:6). Yet it was the Red Cross which was most frequently rebuked by the federal government for not being a “team player.” An early dispute began when the Division of Nutrition Services requested that the Nutrition Committee of the Red Cross stop using the term “nutrition services” to

³⁸ CHEA newsletter, November 1943.

describe its work, suggesting it would create confusion. While Nutrition Services often contributed to Red Cross publications (such as a series written by Janet Keith, published in the Canadian Red Cross Junior magazine), they took exception to the demands the Red Cross made with respect to educational materials – for instance, requesting 20,000 free copies of the Nutrition Services poster “Foods for Health.” In turn, the Red Cross was unaccustomed to being subject to outside editorial approval of its own pamphlets and booklets, leading to some initially polite, but increasingly cool exchanges between the parties.

E.W. McHenry of the University of Toronto was a leading critic of the Red Cross’ approach: “I am somewhat worried about the situation in Ontario. The Red Cross does not seem anxious to cooperate with any one and the Health League is rapidly assuming the same attitude.”³⁹ In another letter, McHenry charges, “So far as I can see, the Red Cross is making a definite effort to dominate the picture and I feel strongly that something should be done to stop them.”⁴⁰ The government was particularly concerned by the 1942 expansion of the Ontario-based Red Cross Nutrition Committee to a national one. While publicly commending it as “valuable,” a series of correspondence reveals an undercurrent of suspicion that the Red Cross is attempting to usurp Nutrition Services: “To be quite frank I have the impression...that a nutrition campaign is to be launched across Canada as a purely individual effort without any attempt to bring into the effort all interested groups,”⁴¹ and the author goes on to question the “general attitude” of the Red

³⁹ Letter to L.B. Pett, Director of Nutrition Services, June 26, 1942.

⁴⁰ Letter to L.B. Pett, Director of Nutrition Services, August 22, 1942.

⁴¹ Letter from L.B. Pett, Director of Nutrition Services, to Mrs. A. Stevenson, Supervisor of Nutrition, Red Cross Society, September 4, 1942.

Cross. Eventually, the Red Cross would come to be seen as the "lone wolf" which, especially during wartime, was not acceptable. In a letter to Dr. Fred W. Routley of the Canadian Red Cross, R.E. Wodehouse outlines some of the government's concerns:

There is plenty of work for all of us in this field, but any suggestion of competition is wasteful in wartime. Dr. Pett informs me that your Mrs. Lee has been travelling across Canada urging local Red Cross groups to start work in nutrition. Many of these communities already have a nutrition committee functioning and it would seem wasteful not to coordinate the two activities. It should be possible for you to suggest to the local Red Cross Group that they find out what is being done and then offer to undertake one particular part of the local nutrition program. Already, confusion has arisen as to "which nutrition program to follow."

I understand also that the booklet used for the last two years in Ontario has been revised and printed so as to be available all across Canada for nutrition classes. Actually, this was suggested by our Nutrition Services, but the booklet is now off the press, without Dr. Pett ever seeing the revisions. It would have been mutually helpful to coordinate this booklet with our own publications. (November 16, 1942).⁴²

It is difficult to know whether these complaints had merit. The Red Cross was very successful in its educational work, and was approached by such esteemed companies as Loblaws and the T. Eaton Company to organize nutrition demonstrations and window displays. The Red Cross nutrition department hosted a stand at the Canadian National Exhibition in 1940, with an estimated 150,000 people stopping to see it, and an additional 325 written requests for further information were subsequently received. They organized "Nutrition Weeks" with the cooperation of grocers across Ontario, and worked in close association with other groups such as the Victorian Order of Nurses and provincial Public Health Associations. They were also instrumental in the war effort, not only in attending to the nutritional health of civilians, but also in the preparation of nutritionally complete

⁴² Routley's reply assures Wodehouse that they are "most desirous of cooperating" and that they have not acted in contravention of the government directives.

food parcels for Canadian prisoners of war. Having recognized the need for nutrition education a full decade before any concerted government initiative, the Canadian Red Cross was better prepared and had more experience than the official advisory body. It may have been most efficient to simply proceed without consulting the government's Nutrition Services Division. However, the same can be said for other groups, such as the Women's Institute, CDA, and CHEA, but despite some incidents of disagreement with Nutrition Services, these did not experience the same degree of conflict as the Red Cross. I postulate here that the members of the Red Cross were seen to overstep the boundaries of what was acceptable participation, an issue to be further addressed below.

Whatever their eventual feelings about the advisory role of the Division of Nutrition Services (and these will likely remain unknown), the groups already engaged in nutrition work had highlighted the need for greater coordination, and so there was enthusiasm for the project. However, as a 1942 editorial reminded Canadians, the government is often "big on talk, invisible when it comes to action." Critiquing the government for being slow to recognize the acute need for a comprehensive approach, the piece points out the failure of the program to address the most pressing concerns:

How official is Canada's "official" nutrition program? By all accounts, its official status is that of a stepchild. The Ottawa government's nutrition program is a vague, infertile cross between educational propaganda and wishful thinking...Ottawa has not lifted a finger to make better nutrition possible. Strictly speaking, what we now have is not a program at all, in the sense of making the necessary protective foods available to those Canadians who need them. Nor in the sense of planning food supplies so as to prevent needlessly jeopardizing the health of Canadians engaged in war work...

Canada's nutritionists and numerous volunteer agencies are doing good work in spreading knowledge of nutritional values. The idea at Ottawa seems to be that all possible requirements are met if the benign Hon. Ian Mackenzie lends departmental aid to the task of spreading the gospel. But

for the sake of common sense, let us not pretend that we have an “official nutrition program” in Canada.⁴³

The lack of direction on the part of government nutrition bodies was also a source of contention for representatives on those committees. Dr. N.L. Burnette of the Canadian Life Insurance Officers Association describes the competition and lack of coordination he witnessed at the Canadian Council on Nutrition: “My impression of the last meeting was that it was not really a meeting of a “Council” – rather was it a motley gathering of people most of whom brought their own hobby horses, and having mounted them, rode off in every direction at once.”⁴⁴

There were also occasions where perceived government involvement proved to be a hindrance to a project’s success. The Women’s Canadian Club and the Manitoba Home Economics Association combined for the “Health for Victory Project” in the Spring of 1941. Using volunteers to teach classes in nutrition in food, they taught 32 groups with a total enrolment approaching 1400 women. However, three groups were discontinued: one due to lack of interest, another ended because of a measles epidemic in the neighbourhood, and the third because “a centre in a labor district ‘suspected’ the program was sponsored by the government, and didn’t want government advice or suggestion on what to do with their money.”⁴⁵

⁴³ From the *Winnipeg Tribune*, 1942; reprinted in the *Ottawa Citizen*.

⁴⁴ Burnette’s comments were conveyed in a letter from Edna F. Newton, Canadian Life Insurance Officers Association, to Dr. Chisholm, Canadian Council on Nutrition, October 23, 1945. In another instance, the Canadian Council on Nutrition is referred to as “woolly.” (Letter to L.B. Pett from Mrs. V.P. Ignatieff, March 12, 1945.

⁴⁵ Paper dated May 22, 1942, reporting on the activities of the “Health for Victory Project”.

Inter-governmental conflict was also a problem, as the rather vague purview of the Canadian Council on Nutrition and the Division of Nutrition Services led to confusion about which departments were responsible for the production and distribution of information. Some of these were obvious examples of staking out territory, such as reluctance to collaborate among the Canadian Medical Association, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Pensions and National Health (of which Nutrition Services is a part). Dr. Hopper of the Department of Agriculture expressed frustration at the requests he received for his department's support of nutritional initiatives, pointing out this is not the mandate of this department: "As you are no doubt aware, each Department has its own distinct field of work to cover and if one Department undertakes work which logically belongs to another Department, the good feeling which must exist between our various departments may be disturbed."⁴⁶

The lack of awareness of the work conducted by other departments could have quite serious repercussions, as illustrated in the following letter:

Dear Mr. Ilsley,

It has come to my notice that a National Nutrition Campaign is being sponsored by the Department of Pensions and National Health, to open in February next. I do not know the details of the campaign, but it is quite possible that it could clash very definitely with our price ceiling policy. For example, if the campaign were to encourage greater use of milk it would add materially to the serious difficulty we are already in, in connection with the milk supply situation.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Letter from Hopper to Frederick F. Tisdall, Chair of the Committee on Nutrition, Canadian Medical Association, June 8, 1939.

⁴⁷ Letter from D. Gordon, Chairman, The Wartime Prices and Trade Board, to The Hon. J.L. Ilsley, Minister of Finance, December 23, 1941.

