

**Free nutritious meals for
all children in Scotland**

“Even the tatties have batter!”



Edited by Usha Brown and Danny Phillips

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have
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CPAG promotes action for the relief, directly or indirectly, of poverty among children and families with children. We work to ensure that those on low incomes get their full entitlements to welfare benefits. In our campaigning and information work we seek to improve benefits and policies for low-income families in order to eradicate the injustice of poverty. If you are not already supporting us, please consider making a donation, or ask for details of our membership schemes and publications.

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Cartoons by Armon Williams, *Dundee Anti Poverty Alliance*

Acknowledgements

CPAG in Scotland would like to thank all the authors for so generously giving up their valuable time to contribute to this publication; including Armon Williams for the cartoons, Usha Brown, Scottish Poverty Information Unit for her editing and Craig Russell for the layout. I would like to thank Alison Munro, Kay Sillars and Elizabeth Kelly for their invaluable comments when checking chapters.

We are also grateful to those attending the school meals advisory group. In particular, for this book, Felicity Garvie for the research of local authorities in Scotland and John Mulvey and Marjorie Shepherd for collating this research, Mike Dailly for writing the Bill and to Kay Johnson, community nutritionist, and Rozanne Foyer of the STUC for assistance in organising the launch event for the book.

Thanks to John McAllion MSP, Alex Neil MSP and Tommy Sheridan MSP for their foreword and for co-sponsoring the School Meals (Scotland) Bill. Thank you to MSPs: Dennis Canavan, Dorothy-Grace Elder, Lloyd Quinan, Donald Gorrie, Gil Paterson, Margo MacDonald, Sandra White, Robin Harper and Christine Grahame for supporting our work and making it a truly cross party bill.

Finally, thank you to UNISON Scotland whose financial contribution made this book possible.

Danny Phillips

Foreword

Critics of our bill to provide free nutritious meals to every pupil in Scotland's schools argue that it will do nothing to end inequality, will subsidise free meals for the better off and will cost more than the Scottish Parliament can afford. They accuse us of proposing a measure that is unimaginative. They claim that it will be ineffective in tackling the curse of child poverty and class inequality that continues to bedevil Scotland at the beginning of the 21st century.

This book provides a comprehensive rebuttal of their criticisms and a passionate argument for a Scotland that is beyond the critics' ken. Providing a nutritious meal in the middle of the day for each pupil in attendance at state schools "free of charge" is in reality a modest progressive measure. It will not break the back of Scotland's tax system. Nor will it waste scarce resources on the undeserving. But it will signal a significant if small step towards a different kind of society in which the welfare of the people, and especially of our young people, is placed at the head of our priorities before anything else. Before making up your mind about the private member's bill we are introducing, we urge you to read this pamphlet.

In its pages you will find the arguments and the reasoning that makes the case for universal free school meals unanswerable. The necessity of rebuilding a school meals service that has been ravaged by decades of means-testing and competitive tendering. The health benefits of tackling the dietary gap that has opened up between deprived and more affluent communities. The obligation on all of us to end the stigma associated with the right to a free and nutritious diet. The urgency of challenging those who misrepresent means testing as the friend of the poor.

If the Scottish Parliament is really serious about trying to eliminate child poverty and tackle health inequalities among our children, then it surely must recognise that universally free school meals is central to those aims. The Parliament was fought for by generations of Scots in the hope that they might see progressive measures such as this enacted for the benefit of the whole nation. Here is a clear opportunity to begin to realise the hopes and aspirations of generations of Scots for Scotland's Parliament.

Of course, this measure will go against the current orthodoxy of squeezing the public sector for the benefit of a burgeoning private sector. It will undoubtedly outrage those who worship at the altar of free markets and private accumulation of profit. It will be given a rough ride by the mouthpieces of privilege and power among our press and media. These are yet more reasons why our bill should receive the support of ordinary Scots everywhere.

Our bill already has the support of a wide range of community and anti-poverty campaigns. From CPAG through members of the Scottish Churches Social Inclusion Network to the STUC Women's Committee and UNISON, Scotland is rallying in support of the bill. When you finish this book, we are confident that you too will throw the weight of your support behind the bill. We unreservedly commend it to you.

John McAllion MSP

Alex Neil MSP

Tommy Sheridan MSP

Introduction

Danny Phillips

The political landscape of Scotland has changed with devolution. “Poverty” has now been put back on the social agenda. We may argue about what it is, how it should be measured and what policies we should adopt to defeat it - but we now agree that poverty exists in Scotland, it is a bad thing and government has the power to make policy to end it.

Food Poverty is the result of complex reasons. They include lack of income, access (or lack of it) to decent food, higher cost of food for poor people, out of town supermarkets and fewer local shops, diminishing cooking skills, nutritional education, socialization in families and information. It is no coincidence that we have the highest rates of child poverty, the worst diet and the highest rates of diet related illnesses in Europe.

School meals have the potential to make a difference. It is a major way we as a community can ensure a healthy diet for Scotland’s children. We do not argue in this book that school meals are a panacea to all our dietary problems in Scotland; that somehow all we need to do is give children plates of healthy food and dietary related illness will disappear or even that all we need to do is provide a plate of food and kids will eat it! But we do argue it is a vital policy tool which - if carefully considered, implemented as part of an anti poverty and healthy eating strategy and given the full resources it requires - can make a real difference.

CPAG have been campaigning since the 1970’s to raise awareness of the role school meals should play in an anti-poverty policy. In Scotland today we have the School Meals (Scotland) Bill, to be voted on in the Scottish Parliament by 10 May 2002, which would give all children in

Scotland the right to a free healthy meal at school. This surely, at very least, needs to be debated seriously and carefully.

This book aims to assist that debate. In broad terms we have tried to give an overview of our school meals service, put the case for nutritional standards and universal provision, explain our bill and the parliamentary process and put the case from anti-poverty campaigners and the trade union movement. The book also reflects our campaign broad base support by including opinion from a range of people: academics, dieticians, politicians, lawyers, and representatives of local authorities, unions and anti-poverty groups.

I should point out that the views expressed in each chapter are the views of the authors and not necessarily the views of CPAG or of the authors as a whole.

Tim Marsh, who was also an author of CPAG's publication on school meals “Filling the Gap”, starts with an overview of the school meals service in the UK: our dietary related ill health, the undermining of the service, present initiatives and the Scottish school meals service. Felicity Garvie wrote to all local authorities in Scotland asking set questions about the bill and their school meals service. John Mulvey and Marjorie Shepherd collated the replies and this has been incorporated into Tim's work.

We believe for school meals to be effective we must set nutritional standards in law. Professor AS Anderson and Dr Wendy Wrieden have produced a chapter on nutritional dimensions of school meals. We have included a shortened version of a paper they produced for us. If you are interested in reading the full version - which we urge you to do - then it is available on www.cpag.org.uk. Professor Anderson and Dr Wrieden have both been invited by the executive to be part of their “expert panel” to consider school meals.

CPAG does not believe that there is no place for means-testing in our welfare state; it simply believes that we must consider each service and consider the best policy. Usha Brown and myself have tried to explain why we believe free meals to all children is the best way to promote social inclusion. While recent social security policy has moved towards means testing that is not true of our wider welfare state, which has seen many more recent universal initiatives.

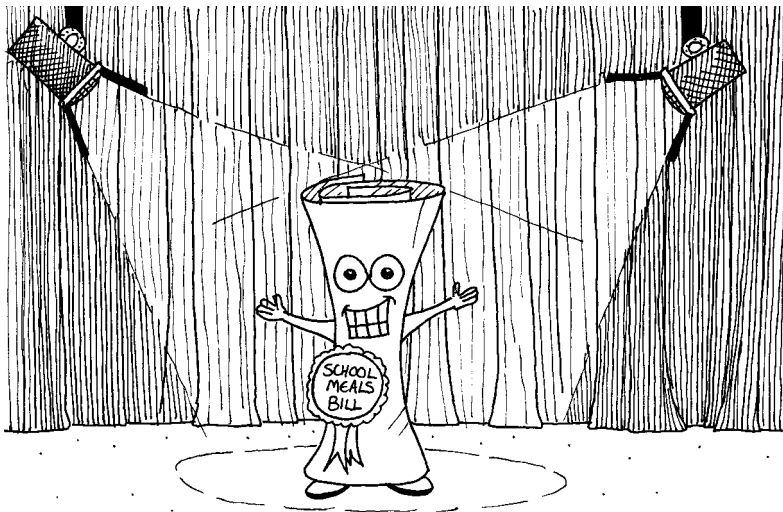
Mike Dailly has given us a clear description of the bill itself: its aims and how it hopes to achieve them through the parliamentary process. We in the school meals working group debated the broad policy terms

and Mike had the unenviable job of putting that into an actual bill ready to be presented to parliament. It is to his credit that he has helped us get this far.

