

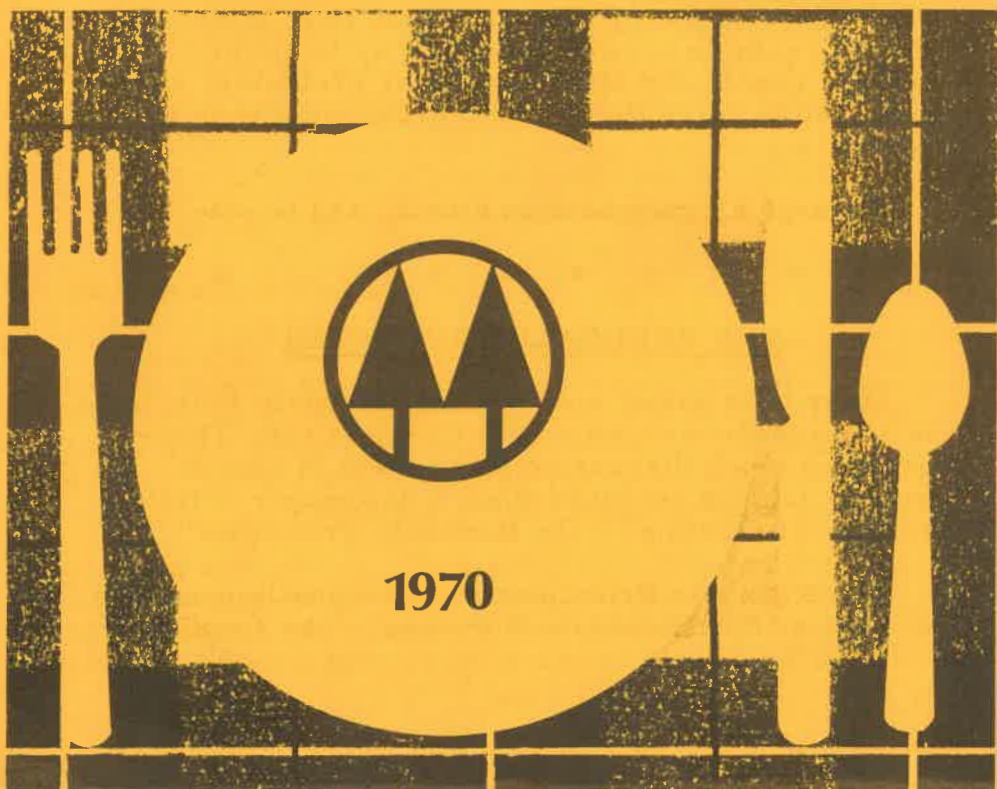


# CO-OP NEWS

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## Personal Report on the White House Conference

The White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health which I attended was an exhausting fun experience.

Many of the important facts and reviews of the 625 page report finally presented to the President have been well covered by the press, radio, and TV. I should like then to give a personal report, impressions, and recommendations.

I feel sure that the President's intent was to get wide participation on the grass-roots level; that participants might more accurately reflect wide areas of need, might then even influence congressmen to take action. In fact, we were urged to contact our congressmen. I had time only to contact Mr. Cleveland. (We had a very fruitful conversation for we even talked about boycotts and the Co-op!) I shall contact other congressmen shortly. We were urged to talk freely with other participants. I made special effort to talk with Indian and Mexican Americans; I met for the first time Eskimos and Samoans! It was wonderful to exchange points of views with people from all parts of the country. I only wish I had had more time!

I have the preliminary report (big as a metropolitan phone book), a task force report, and many other publications which were made available. I do often wish I could know everything therein! I wish I could have been 27 people so each of me could have gone to each of the sessions. But, because I have at the moment special interest or concern for the elderly and the poor I attended those area sessions.

Task Forces had met earlier to compile materials for participant consideration. Fortunately, I had arrived early enough so I could study the material before the Conference opened. I discovered that plans and programs were primarily designed to meet the needs of people in urban areas! Now, though 70% of our population is urban, still 30% is a sizeable percentage of rural people! Northern New England is

primarily rural; there seemed little in any of this applicable in N. N. E. ! I wanted very much to make sure that some modifications or some new plans might be considered which would help our elderly and our poor. Fortunately, two others of the 40 or so who attended these sessions could provide some support, and we were able to include some proposals for significant changes. We hope they will be considered.

Widely distributed at the Conference were two booklets concerning N. H. I must admit I was duly embarrassed when confronted by other participants' reactions to them. The two pamphlets THE CURSE THAT LINGERS (a look at hunger in N. H. ) and THE N. H. OLDER POOR are somewhat pictorial presentations of the plight of the poor and the elderly in N. H. and were easily read by a large number (so it seemed to me). I was asked "How can you be so cruel as to not provide funds needed to have a Food Stamp program? Why don't you have food distribution centers?" I could not honestly justify such inaction, and I was and am truly disturbed to have it so. N. H. is one of 2 states which has no Food Stamp program; and even Grafton County in which the Co-op is located has very, very few distribution centers.

Our legislators have not appropriated funds to meet half the cost of certifying the poor and for the cost of issuing the stamps! There are no funds available in the present budget for the program. Unless a special effort is made by citizens to push for appropriations, the upcoming special session may not even consider acting upon this for still another year! And another year will pass by when the poor will become poorer, and will go hungrier.

I urge N. H. Co-op members and their friends who may be scattered up and down the valley to write their representatives urging them to take whatever action is necessary to initiate a Food Stamp program in N. H. I urge those members in communities which do not participate in the surplus food distribution program to contact their town fathers, and to urge them to take steps to acknowledge the poor in the area-no

matter whether they may be "worthy or "unworthy". I urge voluntary transportation crews be organized to provide transportation for the rural elderly who often have no way to get to distribution centers, even though food may be available to them. Our welfare funds are very meager, our services often are minimal. I would urge renewed vigor and energy in taking steps to change our tax structure so that we can take more responsible action in these areas.

In my conversations with Indian and Mexican Americans we discussed many philosophical questions. "Riches do not bring happiness; we are basically a happy people. We want the right to have pride in our culture, and in ourselves; the right to a good education, and a real place in this fast moving country. We want to share in making contributions!" That was the essence! They were concerned more for "a way of life", and wanted to change the hearts of men to love rather than hate. I wished that I might have had days and days more to spend with them. Some women wore their colorful Indian tribal dress; and a few wore modern adaptations. What a rich heritage we have, and how wonderful it was to see the variety of people. One appreciates the richness of variety when one leaves the Upper Valley a while, especially when one goes to Washington to see it!

I would feel less than responsible if as Co-op members we do not make simple moves to express our concern by writing our legislators to take appropriate actions to help the elderly and the poor to a better life by at least having a Food Stamp and food distribution program available!

N. K.