

BSE : THE SOUTHWOOD REPORT

In his minute of 13 February, which I have now received, the CV comments that the Department of Health will have a view on the ingredients of baby food and that my group should also be consulted.

Liver and kidney, which are the major element of offal likely to be found in baby food, constitute an important part of the diet particularly for certain vitamins which babies need when they are moving on to solid food. Certain ethnic groups cannot eat pigs liver and there could therefore be a risk of malnutrition if the rather vague recommendation in the Southwood report were to lead to the removal of cow and sheep liver and kidney from baby food. Moreover, the question would be asked whether it was safe for adults.

Presentationally it would be difficult for the Department of Agriculture [to raise these points when it goes public on the Southwood report but I suggest that they are of sufficient importance for us to take up the matter with the CMO and to put in the press notice being issued on the Southwood report something on the lines:

" I understand the Committee did not have the opportunity to examine thoroughly all the scientific evidence relating to offal, particularly liver and kidney in human and baby food and I am therefore proposing to refer [I have therefore referred] the matter to the CMO to seek his advice before taking any further action."

This would enable us to assess more fully what the actual risks are and what the risks are of any ban on liver and kidney in baby foods.

We do not wish to create problems for young children and ethnic minorities simply on the basis of poorly substantiated speculation. On the other hand, if there is clear evidence this must be taken into account. My understanding is that the evidence is not clear-cut and does need further consideration.

*Elizabeth A J Attridge*

(MRS) E A J ATTRIDGE  
15 February 1989

*Rec'd 17/2*

Mr Cruickshank

cc:

Mrs Stagg (PS/Minister)  
CVO  
Mr Capstick  
Mr Coe  
Mr Cockbill

*in minute*

*the Lawrence*

*MC*

*17/2/89*

*for 11/2/89*

*Mr Maddin*

*25/2*

*A24*

*15.17.2*

*and food!*

Mr A J Lawrence  
Mr J C Suich  
Dr Crossett