

Does the Food We Eat Need Censor?

IT'S A wonder that the human race survived for thousands of years without official advice on what to eat.

For most of those who have walked this earth the problem was not to choose the "right foods" but to get anything at all to eat. This still is the case for large numbers on every continent.

In this country millions talk about, promote and sometimes adhere to rigid diets for reasons of health, weight or appearance.

Food faddists campaigned vigorously several years ago for legislation to establish a federal diet program. They got bills introduced but Congress let them die in committees. Faddists were not discouraged and didn't give up. They got the Department of Agriculture to bring forth in 1980 a very similar regimen of "recommended" types and amounts of food we ought to eat.

This called for a variety of foods, ideal weight, less fat and cholesterol, plenty of starch and fiber, little or no sugar and salt, and "if you drink alcohol, do so in moderation."

There was considerable controversy at the time about effects of cholesterol, a normal constituent of the human body that some said was a threat to health. Recently, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute announced that a 10-year, \$150 million study had shown that a reduction in blood cholesterol through diet and medication reduced risk of heart attacks.

Thus, the recommended diet guidelines are reinforced and renewed assaults upon some of America's favorite foods may be expected. This report will supply vegetarians, health food zealots and regimentarians with new ammunition to denounce the consumption of beef, eggs, dairy products and other tasty viands.

Fear of cancer has generated a list of taboo foods and food additives so long that it caused magazine editor Malcolm S. Forbes to quip: "The other day I heard of something that doesn't cause cancer and of a mouse that died of natural causes."

A paradoxical observation is that

Americans are living longer than ever while consuming more so-called convenience, synthetic and "junk" foods than before. Nearly half of Americans are classified as "overweight" and fast fried food places thrive in most shopping centers. Something doesn't quite add up.

Don't think that the government isn't checking up on what we eat, even without enforceable dietary plans. Various health agencies and USDA regularly make surveys to discover what we eat, where we eat it, and how much we eat, according to income brackets.

Results are published periodically, but they don't seem to keep the majority of people from eating whatever they like.

As Philosopher George Santayana observed years ago: "A man may not always eat and drink what is good for him; but it is better for him and less ignominious to die of the gout freely than to have a censor officially appointed over his diet, who after all could not render him immortal."