Kait Laughlin, with Mary Harkins and Louisa Graham who all work for West Glasgow Against Poverty, have contributed an article explaining why an anti poverty group would support a bill that gives “rich kids food too”. It is a powerful chapter not simply because of the arguments made and personal experiences described, but also because they have carried out research into the attitudes of 51 local children. This local survey, carried out by parents, makes positive reading and encourages us to rethink the beliefs we have about children’s negative attitudes to healthy food.

Finally we have powerful endorsement from the Scottish trade union movement. Agnes Tolmie puts the case from STUC women’s committee. The support we have received from the unions has been tremendous. They have collected almost 10,000 signatures and UNISON donated money to help us pay for this book. I hope they are pleased with the results.

I cannot finish without mentioning the cartoons. Armon Williams from Dundee Anti Poverty Alliance invented our character “School Meals Bill”. His drawings while being funny also make powerful political points that have taken the rest of us thousands of words to deliver.



The arguments for free nutritious school meals are laid out in this book. It is our hope they will be fully considered by policy makers. We also hope they encourage you to join our campaign. For further information please see our website for regular updates: www.cpag.org.uk/scotland

Lastly, we urge you take part in our campaign. You can:

- Join our school meals working group.
- Sign the STUC petition.
- Give evidence to Scottish Education Committee.
- Write to your MSP urging them to support the School Meals (Scotland) Bill.
- Persuade others in your workplace, school, union, community organisations, church or local council to support free nutritious meals for all children in Scotland.
- Keep up to date with our campaign by reading www.cpag.org.uk/scotland



School Meals

Tim Marsh, additional research by **Felicity Garvie, John Mulvey and Marjorie Shepherd**

“Schools are in a unique position to encourage and facilitate healthy eating”.

The Scottish Diet Action Plan

“School ethos, policies, services and extra curricular activities foster mental, physical and social well being and healthy development”.

The Scottish Public Health White Paper *Towards a Healthier Scotland* (1999)

Food, nutrition and low income

There is increasing evidence, linking what we eat as children and our health in later life. Poor diet not only leads to ill health, its effects are often invisible, impeding a child’s cognitive development and thus educational performance. The body first uses energy to maintain critical organ functions, then growth and lastly social activity and cognitive development.

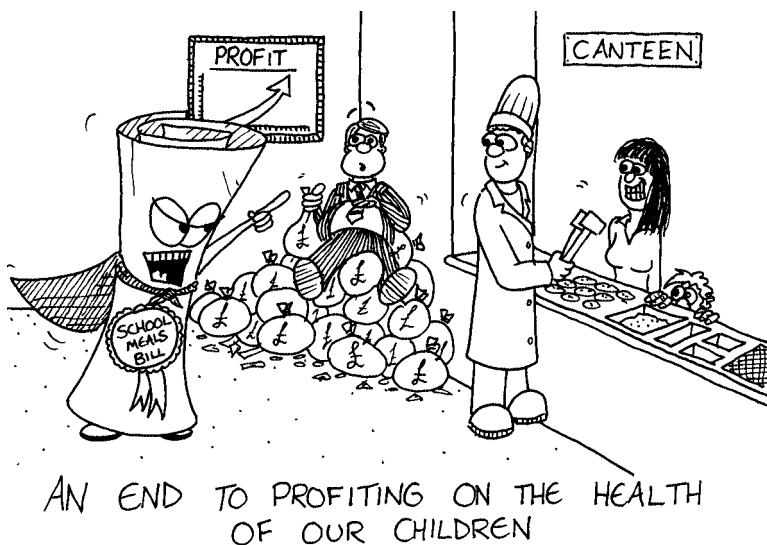
Spending on children in percentage terms is fairly uniform across income groups because parents often make sacrifices to feed their children¹. However, poor families spend proportionately more of their income on food - 21 per cent compared to the national average of 17 per cent. Unfortunately, cheaper foods are generally the least nutritious; they are often fatty, oily foods, high in salt and sugar. The Poverty and Social Exclusion 2000² survey, the largest study of poverty carried out in the

UK, found that 9 per cent of 'poor children' didn't have fresh fruit or vegetables daily and 21 per cent failed to have two substantive meals daily. Research³ has also shown that, children from low-income families tend to receive more of their preferred foods such as chips, beans, burgers and pizzas than their more affluent counterparts, because this avoided waste. These foods tend to be most heavily marketed towards children.

Schools therefore have an important role in addressing poor diet amongst children, both in provision of food but also in educating children and providing them with the necessary skills to eat more healthily.

Free School Meals

School meals have played an important role in the nutrition of children for over 100 years. Universal school meals were introduced in the 1940s. By the end of the 1970s the UK had a comprehensive school meals service, which on the whole was cheap and had a decent level of free provision for those children from poor families. Whilst there was some disquiet about a decline in nutritional standards, the post-war development of the service had created a platform from which nutritional poverty affecting children could be tackled in a systematic way.



The undermining of the service

The election of the Conservative administration in 1979 signalled a wholesale shift in Government attitude to the school meals service and free school meal provision. Their watchwords were “choice and parental responsibility”. State provision of such a service was viewed as bureaucratic and expensive. It was felt that private catering companies could provide a more efficient service and so better value. This ethos was carried into law by way of two Acts, which fundamentally altered the post-war school meals service.

1980 Education (Scotland) Act

The 1980 Education (Scotland) Act introduced a number of changes, which began to undermine the breadth of provision and nutritional content of free school meals. Measures included the removal of the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) statutory duty to provide a midday meal for all pupils that was “*suitable in all respects as the main meal of the day*”. Instead LEAs were only required to provide meals for children whose parents claimed supplementary benefit or family income supplement (forebears of today’s income support, job seeker’s allowance or working families’ tax credits). LEAs could still give free school meals on a discretionary basis for those children from low-income families. The Act also abolished the minimum nutritional standards that controlled the quality of the school meals and the fixed price “national charge” for school meals.

1986 Social Security Act

The 1986 Social Security Act, which came into operation in 1988, introduced further changes to the system. The most important of the changes was to withdraw provision of free school meals for families receiving family income supplement and to replace it with a notional amount included in family credit. As a result well over half a million children from low-income families lost entitlement to a free school meal. In addition the Act also required LEAs providing school meals and free milk to charge for them in all cases, except where parents received income support.

Without statutory nutritional standards, price controls or a mandatory requirement to provide a meal for all children the national and comprehensive nature of the service was eroded. In effect, this has led to wide variation in the type, quantity and quality of paid for and free school meals provided. Moreover one million poor children were and are missing out on a free school meal in the UK and at least 300,000 are not getting the meal to which they are entitled. By the time of the 1997 general election the school meals service had changed out of all recognition, it was, no longer a national service that could be an effective instrument for Government health policy.

Scottish Executive

There has been some recognition by the current Government of these problems. The Scottish Executive have introduced a range of measures in schools to improve children's health. Some mirror developments in the UK, some are unique to Scotland. These include fruit and salad bars, healthy tuck-shops and breakfast clubs. The Scottish Executive recently announced the establishment of an "expert panel" to devise national nutritional standards improve the appeal of school meals and maximise the uptake of free school meals. Speaking at its launch the Scottish Health minister Susan Deacon MSP said, "*the standards will give each child in Scotland access to well balanced, healthy school food*".

However, according to UK Government statistics about 29 per cent of Scottish children live below the Governments poverty line.⁴ This means that 30 per cent of children officially classified as living in poverty are not entitled to a free school meal and are unlikely to have the means to participate in these benefits.

Scottish School Meals

Scottish Executive figures show that over 144,000 Scottish school students are recorded as entitled to free school meals. Entitlement to free school meals in Scotland is 21 per cent of primary school pupils and 17 per cent for secondary schools. Overall around 19 per cent of all children in Scotland are entitled to free school meals. Glasgow city council had the highest percentage of children entitled to a free school meal (41 per cent) and Aberdeenshire had the lowest (7 per cent).