Following from this, it was questioned whether the government ran the risk of being “unpatriotic” by recommending foods to which its citizens had limited access.⁴⁸

While there was considerable cooperation and exchange of materials and ideas between the federal government and the various national, provincial, and local initiatives, there were nonetheless some pockets of tension when groups with a lengthy history of involvement in nutrition felt the relative newcomer on the scene (Nutrition Services) to be encroaching on their territory. Indeed, had Canada not gone to war, thus forcing a collective effort to combat malnutrition, it is conceivable that greater jockeying for position would have ensued. But while some “machines” are incompatible, and do not work well together, there were also companies who solidly backed the national nutrition effort, and some of the most notable are considered below.

Sponsors and Collaborators (“The Money”)

The Division of Nutrition Services benefited from the support of the business sector, which understood the importance of marketing one’s product – in this case, Canada’s dietary standard and recommended protective foods. While most companies supported the war effort (either by choice or by necessity), and the majority referred to it in advertising campaigns for their own products, several actively courted a relationship with the federal government, offering their services to spread the nutritional word, or in some cases, to help determine what that message should be. Canadian firms of long standing such as Quaker Oats, the Hudson’s Bay Company and the T. Eaton company were

⁴⁸ Memo of May 8, 1944, “Provincial Organization for Nutritional Education”, Canadian Council on Nutrition.

important with respect to communicating nutritional advice to the public, but most important to the successful functioning of the national nutrition program in Canada were the Swift Canadian Company Limited, and what will collectively be known here as the Insurance Companies.

The Swift Company was a successful manufacturer of meat and meat products, and the Swift Foundation was a philanthropic division which subsidized nutritional research. In May 1942, the Swift Foundation endowed six fellowships for research in nutrition, stipulating a two-fold purpose: to gain fundamental information on the nutritive properties of foods, and the application of this information to the improvement of the Canadian diet and health (Guest and Chapman 1943).⁴⁹ While these fellowships were intended for universities and medical schools, the Swift Foundation made available a fellowship for a university graduate in Home Economics to work under the direction of Nutrition Services, through the Department of Pensions and National Health. In the formal announcement of this endowment, the fellowship was called "a gift to the voluntary women's organizations of Canada," and although The Hon. Ian Mackenzie, Minister of National Health neglected to mention it in his radio address of November 2, 1942, trustee Edna Guest⁵⁰ pointed out that it was the initiative and hard work of women that secured this fellowship, as the women already volunteering in nutrition work

⁴⁹ Swift and Co. in the United States also funded nutritional research, endowing studies at Johns Hopkins University.

⁵⁰ Dr. Edna Guest, O.B.E., Health Convenor of the National Council of Women, is a somewhat controversial figure in the Swift Fellowship. As trustees, Guest and Miss Ethel Chapman (Author and Editor of *Farmers' Magazine*) received no remuneration for their participation, but while Chapman seems content to stay in the background, Guest assumes a leadership role that is inappropriate. She suggests she was the key person in securing the Swift Fellowship, takes credit for the work performed by Miss McKay, complains about personal sacrifices while neglecting to provide requested updates to Nutrition Services, fails to consult with others involved in the stewardship of the Fellowship and engages in a bitter exchange of correspondence with L.B. Pett, Director of Nutrition Services. His "margin" replies upon her letters reveal much frustration with Guest.

investigated ways to improve their work and make it more effective. As Guest (1943: 14) explains:

[T]hey cannot forget that they have heard it said on so many occasions, that the "second line of defence in Great Britain has been the scientific understanding of the foods necessary to retain good health and good morale." So with this challenge, Canadian women set forth to see what they could do to obtain the services of a graduate home economist, who would assist in co-ordinating the efforts of voluntary organizations in their nutrition education drives.

The Swift Fellowship in Applied Nutrition was awarded to Miss Frances McKay,⁵¹ a graduate of the University of Manitoba in Home Economics, with post-graduate courses from Cornell, and having extensive experience as an education worker for the provincial government of Manitoba. For eight months, in 1942-1943, McKay travelled across Canada, conducting extensive dietary surveys in selected towns and cities in every province. One of the important aspects of the fellowship was that rural and urban groups were to be equally represented. In an interview broadcast on radio station CFRB, McKay explained her mandate: "The Swift Fellowship in Applied Nutrition has been designed to bring practical help to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are cooperating in the Dominion-wide nutrition campaign...No matter how good community nutrition programs have been in the past, they are realizing they've only reached comparatively few."⁵²

The amount of information compiled by McKay during her tenure is impressive, culminating in a report detailing local efforts in a wide range of cities, both large and

⁵¹ McKay would become president of CHEA the following year.

⁵² Script of Broadcast over Station CFRB, Tuesday, February 5, 1943. In a CBC broadcast, McKay emphasizes the importance of reaching rural women, and notes that over 13 years of WI programmes, more than 12,500 women met during wintertime to learn about nutrition. These numbers are impressive, but more so is how once again the Women's Institutes were far ahead of the government with respect to this initiative.

small, with all provinces represented.⁵³ The data gathered under the Swift Fellowship filled a significant gap in the national understanding of dietary deficiencies, as well as increasing awareness of the kinds of nutrition work already underway in the provinces.⁵⁴ Swift clearly benefited from this association – for example, Nutrition Services promoted Swift meat products across the country,⁵⁵ but Swift actually downplayed its role in the national nutrition program.⁵⁶ Although not well known, Swift’s financial support of nutrition research and education was most significant.

The insurance companies of Canada represent another key source of support of the national nutrition program, particularly with respect to the underwriting of government publications as well as the production of many themselves. They served as editorial boards for their respective booklets and pamphlets, were featured speakers at one another’s conferences, and recommended the others’ works as resource material for both nutrition workers and individuals.⁵⁷ On some occasions, the insurance companies brought awareness to information deficits that the government had not yet identified – for instance, in its efforts to prepare a budget booklet to help people stretch their budgets, The North American Life Assurance Company discovered a dearth of data when

⁵³ Unfortunately, the summary report presented fails to fully accord McKay the credit she deserves.

⁵⁴ Manufacturing Chemists Merck and Co., Incorporated provided \$10,000 in U.S. funds toward a nutritional survey of Newfoundland (conducted as a joint effort between the Newfoundland government and the United States government).

⁵⁵ As discussed in letter from L.B. Pett, Director of Nutrition Services to Mr. G.S. Bertram, Swift Canadian Company Limited, January 6, 1943.

⁵⁶ In a letter to L.B. Pett, Director of Nutrition Services, Mr. G. S. Bertram of Swift Canadian Company Limited notes, “we do not wish to publicize our Fellowship in Applied Nutrition.” (December 30, 1942).

⁵⁷ The insurance companies also collaborated with non-governmental groups. For example, the CDA, the Canadian Marketing Association, and the Life Insurance Companies of Canada produced a pamphlet: “Food For Health in Peace and War” (1940). Helen G. Campbell of the Chatelaine Institute prepared menus and recipes for the publications of The Equitable Life Insurance Company of Canada.

attempting to adjust for family size and salary levels.⁵⁸ Nutrition Services was useful in pointing out to the insurance companies the problems with adopting material from American branch offices: “You are entirely aware of the fact that the weights given for a pint and a quart of milk are different in Canada...”⁵⁹ and terminology such as “enriched” bread was not appropriate to this country. The resources of the insurance companies were also useful, as pointed out to Nutrition Services Director L.B. Pett: “Had the Metropolitan Life undertaken the task of seeing that a copy of a given pamphlet was placed in every urban home of Canada, the task would have been achieved within one week of the receipt of a telegram to every one of our offices throughout the Dominion.”⁶⁰

Of course, the insurance industry stood to benefit from its involvement in the national nutrition program. Reminding people of the importance of healthy eating was admirable, but like other companies, there was a product to promote. However, unlike Kellogg’s, Fleischmann’s, or other companies who promised to help you achieve those dietary goals through consumption of their respective foods, the insurance companies offered a “back-up plan,” just in case you failed to follow the recommendations. An advertisement for Continental Casualty Company (published in *Saturday Night* April 17, 1943) illustrates this beautifully:

6 out of every 10 Canadians Don’t Eat Right!
 Unbelievable – yet true. These people, through improper diet, are laying themselves open to sickness. Are you one of them? If so, you’ll be wise to change your diet NOW in order to have and enjoy good health.

⁵⁸ As outlined in a letter of April 9, 1943.

⁵⁹ Letter from L.B. Pett, Nutrition Services, to N.L. Burnette, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, May 1, 1943.

⁶⁰ Letter from N.L. Burnette, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, August 31, 1942.

And you'll be wise, too, to have and enjoy the security of an inexpensive Continental Income Protection policy in the event sickness or accident does strike.

Write – or ask the Continental Agent for particulars and ask for a copy of adaptations from Canada's Food Rules.

David Garland (2003: 60) identifies insurance as an “apparatus of security” for the government, “because it preserves the free play of autonomous action within the economic and social spheres...while adding a safety net that removes some of the risks associated with these freedoms.” The association of insurance and government was a mutually beneficial relationship, and one which would only strengthen over the next few decades.⁶¹ It is also an especially appropriate combination, as insurance is considered a form of protection against risks, which is in effect what Nutrition Services also saw itself providing.

