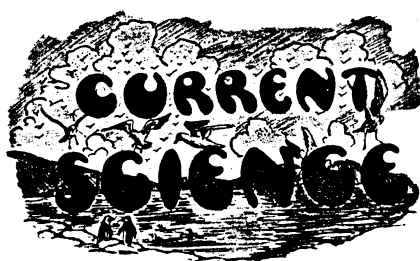


basic needs of our people, particularly those living in rural areas and urban slums, while continuing to strengthen basic research in selected frontline areas of modern Western S&T. There is an urgent need to create and strengthen R&D infrastructure for traditional Indian sciences, where India has the potential to become the world leader. Special efforts will have to be made to encourage study

and research in traditional as well as modern S&T in Indian languages, to ensure involvement of the vast Indian intellect in general and particularly that of artisans, kisans and traditional S&T practitioners, for harnessing their rich knowledge potential. This will also help in developing and adapting such frontier and eco-friendly technologies which shall ensure value addition to our resources,

minimization of waste generation and creation of increased employment opportunities in rural areas and smaller towns. Thus, we require a new S&T policy for sustainable development in the twenty-first century.

N. N. Mehrotra is in the Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow 226 001, India (e-mail: root@cscdri.ren.nic.in).



Vol. IV] NOVEMBER 1935 [No. 5

Over-population in India

In an extensive note recently published in the press, the Public Health Commissioner with the Government of India was reported to be contemplating a discussion of the problem of over-population in India in an article about to appear in the *Indian Medical Gazette*, and also as making a suggestion, that the Federal Administration should deal with the issue of family limitation as a remedy for combating the baleful consequences resulting from an uncontrollable increase of population. In many provinces large masses are at the level of bare subsistence, with hardly any clothing or house furnishings but possessing quite a remarkable power of fecundity. Few will fail to be impressed by the prevailing misery, squalor and poverty of the Indian people, and among the numerous public matters with which the Government of India will shortly be confronted, the subject of raising the economic level of the country and of improving the standard of living of the

common people must necessarily occupy the foremost place.

Modern civilization is full of paradoxes. In the midst of plenty people are allowed to suffer. The banks are embarrassed by a plethora of money, but are unable to release the funds for providing relief to the unemployed. Gold always regarded as an incorruptible standard of currency, has been deflected from its appointed task, with the inevitable effects of discouragement and arrest of business involving human unhappiness. Increase of population considered a sign of public prosperity in the past, has now become a menace. These strange and alarming phenomena in human affairs must inevitably puzzle the ingenuity of all Governments, and perturb the hearts of public leaders. It seems to us that at the root of all these troubles lies the currency problem. The recent policy of sovereign governments of hoarding gold and silver is obviously due to the apprehension of a shrinkage in their supply, and their immobilization paralyzes trade and increase unemployment. If the world would adopt a form of currency, incapable of maldistribution or of being cornered, which could be used purely as a counter or a cheque between services and commodities, perhaps the other social problems might admit of easy solution. It is the inefficient system of world economics that has made some of the existing population superfluous, and the remedies suggested for restricting the increase are in the nature of an experiment in human biology.

We know that the humanitarian measures, which governments and voluntary

public services have adopted for the promotion of the peoples' health and happiness, provided also the cause leading to an absolute increase of population. But no one can seriously suggest the suspension or repeal of all attempts at sanitation and the prevention of disease, the provision of famine relief measures or the protection of the person and property of the people as one of the remedies for over-population. It may be possible to absorb the superfluous population by an extension of irrigation, improved methods of agriculture, emigration and closer settlement of sparsely inhabited lands and by developments in industry and commerce. The limits of what can be done in these directions must be reached sooner or later, and possibly in most parts of the world they must have been already reached.

We are not arguing against the new doctrine of family limitation. Its object is, however, gradually realised by the operation of those social phenomena which we have noticed. It is established by the American school of investigators with a fair measure of probability that education, occupation, better housing and a higher standard of life have individually the power of affecting more or less permanently the rate of fertility. The hope of restricting the population of India seems to lie more in the rapid and energetic promotion of those social developments which must inevitably effect fertility rate, than in the promotion of the artificial methods to which sentiment and custom are hard to be reconciled. The results in the latter case are spectacular, but those arising from the former must be progressive and slow.

FROM THE ARCHIVES