

Wives Set Guidelines to Streamline Solons' Waistlines in Food Lines

By KAREN FELD

A bi-partisan group of Congressional wives, concerned about their husbands' diets, have been biting into the core of nutritional and health standards in Hill restaurants. Three registered nurses, Mrs. Charles Vanik (Ohio), Mrs. Tom Morgan (Pa) and Mrs. Silvio Conte (Mass), as well as Mrs. Gerald Ford (Mich), Mrs. Jonathan Bingham (NY), Mrs. Lee Hamilton (Md), and Mrs. Bill McCulloch (Ohio), met with a White House nutritionist earlier in the week in a continuing joint effort to raise the level of nutrition in House restaurants.

More money is put into the DC Public Health Program than anywhere else in the country, and yet, the health standards for the district are poor, based on findings in a report by Dr. Gerard Daniel, in a recent study of the D.C. Dept. of Public Health. Therefore, these Congressional wives prefer to work through the National Health Department, than the local. As a group, they feel that frequent supervision under the National Public Health Department is necessary.

Although the wives aren't an official body, Mrs. Vanik commented, "We are exerting our minimal influence to pin-point and solve problems in the House restaurants." They have taken their cue from Rep. John Kluczynski (Ill), restaurateur and Chairman of the Select Committee on The House Restaurant, Mrs. Vanik said. Before going into any restaurant, Rep. Kluczynski looks at the kitchen. "Keep 'em clean!" is his motto.

The Congressional wives have had some influence on the House Restaurant Committee. At the

beginning of the new session in January, menus in all of the House Restaurants were modified and standardized, and a daily Congressional Streamliner item was added at their suggestion. More important than low-calories, the wives want this streamliner item to be low in cholesterol, and one wife was shocked to find the high-cholesterol item, liver, listed one day. Polyunsaturated salad dressings, rather than simply commercial brands are now served in the House restaurants. Fish dishes are also seen more frequently on menus.

A part-time experienced dietician and an overall food manager should be hired to work together, the wives feel. "There is no reason why there shouldn't be a variety of food, including a gourmet salad bar," Mrs. Vanik remarked. She also suggested that a dietician should be available for special conferences with Members or their wives, if their husbands don't have time to get involved. These wives would like their busy Congressional husbands spoonfed good nutrition. "Why not have a 'food thought for the day' at the top of the menu?", one wife exclaimed.

A food manager should be a basic necessity to any large food institution serving masses of people, they believe. The manager would educate employees and supervise them on the job. They hold that education should be completed before hiring, especially the basics, such as hand-washing, food handling, etc. When restaurant employees were hired, the only requirement was that they pass a Public Health Service Physical examination. No food experience or

education was involved.

Tom Campbell, Staff Director of the Select Committee on the House Restaurant said they are now trying to improve all aspects of the House restaurants as a result of the Congressional wives' drive and the hearings. Dieticians connected with the armed services have been consulted to select nutritious and dietic foods. The Committee is presently investigating computers, a new technique to set up well-balanced meals. Campbell has written to the Sara Mayo Hospital in New Orleans, the first institution to use this type of computer, to see if it has proved workable. Campbell insists, "We are exploring every possibility." According to The Select Committee on the House Restaurant, the quality of the food as well as the variety, and the receipts has increased since the beginning of the new session of Congress. The menus are now set up in two-week cycles, including such items as steamship round of beef on Tuesdays, pol-

ish sausage on Wednesdays, and turkey dinner on Thursdays. For weight-watchers, a fruit cocktail with melon and grapes can now be found on the salad shelf.

When Rep. Kluczynski took over the restaurant committee last October, he ordered follow-up examinations for employees to be given every six months. This was never enforced. As a result of the recent investigation, more severe investigations will be mandatory. A medical team will now come in to inspect the restaurants at their discretion, and can instruct any employee to have a thorough physical. (Continued on page 8)

Restaurants

(Continued from Page 2)

cal exam at any time. There plans to hire a sanitarian pendent of the restaurant.

The Committee has taken a project to attempt educate its employees on personal hygiene as well as the preparation and handling of food. A technical film on food-borne illnesses, "The Unwanted Four!" compiled by the National Restaurant Association, and other films will be shown to all House Restaurant employees within the next couple weeks. Working hours of some of the employees have been increased so that more time can be spent keeping the restaurants sanitary and clean.

Each food service employee will receive a questionnaire next week to uncover any special skills or experience if it exists. "The Committee," remarked Campbell, "wants to advance their employees. Some may have training they are not using."

Staffers and Members soon can get their gripes into the open. The Committee is taking a brave step, putting a suggestion box in each of the restaurants.

P.S. This reporter suggests that the hamburgers be cooked to order, rather than pre-cooked on both sides in the morning, and then stacked in the drawer under the grill for 2½ hours, before they are quickly heated as you stroll through the long cafeteria lines.

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