The insurance companies were also seen (however inaccurate this may be) as free from any kind of “vested interest” that producers of food or related products might have, a concern raised during the planning of the national nutrition campaign: “It was...thought desirable to ask that care should be taken with any campaign sponsored largely by parties interested in the sale of foodstuffs that people who are already consuming adequate quantities of the right kinds of food should not be induced to demand more” (L.B. Pett, in a letter regarding the Food Requirements Committee, January 2, 1943). This led Nutrition Services to draft regulations outlining exactly what kind of claims manufacturers could make, particularly those with a close working relationship with the government. Of

⁶¹ Involvement in the establishment of nutritional standards and expectations would prove profitable for the insurance industry. Insurance companies have become extremely influential in determining standards of health, “normal” weights and heights, and further, can deny coverage on the basis of individuals deviating too far from these norms.

course, there were many companies that continued to implicitly (or expressly) claim to be endorsed by Nutrition Services.⁶² However, the verity of their claims tended to be less important than the overall motivational power of their message.

Motivation: "Eat Right to Win the Fight"

Although many women were clearly interested in nutritional issues prior to the war,⁶³ anyone who previously had not given it much thought was likely compelled to do so through the intense media campaign endorsed by the government and private business sector. Some of these were explicitly joint efforts, but most Canadian companies regardless supported the war effort through their marketing practices. During the 1940s, there are two primary methods of communicating the nutritional message: popular media, such as articles and editorials in newspapers and women's magazines, and through advertising (much of which ran in the former).⁶⁴ As mentioned above, individual and local efforts were also important in motivating people to eat properly, and in some cases the efforts themselves had been prompted by media coverage.

Nutrition Services was one of the most prolific producers of material, and while their publications were not flashy, they were filled with information. A good example is their pamphlet "The Lunch Box is On the March" (1943 – 1945, prepared jointly with the Department of Agriculture), which included Canada's Food Rules, suggestions for proper

⁶² Perhaps because most of these did so within the context of communicating safe, healthy eating, the government does not appear to have enforced these regulations in any meaningful way.

⁶³ As discussed, it had been part of the mandate of the Red Cross, the WI, and others for many years.

⁶⁴ Although I have elected not to focus upon them here, schoolchildren were another way of reaching women at home. Nutrition education in the school would be passed along to mothers.

packing of lunches and cleaning of thermos and lunchboxes, plus a detailed menu of food group components, sandwich fillings, and complete lunches for adults and children. Remember, a good lunch planned well and packed well, pays well! Paper versions of filmstrips were also distributed, such as "Save Food, Avoid Waste" (1945 and 1946), designed by the National Film Board of Canada. This series of vignettes reminded families to "starve the garbage pail" and add "odds and ends" of food to the soup pot instead. Although printed matter was sent only upon request, it had a wide circulation, thanks to the interest of the Women's Institutes, in particular, and designated individuals or committees. For example, 250,000 copies of "The Lunch Box is On the March" had been distributed in only its first year of printing. Over 500,000 copies of a leaflet entitled "Nutrition in Wartime" were sent to communities in all provinces. Nutrition Services also provided speakers upon request, ran radio spots on nutrition, and created travelling exhibits for the Provincial Departments of Health, who in turn made these available to interested groups. In an account of its activities for 1943, Nutrition Services reported having sent material to "hundreds of individuals, 123 communities, 13 commercial companies, 13 educational institutions (colleges, universities), 96 schools, 5 hospitals, 144 Chambers of Commerce, 384 Bell Telephone Offices, various Women's Organizations, rural and urban, and to other countries including England, U.S.A., South Africa, Australia, Argentina, Mexico, Panama, and Eire."⁶⁵

Nutrition Services also benefited from the support of major firms in Canada, who incorporated government information into their own more interesting campaigns. The Hudson's Bay Company took out a series of half-page ads in the Saturday issue of each

⁶⁵ "Activities of Nutrition Services, 1943." Department of Pensions and National Health, Ottawa.

of Canada's daily newspapers to promote "Health for Victory,"⁶⁶ produced posters to accompany these, and created a "Housewives' Information Desk" in the food departments of selected stores. The company dietitian also conducted classes for all employees who worked as "food handlers," so they would be better prepared to offer sound advice to customers.⁶⁷ As the Hudson's Bay Company reminded Canadians, "national defence begins in your kitchen." In its booklet, "Eat Right to Work and Win" (1942), The Swift Canadian Company echoed this idea:

Housewives of Canada – you are, we know, keen to give every service which will help bring Victory. Yours is the vital job of helping to build a healthier, sturdier nation – and don't you under-rate it!

You can do it in *your own kitchen*, just by knowing and serving the right amounts and kinds of food.

We have enough food. We know HOW it can be used to help win the war. We need only the help of housewives who are willing to put together these two factors – food, plus a sound knowledge of how to use it – to make our nation stronger. Will you do your share?

Another example of Swift's ongoing commitment to improving national nutrition, this booklet employs King Features Syndicate comic characters to show the way to better eating habits. One scene has Popeye contemplating a sign that reads: "For health and victory, eat leafy, green and yellow vegetables," causing him to exclaim: "Blow me down! An' here I bin confinin' meself to spinach!" This publication thus held an appeal for children as well as adults.

⁶⁶ These ads ran for over forty weeks, representing a significant cost to the company.

⁶⁷ Memo, "Methods of Nutrition Education for Adults and their Effectiveness, Manitoba's Experience." Canadian Council on Nutrition, June 1945.

Campaigns such as these are noteworthy because they go beyond self-promotion with an obligatory nod to the war effort – in fact, Swift never mentions its own products at all. In a January 1943 Canadian Nutrition Program Bulletin, the government criticized those companies who merely add a line (“Eat Right – Feel Right”) to existing advertising campaigns, reminding them of the “urgent educational job to be done.” Others indirectly advertise their product, such as Fleischmann’s Yeast, which sponsored a series of ads about the value of bread in supplying one-quarter of the food energy of Canadians, and reminding us that national strength depends on proper diet.⁶⁸

Wartime advertising related to nutrition generally took one of three approaches: instilling fear, inspiring patriotism, or a “soft-sell” approach which often drew upon the patriotic angle, particularly in its praise of women. The “fear” category primarily preyed upon maternal guilt: “*It’s up to mothers* to see that their children develop keen minds in active bodies” (Kellogg’s All-Wheat, 1939, emphasis in original). Quaker Oats implored women to protect the family against tiredness (1940).⁶⁹ The Super Health Company of Toronto warned: “Mothers! The Health of Your Family depends entirely upon YOU.”⁷⁰ Fear and patriotism dovetailed in the American Can Company’s 1944 question: “Are You and Your Family Food Criminals?” (on food wastage as sabotage). This company also reminded women that knowledge of nutrition can help win the war: “How to use your cook stove to cook Hitler’s goose!” (1943). Servel Canada Limited launched the “Nutrition in Industry Plan,” with its slogan: “Eat to Beat the Devil,” the Devil being

⁶⁸ Advertisements appearing in *Chatelaine*, February 1940 and 1941.

⁶⁹ Many continued with campaigns introduced in the 1930s (see Chapter Three).

⁷⁰ Their flyer is fascinating, in that it presents a series of quotes from many well-known people in the field of nutrition (including Deputy Minister of Health Dr. R.E. Woodhouse (sic), Sir John Orr, and Dr. E.V. McCollum), none of which actually address what Super Health is selling (cookware).

represented as a Hitler caricature (complete with horns), wearing a swastika insignia on his collar, being hit by the fist of a (presumably well-fed and strong) Canadian.⁷¹ Canada Packers pointed out that “Today the patriotic Canadian woman plans her menus for *Health* even more than for pleasure” (1943, emphasis in original). Metropolitan Life Insurance Company was one of the most frequent advertisers on this theme, asking housewives: “Do you want to build a stronger, healthier Canada? Increase the efficiency of Canada’s war effort? You can do so by making sure that your family gets proper food.”⁷² “In peacetime, you owe it to yourself and your family to eat well-balanced, nourishing meals. In critical times like these, it’s a patriotic duty.”⁷³ Purchasing the right foods and preparing nutritious meals is “the most vital war work housewives can do.”⁷⁴

The third approach employed a more gentle reminder of women’s responsibilities in wartime, such as the spokeswoman for Spry shortening (the kindly “Aunt Jenny,” who was older and wiser than most): “Ladies, our government has asked all of us to give our families nourishin’, well-balanced meals...to make ‘em strong an’ healthy...Use these temptin’, dependable receipts (sic) every day, ladies, an’ keep your families healthy, happy, and fit.”⁷⁵ More interesting are those campaigns which recognize the efforts of women (and no doubt guarantee themselves some customers at the same time). The

⁷¹ Servel’s plan was outlined in an article/advertisement in *Canadian Home Journal*, January 1943.

