PRE-PLATING AND SERVING OF MEALS

4. It was stated by dining hall staff that to enable main meals to be served on time, pre-plating had to commence between two and three hours beforehand. This operation was therefore watched very closely, and it appeared that some of the factors which contributed to this length of time for pre-plating were as follows:-

(a) The cooks did not show evidence of any training, or adequate experience, in the art of plating food in an appetising and economical way.

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(b) The serving implements used by the coo s were not considered to be ideal tools for rapid and efficient pre-plating. For example, the serving tongs for fried fish were a cheap and inferior copy of the acceptable spring-back pattern. On occasions it was noted that cooks discarded these tongs and used their fingers to serve the fish on to plates - a more rapid, but clearly less hygenic method. Again, chip potatoes were served from ineffective, poorly designed scoops.

(c) The serving containers were too deep for rapid serving. (When 480 portions are issued by a cook from such containers the waste time due to unnecessarily extended motion paths for the hands during each operation, can be considérable.) It was also noted that approximately a pint of cabbage water was evident in the bottom of vegetable containers, probably due to imperfect colandering in the galley. To prevent excessive cabbage water being actually issued with the vegetables, the cooks had partially to strain each portion before serving - again adding to the waste time. Despite this precaution, however, a not inconsiderable amount of cabbage water found its way on to each plate in these circumstances; one cook offered his opinion that this was not in fact a bad thing for it prevented the vegetable becoming unduly dry when the meal was re-heated.
Even though ineffective colandering were accepted as sometimes unavoidable, a perforated false bottom, fitted to the container in such a way as to provide a reservoir in the bottom, would enable excessive moisture to seep through and to be drained off from this cavity.

(d) As observed above, it was stated emphatically that pre-plating might take from two to three hours for a main meal. Without their being aware of it, the performance of cooks was timed while they were each adding a portion per plate. The average time taken during the issue of food for 33 plates was 6 seconds per portion which includes an allowance for moving along the counter for every one in 3 plates.
One cook therefore can serve 480 portions by continuous effort in the following time:-

$$480 \times \frac{6}{60} = 48 \text{ minutes}$$

Even though this sample calculation cannot be taken as a final standard, it does seem that the observed rate of performance was inconsistent with the overall time estimated by Supply personnel themselves.

5. Nevertheless the time taken for pre-plating is considerable. Meals are always cold before being transferred to the hot lockers, which takes place only after 240 plates, arranged in stacks of three separated by aluminium rings, have been set out along the counter. This long cooling period allows gravy and moisture to settle which then congeals on the plates when these are rapidly re-heated in the hot lockers. The effect is to make the meal less palatable and liable to create washing difficulties in the scullery.

6. The present method of pre-plating food necessitates the handing of plates a considerable number of times. Clearly the more frequently a plate is handled the greater is the probability of its being cracked or broken and the less hygenic is the system.
An attempt is being made in this Memorandum therefore to compare, for three

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different systems of messing, the number of occasions on which a plate must be handled from the galley to the consumer, and to compare the number of prime movements involved in these respective systems.

Appendix I - This illustrates the prime movements involved in the present method of pre-plating food, using server boys.

Appendix II - Here the broadside general messing system is illustrated with food served directly from containers on each table.

Appendix III - This illustrates the situation for a Cafetoria service where each boy collects his own meal directly from the serving counter.

These flow process charts indicate that both the broadside general messing and the Cafeteria service have distinct advantages over the present system; also they support the contention made later on that the Cafeteria system has distinct advantages over both of the others.