Take Up

The take up of school meals varies greatly within Scotland from 88.8 per cent in Shetland to 36.7 per cent in Edinburgh City. Even within local authorities there are examples of secondary schools with relatively similar socio-economic populations with very high and very low take up. Recent research in East Dumbarton⁵ highlights some of the reasons. These include: quality of environment, length of queues, year rotas, information, other activities, noise, lack of supervision, the provision of alternatives, children in inner cities are also likely to be surrounded by take-aways which actively promote themselves to school children with special offers. The Scottish Executive have identified stigma as a major issue with free school meals, when setting up their “expert panel” the Deputy Minister of Education Nicol Stephen said, *“children need to feel able to take free school meals without fear of social stigma”*

Many local authorities do not accept stigma is a problem. However Local Authorities, which have initiated schemes to address stigma, have seen significant increases in uptake of Free School Meals. Aberdeen City Council piloted a swipe card scheme in two of its secondary schools in 1999, which showed increases and a reduction in cash related bullying. Fife and Falkirk, amongst others, are also piloting swipe card schemes. Inverclyde council are piloting a scheme supported by the local health board aimed to increase uptake amongst pupils entitled to free school meals.

Research also shows the attitude to information provision also varies considerably. Some councils feel that no information is needed because *“everyone knows about entitlement”* and, others for example, Edinburgh City Council provide information to housing benefit recipients encouraging them to apply.⁶

Nutritional Standards

Providers of School Meals work to standards and rules set by the local authorities which leads to wide variations in services. Some authorities, Edinburgh for example, use the Caroline Walker Trust “Nutritional Guidelines for School Meals”⁷ which are widely regarded as the most appropriate for use in schools. Nine local authorities use the Scottish Diet Action Plan and the Scottish healthy choice award scheme.⁸ Others,

for example, Argyll and Bute Council, have forged partnerships with the health board and education services in school food strategy groups. Aberdeen City council has introduced an Accord Card, which uses Smart card technology scheme. Each pupil has a healthy eating loyalty card, which provides discounts to services outside of school such as leisure, transport, as a reward for healthy eating choices.

Practicalities of universal provision of free school meals⁹

Local Authorities were asked what barriers and benefits there were to a universal free school meal service. Several local authorities that responded commented on the potential benefits of universal free school meal and offered support for the bill. However concerns were also raised, East Ayrshire Council comments summed up the general view: *“Such provision could only be supported if full funding were provided by the Scottish executive. Such funding would need to cover the full economic cost of providing meals together with the related costs such as dining hall supervision. Depending on uptake there might also have to be additional costs on matters such as furniture and kitchen equipment”*.

- 1 Family Expenditure Survey (1999) Office for National Statistics London: TSO
- 2 Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey (2000) Joseph Rowntree Foundation York:JRF
- 3 Diet, Choice and Poverty (1994) Dobson, Beardsworth, Keil et al London: Family Policy Studies Centre
- 4 Households Below Average Income 1999/2000 (2001) Department of Work and Pensions, Leeds: Corporate Document Services
- 5,6 Research carried out by Felicity Garvie, Parliamentary assistant to Tommy Sheridan MSP and collated by John Mulvey and Marjorie Shepherd
- 7 Nutritional Guidelines for Schools: Caroline Walker Trust
- 8 Of those who replied to research carried out by Felicity Garvie, Parliamentary assistant to Tommy Sheridan MSP and collated by John Mulvey and Marjorie Shepherd
- 9 Based on responses to research carried out by Felicity Garvie, Parliamentary assistant to Tommy Sheridan MSP and collated by John Mulvey and Marjorie Shepherd

2

Nutritional dimensions of school meals

Dr Wendy Wrieden and Professor AS Anderson

Diet and Health

Scotland has a poor health record with very high rates of cancer, coronary heart disease and stroke; diseases that are linked to factors such as smoking, excessive drinking and poor diet (Morrison *et al.* 1997). There is evidence that dietary patterns of adulthood are learned in childhood (Krebs-Smith *et al.* 1995) and that poor diet in children may be linked to disease in later life (Department of Health 1994). *“The usual Scottish diet consumed by children is also that which would now be expected to be conducive to the development of adult chronic disease”* (Scotland’s Health: A challenge to us all. The Scottish Diet. p44)

Health and well-being during the childhood years can also be linked to diet. For example, it is well established that dental problems such as decay and erosion are a result of frequent sugar intake and consumption of carbonated drinks. Experience of tooth decay in 5 year olds in Scotland is considerably higher than for the United Kingdom as a whole (Pitts 2000). In terms of general well-being (to which nutrition undoubtedly contributes), recent reports from the west of Scotland have shown that only 47 per cent of eleven year olds reported their health as good (Sweeting & West 1998).

Current Dietary Intake

The National Diet and Nutrition Survey of 4-18 year olds found that three-quarters of the Scottish children did not eat green leafy vegetables during the 7 day recording period (compared with approximately a half

of English children); only a third (33 per cent) ate salad vegetables and a quarter ate citrus fruit (Gregory *et al.* 2000). Scottish children eat around two portions per day of fruit and vegetables compared to the recommended five portions (Bolton-Smith 1991; Wrieden 1996; Scottish Executive Health Department 2001).

Intake of energy and nutrients from standard school meals in Dundee in 1998.

Mean of 1,011 meal choices made by secondary school pupil aged 11-18y (Wrieden *et al.* 2001a)

	Mean	SD	Guideline *
Energy (MJ)	2.77	1.03	2.70
Fat (% of energy)	41.5	8.64	not more than 35%
NSP (g)	3.50	2.36	not less than 5.2
Iron (mg)	2.54	1.39	not less than 5.9
Calcium (mg)	223	184	not less than 350
Folate (micrograms)	52.3	32.8	not less than 80
Vitamin C (mg)	19.1	17.5	not less than 13

Means for intakes of 88 primary pupils aged 7-10 years

(Wrieden *et al.* 2000)

	Mean	SD	Guideline **
Energy (MJ)	1.80	0.74	2.33
Fat (% of energy)	40.3	11.7	not more than 35%
NSP (g)	1.80	0.90	not less than 4.5
Protein (g)	15.0	7.10	not less than 8.5
Iron (mg)	1.65	0.89	not less than 3.5
Calcium (mg)	205	149	not less than 193
Folate (micrograms)	24.1	12.4	not less than 60
Vitamin C (mg)	6.9	6.93	not less than 11

* guideline for school meals for pupils aged 11-18 years

** guideline for school meals for pupils aged 4-7 years (Sharp, 1992)

Research also shows a marked social divide in food choices and that although fruit consumption has increased in the more affluent sectors

of society it has shown little change in the least affluent (Wrieden 2001b). Consumption of foods targeted by the Scottish Diet Action Plan (oil-rich fish, bread and breakfast cereals) was less frequent in the lower income groups (Joint Health Surveys Unit 2000).

School Food

In England, the Department of Education and Employment (1997) recommended that the nutritional guidelines for school meals set out by the Caroline Walker Trust (Sharp 1992) be used as a benchmark to review the progress of school meal contracts. The guidelines are set for ingredients, which aid a good quality diet and have an important role in the maintenance of health. In Scotland, guidance is given in the Scottish Diet Action Plan Model Nutritional Guidelines (The Scottish Office 1996) for pre-fives and primary school children (no specific information is given for secondary schools).

Recent research in Scotland, however has shown that school lunches currently provide a poor nutrient profile (Wrieden *et al.* 2000; Armstrong *et al.* 2001) when compared with recommended standards set by the Department of Education and Employment (1997). This is particularly worrying for children receiving free lunches. Many families depend on children getting their main meal at school and it is well established that the lunchtime school meal is an important contributor to overall food intake for many children (Ruxton *et al.* 1996). In Dundee and Glasgow a substantial number of schools have over 50 per cent of children eligible for free school meals.

It is worth noting that whilst school lunches are under the spotlight the issues of food in schools (vending machines, tuck shops and breakfast clubs) must be viewed as a whole with the impact of sponsorship and advertising carefully considered. Realistic nutritional standards for school meals in Scotland are needed and parents should be made aware of the nutritional value of the school meal offered to their children.

