

Weekly Notes

More Heat Than Light

SHRI KIDWAI has passed on the baby to the Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics whom he has asked to settle the dispute between the Indian Council of Agricultural Research which is under his Ministry and the National Sample Survey which comes under the Ministry of Finance. It is good strategy to ask a scientific body to intervene in a controversy among scientists. While the Food Minister shows refreshing candour in expressing his own bewilderment that his Ministry should estimate food production at 49 million tons when the National Sample Survey estimates it at 68 million tons, his concern for the timeliness of these statistics and repeated mention of random sampling and scientific methods do these not suggest a distinct preference for sampling as against complete enumeration, and raise the suspicion that the village records on which his own Ministry has been working, through crop cutting experiments, to evolve more reliable estimates, are already doomed?

It is not food statistics alone on which Shri Kidwai seeks light from this learned body. But surely, all the problems of the Grow More Food Campaign are not of advanced statistics nor can they be solved by statisticians. One may humbly submit, for instance, that cultivators are fertile-minded enough. In the South, years before the war, producers of rice had been using ammonium sulphate. Cultivators would take any amount, provided they can get it at a price which they can pay. It is a travesty of truth to suggest that fertilisers are not moving fast enough because the farmer does not know their use. Instead of consulting statisticians, had the Food Minister looked more closely in the organisation for distribution and relative prices of fertilisers and different crops, he would have easily got more light.

Calendar Reform

THERE was a time when the calendar could be reformed by the Imperial Decree in Rome or by a Papal bull. Now it has to be done by the UNO who have before them a proposal by the World Calendar Reform Association for the revision of the Gregorian calendar. Pandits here have been disputing the problem for long.

They have formed themselves into two major groups and the Panjikas or Panchangs that are now current, bear the stamp of the particular authority according to which they have been compiled. The elates of important celebrations, pujas for example, differ in consequence, causing much inconvenience to lots of people.

The Indian Calendar Reform Committee under the chairmanship of Prof Meghnad Saha has been entrusted with the task of examining all the existing calendars which are being followed in this country to submit proposals for an accurate and uniform calendar for the whole of India after a scientific study of the subject. The final report of the Committee is to be submitted within a year. It is horrifying, however, to be told that if the calendar is to be made really scientific, the week will have to be dropped from the computation of time. What will happen to the weeklies then? Surely the Committee is not thinking of anything so abominably scientific?

ECAFE Survey

ECONOMIC developments in the countries of the ECAFE region during 1951 and the first half of 1952 merely emphasise the vulnerability of these countries to international economic disturbances. The large foreign exchange earnings of the period of the Korean boom were largely frittered away. And in any case, because of the prevailing high prices and other factors, they did not lead to any acceleration in the pace of economic development. The subsequent heavy fall in prices disorganised development plans and produced a deflationary effect which still persists. The worsening of the terms of trade which took place in all but the rice exporting countries caused a fall in real income, particularly in those countries which exported raw materials and imported manufactured commodities. These are the major conclusions of the belated survey for 1951 just received along with the expedited publication of the 1952 report. The inclusion of Japan is a new feature which merits separate treatment attempted in a special article elsewhere in this issue.

While there was a definite slackening of demand during this period, there was also an improvement in

the supply position in response to the high prices prevailing earlier. By 1951, when demand took a sudden downturn, the world supply of raw materials had increased quite substantially. This improvement was partly due to the development of substitute materials in industrial countries, a tendency which is continuing in spite of declining prices. In consequence of this, the supply potential today is much greater than existing demand. Increases in demand are, therefore, quite likely to be met without any increase in prices, at least until the limits of elastic supply are reached. The ECAFE countries can no longer expect to gain from any increases in demand from the West as they did from the post-Korean boom when it was prices more than sales volumes that pushed up their export receipts. While the countries of the region will certainly gain if the upturn in United States production and imports continues, they will have to take note of this basic change in the situation.

Pharmaceutical Enquiry

A committee of enquiry has been appointed for the pharmaceutical industry to

The Study the working of the existing pharmaceutical manufacturing concerns with special reference to the demand for the drugs produced and their essentiality the cost of production, the efficiency of the processes employed and whether the product is made from imported intermediates and penultimate products or from basic raw materials and chemicals;

(2) Study the operations of foreign and Indian concerns who import drugs and pack them here and the extent of tie-up between the wholly or partly owned Indian concerns with foreign companies;

(3) Recommend steps for encouraging the manufacture of important drugs now imported;

(4) Enquire into the scheme of distribution of pharmaceutical products whether imported or manufactured or packed in India, the profit margins to trade or industry and the part played in this by purely Indian as well as other concerns; and

(5) All ancillary matters connected with these.

There have been frequent complaints about the preparation and sale of spurious drugs and of profiteering.