⁷² Excerpt from advertisement appearing in *Chatelaine* June 1940. Metropolitan Life made available free publications such as the Metropolitan Cookbook, and “Food for Health in Peace and War,” and sponsored short films on nutrition that were shown in theatres.

⁷³ Excerpt from advertisement appearing in *Chatelaine* September 1942.

⁷⁴ Excerpt from advertisement appearing in *Chatelaine* October 1941.

⁷⁵ The government in question is the American government; however, this flyer was included with Spry sold in both the United States and Canada.

Canada Starch Company commended Canada's "Housoldiers" for their skill and knowledge:

All-out production demands a healthy people. War workers must not only get to their jobs...they must stay on them...work steadily and efficiently...resist the strain of long hours and exacting labour.

All honour, then, to those mothers and wives who are exerting every effort to keep the workers of Canada fit, vigorous and keyed to "victory through production." *They are Canada's Housoliders.*⁷⁶

In 1943, OXO proclaimed what it thought of Canada's women:

Women are wonderful!

Keeping house and feeding a family isn't any picnic these days. You're working overtime – all the time, with your hands, your head, and your heart...and doing a grand job.

You know that food and fitness, victory and vitamins are all related. You know rationing is necessary so you cope with more and more mental arithmetic and remember more and more dates. Shortages can't be helped so if you can't get this you substitute that. You conserve, preserve – you stretch and save.

You're ingenious, industrious and cheerful. Your patience and good humour are unflinching.

You've got all the courage of the pioneer women and you're armed with the power and influence of much new knowledge and many new skills. In fact you're wonderful! That's what we think and we want you to know it.

HOUSEKEEPERS OF CANADA – WE SALUTE YOU!⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Excerpt from advertisement appearing in *Chatelaine* November 1942. The small print points out how Canada's Housoldiers choose many products of the Canada Starch Company.

⁷⁷ Advertisement in *Chatelaine* November 1943. The fine print reads: "It's a satisfaction to the makers of OXO to know that OXO Cubes and Fluid OXO are a great help to the Housewife in planning Wartime Meals." This ad, while superficially flattering, also manages to tell women what they *ought to be doing*.

Another aspect of advertising which reached women (through their association with motherhood) was that aimed at a younger audience. Nutrition Services was frequently asked to prepare material of interest to children. Such material was rarely produced, left instead to the initiative of other agencies (see below).⁷⁸ In 1942, Director Pett grudgingly agreed to the preparation of verses, but asked, “whether it would be undignified for the name of the Department to be associated with such material” (Memo dated July 21, 1942). While most missed the rhythm of limericks altogether, others were relatively catchy:

There once lived a Princess, ethereal
 Who longed for Prince Charming, imperial
 So she guarded her curves,
 And she strengthened her nerves
 By eating, each day, whole grain cereal.

There once lived a rabbit named Peter
 And no other rabbit was fleeter
 He owed his success
 To the fact – can’t you guess?
 That he was a great carrot eater.

Canadian Red Cross Junior magazine contained a youth-friendly version of the Red Cross’ “Nutrition Notes.” In Kingston, Ontario, the Community Nutrition Council used radio shows to spread the message of proper nutrition to families through children.

Though couched in familiar fairy tales and other stories, they certainly get their message across:

“You boys and girls are so important to your country that we want to explain how you may keep yourselves healthy – so that whatever you may be called upon to do for Canada

⁷⁸ The Consumer Information Service of the Wartime Information Board used as its mascot a smiling beaver, dressed in military garb, telling us to “Eat Right to Fight!” This may have appealed to children.

you will be strong, fit, and eager to do it.” In this installment, the appeal of “Little Red Riding Hood” to the Big Bad Wolf is attributed to her good diet. An excerpt:

Mr. Wolf raised his sly head and scented the breeze
 It's a plump little girl that I see through these trees
 I'll manage to catch her by stunning or stealth
 She surely must come from the House of Good Health
 Her hair is so curly and shiny as silk
 And those pearly [teeth] prove she drinks plenty of milk
 Her cheeks are so rosy, her eyes are so bright
 To eat this fine morsel will be a delight.

Thankfully, our heroine is saved by the Green Huntsman, who cautions her:

Stay out of harm's way, whatever you do
 This old world needs glad healthy children like you.

The story ends with the following:

Children of Canada cannot but realize that their health is their most precious possession. Our land is like Red Riding Hood's mother's cottage. Its pantries are filled with good food – with cereals, whole wheat bread, butter, eggs, and jugsful of milk. Your mother will know that it costs less to buy good food for you than it costs to buy unnecessary delicacies. So ask for it – and eat it – and like it...In that way you will be making yourself strong for your community and for Canada. And you'll be happy, healthy, laughing and gay.⁷⁹

It was indeed expected that “mother would know,” and considering the amount of community work and corporate efforts alongside magazine and newspaper features and the advertising within these, there was little excuse or patience for those women who professed “not to know” about proper nutrition. Helen G. Campbell of The Chatelaine Institute puts it this way (1941:51): “You can't, of course, expect every mother to be a dietitian, but if she's going to do a good job of feeding her family she must understand a

⁷⁹ At the end of the broadcast, children were invited to demonstrate their knowledge of Canada's food rules by answering the following: What five most important foods should be included in a healthy picnic basket?

few nutritional facts and plan her menus ahead of time to fit them together and provide a varied and well-balanced diet.” Women’s Institutes and other local groups offered classes on nutrition, but while these were well attended (as McKay noted above, even during the winter months – no small accomplishment in Canada), there were women unable to take part in these due to work and/or family obligations. For these women, there was a popular alternative: Safeway Stores’ Kitchen Course in Nutrition.

In November 1942, Safeway introduced a nutrition program for Canadian women.⁸⁰ This was a significant undertaking for the company, and was intended to complement and contribute to the national nutrition program, a view shared by the government. In a letter to Mr. J.B. Hardy, Safeway Stores Limited, Dr. G.S.H. Barton, Deputy Minister, Department of Agriculture showers praise on the initiative (in one remarkably long sentence):

I feel sure that the distribution of so much helpful information, particularly at this time, will be of definite assistance to the large number of people you serve through your stores and will undoubtedly constitute a valuable contribution in the whole effort of maintaining the health of our people with the most economical use of food materials so that the maximum amount of what we produce can be made available to those who are in urgent need of it (February 19, 1943).

In “A Report on the Activities of Safeway Stores, Limited in the Canadian Nutrition Program,” the company explains that its efforts are in response to survey data indicating that only 40 percent of the Canadian people were adequately nourished, and outlines

⁸⁰ The Kitchen Course in Nutrition was first introduced in the United States earlier that year, and subsequently adapted for Canadian use. These adaptations were not entirely successful, as Laura C. Pepper, Chief, Consumer Section of the Department of Agriculture, notes in a February 17, 1943 letter to Dr. G.S.H. Barton, Deputy Minister, Department of Agriculture: “My one criticism of the Course is that the menus and recipes are not as typically Canadian as they might be and in some instances foods, which are difficult to procure because they are not produced in Canada, are suggested.” Although not mentioned by Pepper, when the American version was written, the United States had not been at war as long as Canada, and so the food suggestions may not have reflected the shortages and restrictions faced by Canadians.

objectives that the company shares with the national program: "To awaken Canadian housewives to the realization that the right selection of foods is of vital importance to national health, to show these housewives how to select and prepare foods for greatest nutritional value," and noting how daily contact with housewives through their food stores places Safeway in an ideal position to assist in the teaching of proper nutrition (1943: 2-3).

As Safeway stores were concentrated in the Western provinces, a correspondence course enabled the company to reach thousands more women. Prepared by the Director of the Safeway Homemakers' Bureau, Julia Lee Wright, the Kitchen Course in Nutrition consisted of ten lessons, accompanied by menu ideas and recipes. The rationale behind this course is explained (1943:6):

From a score of nutrition books studied, the Homemakers' Bureau condensed a vast sum of scientific knowledge, edited it to fit the average housewife's needs, and translated it into understandable, everyday English – the so-called language of the kitchen.

The scope of the material made it apparent that the subject must be presented slowly – a bit at a time – to be understandable and to be kept interesting. So the correspondence course method of presentation was decided upon.

Lessons were mailed once a week for ten weeks, with a questionnaire included with the first lesson (to analyze nutritional requirements of the family and once returned to the Bureau, to guide future material), and an examination included with the final lesson. Enrollees of the course who completed all ten lessons and did "reasonably well" in the examination received a "diploma" (actually a "Certificate of Merit"). The expectation that all enrollees would be women is evidenced throughout the course material, with scenarios involving "your husband and children", and constant use of the feminine

pronoun, such as the Certificate of Merit, which reads: "This is to certify that [name] has completed a ten lesson course in modern nutrition, thus evidencing her eagerness to do her part in improving the health of Canada."