Putting into practice

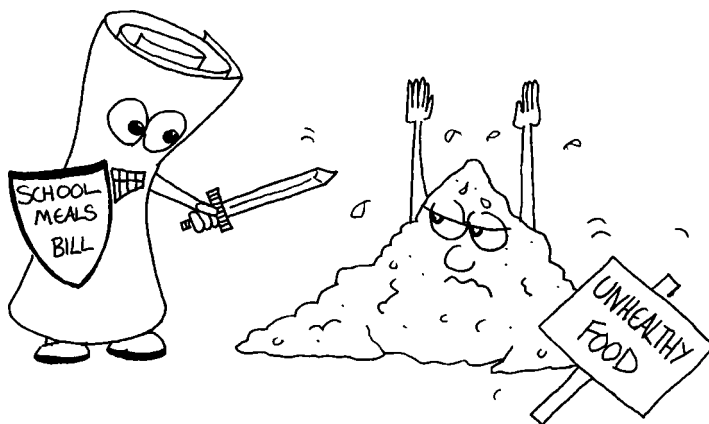
We know that children do not always eat what they are given, particularly in primary schools where there might be a choice of only two set meals.

Pupils can have the required food put on their plate but the days when teachers forced children to eat what they did not want in the first place have now gone and would be considered undesirable in most circles. The situation could arise where caterers prepare and serve for example, cabbage, and then have to throw it away. This is not good economics. What is needed is some kind of involvement from the customers, ie, the children. In Sweden and Finland, where a free school meal system has been in place for many years we have been told that a variety of fruits, vegetables and breads are available at meals so that pupils are able to choose what suits them best. Providing just one vegetable or one fruit a day is not enough. A selection of favourites should be served so that the majority of children find something they like.

Children also need food education of a practical nature. It is unlikely, for example, that children will suddenly start eating vegetables just because they are available. However, work done with primary school children where they were involved in fruit and vegetable tasting sessions shows such lessons are a key element in encouraging change in consumption. There is also evidence from secondary schools that it is possible to change the balance of what is eaten by restricting choice to a certain degree. For example, the removal of confectionery from a cash cafeteria led to increased uptake of fruit. Children need to have suitable meals available and be encouraged to eat them. Suitable provision needs to go hand in hand with education

In addition the quality of the food served needs to be monitored. Serving large baked potatoes or rolls to small children is likely to lead to waste. Similarly the provision of underdone potatoes or overcooked discoloured green vegetables is unlikely to encourage consumption. The foods supplied for the school meals also need to have strict quality specifications to avoid the use of, for example, low quality meat (implicated in some recent food scares) or high salt soup mixes.

School caterers in Scotland are limited by budgets and have to balance what children will eat with what they should eat. However, despite sterling efforts by some catering contractors there are no legislative guidelines for them to follow and they are more likely to have to put other factors first. For example a recent report (Scottish Consumer Council 2001) suggests that caterers responsibilities are about food provision, helping pupils stay in school, giving clients an enjoyable experience and being cost effective as well as offering “food that is as nutritious as possible” - no mean feat for the most dedicated caterer.



The need to set the standards in law

The universal provision of free school meals will only be effective as a means of improving the health of Scotland's children if these meals are of a consistent standard that meets current dietary guidelines for health. It is, in most cases, the only meal in a child's day that the government has the ability to prescribe without being accused of limiting freedom of choice. If done carefully and with full consultation it has the potential to transform the diet of our young people. However if standards are not set the free school meal is open to market and economic considerations alone. This could lead to a low cost, low quality, low nutritional value meal which would be a backward step from the current efforts of many caterers to produce healthy meals that children will enjoy. The resources need to be available for realistically priced meals that meet minimum legal standards with resources for monitoring and enforcing. This is the only way to ensure that all children get the same provision. Local authorities and caterers can not be left to set the standards themselves, as there will be different priorities according to the resources available and the whims of local politicians and councils. The long-term health of our children should be a priority and thus needs to be part of a national strategy to improve diet and health.

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3

Universal benefits

Usha Brown and Danny Phillips

There are approximately 1 million children under the age of 16 living in Scotland. Over 29 per cent (300,000) of them live in poverty.

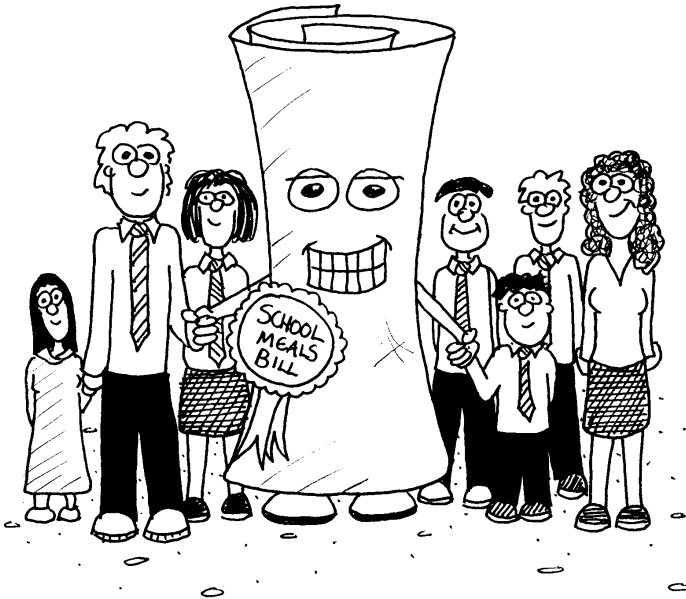
The cost of food

Food is the largest component in the cost of a child with the exception of childcare costs.¹⁰ School meals are expensive. In Edinburgh, for example, a secondary school child pays £1.80 per day. A family of three children pay over £25 per week for lunch. This is a considerable sum for a family, especially if they are on a low income. However, only children who come from the poorest families - those who receive income support (or income-based jobseeker's allowance) - are entitled to a free school meal.¹¹ Children whose families live in or on the margins of poverty but receive the minimum wage, working families' tax credit, housing benefit, disability benefits or incapacity benefit have to pay for their children's school meal. Around 30 per cent of children officially classified as living in poor households are not entitled to free school meals.

Stigma and take up

Take up of school meals and free school meals vary considerably across Scotland in some local authorities it is as low as 37 per cent.¹² Around 1 in 5 children in Scotland, who are entitled to a free meal, do not claim

it. Recent research carried out by DfEE, which asked children themselves, concluded that the main reason for low take-up was stigma.¹³ Children (and parents) said they are embarrassed because claiming it publicised their financial status. The children also complained of being pointed out, having to stand in separate queues, being made to wait until the paying children eat first, of name-calling and even bullying.



The School Meals (Scotland) Bill would provide a nutritious meal to every child at a local authority managed school in Scotland regardless of any previous contribution record and without means testing them or their parents. It would be a welfare service provided free at the point of use.

Universal welfare services

Universal welfare services play a fundamental role in our wider welfare system. The National Health Service, State Education and many local authority services are all major examples of welfare services provided

universally free at the point of use and paid for through tax and national insurance.

In Scotland, a number of recent initiatives have also been provided universally free at the point of use. For example, the Scottish Executive announced care for the elderly is to be substantially subsidised without means testing. Glasgow City Council is to provide free breakfasts to all children who attend their schools and they also provide free use of leisure centres to all under 18s. Other examples include: cleansing services, public lighting, social work services, homeless accommodation, entry to museums and art galleries.

Surely free school meals should go to people who need them?

In recent years governments have favoured use of 'targeted' or means-tested benefits and services, arguing they are the most efficient way of helping those most in need given limited resources. However, there are many problems with this policy.

A means-tested system involve complex rules and complicated and expensive administration. It creates poverty traps and work disincentives because a small rise in income can leave a claimant no better off. For example, at present families must calculate whether a small rise in income, which takes them above the income support level, can also cover the cost of children's school meals. Claimants also find means-testing stigmatising and humiliating, with the result that there is a relatively low take up of such benefits. It is estimated that over £4billion of benefits go unclaimed, stigmatisation is cited as a major reason.

Universal benefits have a high take up, are less stigmatising and hit the target more effectively. Child benefit, for example, has over a 98 per cent take up. The administrative costs are also lower, 2 per cent of the child benefit budget is spent on administration; it is over 10 per cent for income support and over 30 per cent for the social fund.

