

6/12/95
USDA's "Team Nutrition

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 12, 1995

Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton at
USDA's "Team Nutrition" Campaign
Washington, DC

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you. Thank you all. Thank you very much. Thank you. Well, I am so pleased to be here today, to help inaugurate the Team Nutrition campaign. And I want to thank both Senator Leahy and Representative de la Garza for joining us, and for going through so much trouble to get here. I really appreciate that. And I also want to thank Secretary Glickman and Under Secretary Haas for their leadership on this very important issue.

And I'm delighted that we have so many students here from Cresthaven Elementary School. I'm pleased you could be here with us, and could be part of helping to tell other children all over our country how important nutrition is.

This is a long overdue effort, because this is a team that is put together by very many parts of the government, different agencies that are working together, many different businesses and groups in the private sector that are working together, and then the public and the private sectors coming together to form a team. I really like that, because in America, we should think of ourselves as a team, a team with many different players, with many different kinds of skills and talents, with different abilities that can move us all toward our goals, and the goal today is to improve the nutrition of our children. So I cannot think of a more important team to be part of.

I wanted to ask the children -- Have you ever felt really, really hungry? How many of you have ever felt really hungry? Now, did feeling really, really hungry last like a whole day? How many of you ever felt hungry for a whole day? How about for two whole days? Okay. So, maybe really, really hungry for a day, maybe even really, really hungry for two days.

Well, there are some children in America who feel really hungry all the time, and there are other children who feel hungry

and eat things that fill them up, but don't help their bodies very much. They fill up, and so they get rid of feeling really hungry, but they're not helping themselves run faster, or grow bigger or see better, or think, and that's really why we're trying with Team Nutrition to make sure that no child in America feels hungry for very long, and that all children, even if they do feel hungry from time to time, when they eat, they get the food that is right for them.

How many of you have ever gone to school, and you just were tired and hungry, and you didn't really feel like you learned very much that day? It was kind of hard to concentrate. Well, that happens a lot of times. You know, one of the reasons we have a program like the school breakfast program is that we know for all kinds of reasons, some children get to school, and they haven't had anything to eat, or maybe they've had something, but it's not been enough to really get them going so that they can do the very best they can do.

And one of the reasons that we have always had so much support in our country for the school lunch program is because we know that good nutrition during the school day helps children do better all day long.

Now long before any of the children from Cresthaven were born, and this is one of the few times I can say, even before I was born these days, there was a decision made by our government to try to invest in nutrition programs because so many people who came into our military in World War II did not have good nutrition.

Now, how can you tell if somebody hasn't had good nutrition, not just for a day, or two days, but for day after day, and month after month and year after year? Well, you can tell because physically there are things, if somebody's been really, really hungry for a long time, you can see. And I've seen children who have those kinds of problems.

You know, it's kind of odd, but when children are really hungry for a long time, you know, one of the things that happens to them is their stomach gets big. Now you'd think that wouldn't happen, because you'd think that your stomach would only get really big if you'd been eating a lot, but that happens. And sometimes their hair turns a funny color and falls out, and sometimes they get really, really skinny, and their arms, and their legs and their cheeks get really hollow. And I've seen some children like that in our country. We mostly see children like that in other countries. Have you ever seen pictures of children on T.V. that are really, really hungry and have been starving? How many of you have seen pictures like that? So you know what it looks like when somebody hasn't had food for a very long time.

But during World War II, when millions and millions of Americans, mostly boys, showed up to get their physical exams to see how well they could fight for our country, do you know what we found? We found that although we had lots and lots of people who'd been going to school and working and doing the things you do every day, a lot of them had not had good nutrition. And we could tell that because they hadn't grown right, and we could tell that because they're brains didn't work as well as they could have worked. So that's when, for the first time, our country and our government decided we were going to try to make sure people got good nutrition.

So today, with Team Nutrition, we're going to try to continue to do what we can do -- people in the government and people in a lot of these businesses that are helping with this project. We're going to try to make sure that we keep giving good nutritional assistance to little, tiny babies and to pregnant women. And we're going to make sure we have good nutrition standards and that we have enough food in the school breakfast, in the school lunch programs, in the food stamp programs and other ways to make sure people get food.

But now let me ask you another question -- Can anybody, once you're as big as you all are, make you eat good food, if you just decide you're not going to do it? You're not going to eat your vegetables. You're not going to eat your fruits. You're not going to eat the calcium and the dairy products you need. You're not going to get enough iron. Can anybody really make you anymore now that you're not babies?

So part of what Team Nutrition is about is telling all of the children in America, "You have to be on this team." You have to be on this team to make sure you eat right, and you know enough about good nutrition so that you take good care of your own bodies and your own brains.

So I want to thank all of the partners. I want to thank all of the government partners that are here today. I want to thank all of our partners from all of the businesses that are here today. I want to thank all of the producers who actually grow, and manufacture, and market and distribute the food we eat.

But I mostly want every child in America to know -- You are on Team Nutrition. And we need you to do everything you can do to eat as well as you can, to be as strong as you can and to grow up and be as healthy as you possibly can. So let's all be part of Team Nutrition, okay?

Thank you very much.

###