Safeway's interest actually does appear to be in promoting healthy eating habits among Canadians. As a retailer, it undoubtedly benefited from customer interest, but the Kitchen Course in Nutrition was clearly not a profit-making venture. Enrollees were charged 25 cents for the entire course, "to assure their interest", and for study groups of twenty-five or more, a Teacher's Guide was made available for free. Employees of Safeway received the course at no charge. The ten lessons plus additional information comprise over 100 pages, lending support to Safeway's claim that the enrolment fee represents "only a small part of producing it." (1943:8).⁸¹ Unfortunately, exact enrolment figures could not be established, though J.B. Hardy of Safeway Stores Limited declared them to be "quite satisfactory."⁸² The association of the Safeway Homemakers' Bureau and Family Circle Magazine (over 90,000 copies distributed weekly in Western Canada at the time) meant their message reached large numbers of women, whether or not they chose to enrol in the Kitchen Course. This is a clear example of the "contract and tutelage" Donzelot describes (1979).

While popular, the Safeway course added to a burgeoning controversy among some government officials who were uncomfortable with the idea of "accrediting" housewives. Considered beside all the pressing concerns of the day, the amount of deliberation this issue received is startling. According to existing correspondence, the issuing of a button

⁸¹ Furthermore, the course package was strictly educational material; it included no advertising.

⁸² Letter to Dr. G.S.H. Barton, Deputy Minister, Department of Agriculture, January 21, 1943.

or certificate to housewives was frequently suggested as an incentive for completing nutrition classes.⁸³ Put to members of the Canadian Council on Nutrition, the question generated a range of responses: favourable, opposed, or indifferent, but what is notable about those opposed to the idea is the theme of concern about women fancying themselves “experts.” A typical comment: “...there is a danger that these women, who have only a superficial training, might consider themselves qualified nutritionists. I mention this...because we have found that situation to exist in Ontario in the case of a group of women who took a one month course, and considered themselves authorities in nutrition.”⁸⁴

Though the Ontario example is a rarity, it raises an interesting question: How much information were women to have? Although encouraged, if not commanded, to become educated about nutrition and proper feeding of the family, women were not to consider themselves authorities or experts. While I would not characterize it as a backlash, there was a simultaneous message being presented to women not to lose their femininity while gaining knowledge. As one (American) wartime pamphlet cautioned: “...it is essential that women avoid arrogance and retain their femininity in the face of their own new status...She may be the woman of the moment, but she must watch her moments” (May 1988: 68-69).⁸⁵ Much ink was devoted to tips for keeping meals “attractive and pleasing” for the man of the house, and as the war progressed and more women were pressed into

⁸³ Letter from L.B. Pett to members of the Canadian Council on Nutrition, June 10, 1942.

⁸⁴ Letter to L.B. Pett from Mary A Clarke, Superintendent, Ontario Department of Agriculture, July 3, 1942.

⁸⁵ There is tension among the messages directed at women during wartime. In the United States, J. Edgar Hoover contributed an infamous article to *Woman's Home Companion* (January 1944), in which he argues that mothers should not be taking on factory work and other “war jobs”, as they already have the most important job of all: “*There must be no absenteeism among mothers.*” (reprinted in Walker 1998: 44-47).

service,⁸⁶ articles warned women not to become too “mannish.” Even those women who actually *were* experts in nutrition were not exempt from this trend. Newspaper coverage of the CDA conventions allots considerable space to describing the attire and appearance of its members, and less to their qualifications and experience: “Utterly feminine, she likes simple, smart suits for business (in black or navy) with bright accents, and dressy clothes for special dates. She has a yen for extreme hats, and this season favors a pale blue silk covered with large matching roses.”⁸⁷ While much of this advice focused upon appearance (such as 1942 *Good Housekeeping* suggestions for women in uniform),⁸⁸ part of women’s femininity had to do with food – not only preparing it, but also what or how they ate.

For instance, during the first years of the war, prior to wide-scale rationing, girls’ and women’s perceived preoccupation with slimness was considered selfish and as Helen Gagen sees it, unpatriotic:

You see, it isn’t simply a matter of keeping yourself from being an expense to your family or to your country – it’s a question of making a definite contribution. Just remember that each one of us is likely to be called upon to do the work of two good men, these coming months. Dictators have called you “young weaklings.” Shows all *they* know! (1940: 49).

Internal government memos and published articles comment upon women who do not eat properly, either because they put their families’ nutritional needs first (is that not what

⁸⁶ Those women who never previously had to deal with domestic work could also find help in articles such as “My Maid’s Gone into Munitions” by Helen G. Campbell of *Chatelaine* (April 1942).

⁸⁷ *The Herald*, Montreal, April 28, 1947.

⁸⁸ Suggestions include: “Don’t cut your hair very short. A mannish effect is the last thing you want. Don’t swagger or stride along in masculine fashion.” From “How a Woman Should Wear a Uniform” *Good Housekeeping*, August 1942, reprinted in Walker 1998: 37-38).

they were supposed to do?), or (especially the younger women) do not make the “right” dietary choices. Helen G. Campbell of the *Chatelaine* Institute chastised: “What about the women who eats a few ill-sorted scraps because she ‘can’t be bothered to cook for one person’? What about the career girl who ‘grabs a sandwich’ and lets it go at that? Time to turn over a new leaf in the cause of nutrition and health.”⁸⁹ In one particularly unflattering example, the author observes:

It is an established fact that in the lower-salaried brackets, all females have far greater interest in fine feathers for their backs than they have in lining their stomachs and maintaining their health. A girl will go without sufficient nourishing food at any time if she feels she needs additional finery, hair-does, or things of that kind.⁹⁰

In contrast, says *Chatelaine’s* Campbell, “men are the wise guys”:

Regarding the quantity of food and the quality of meals, the female of the species is not as sensible as the male. Men are better to themselves in this respect, perhaps because they have a bit more money to spend and don’t use any for manicures and prettying-up...Remember, girls, a sandwich and a bottle of pop aren’t enough for anyone, and decent meals are not only more healthful, but the best of all beauty treatments.⁹¹

In a discussion of how to better motivate the public, The Canadian Council on Nutrition debated the “inspirational value of [associating] pictures of food with pictures of beautiful healthy women (presumably the result of adequate nourishment).”⁹²

⁸⁹ From “3 Squares” by Helen G. Campbell, *Chatelaine* January 1943.

⁹⁰ Unsigned letter (letterhead of Wartime Housing Limited) to The Honourable C.D. Howe, Minister of Munitions and Supply, May 18, 1943. The author also asserts that girls tend to avoid nourishing beverages, opting instead for “the stimulating qualities of say Coca Cola.”

⁹¹ “Meals on Shift” *Chatelaine* September 1942: 53-54. This article is an example of what emerges as a pattern at the time – the characterization of women (especially unmarried women without children) as selfish, or at least self-absorbed. This often comes up in the context of women doing war work outside the home, and one can speculate about the motivation here. This is anecdotal, and requires further research, but I raise it as a point of interest.

⁹² Tenth Meeting, Canadian Council on Nutrition, June 8, 1945.

Women were central to nutrition in Canada, not only as workers but often quite literally as the “face” of nutrition. As discussed above, this association produced a number of social risks for women: Women who ignored or failed to understand nutritional basics were risking the health of their families and moreover, the country. Yet following the advice too closely could result in risks to women’s own health. It was important to be educated, but not “too expert” in their thinking, and this education must be part of fulfilling the larger feminine role, not a distraction from it. As the following chapter will examine, the creation of these risks was a necessary technology in the moral regulation project of nutrition in Canada.

Chapter Five:
The Risks of Poor Nutritional Habits:
Analysis and Conclusions

The preceding chapters provide an introduction to the emergence of nutrition as a national concern in Canada, the kinds of work being done and the kind of people doing it (namely women), and the popular sentiment and discourses designed to motivate Canadians to follow nutritional advice and maintain a healthy diet. While the ideas of morality and risk inform these discussions, this chapter endeavours to make the connections more explicitly, as well as clarify how we may understand the concepts themselves as technologies of governance. Further, following the work of Hunt (1999, 2003) and others, I will demonstrate how nutrition may be understood as a site of moral regulation and should be acknowledged as an important site of “responsibilization” (Dean 1991; Hunt 1999, 2003; Rous and Hunt 2004). The extent of the effect of the Second World War on nutritional advice will also be briefly considered.

Foucault described his work as “the history of *problematizations*, that is, the history of the way in which things become a problem” (1996:414). He elaborates:

[M]oreover, if you like, it is the genealogy of problems that concerns me. Why a problem and why such a kind of problem, why a certain way of problematizing appears at a given point in time... You know, this history of problematizations in human practices, there is a point where in some way the certainties all mix together, the lights go out, night falls, people begin to realize that they act blindly and that consequently a new light is necessary, new lighting and new rules of behaviour are needed. So there it is, an object appears, an object that appears as a problem, voila... (1996:414).