It will be too expensive

The exact costs have been difficult to ascertain. They depend upon nutritional standards, take up, and capital investment required in schools and quantifying the savings that would obviously be made in other

budgets and by economies of scale. A sound estimate would be £1.68 per child per day.¹⁴ The Scottish education minister recently estimated it would cost £174 million. Which is small amount of government expenditure (less than 0.5 per cent of Scottish parliaments total budget).¹⁵



These costs need to be set against the costs - human and financial - of ill-health in Scotland. Poverty has been established as the major determinant of child health in the UK and 1 in 3 children still live in poverty in Scotland. Preventing ill health and fostering health and well-being will not come cheap. However, investment now will prevent the waste of human resources and the ruinous expense of dealing with consequences of ill-health later. The school meals Bill is a long-term investment in the health of the nation, its outcomes will far outweigh our continued investment.

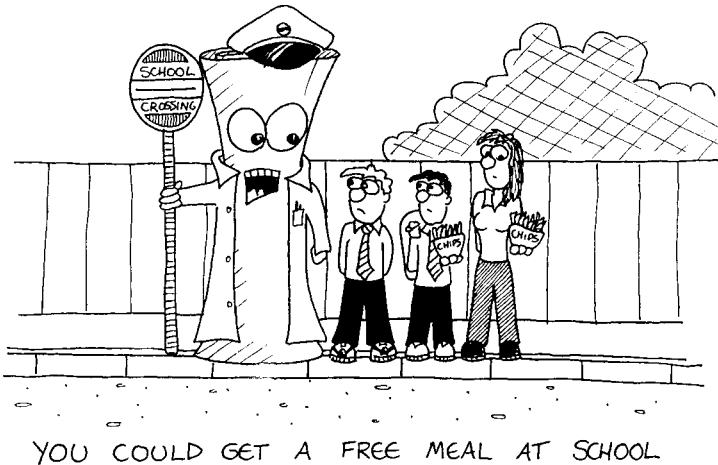
Why should rich kids get it?

All children have the same rights and the Bill is for the benefit of all children. There has been a growth, fuelled by stories in the media, in divisions and resentment between those who pay for services and those who receive them. A universal system would work against the 'us and them' culture and provide a concrete example of social inclusion. It should also be noted that we are not means tested to get an operation, to send our children to school or to have our bins collected because these

are measures that contribute to the economic prosperity, social cohesion and the health and well being of Scotland as a whole. The same is true of school meals.

Maintaining standards

If all families have a stake in the system, they will also feel a responsibility for it. Standards will be less able to fall and services can be protected from competing priorities. For example, the National Health Service (NHS) is seen to belong to everyone. There is keen media interest in it, all political parties are committed to improving it and governments respond quickly to criticisms. In contrast, when the social security committee criticised the inadequacy of the social fund, a service entirely for poor people, the government ignored suggestions for reform. There was no public outcry and little media interest. Services for the poor too often become poor services.



Other advantages

Free School meals would curb stigmatisation. They would help parents entering lower paid work. There is also evidence that breakfast clubs decrease school absences, and school exclusions.

A bottom line

Universal free school meals would be a benefit direct to children. Although research tells us that children are generally protected from the worst aspects of poverty by their parents this not in all cases. Many children, no matter what their family income, have parents who cannot cope e.g. drug or alcohol dependants, women suffering domestic violence, those too ill to care. This Bill would provide a bottom line safety net for them.

Universal free school meals would be *“Concrete evidence of the importance of children diets, the value we attach to child rearing in Scotland, it would help transfer resources over the family cycle to the point where needs are greater and income often lower. It is an attempt to equalise the burden between those with and without children, and represents an investment in the next generation by the community as whole”*.^{15b}

10 Costs of a child, Living standards for the 1990s, Nina Oldfield and Autumn CS Yu: CPAG

11 Section 53 Education (Scotland) Act 1984

12 Scottish Executive annual survey 29 October 2001

13 “Improving take up of free school meals” Pamela Storey and Rosemary Chambelin, Thoams Coram Research Unit, DfEE, May 2001 Research brief no. 270

14 Estimates provided by Scottish Parliament Information Centre in response to questions submitted by Tommy Sheridan MSP. This uses the Finnish example to calculate costing.

15 Letter to Tommy Sheridan MSP from, then, Scottish Education Minister Jack McConnell MSP and press released on 14 November 2001

15b Fran Bennet, “Child Benefit: Investing in the Future”, Joan Brown, CPAG

4

Even the tatties have batter

Kait Loughlan

"Children have the right to 'a standard of living adequate for physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development'."

Article 27 of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child

"Mummy when will you be getting paid for your work again?"

"I'm not sure, why Sean?"

"So that we don't have to be 'on a ticket', I like paying for my dinner"

"Who says you're 'on a ticket'?"

"The dinner lady, she lets me go on 'cause she says I'm 'on a ticket'"

This conversation took place between a seven-year-old boy and his mother a few weeks ago. She was surprised, as neither he nor his eight-year-old sister had ever seemed bothered about having free school meals. They regularly complained about the quality and quantity of them, but not the fact they were free.

She knew the day would come when they or their classmates would pick up on the difference, and it seemed that day had arrived. She felt her child's reaction at not only being seen to be different, but also picking up that there was something wrong about being 'on a ticket'. She tried to resist feeling guilty, as if she had failed her children, and to refuse to be drawn into once again feeling how she felt as a child when she experienced similar things.

I should know - I am that mother. I am also a politically aware woman; an unpaid worker with the local anti-poverty group, who has brought her children up to be aware of their rights as well as their responsibilities. But the stigma of free school meals is so strong, so all pervasive and has been around for so long that even we could not escape it.

Swipe cards and stigma

'Swipe' cards which are used a bit like Switch cards have been put forward as a solution to stigma: with money 'pre-paid' into each one, which is meant to make everyone seem the same and so do away with the stigma. However, children are still aware of differences:

"They are better than what we had before, but it doesn't change much because if your family's got money, then they've got more cash on it. We can still tell who doesn't have much."

Megan, age 13

Stigma is the reason why so many children do not take free school meals they are entitled to, (around one third of those secondary children who are entitled do not take them).



Universal free school meals would remove stigma in one fell swoop

Children would no longer feel part of a two-tier system, where those whose families struggle to clothe them adequately, to keep decent shoes on their feet, and to do everything possible to ensure that they are not singled out for being poor, find that when they go to the school dinner hall that is exactly what happens.

Children would no longer do without their school meal in order to avoid the stigma. Instead a school dinner would be seen as a normal, integral part of the day for everyone, just like lessons, like gym and like playtime.

It will improve children's health and therefore their health as adults

There is no point in giving every child a free school meal if it's nutritionally junk. In 1998 it was estimated that one in four of Scotland's children do not go home to a hot meal in the evening. For those children in particular, their school dinner may be the only 'proper' meal they have all day. Anything that increases the numbers of children eating at least one good, hot nutritionally balanced meal a day, could have substantial effects on the health of the poorest children in our society. Nutritional standards backed up by legislation must be part of this campaign.

Sharing the cost of children

When we talk to adults about universal free school meals, the most common question asked is 'Why should rich kids get it too? What about the family that's earning enough money?' Many of those who take this critical stance are happy with the system of universal child benefit. They understand how beneficial this has been, and how the fact that everyone gets it, regardless of income is crucial to its almost 100 per cent uptake. The issue should be 'Will it help those who are in need to get what they need?' Even in cases where family income is relatively high, this does not always make its way to the children. The person who is the main carer for the children is not always the person

who has control of the finances. Universal free school meals would target children's needs *directly*.

We feel that all our society should be 'sharing the cost of children'. Children's health and well being should be everyone's concern, and society as a whole has an interest in, and should be prepared to invest in the future of Scottish children. This is already accepted in terms of free education and health. We would like to see children's nutritional needs treated in the same way, and occupying the same place in our culture, as they are no less important.

Children's Rights

This is about children's rights. Not adults' rights, not schools' rights, but the right of children to be fed adequately without fear of discrimination, stigma or lack of financial resources or parental concern. We believe the same arguments apply here as have already been accepted for child benefit. It works. Give the resources as directly as possible to where they are needed. Feed the children.

5

Local survey of children

Louisa Graham, Mary Harkins and Kait Laughlin

Will children eat healthy food?

Some people say that there is no point in giving children healthy food, as they won't eat it. We did our own local survey, and asked 51 10 and 11 year olds, what they thought of that statement.

