

European powers, with their empires and spheres of influence, and later also by the USA.

He says little reference is made to Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm shifts. This is so. Kuhn's best-known ideas are mentioned and cited, but more positive and integrative systems approaches such as that of Kurt Lewin are preferred¹⁶.

He suggests we make too much reference to our own work. His eight citations include a modest 25 per cent to Oshaug A. He cites the writings of the Sri Lankan polymath Susantha Goonatilake twice, perhaps not as carefully as might be expected, for their relevance certainly in one case¹⁷ is obscure. The 154 citations in the paper he criticises include 13 to our own work, of which four cross-refer to other papers in the special issue. He says one of us cites his own work instead of relevant UN reports. This is not so.

Studies of systematic change in the making observe a range of negative reactions inherent in the process, whose vehemence varies with the depth of entrenchment of the critic. These include 'this is nonsense', 'this is damaging', 'these people don't know what they are saying', 'why wasn't I told?', 'everything is fine as it is', 'I thought of this first', 'leave this to the experts', 'there is nothing new here' and 'everybody knows this already'. Professor Oshaug's letter is somewhat of a collector's item in that it includes or implies all of these reactions, while failing to support any of them. He also does not justify his tendency to a formula rather familiar in knockabout debate in scientific journals, epitomised as 'I am scientific, you are subjective, they are biased'.

Change happens as a result of irresistible pressure of circumstances, like that now exerted in this age of linked global revolutionary electronic, genomic, political, economic and environmental developments^{18,19}. Such pressure accelerates formulation of new ideas and theories that become agreed and adopted as they are found to be more accurate, interesting, useful, relevant and appropriate.

The new maps and new explorations needed for us, our children and their children, to live well in this new world, are being prepared by those willing to pool resources, with receptive minds and generous spirits. *The New Nutrition Science project* is not a closed shop, but an open door. Welcome in.

Geoffrey Cannon

World Health Policy Forum, Brazil
geoffreycannon@aol.com

Claus Leitzmann

Justus-Liebig University, Giessen, Germany
ClausLeitzmann@aol.com

DOI: 10.1079/PHN2005904

References

- Oshaug A. Developing voluntary guidelines for implementing the right to adequate food: anatomy of an intergovernmental process [Chapter 11]. In: Eide W, Kracht U, eds. *Food and Human Rights in Development. Vol. 1. Legal and Institutional Dimensions and Selected Topics*. Antwerp: Intersentia, 2005.
- Leitzmann C, Cannon G, eds. The New Nutrition Science project. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 667–804.
- Cannon G, Leitzmann C. The new nutrition science project. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 673–94.
- The Giessen Declaration. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 783–6. Also available at <http://www.iuns.org>
- Leitzmann C, Cannon G. Dimensions, domains and principles of the new nutrition science. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 787–94.
- Beaudry M, Delisle H. Public(s) nutrition. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 743–8.
- Leitzmann C. Wholesome nutrition: a suitable diet for the new nutrition science project. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 753–9.
- Wahlqvist M. The new nutrition science: sustainability and development. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 766–72.
- Lang T. Food control or food democracy? Re-engaging nutrition with society and the environment. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 730–7.
- Anon. Confluence. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 699–700.
- Anon. Agreement. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 781–2.
- Scrimshaw N, ed. Public nutrition. *Food and Nutrition Bulletin* 1999; **20**(3): 279–343.
- Mason J, Habicht J-P, Greaves P, Jonsson U, Kevany J, Martorell R, Rogers B. Public nutrition [letter]. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 1996; **63**: 399–400.
- McMichael A. Integrating nutrition with ecology: balancing the health of humans and biosphere. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 706–15.
- Beauman C, Cannon G, Elmadfa I, *et al.* The principles, definition and dimensions of the new nutrition science. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 695–9.
- Lewin K. In: Lewin G, ed. *Resolving Social Conflicts. Selected Papers on Group Dynamics*. New York: Harper and Row, 1948. See also <http://santafe.edu>
- Goonatilake S. *Crippled Minds. An Exploration into Colonial Culture*. Second impression. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Lake House, 1984.
- Uauy R. Defining and addressing the nutritional needs of populations. *Public Health Nutrition* 2005; **8**(6A): 773–80.
- Castells M. *The Information Age*. Three volumes. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.

Obesity and corporate responsibility

Sir,

The state of affairs is obvious to everyone. The increase in obesity seen in all parts of the world is challenging our ways of thinking about individual responsibility concerning health, the role of the state and the responsibility of the food industry. Solutions should focus on lowering energy intake and increasing expenditure, as stated by the World Health Organization (WHO)¹.

In this document it is stated that more than 1 billion adults are overweight, and that 300 million, at least, are clinically obese. Moreover, obesity is increasing faster in developing countries, creating a double burden of disease in many parts of the world. WHO also points to the troubling issue of increased childhood obesity. Obesity is an extremely challenging issue when it comes to treatment. Success rates are depressingly low in spite of intense research in this area.

In a long-term perspective it is obvious that the obesity problem cannot be solved only by appealing to the morale of the individual and campaigning for lifestyle changes. With increasing urbanisation and globalisation of food markets, obesity on the scale we see today represents an unprecedented global health challenge. We are in need of new approaches, extending beyond the boundaries of the national state. Primary prevention is a key issue, but in order to be efficient in combating obesity, new strategies and alliances are required urgently.

Many of the companies providing our daily food are multinational giants with budgets, profits and political muscles most national governments would envy. However, they are beyond national political influence, or have been up until now. The international pressure that has been put on the tobacco industry from the world health community has evidently had its effect also on the international food industry. Corporate responsibility is now a new keyword with a taste of political correctness. The global food and agricultural industry must now face its international responsibilities and stand up and deliver, through partnerships for global health, by:

- Increasing research into low-calorie products;
- Promoting production of products low in simple sugars, high in complex carbohydrates;
- Promoting production of products low in animal saturated fat, but high in vegetable oils;
- Using its marketing strategies and know-how to promote consumption of healthy and recommended products;
- Restricting marketing to children;
- Providing easy-to-understand nutritional labelling on their products;
- Supporting peer-reviewed research in obesity biology and how to change dietary behaviour.

The international food industry is definitely one important part of the global obesity problem. It urgently needs to become part of the solution.

Svein O Kolset

Professor and Department Head
Department of Nutrition
University of Oslo, Norway
Email: s.o.kolset@medisin.uio.no

DOI: 10.1079/PHN2005862

Reference

- 1 World Health Organization (WHO). Global strategy on diet, physical activity and health. *57th World Health Assembly*, Agenda item 12.6, Resolution WHA 57.17. Geneva: WHO, 22 May 2004. Available at http://www.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA57/A57_R17-en.pdf.