

REMARKS OF HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, M. C., 2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
RHODE ISLAND AT THE RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE ASSOCIATION LUNCHEON  
MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 29, 1959 AT THE EAST PROVIDENCE HIGH SCHOOL.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to participate in this meeting of the Rhode Island School Food Service Association.

I am a firm believer in the school lunch program. I have long since felt that this program has proved its effectiveness -- both as a nutritional and agricultural measure.

I need not tell you people that too many of our children still are not getting the kind of diets they need to really protect their health. And, this isn't always an economic problem. Some children do not know the principles of good nutrition so they make poor food selections. Others may know--but they are not convinced that it is important to follow accepted dietary practices.

All of this is bad for children. And it is bad for our food industry too, because skimpy eaters make pretty poor food customers. So, back in 1947, the Congress placed the school lunch program on a permanent basis, as a means of better using our food supplies to improve the diets of our children.

It has been a remarkably successful program.



Today, school feeding programs are generally regarded as an essential service for almost every elementary and secondary school. The community has recognized that a substantial number of children cannot go home for lunch--they live too far away, their mothers work outside the home, or the volume of fast-moving noontime traffic creates a real hazard in built-up areas, especially for the younger children.

Parents want the school to provide good, nourishing food at reasonable prices. They feel that adequate provision should be made for the neediest children, especially when tax funds are going into the program. And, I believe, most parents would support the idea that the lunch program should also be educational. It should introduce children to new foods and it should encourage good eating habits. Many communities have gone a long ways in using the lunchroom as a learning experience in nutrition, health, business principles, and the social graces.

This broad concept of the lunch program presents a real challenge to every one of you. You are more than food service workers. In a larger sense, you are teachers--who can exert a life-long influence



on the food habits and attitudes of the children you serve in your lunchroom. For this reason, I am pleased to see how you have banded together in a food service organization, as a means of improving your school lunch skills. It testifies to the vigor of the Rhode Island school lunch program and to the pride each of you have in your profession.

During the years I have been in Washington as your Congressman, I have strongly supported the National School Lunch Act. Nonetheless, I am convinced that the strength of the school lunch program comes from the local, State, and Federal teamwork that is involved. This is not a Federal program. It is a State and local program, which receives Federal assistance. As I see it, the heart of the program is in the local school--where the lunch is prepared and served. All of the Federal and State assistance is directed toward helping you turn out a well-balanced, low-cost, appetizing lunch day after day.

Yours is a big responsibility. With obvious affection for her children and with a sense of humor, here is how one school lunch



manager has described her job:

"I am paid, probably adequately, for a part-time job in the management of the lunch program of the \_\_\_\_\_ school. For me, this job is time and a half, all my energy and all my nervous system. I keep the books, I plan the meals, I buy the grocery orders, I supervise the children, I supervise the help, I inspect every plate that goes out the pass, I even inspect the garbage that comes back, I keep lunch accounts straight, I beg for money that's unpaid, I pass judgment on whether or not this child needs free lunch or is just giving me the works, I maintain a certain amount of martial law, I take the grief both for and from the PTA, I listen--not very patiently--to parents who don't know what they're talking about, to children who usually do, I cope with teachers, and I drop dead every Friday night..."

I am sure that many of you have felt the same way some Friday night. But, like this woman, Monday morning found you back on the job.

Here in Rhode Island, about one out of every five children in school are participating in the Type A lunch program. This is below the nationwide average of about one out of every 3 children. I am



certainly hopeful that we can at least reach that national average in the near future. I understand, however, that the lack of lunchroom facilities in some of our city schools is a significant factor.

In general, however -- from what I have heard and what I have observed--I feel that the State has exercised good school lunch leadership over the years.

Rhode Island is one of the few States which, beginning in 1947, has provided State tax funds to help finance local school lunch operations. This was a sound move. And, it was in line with the intent of Congress that States and localities should assume their fair share of the overall cost of the program. But with sharply increasing school enrollments, our State cannot afford to rest on its past efforts. School lunch must continue to receive adequate State and local support, if we are to keep the price of the Type A lunch within the reach of the majority of our children.

During my years in Washington, I have also supported an adequate Federal school lunch appropriation to supplement State and local efforts. In the first session of the 86th Congress, effective action



was taken along this line for this school year. In addition to cash assistance for local food purchases, the Congress made possible a good supply of donated commodities, with special attention to protein items. As a result, the Department of Agriculture has already taken steps to obtain such items as frozen turkeys, frozen ground pork, and canned pork and gravy for schools. This is in addition to some canned fruits and vegetables and surplus items such as dairy and cereal products.

I also have been pleased to learn that the Federal program to increase milk consumption in schools has been so successful in Rhode Island. The Department of Agriculture tells me that nearly half of the school children in Rhode Island are drinking milk at school -- as part of the Type A lunch or during recess periods. Considering the importance of milk in the diets of children, this is a most heartening development. And, again, I feel it demonstrates that you people are really doing an effective job in all of our communities throughout the State.



In conclusion, let me summarize my thoughts in this manner:

- I support the school lunch program and I believe it has earned its place in our educational system.
- I feel that the success of any lunchroom operation rests with the local community--the local workers themselves, the local school officials, and the parents of the children attending the school.
- I urge that each of you--individually and as members of your association--continue your fine work. The school lunch program deserves your full support.