Of the 46 who answered:

- 5 agreed that they wouldn't eat healthy food;
- 11 said that children would eat some healthy food (or all healthy sometimes); and
- 30 (65%) disagreed with the statement, with sentiments such as:

"Ridiculous"

"We will eat it because we might not get enough at home"

"I think you should give healthy lunches out because some people aren't very healthy and if you give out healthy food they might get healthier!"

"I know I would eat the healthy food!"

"I think all children should eat healthy because it's not good to eat junk food all the time"

"That's a load of crap" (the statement not the food!)

These statements are made in a climate where junk food is continually being pushed at children including in the dining hall itself.

Do school meals fill you up?

In the same survey, we asked the children: When you have had your lunch, most days do you feel:

- a) Full up
- b) Just had enough
- c) Still hungry
- d) Still very hungry

24 out of the 51 children took school dinners. 23 answered the question. Of those:

- 14 (61%) were either hungry or very hungry after their lunch;
- 5 of those (22%) were very hungry;
- 7 had just had enough;
- 2 were full up sometimes.

Remember, this is when they have had their lunch. They have a whole afternoon of schooling to get through - *hungry*. Hungry children cannot learn properly.

Packed lunches

This is contrasted with the twenty-seven children who took packed lunches. 25 answered the question - only *one* was still hungry after lunch. However, good packed lunches every day are not an option for many families in our society.

School meals are failing all our children

Of those who had packed lunches a substantial proportion had previously been to school lunches and found them '*disgusting*', '*not nice*' or '*Yuck!*'. In the words of one child when asked to write three words about how she feels after her school lunch: "*Hungry, sick, uncomfy.*"

A typical school meal

Here are two typical days school lunch for my two children, age seven and eight.

Day one:

A sausage (as there are no nutritional standards, goodness knows what's in it), three McCain's 'Happy Faces' (small circles of processed potato in batter, about 2" across) and one spoonful of baked beans, followed by a small, very sweet cake.

Day two:

Nothing left by the time they get there, except the cold choice, a lunch bag containing a roll with a thin slice of processed chicken(?), an apple and a very small packet of maize snack 'things'.

"Every day when they come out of school they are very hungry, and the first thing I have to do is to give them something to eat".

What children and mothers think

We also spoke to another group of children and their mothers in a different area of Glasgow. Here's what Louis, age ten, thinks of his school dinner,

"Not very nice stuff. The food is really greasy... nearly all of it is deep fat fried. They never have normal potatoes. Even the tatties have batter! The meat is pink. We have fruit and then none for a month but it's horrible. The pears are hard and green bananas."

Here's what Brodie, age six, says about his school meals:

"I get hot dogs, smiley faces, potato faces, bags of cookies, tomato sauce. I love it."

Here's what his mum says:

"I'm very disappointed in them. Brodie always picks the most unhealthy option. He has a hot dog or a pizza. Brodie chooses strawberry milk, yet he has ordinary milk at home. Why do they have flavoured milk?"

Harriet, age six, says:

“I had dinner school once and it didn't fill me up. My daddy said I could just come home for lunch and I do that.”

All of the parents were concerned about their children's school meals.

Louis' mum says:

“I'm sure school meals used to be better. I think it's shocking that children can't even get a decent meal at school.”

“The Scottish Parliament is being asked to make school meals healthier, and to make all school meals free. What do you think?”

Finally, we asked our initial group of 51 young people this question:

- 8 didn't give an answer;
- 3 didn't like the idea, with one child saying, *“People should pay and more sweet things instead of bananas would be good;”*
- 40 thought it was a good or great idea.

Here are some typical comments:

“I think they should make them healthy and free”

“I think they should to make us healthy”

“I think it would be excellent and more children would have school dinners”

“I think it is very good as long as we don't eat just things like cabbage and mushrooms”

“I think that's a GREAT idea!”

“Yes, because my mum's not rich and I want to be healthier.”

6

Aims of the School Meals (Scotland) Bill

Mike Dailly

THE LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS

Policy aims

The Bill represents a “family-friendly” and “preventative public health policy”, similar to the family health policies operating in Sweden and Finland.¹⁷ The main aims of the Bill are simple:

- to give all children the right to a free meal and drink of milk at schools under the management of local authorities in Scotland;
- to introduce minimum nutritional standards for free school meals; and
- to facilitate maximum take-up of healthy meals and milk.

The Scottish diet is the worst in Europe, and new thinking is required to address it. A universal system of free and nutritional school meals, with an accompanying drink of milk, is a European solution with a proven track record of success.¹⁸

Policy objectives are set out in a policy memorandum published as an accompanying document to the School Meals (Scotland) Bill (‘the Bill’), in accordance with Rule 9.3.3A of the Parliament’s Standing Orders.¹⁹



The School Meals (Scotland) Bill

Where any pupil attends a local authority-managed school, the Bill makes provision for a free nutritious meal to be provided to that pupil in the middle of the day. This obligation is placed upon all local authorities in Scotland. The Bill requires the Scottish Ministers to set nutritional standards in schools by defining the term “nutritious meal”. These standards will be set out by regulations made under the Bill.

The Bill also empowers the Scottish Ministers to issue guidance to local authorities on the provision of other refreshments, which may be sold to pupils. Before regulations can be made or guidance issued, the Bill requires the Scottish Ministers to consult education authorities, Health Boards, school boards and such other persons as they consider appropriate.

The text of the Bill is reproduced below in **bold**, with explanatory notes in *italic*.²⁰

I Provision of free school meals

- (1) **Section 53 (provision of school meals) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (c.44) is amended as follows.**
- (2) **In subsection (1)(b), after “provide” insert “free of charge”.**
- (3) **For subsections (3) and (3AA) substitute-**

“(3) An authority shall so exercise the power conferred by subsection (1)(a) above as to ensure that provision is made for each pupil in attendance at public schools and other educational establishments under their management to have a nutritious meal in the middle of the day and shall make that provision for the pupil free of charge.”

(4) In subsection (3A), for “subsections (1) to (3AA)” substitute “subsections (1) and (2)”.

(5) After subsection (4) insert-

“(5) The Scottish Ministers shall, by regulations, make further provision about school meals, including in particular provision-

(a) defining “nutritious meal” for the purposes of subsection (3) above;

(b) requiring milk and water to be made available to accompany any nutritious meal provided under that subsection; and

(c) requiring nutritious meals to be provided under that subsection in such a way as to—

(i) take account of the cultural, religious, special health and dietary needs of pupils; and

(ii) make allowances, so far as reasonably practicable, for pupils’ dietary restrictions based on conscience.

(6) Before making regulations under subsection (5) above, the Scottish Ministers must consult—

(a) such persons or bodies as they consider representative of-

(i) education authorities,

(ii) Health Boards, and

(iii) school boards, and

(b) such other persons as they consider appropriate.

(7) The Scottish Ministers may issue guidance as to the provision by education authorities of refreshments for charge to pupils under subsection (1)(a) above, including in particular guidance on providing refreshments in such a way as to-

(a) take account of the cultural, religious, special

- health and dietary needs of pupils; and**
- (b) make allowances, so far as reasonably practicable, for pupils' dietary restrictions based on conscience.**
- (8) Before issuing guidance under subsection (7) above, the Scottish Ministers must consult-**
 - (a) such persons or bodies as they consider representative of-**
 - (i) education authorities,**
 - (ii) Health Boards, and**
 - (iii) school boards, and**
 - (b) such other persons as they consider appropriate.”**

This section amends section 53 of the 1980 Act to require local authorities to provide a nutritious meal, without charge, to all pupils at schools under their management. Subsection (2) amends section 53(1)(b) of the 1980 Act to require local authorities to provide facilities without charge for the consumption of meals or other refreshments by pupils. The effect of subsection (3) is to replace section 53(3) and (3AA) of the 1980 Act, and in so doing, introduce universal entitlement to free and nutritious school meals for all children at local authority-managed schools.

Subsection (4) amends section 53(3A) of the 1980 Act so that the provision of free and nutritious school meals does not extend to pupils in attendance at self-governing schools or independent (i.e. private) schools.

Subsection (5) introduces four new subsections to section 53 of the 1980 Act. It makes provision for the Scottish Ministers to set nutritional standards in local authority managed schools by way of regulations. The Bill requires such regulations to make provision for milk and water to accompany any nutritious meal provided for under section 1. Such regulations must also take account of the cultural, religious, special health and dietary needs of pupils and make allowance, as far as reasonably practicable, for pupils' dietary restrictions based on conscience (for example, pupils who are vegetarian on ethical grounds).

