

# EDITORIAL PAGE

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## **Food Protection - Mission, Goal, Methodology**

By Larry Gordon, Assistant Editor

The consuming public is usually keenly aware of, and desirous of, a high level food protection program. An effective food program is one that can be easily sold to our modern enlightened consumers. Food programs have long been a basic environmental health program responsibility in various federal, state, and local agencies.

Some 15 years ago, Dr. Malcolm Merrill, who was director of the California State Health Department said, "The food protection programs of most of our public health agencies are either standing still or are frankly obsolescent." Somewhat later, William J. Hickey of the Paper Cup and Container Institute (Single Service Institute) told the American Public Health Association that there were few successful food sanitation programs in the nation and that some health officials had told him they were afraid to eat within their jurisdictions.

**That was a different era - yesterday. . . . Or was it?**

Recently, the General Accounting Office, in a report to Congress, said 'the U.S. Food and Drug Administration had conducted surveys in nine major U.S. cities and concluded that 89.8 percent of restaurants in these cities were insanitary.

Many of us would disagree with such a damning conclusion and would question the hidden purpose of the surveys. Some have suggested the attack may have been a first move in an effort to get federal control over such food protection programs.

**Regardless of the survey, what are the facts?**

**Are regulatory officials and the food service industry satisfied with compliance levels?**

**Do the various food programs have an appropriate mission of serving the public and protecting the consumer?**

**Do the programs have a stated goal such as assuring that all citizens are adequately protected from unhealthful or unsafe food and food products?**

**Do the regulatory agencies utilize a full spectrum of modern program methodology to effect the programs, or is sole reliance still on "inspection" as a method?**

**Do the food programs address related issues such as environmental chemicals, noise employee safety, air pollution, water Pollution, solid wastes, biological insults and water supply; or is the program confined to keeping the potato salad cold?**

**The recent charges by the General Accounting Office make it imperative that appropriate public and industry officials promptly engage in dialog and answer such questions as the foregoing and subsequently insure that food programs are effective in attaining an interim objective toward the ultimate goal.**