The problematization of nutrition is precisely the issue here. Why is nutrition a “problem”? To be accurate, *mal*nutrition is the problem, but it is “nutrition” that is characterized as unstable, fragile, problematic. Why did it gain such attention in the late 1930s and 1940s? The Depression years certainly increased awareness of the effects of undernourishment, yet the federal government did not take up nutrition as an issue of national importance until pressured to do so by international events. How was the decision reached that a “new light” was necessary, and who would ensure it shone?

As introduced at the beginning of this thesis, biopower represents an unprecedented move toward the collection of information about the population which is then used in the regulation of that population (Foucault 1980a, 2003). Data such as mortality rates, population growth predictions, levels of hygiene, and age and sex distributions can be employed to facilitate new behaviours among the people. Nutrition statistics are similarly useful: if surveys reveal only ten percent of Canadians eat adequate daily servings of fruit and vegetables (as recommended by our food guide), the government knows what to emphasize in future publicity campaigns. If serious discrepancies in caloric intake are discovered across the country, one needs to examine what, if any, education is available in the respective provinces. Prior to the late 1930s, governance of nutrition was impossible in Canada, as these kinds of information had yet to be compiled. The League of Nations’ focus on nutrition and the subsequent requests for member countries to provide data revealed a dearth of reliable records about the nutritional state of Canadians. What was available, however, was research pertaining to the “science” of nutrition, which would eventually prove important to the establishment of a dietary standard for

Canada. In the short-term, some of the more dubious scientific findings were used to encourage people to change their eating habits, such as the 1930s advertising campaigns detailing the fearsome ailments that could befall the malnourished.

Although nutritional recommendations are carried out at the individual level – particularly the family – what is really being regulated within biopower is the *social body*. This is a somewhat intangible concept, and one with which Foucault is not altogether comfortable,¹ but in “Body/Power,” he conceptualizes it as “the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals” (1980b: 55). Bryan Turner uses the body as a metaphor for society as a whole (1996:175-176). Kendall and Wickham (1992: 9-10) employ a combination of these ideas, arguing that the conceptualization of the population in this way is useful in governing society. As they write (1992:9), “what is important for such a theory of ‘government’ is that the populations under consideration are conceptualized in terms of definite conditions of their operation.” Through classification and management, biopower has the effect of bringing people into the social body. Target populations can be comprised of any number of people, be it small groups or a national audience (Donzelot 1979, Hunt 1999, Kendall and Wickham 1992). In the case of spreading nutritional advice, the social body included every man, woman, and child in Canada.

I should note that in this work I have deliberately not addressed issues of class in the nutritional education provided to the public. While I acknowledge that economic position could potentially determine which women could attend nutrition courses, subscribe to

¹ See discussion in Chapter One.

magazines, and so on, its influence is weakened by two factors: First, the breadth of the national nutrition effort included considerable free advice, such as pamphlets distributed door-to-door, store displays, municipal initiatives (for example, the Windsor Food Fair) and the complimentary work of the women's organizations (which often provided child care). Further, as the war progressed, differences among those who could afford "better" foods became increasingly less relevant, as shortages, not status, dictated distribution. Unlike other moral regulation projects which identify "at risk" populations, malnutrition was considered a threat that could affect anyone. Being wealthy provided no guarantee of being healthy – one still had to have the appropriate knowledge (Kendall and Wickham 1992).²

A second reason for excluding class from this discussion is that the national nutrition program effectively did the very same thing in its approach. With the very rare exception, the state treated its citizens as one. This is an aspect of governance, as Hunt notes: " 'governing' cannot be adequately encompassed within a hierarchical conception focused on the state or on dominant social or economic classes" (1999: 5). Further, as evidenced by the range of groups and individuals involved in nutrition work, governance takes place at many levels, or as Ericson and Haggerty state, " biopower, discipline, and sovereignty exist in multiple spaces within and among both state and nonstate institutions" (1997: 91). The "social" is more than conceptual – it is "the space between state and civil society in which numerous state, philanthropic, and private corporate

² Donzelot (1979) argues that class helps determine what kind of intervention a family will experience. I agree this is the case in many situations; however, it does not appear to have had a significant impact upon access to nutritional advice.

institutions negotiate governance” (Ericson and Haggerty 1997: 91).³ Governance is not restricted to formalized relationships (Hunt 1999), nor are there always clear distinctions among the governed. Sometimes the target population is the entire population.

Granted, in order to reach this target, a particular group within the social body may be called upon to deliver the message. As has been demonstrated throughout this paper, women were the primary audience for nutritional information, as well as being leaders in its production and dissemination. Women are often pressed into service in moral regulation projects, and may in fact be their initiators (Donzelot 1979, Hunt 1999, Valverde 1991). Although the “official” nutrition effort was introduced by the federal government (or in Hunt’s terminology, “from above”), the need for nutrition education had been recognized over a decade earlier by groups such as the Women’s Institutes, Canadian Home Economics Association, and the Ontario branch of the Red Cross. The work performed by these groups indicates that moral regulation of nutrition emerged from the middle, and in the case of small local groups of women seeking and providing knowledge about good dietary habits, also from below. As Hunt notes (1999:5), “regulatory agents [may also] act in concert,” where state action and popular action combine forces in interests of the project, and this was clearly the case with respect to nutrition education in Canada.

In addition to this emergence from “below,” the nutrition effort in Canada clearly involved care of the self and care for others (a second criteria of moral regulation

³ Ericson and Haggerty credit Donzelot with this conception.

projects). The discourse of the day is laden with suggestions for a “New Way of Living,” and invitations to “come over to the sunny side of life.”⁴ Of course, the entire family should be brought along, and women were encouraged (and expected) by all regulatory agents to assume this responsibility. Dr. E. W. McHenry, head of the Department of Nutrition, School of Hygiene, University of Toronto, and consultant to the federal government was clear on this point: “An extensive program of education to Canadian *women* is being planned by the...Division of Nutrition Services...and co-operating committees in different provinces...when all is said and done, the welfare of a nation is in the hands of its housekeepers” (emphasis added).⁵ Advertisements of the 1930s and particularly the 1940s were overwhelmingly directed at women – for example: “A change in your eating habits can influence your whole life. Follow Canada’s Official Food Rules. See that your husband and your children get lots of these foods – and your family will be better in health and energy.”⁶ Even some of the aforementioned children’s verses prepared by Nutrition Services invoked this theme:

There once lived a fellow named Pins
 Who berated his wife for her sins
 “The worst one it’s true”
 He said “Is that you
 Always cook my potatoes sans skins.”

Said a man to his wife one fine day
 “Our lawn seems to be mostly hay
 If that lawn I must mow
 Lots of brawn I must grow
 So feed me some meat every day.”

⁴ These are both Kellogg’s slogans of the 1930s.

⁵ McHenry as quoted in “Food for Fitness” by Helen G. Campbell, *Chatelaine*, March 1942.

⁶ Ironically (from a contemporary viewpoint), this 1943 advertisement is for doughnuts, which at the time were marketed as “Good Nutrition plus Eating Pleasure.”

And if they faltered in their resolve to follow all the advice, the popular magazines did it for them:

I will serve simple wholesome meals to keep my family fit, building my menus around the basic foods and using the proper amounts of each. But I'll think about good flavor and appetizing appearance too...

I will learn – and practice – the best and latest methods of cooking in order to have each food as good, and good for us, as possible...

When I'm packing a lunch box for my husband or one of the children, I'll see that it's a *good* meal – some meat, fish, cheese or other meat substitute, some fruit or vegetable other than potato and some milk. It will look nice and taste good too, if I know anything...

And I'll do my best for my family by serving well-balanced meals, properly cooked and as delicious as I can make them.
 ("New Year's Resolutions" by Helen G. Campbell, *Chatelaine* January 1943).

Key to engendering cooperation is the *moral* element of nutritional advice. While Garland (2003:57) is correct that governments must take care not to create alarmism (or the other extreme of complacency), they nonetheless need to get the message across to the citizens. By packaging good nutrition as the hallmark of good citizenry, the information reached a receptive audience. Further, by appealing to long-standing ideologies of motherhood and an inherent "maternalism" of all women (Arnup 1990, 1994, Valverde 1991, 1994), often reinforced by women's groups (Peterat and DeZwart 1995), women were arguably predisposed to taking on the responsibility of the family, and often, for the care of their communities as well.⁷ Donzelot (1979:58-94) sees the family as a primary point of support for state attempts to institute normative change, noting that the family can more successfully hold its members to the norms. Through the

⁷ In the case of the WI, they were already performing *national* nutrition work.

provision of advice (which Donzelot argues “costs nothing”), and where necessary, forms of relief, the state delivers its message to the social body, and it does so through women, “because such a policy [will] pay off” (1979:66). This enables, according to Miller and Rose, “government at a distance.”⁸

According to Donzelot (1979:69), “morality was systematically linked to the economic factor, involving a continuous surveillance of the family.” While the economic factor was important to nutrition (certainly it was used as a reason to be careful in purchasing the “right” foods and preparing them properly), throughout the messages directed at housewives, this was not the predominant theme. Rather, as Valverde asserts, what was at work is a distinct mode of regulation involving “the production of individual ethical subjectivity and the reproduction of the nation’s moral capital” (1994:218). When Elsie the Cow told the housewives of Canada to “Eat the right food – for health – for Canada!”⁹ she was reinforcing the idea of being a dutiful and moral Canadian. When magazine articles announced “Children Starve in this Land of Plenty”¹⁰ and other families were profiled as responsible (“We Eat to Win – And Like It!”),¹¹ women were

⁸ Miller and Rose 1990, cited in Ericson and Haggerty 1997: 94-95.