Before nutritional standards can be set by the Scottish Ministers, the Bill requires consultation with education authorities, Health Boards, school boards and such other persons as the Scottish Ministers consider appropriate. Subsection (5) gives the Scottish Ministers the discretion to issue guidance to local authorities with respect to the provision of other refreshments sold to pupils. Again, before guidance can be issued, the Scottish Ministers must undertake consultation with education authorities,

Health Boards, school boards and such other persons as they consider appropriate.

2 Commencement and short title

- (1) Section 1 of this Act shall come into force on 31st December 2003 or such earlier date as the Scottish Ministers may, by order made by statutory instrument, appoint; and different such days may be appointed for different purposes.**
- (2) This Act may be cited as the School Meals (Scotland) Act 2002.**

Provision is made for section 1 of the Bill to come into force no later than 31 December 2003 (that is, after the 2003 Scottish Parliamentary elections), or such earlier date as the Scottish Ministers may appoint by way of statutory instrument.



Scottish Parliamentary procedure

Procedure in the Scottish Parliament is regulated by the Parliament's Standing Orders, as amended from time to time.²¹

Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) are entitled to introduce two bills within the four-year session of the Parliament. In order to do so, they must publish a proposal within the Parliament's Business Bulletin.

If a proposal does not receive the support of 11 MSPs within one month, that proposal will fall.

The proposal for the School Meals (Scotland) Bill was lodged on 21 June 2001, and provides: “*A Bill to provide universally free and nutritious school meals for every child attending a local authority managed secondary, primary or special needs school*”.

The Bill’s proposal was successful on 26 June 2001, when it received 12 supporters (including the Bill’s cross-party MSP sponsors, Tommy Sheridan, John McAllion and Alex Neil). The 9 additional MSP supporters were: Dennis Canavan, Dorothy-Grace Elder, Lloyd Quinan, Donald Gorrie, Gil Paterson, Margo MacDonald, Sandra White, Robin Harper and Christine Grahame.

The School Meals (Scotland) Bill has now been published, together with accompanying Explanatory Notes, Financial Memorandum and Policy Memorandum.²² The Parliament’s Business Bureau has allocated a lead committee in order for a Stage 1 inquiry and report to take place. This Bill has been allocated to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee as lead committee. Other relevant parliamentary committees can be involved in the Stage 1 inquiry, if the Bureau agrees. This Bill will also be scrutinised by the Health and Community Care Committee and the Social Justice Committee. As the Bill makes provision for secondary legislation, the Subordinate Legislation Committee will also consider it. The Stage 1 process allows the Parliament’s committees to take a wide range of written and oral evidence on the Bill, and represents an accessible and effective form of public consultation.

Following completion of the Stage 1 inquiry, the lead committee will publish its report, with a recommendation to the Parliament, to either support or reject the general principles of the Bill. The Stage 1 report forms the basis of a debate before the full Parliament, with MSPs being asked to vote for, or against the general principles of the Bill.

If the Bill’s general principles are agreed to, on a simple majority vote, the Bill returns to the lead committee for detailed line by line Stage 2 scrutiny. MSPs have an opportunity to amend the Bill at this stage, although “wrecking amendments” are now inadmissible.²³ Only “relevant” amendments can be considered at Stage 2, in other words, amendments that are within the general scope of the Bill.²⁴

Following Stage 2, the Bill returns to the full chamber of the Parliament for Stage 3 consideration. At this stage, MSPs are invited to vote on a motion to pass the Bill as agreed to. Amendments can still be lodged at

Stage 3, although as noted, there is now a prohibition on "wrecking amendments".

Rule 9.12 of the Parliament's Standing Orders prescribes the circumstances in which a Financial Resolution is required. A Financial resolution is a motion for parliament to agree expenditure to be incurred on the Scottish Consolidated Fund. Only the Scottish Executive can lodge and move a Financial Resolution, and ultimately it is for the Presiding Officer to decide whether the School Meals (Scotland) Bill will require a Resolution after Stage 1. Where the likely effect of a Bill is to incur "significant expenditure" on the Scottish Consolidated Fund then the Presiding Officer may decide that a Financial Resolution is necessary. Where a Financial Resolution is required, a Bill cannot proceed to Stage 2 without a Financial Resolution being agreed to by the Parliament.

- 17 Paragraphs 15-18 et. seq., of the Policy Memorandum to the School Meals (Scotland) Bill
- 18 Paragraphs 17-18 of the Policy Memorandum, cited *supra*.
- 19 The Bill and accompanying documents are published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliament by the Stationary Office Ltd. Download at - http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parl_bus/legis.html. The Bill and accompanying documents were drafted by the author, in consultation with CPAG in Scotland's Advisory Group, with the invaluable assistance of the Scottish Parliament's Legislation Team.
- 20 Explanatory notes are published with the School Meals (Scotland) Bill as an accompanying document (although they do not form part of the Bill and have not been endorsed by the Parliament).
- 21 The Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament made in accordance with section 22 of and Schedule 3 to the Scotland Act 1998. As at date of publication, the latest revised Standing Orders were made on 16 June 2001. See: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parl_bus/sto-c.htm
- 22 Available from The Stationary Office Bookshop, 71 Lothian Road, Edinburgh, EH3 9AZ (telephone 0870 606 5566, fax 0870 60655 88); and at http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parl_bus/legis.html
- 23 See rule 9.10.5(c) of the Parliament's Standing Orders.
- 24 See rule 9.10.5(b) of the Parliament's Standing Orders.

7

Support this Bill

Scottish Trades Union Council Women's Committee

Agnes Tolmie

The STUC Women's Committee recognises the role of school meals in improving the nutrition and health of Scotland's children and supports the Campaign calling for the universal provision of free school meals.

The rapid growth of poverty over the last two decades is a source of great concern to the STUC. Recent figures show that over 31 per cent of Scottish children and over 50 per cent of lone parent families live in poverty. Poverty not only excludes millions of people from full participation in society, it destroys and debilitates the sufferers. It denies children the chance to fulfil their potential. Moreover, poverty is by no means restricted to those on benefits. Many families who live in poverty are low paid workers. The committee sees the provision of free school meals as significant contribution in combating child poverty.

The STUC Women's Committee is and always has been committed to, and worked for, an inclusive society. In our view this is an issue affecting **all** the children of this country, it should therefore make no difference what background a child comes from. It is surely a matter of concern for us all that all our children are nurtured and nourished. Universal provision of free school meals is one of the clearest examples of a commitment to an inclusive society.

One in five children who were entitled to free school meals do not take them. Evidence shows that the stigma attached to free school meals

in the current means-tested system leads to many families not claiming them. Moreover the nutritional standards and quality of food provision is variable and often unsatisfactory. As a result many children are using alternative sources of food, which do not comply with any nutritional standards. Currently, children often purchase their school meals from vans selling pizzas and burgers nearby to the school premises, or, indeed from machines stocking chocolate and fizzy drinks, inside the schools. Those children, therefore, with more readily available cash are as unlikely to receive decent nourishment as those are with less.

The committee wishes to raise the quality and nutritional value of the meals currently being provided. One of the key aims of the campaign is to encourage healthy eating among young people. It is generally recognised that one of the major causes of poor health in Scotland is our diet. Poor nutritional standards in childhood are known to have an adverse affect not only on health and physical development, but also on educational achievement. The universal provision of free nutritional school meals and the return of free school milk is recognised as vital and effective public health measure for instilling healthy eating habits and improving long-term health.



STUC Women's Committee believe that the resources are available, the Minister for Finance noted, in November 2001, that there was likely to be an underspend of in excess of some four hundred million pounds by the year end. The resources are there and what better way is there to

spend some of this excess than on the health of our children. In our view the universal provision of nutritional school meals is an investment for the future health and well being of our society. We would urge you to support this campaign and ensure that future.

Public Petition

The Committee, at the time of writing, has collected over 10,000 signatures on a public petition call for the universal provision of free school meals and milk, which will be presented, to the Chair of Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee. The STUC Women's Committee has also given its support to the Cross Party Private Members Bill, currently making its way through Parliament on this issue.

