

Weekly Notes

Advertising Morals & Economics

WITHHOLDING its advertisements from newspapers which offended it was one of the obnoxious weapons employed by the British Government against the nationalist press. It did not work even at a time when the economic pressure was really formidable and extremely difficult for the struggling papers to withstand.

Experience, however, made the British wiser. They evolved, subsequently, other methods of curbing the press which were more refined and genteel. These worked most successfully, during the years of war, for example. Even the August movement could not make a breach in the friendly relations between the Government and the press which had been established through the intermecliaey of the Newspaper Editors' Conference. Sir Francis Low conducting *dhoti-clad* journalists to their seats at a luncheon at the Taj or Sir Robert Lockhart patiently listening to 'Stalin' Srinivasan at a press conference were a sight for the gods which Shri Morarji Desai probably missed, being in jail at that tune, But that cannot be adequate reason for his missing its moral.

In extenuation of his conduct in withholding Government advertisements from papers which can jolly well do without them, one can say that it is not crude economic jiresure which he is trying to put on the offending papers. It is just a flea bite, to express gently his displeasure. The moral of it alone is to be noted, as in a token cut in the budget moved by a member who wants to draw attention to something. But to what, precisely, does Shri Morarji wants to draw attention? The question should perhaps be left to his Directorate of Publicity to answer. However, if it is compliance that he wants, one must enter a caveat against his unsound economics. The cost of non-compliance must be raised sufficiently high to keep off prospective practitioilers.

Iron and Coking Coal

HIGH quality metallurgical coal being in short supply, the project for a pilot plant investigation for the smelting of iron ore without the use of coking coal which was approved by the Council of Scientific Research assumes considerable significance. Simultane-

ously, investigations are proceeding for the blending of coking and non-coking coal for use in iron and steel works specially designed for the purpose. It appears that blending with weakly coking coals can also be used in the present steel works without causing trouble.

These are indications of the importance of technological factors in industrial development. The possibility these measures suggest of solving such problems, however, should not cut across the present attempts being made to conserve metallurgical coal. For the gap and time lag between technological developments and their commercial exploitation arc wide and not easy to remove. It would be wrong to jump at the conclusion that because there is a technological possibility of smelting iron ore without using coking coal, measures for conservation of such coal can be relaxed. On the other hand, W H S Michelmore argued, in his address to the Indian Mining Association, that given the plans for the expansion of the iron and steel industry, the demand for metallurgical coal would be equal to the present production within four or five years. It would not be good policy, therefore, to insist on conservation today at the cost of the dislocation that would inevitably result. While agreeing with the need for sand stowing and coal washing as measures of conservation he suggested that compulsory ceiling on production or pegging at present levels would be undesirable. And this is what the Government has done.

The case for conservation obviously rests on the correctness of the estimate that reserves of metallurgical coal in the country are low. If the figures on which official policy is based are proved to be wrong, it falls to the ground. Serious attention should certainly be paid to the statement made by Mr Michelmore that at least in one important coalfield, the official figures have proved to be gross under-estimates. Dr Fox estimated available coal in South Karanpura at 750 million tons, in 1934. As late as 1945 Dr Gee recorded the reserves in both North and South Karanpura at 750 million tons. According to Mr Michelmore, the estimates made by one of the companies with which he is connected, based on experience over a period of 30 years in prospecting, drilling

and surveying of the coal reserves in the area, show that there are at least 3,000 million tons of good coal at a depth not greater than 1,500 feet in North and South Karanpura. If this is correct, there is need for a more careful investigation into the official estimates before rushing into any policy which is likely to cause more harm than good.

About sand stowing, Mr Michelmore is not happy because of the costs involved. Stowing for conservation in addition to stowing for safety, which was normally undertaken in the past, involves a sharp rise in costs and even though the Government contributes 75 per cent of this increase, the burden on the collieries will still be heavy.

In Same Boat With Britain

DR ARTHUR LEWIS, the noted economist, whose advice is much sought, nowadays on problems of undeveloped countries, created quite a stir in Delhi some time ago by his advice to India to raise steel production to 10 million tons. The character of our exports, he said, was bound to undergo a transormation, for the countries which were buying our textiles arc setting up textile industries of their own. Even continued export of jute manufactures was no longer assured. Processed goods, in short, will have to be substituted by manufactures in a few years, if we are to maintain and raise the level of our exports. That was the substance of his lecture at the Delhi University. Dr Lewis is now very much embarrassed to find that his speech was reported in the papers, for he does not want to set up as an authority on Indian economic problems, or to write about them, without spending some time in the country and making a more extensive study of its problems. He spent only one week in India, and that, too, " in a very restricted atmosphere."

Such humility does credit to Dr Lewis' the reputation as a scholar and as a fair commentator of economic affairs. It did not prevent him, however, from expressing very definite opinions about the countries of South-East Asia, including India, in an article published in the last issue of *District Bank Review*. India, Dr Lewis is convinced, will have to remain a food importing country. " Bearing in mind the