⁹ Elsie was the mascot of the Borden Company Limited for several decades. In a series of advertisements in the early 1940s, Elsie patiently explained to her grumbling husband Elmer the importance of proper nutrition. Elsie even wrote a book that was available free (much to Elmer’s chagrin) through the Borden Company. As Elsie explains in this 1943 advertisement, “You see, at the Borden Company they want every housewife in Canada to have a copy of my new book...FREE. It’s *such* a help in planning meals that meet the requirements of Canada’s Nutrition Program.”

¹⁰ Article by Dorothy Thompson, *Ladies’ Home Journal* April 1939. “This Land” referred to the United States, but all readers were urged “to investigate thoroughly to what extent undernourishment of children constitutes a national problem. And if they find what superficial figures seem to indicate, to do something about it” (p.53)

¹¹ Article by Katherine Caldwell Bayley, *Canadian Home Journal* January 1943, written in support of L.B. Pett and Nutrition Services.

motivated to reconsider the food habits of their own households. In this context, Foucault's conception of morality (1985:25) seems particularly appropriate:

...“morality”...refers to the real behaviour of individuals in relation to the rules and values that are recommended to them: the word thus designates the manner in which they comply more or less fully with a standard of conduct, the manner in which they obey or resist an interdiction or a prescription; the manner in which they respect or disregard a set of values.

Beyond women's learned sense of duty, the regulation of nutrition involved a “normative judgement that some conduct is intrinsically bad, wrong, or immoral” (Hunt 1999: 7).

Failing to fulfill the daily requirements, wasting food, or not planning menus according to the recommended food groups was immoral conduct. Furthermore, “[i]t is an important supplement that moralizing discourses frequently invoke some utilitarian consideration linking the immoral practice to some form of harm” (Hunt 1999: 7). In other words, there is *risk* associated with the “bad” practice.

The governance of risk, as described above, is not limited to the state. Rather, it “gets parceled out among individuals, corporations, and government agencies” (Garland 2003: 59). Garland suggests the state becomes a “general risk manager,” a characterization I find useful. As a state initiative, the national nutrition program certainly relied upon government support and (at least symbolically) leadership, but it was the women's voluntary organizations who actively worked to reduce the state-identified risks, by going into the community and talking to people and discovering what was lacking (be it education, assistance, or the foods themselves).¹² Once these risks are communicated to

¹² It is important to note that this paper makes no claims as to the objective reality of these risks, and indeed, I would amend Garland's portrayal of the state to include its role as risk-creator.

the social body, people “experience the facts of risk assessment as normative obligations and therefore as scripts for action” (Ericson and Haggerty 1997: 123). The actual reality of the potential harm is less important than the moral arguments, as Hunt (2003:167) explains: [Moral and risk discourses] “merge their characteristics into a distinctively new form. The most striking feature of the hybridization of morals and risks is the creation of an apparently benign form of moralization in which the boundary between objective hazards and normative judgments becomes blurred.”

When one considers the nutritional discourse of the 1930s and 1940s, despite the clearly stated food rules and menu suggestions, there is actually little explanation of *what will happen* to those who fail to adhere to them. As outlined in Chapter Two, by this time there was some reliable scientific data available, but considering the amount of literature produced for distribution, it is rare to find references to specific findings.¹³ The physiological and mental effects of malnutrition are not discussed in any meaningful way. When reference is made to “lack of energy” or “decreased stamina,” it is done so within the context of our strength as a nation, in other words, the consequences for the *social body*, rather than individual bodies. Hunt (1999: 11) suggests that moral reform generally has a dual agenda: “a specific cure for the identified ill and an expanded or symbolic dimension.” With its rather general claims, the advice of the national nutrition program appears to resemble what Freeman (1992) calls “symbolic policy,” the goal of which is achieved “when ideas and understandings are represented to and accepted by

¹³ The manufacturers employed the “scientific” arguments quite commonly in the 1930s, but many of these claims were dubious at best.

those at whom it is addressed" (1992: 47). Just as the objective hazards of risks may be unclear, the remedy, "prevention," is necessarily vague (Freeman 1992, Scott and Williams 1992). In the same way we are made to recognize nutrition as a social problem, we learn to participate in ways to fix it, even if the actual harm remains obscured:

"Prevention is a good thing, we may assume, because social problems are bad things" (Freeman 1992: 47), thus we govern ourselves and others:

One of the key functions of a policy of prevention, then, is to reproduce the willingness of individuals, firstly to collude in the ideological reconstruction of social problems as individual problems and then, secondly, to cooperate, as individuals, in prescribed solutions to those problems (Freeman 1992: 45).

The "solution" to risk includes behaving morally. As Hunt (2003:171-173) notes, risk practices are moralized; our actions are subject to scrutiny as to whether they are "right" or "wrong." This scrutiny, or policing, as Donzelot calls it, appears benevolent, and is aimed at improving the strength and hence the quality of life of the nation (1979:6-7). Those involved in the surveillance, or in moral regulation projects more broadly, "actively seek to chart and engage with social problems perceived and experienced as problematic or dangerous" (Hunt 1999: 197). With the entire social body being targeted for its nutritional practices, Mary Douglas' astute observation comes to mind: "a culture is a system of persons holding one another mutually accountable" (1990:10).

Foucault conceived of the dangerous individual as a "potential source of acts" (1988 [1978]: 150). The dangerous individual in this study is she who behaves immorally, that is, who puts her family or others at risk by failing to provide them with nutritious food. Her behaviour needs to be corrected, or normalized (O'Malley 1996: 189). Hunt (2003:

177-183) contends that governance of risk takes two forms: risk management and risk avoidance.¹⁴ It is the latter which interests me, and is most useful within discussions of nutritional advice of the era in question.¹⁵ Risk avoidance is informed by a preoccupation with safety, an ideal clearly evident in the rhetoric of the day,¹⁶ though the dangers that threatened us were perhaps more symbolic than objective. They were articulated in many ways, but all variations on a theme. For example, Helen G. Campbell identified them as “Fifth Columns in the Kitchen”:

This war is something that you and I and every Canadian housekeeper will have to take a hand in. We can't leave it all to the boys – and girls – in blue or khaki, for there's a fight to be won against the Fifth Column in our kitchen, and only you and I can do it.

Oh yes, they're there, getting in their dirty work unbeknownst; that's the meanest thing about the meanest of all enemies. So let's bring them out in the open – then up and at 'em!

Poor Nutrition – It's practical patriotism to lick this fellow, for given half a chance he'll slowly but sure as shooting undermine our health and efficiency. It's a round for Hitler when the bills for sickness go up and when “time off” reduces our war effort.¹⁷

The association of poor nutrition with risks to the well-being of the nation illustrates Deborah Lupton's argument that risk has become a fundamental concept in our daily lives: “risk is a central aspect of human subjectivity; risk is seen as something that can be

¹⁴ This is an important distinction, and one often overlooked in the literature.

¹⁵ I would suggest that in the 1930s and 1940s (when awareness of nutrition was in its infancy) the public were asked to avoid the risks (whatever these might actually represent), whereas in contemporary society, there is a greater emphasis on risk management. I contend that there is a lack of responsibility among the social body which exposes us to greater harms (both objective and symbolic), and thus necessitates more “after-the-fact” responses (i.e., treatment rather than prevention).

¹⁶ The influence of World War II is discussed below.

¹⁷ *Chatelaine* January 1942. A “fifth column” is a traitorous group of people who sympathize with the enemy.

managed through human intervention; and risk is associated with notions of choice, responsibility, and blame” (1999:25).

All of these concepts are recurrent throughout the nutritional discourse of the era, but the notion of responsibility is perhaps the most intriguing in this context. Despite the posturing, the territorial disputes, the lack of coordination and the masses of governmental memos produced over this fifteen-year period, responsibility for educating the public about nutrition ultimately remained where it originated – with the women of Canada. This was not accidental – the federal government relied upon the voluntary women’s organizations as well as motivated individuals to conduct nutrition work from coast to coast. As Kendall and Wickham remark, “governmentality involves processes by which particular populations are first defined and then subjected to definite political strategies” (1992:8).¹⁸ Subjected to the combined discourses of morality and risk (and having been well-versed in them for some time), Canadian women went about making themselves competent so as to avoid risks for themselves and to avoid bringing risk to others (Ericson and Haggerty 1997).