Appendices

History of the school meals service in the UK

Tim Marsh

- 1879** Manchester give free meals to "destitute and badly nourished children".
- 1889** London School Board establish a School Dinners Association.
- 1892** Bradford school board allows the use of school cellars for the purpose of preparing and serving dinners to poor children. 45 boards now provide school meals.
- 1900** Glasgow school meals service funded by special fund established by the Mayor. Meals consisted of such staples as potatoes, bread, dumplings and occasionally milk.
- 1904** An interdepartmental committee reported on the poor physique of volunteers during the Boer War. Compulsory education highlighted the problem of underfed children. Over 350 voluntary bodies exist to provide meals for underfed children.
- 1906** The Education Act empowered Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to contribute to costs incurred by school canteen committees. Boards of education given powers to provide but were not compelled, free meals to the poorest children.
- 1914** Provision of Meals Act gives the exchequer power to make available grants to cover half the costs of meals. However the First World War leads to a cut in the provision of free school meals from 400,000 in 1914 to 43,000 in 1918 as cuts are made.
- 1920** By now over one million were provided with meals.
- 1924** Free milk in schools introduced.

- 1939** Only half the education authorities (157) now provide a total of 160,000 free school meals.
- 1940** National policy of school meals introduced, government provided initially 70% of cost of meals, increased to 95% the following year, recommendations for nutritional content, staffing levels and organisation of service established. Price of school meals fixed at 5d.
- 1944** The 1944 Education Act required local education authorities to provide a meal for every child in a maintained school who wanted one. 1.8million children were now taking school meals.
- 1946** School milk provided free in all grant aided schools.
- 1947** The full cost of school meals is met by government.
- 1949** A uniform charge is placed on school meals.
- 1950** Price of school meals increased to 6d.
- 1953** Price of school meals increased to 9d.
- 1956** Price of school meals increased to 10d.
- 1957** Price of school meals increased to 1s.
- 1966** Circular 3/66 The Nutritional Standard of School Dinners, replaces Circular 1571 (of 1941).
- 1967** 100 % grant for school meals expenditure withdrawn and replaced by system of general rate support.
- 1968** Price of school meals increased to 1s 6d. First convenience foods introduced into school meals service in Liverpool. Free school milk for children in secondary schools withdrawn.
- 1969** Price of school meals increased to 1s 9d.
- 1970** 5,148,000 (67.9%) of children in England and Wales and 375,000 (44%) in Scotland now have a school meal. Government announce intention to raise price of meal to 2s 10d in two stages.
- 1971** Price of school meals 12p. School milk withdrawn at age seven except in special circumstances.
- 1973** Reorganisation of local government takes place.
- 1975** Price of school meals increased to 15p. Report of DES working party Nutrition in Schools published.
- 1976** Government announces its decision to reduce the cost of school meals by £9million in 1977/78 and £36million in 1978/79.
- 1977** Price of school meals increased to 25p. 61.7% of all school children in England and Wales are taking a school meal on census day.
- 1978** EEC Scheme subsidising supply of milk to children introduced.
- 1979** White paper on public expenditure estimates cost of school meals at £380million, targets to reduce to £190million by reducing quality

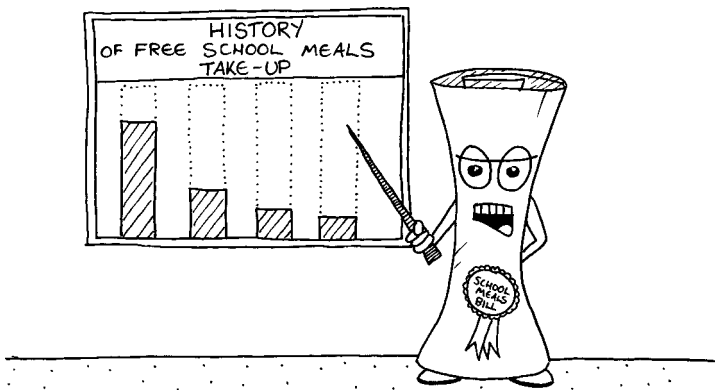
of service, increasing use of convenience foods. Price of school meals increased to 30p.

1980 The new Education Act gives LEAs power to axe school meals service. There are only two statutory requirements.

- 1 LEAs must ensure that children whose parents receive supplementary benefit or family income support receive a free meal.
- 2 Facilities must be provided for pupils who bring their own food.

Charges now range from 35p to 55p per meal, cafeterias introduced in secondary schools.

Number of children taking school meals in secondary schools drops to 41.7%, and 53.4% in secondary schools. Dorset CC votes to discontinue school meals service.



THE OLD WAY CLEARLY DOES NOT WORK !

1981 CPAG publish "Badge of poverty, a new look at the stigma attached to free school meals". Lincolnshire withdraws school meals.

1982 As more budget cuts are introduced Cash Cafeterias are encouraged in Secondary schools.

1983 The DES census shows that 51.4% of pupils now have school meals, free school meals account for 15%.

1986 Local Government Act forces LEAs to put the provision of school meals out to competitive tendering. Buckinghamshire closes its service.

- 1988** Social Security Act 1986 comes into force. Children of parents in receipt of income support are still eligible for free school meals, those in receipt of family credit have the price of the meal included in the benefit. As a result thousands of children lose their entitlement. Number of school children having school meals now 49.4%.
CPAG publish “One Good meal a Day, the loss of free school meals”
- 1991** The rise of compulsory competitive tendering leads to cuts in school meals services. CPAG publish “School meals, fact sheet”.
- 1992** The further tightening of eligibility rules for income support mean that only people working under 16 hours are eligible to claim free school meals as opposed to 24 hours previously. 11 % of local authorities have ceased to provide school meals beyond their statutory requirement.
- 1995** The number of children taking school meals in England is now only 45%.
- 1999** CPAG launch School Meals Campaign with three aims
- Extend free school meals provision;
 - Improve take up of free school meals;
 - Introduce nutritional standards for school meals.
- To support the campaign CPAG publish “Filling the Gap”
- 2000** CPAG in Scotland form the school meals advisory group and spearhead campaign for free nutritious meals for all children in Scotland.
- 2000** Introduction of new nutritional standards in England.
- 2000** Introduction of the School Meals (Scotland) Bill into Scottish parliament which:
- Set nutritional standards in law;
 - Provide free meal for every child in Scotland.
- 2001** Scottish Executive announce establishment of an expert panel to devise nutritional standards, improve appeal of school meals and maximise the uptake of free school meals.
- 2002** School meals bill debated in Scottish Parliament by 10 May 2002.

Summary of nutritional requirements for school meal under English SI no. 1777, The Education (Nutritional Standards for School Lunches) (England) Regulations 2000

Nursery schools

Food from each of food groups (excluding fatty and sugary foods) shall be available as part of school lunch each day.

Primary Schools (excluding special schools)

As nursery schools with detail that:

- a) Fruit and vegetable group
 - i) fresh fruit, fruit tinned in juice, or fruit salad be available every day
 - ii) a fruit based desert be available at least twice a week
 - iii) a type of vegetable (not potato) be available every day
- b) Starchy food group, fat or oil shall not be used in the cooking process on more than 3 days in any week (ie chips only three times per week)
- c) Meat, fish and other non-dairy sources of protein group
 - i) fish shall be available at least one day in any week
 - ii) red meat shall be available on at least two days in any week

Sources of protein in c) can include dairy sources for this group

Secondary Schools (excluding special schools)

On each day two types of food from each of the food groups (excluding fatty and sugary foods) shall be available.

- a) a fruit and a vegetable shall be available
- b) for starchy food on every day that a food cooked in oil or fat is available, a food not cooked in fat or oil shall be available
- c) fish shall be available on at least two days in any week and red meat shall be available on at least three days in any week

“Even the tatties have batter!”



There is increasing evidence linking what we eat as children and our health in later life. The Scottish diet is the worst in Europe, and new thinking is required to address the issue. A universal system of free and nutritional school meals is a solution with a proven track record of success.

The School Meals (Scotland) Bill would give all children in Scotland the right to a free healthy meal at school.

This book provides an overview of the current school meals service and puts the case for nutritional standards and universal provision. It explains the Bill and the parliamentary process and reflects the broad base of support for the Bill, including opinion from a wide range of people: academics, dieticians, politicians, lawyers, and representatives of local authorities, unions and anti poverty groups.

The School Meals (Scotland) Bill is a long-term investment in the health of the nation. Its outcomes will far outweigh our continued investment.

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