This effort to become informed so as to care for others (and the self) more successfully may be viewed as *responsibilization*. Drawing upon the work of Mitchell Dean (1991),¹⁹ Rous and Hunt define responsibilization as “the social process that

¹⁸ Or “technologies”, to use O’Malley’s terminology (see Chapter One).

¹⁹ Dean considers how responsibility becomes conceptualized in the notion of “breadwinner”, enabling the state to formally expect able-bodied, labourer fathers to support their children financially. The current study demonstrates how women are responsibilized to be good food providers for their families and by extension, the country, so that the health of the country is indeed “in its women’s keeping.”

imposes specific responsibilities on some category of social agents” (2004:826). Of course, women have long been associated with household labour, including the responsibilities of the kitchen. But the emergence of nutrition as a social problem required many women to learn new skills, including some knowledge of basic food science and nutritional principles, caloric requirements and product costs, and often while dealing with the constraints of rationing. These demands are effectively captured in a Cocomalt advertisement of the day in which a frustrated housewife gestures angrily at her husband with a spatula and exclaims: “Check our vitamins? Listen, I’m a cook, not a bookkeeper!”²⁰

Hunt (2003) contends that over the course of the twentieth century, “a new expansionary cycle of responsabilization sets in” (2003:167), the suggestion being that responsibility for oneself is no longer sufficient; risks (and the consequences of exposure to them) are shared among greater numbers of agents. I take his point, but question whether what we are witnessing is increased responsabilization or in fact a movement away from responsibility altogether. When responsibility steadily becomes more diffuse, do we not reach a point where no one can actually be held responsible? With respect to nutrition in the present day, there are few identifiable social agents to whom we assign responsibility; certainly they are less easily recognized than the mothers of sixty years ago. For example, there is growing concern about obesity among Canadians –

²⁰ Cocomalt advertisement appearing in *Ladies' Home Journal* May 1940.

newspapers and magazines warn of the epidemic – but assignment of responsibility has tended to be vague, or holds accountable so many agents that it becomes meaningless.²¹

This may be related to a renewed interest in expert regulation in recent years, and decreased preoccupation with care of the self (Hunt 1999:216). This shift, I would submit, is not surprising, as women have borne this responsibility for a long time, and indeed, the entire population has been encouraged toward self-surveillance since the 1970s. Much of the literature on health promotion and public health seems to misunderstand the genealogy of risk with respect to social and individual well-being. For example, Scott and Williams argue that the concept of risk based on individualism rather than fate is a relatively modern one, and I concur. Where we differ is on the definition of “modern.” Many authors making the links of morality and health locate this modern conceptualization of risk as emerging in the mid-1970s (Badgley 1994, Brandt 1997, Crawford 2000, Pinder 1994, Scott and Williams 1992), but as this study has demonstrated, risks have been understood in the context of the accountability of individual actors for considerably longer than acknowledged.²²

Perhaps the inclination to put our care into the hands of the experts is related to questions of responsibility. While not a popular suggestion, is it not conceivable that we simply *do not care* as much as people did in the first half of the twentieth century? If, as

²¹ For instance, schools, television, food manufacturers, teen magazines, fast food, the “supersize” effect, poor parenting, single-parent families, both parents working outside the home, cutbacks to exercise programs, costs of athletic activities, too much homework, video games...the list goes on.

²² Hunt’s work brilliantly demonstrates the genealogy of risk, and indeed, the scholarship on risk (Lupton, Giddens, to name only two) displays far greater understanding of the longevity of self-care than does the public health literature.

O'Malley asserts, risk management has "become a much more important social technology than it was half a century ago" (1996:203), do we have the same impetus to care as we did when risk avoidance was the emphasis of governance? Is there the same immediacy of concern? Do we really want the experts to care for us, or are we relying upon them to manage our risks? In other words, perhaps the individual bodies that make up the social body do not want to change their behaviours, that is, do not want to avoid risk, but rather, expect others to minimize risk for us, and if not, then to devise solutions for the consequences that may befall us. Perhaps the reason many people of Canada seemingly did their best to avoid the risks of poor nutrition in the 1940s is simply, as suggested in Hunnicutt (1996:77), "people were more human then." They did what they understood to be moral.

But how important was the context in which this occurred? Whether nutrition would have emerged as a national concern with a designated group of agents committed to educating the Canadian public about the risks of eating poorly, had the country not gone to war, is perhaps unanswerable, but several points deserve consideration. First, in my research, I came across nothing to indicate any serious resentment toward, or rejection of, the governmental suggestions. Issues of availability arose, particularly with respect to shortages of certain kinds of foods in various provinces, but I found no evidence that the majority of Canadians did not at least try to adhere to the recommended daily allowances. Second, the national campaign unquestionably increased awareness about good nutrition and poor nutrition, if a little vague on the actual effects of the latter. As has been discussed above, women had been engaged in nutrition work before the government

became involved, and the pre-war discourse invoked notions of morality and risk. Certainly the war allowed for an intensification of the moral message, but as outlined at the beginning of this paper, whether the objective hazards actually increased during the war is not so much the point. Clearly poor nutrition can cause harm to the body, but the notion of individual neglect putting the *social body* at risk was not exclusive to wartime, nor was it a new technology of governance.

The focus on nutrition during wartime was a way of coping with uncertainty (Turner 1997: xviii) and the need for the people at home to “do something” towards the war effort. I am not suggesting that proper nutrition was unimportant, but the notions of risk and morality and discipline were about more than healthy eating. As Hunt explains:

[M]oral regulation movements form an interconnected web of discourses, symbols and practices exhibiting persistent continuities that stretch across time and space. The deep anxieties that are roused and stirred in moral politics involve the condensation of a number of different discourses, different fears, within a single image” (1999: 9).

The war brought enormous changes to the country, disrupting families and necessitating new social arrangements, particularly gendered ones, which were unfamiliar and for many, uncomfortable. There were tangible threats to freedom and security. In addition to the effects of war, the country was still recovering from a decade-long economic depression. As Giddens outlines, in this context, a heightened awareness of risk makes sense: “The notion of risk becomes central in a society which is taking leave of the past, of traditional ways of doing things, and which is opening itself up to a problematic future” (1991:111). The sentiment “Eat Right to Win the Fight” need not be solely

understood as a wartime slogan. There were plenty of things to “fight” – the perils of childhood germs, disgruntled husbands, limited budgets, changing norms...²³

This study has focused upon the period 1930-1945 for several specific reasons. It was during this time that the federal government recognized nutrition as a matter of national importance, and the effects of the Depression (and subsequently, the Second World War) necessitated a new awareness about the benefits of proper eating and the perceived risks of disregarding nutritional advice. For this, the government looked to the women of the country, many of whom were already engaged in nutrition work, to advise and assist the social body in making the necessary adjustments.²⁴ To encourage their cooperation, and that of the public, notions of risk and morality were invoked, and indeed, nutrition emerged as a site of moral regulation. The moral regulation of nutrition continues into the present day, for as noted by Hunt, “governing is not necessarily successful or completed action, but always involves attempts that are more or less successful, and more or less failures” (1999:5). The federal government is of the opinion that the nutrition work conducted up to 1945 was successful indeed:

By establishing a Division of Nutrition...the Government proved its recognition of the vital need for improving nutritional levels in Canada. Today reports indicate not only an increased nutritional awareness throughout the nation, but also that an actual improvement in nutrition has occurred in the last few years...I look forward confidently to an era of better health for Canada achieved through the co-operation of federal and provincial governments and all health agencies.

²³ Cassel (1994: 297-298) asserts that public health work in Canada from the 1940s-1960s was an elaboration of that begun in previous decades.

²⁴ As Donzelot writes, “In short, a technology of needs was established which made the family into the cornerstone of autonomy, based on the following alternative: control its needs or be controlled by them” (1979: 69-70).

(Excerpt from Message from The Honourable Mr. Brooke Claxton, Minister of National Health and Welfare, presented to the Canadian Council on Nutrition at their Tenth Meeting, June 8, 1945).

Whether the Honourable Mr. Claxton's vision has been achieved is debatable, but there can be little question that public awareness of nutrition and the risks of eating poorly has continued to increase over the past sixty years. We have access to enormous amounts of information, as well as much improved availability of a range of foods, so care of the self and care for others should be easier than ever before. But do we have the motivation? Clearly this moral regulation project is far from over.

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 - RG 77 National Research Council
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- MG 28-I359 Canadian Home Economics Association
 - MG 28-I207 Canadian Dietetics Association