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Nutrition Advisory Committee.

BY the inauguration of the Nutrition Advisory Committee, His Excellency the Viceroy has focussed public attention and enlisted the sympathy of the leaders of public life in favour of the vital problems of human and animal nutrition. In his opening speech H. E. Lord Linlithgow laid particular stress on the application of the researches of the nutrition laboratories to the food habits of the people as well as to those of animals in their service, in close collaboration with the investigations of the agricultural departments. The question of nutrition has been arousing increasing public interest in the last three decades, as a result of social and scientific progress, and the health organisation of the League of Nations has been engaged in investigating certain aspects of this subject for several years. It will be remembered that at the public session of the League Assembly in 1935, a discussion took place on the relation of nutrition to public health on the one hand and to economic and social problems on the other, resulting in the adoption of a series of resolutions urging Governments to examine the practical means

of securing better nutrition. Writing on Nutrition Research in India,¹ we observed that

"The question of feeding India for national efficiency is sufficiently important to warrant the creation of certain new departments such as the Bureau of Food Economics and the Agriculture Adjustment Board which would have to work in closer collaboration with the Nutrition Research Laboratories at Coonoor and with the Provincial Agricultural Departments. The first step is to work out a set of figures showing the amount of land that would have to be devoted to various food crops for each of the dietary plants, assuming that they will be universally used by the Indian population. These figures will naturally include not only crops used directly for human food but also crops necessary to feed the required dairy and work animals. A close

¹ *Curr. Sci.*, April 1935, 3, 10.

relationship has thus to be established between dietary habits and agricultural practice."

We have always emphasised that the problems of public health are more intimately connected with the nutrition of the people and the agricultural policy of the State than with the prevention of diseases, and this view is in accordance with the results of medical researches which establish that most of the maladies which afflict man arise from lack of resistance produced by malnutrition. The institution of the Nutrition Advisory Board which includes experts of agricultural and veterinary science, linked up with the Scientific Advisory Board of the Indian Research Fund Association, must remove the general criticism that "the agricultural policy in India is not correlated with the science of nutrition" and must be the outcome of the recognition of the fact that the problems of public health, human and animal nutrition and of agriculture "vitaly constitute the elements of a single great administrative policy".

The primary task of the Nutrition Advisory Board will be to formulate easily understood principles on which the scientific control of the production and distribution of food to the nation must be founded, and to institute a machinery for popularising these principles. For the purpose of ensuring an equable and equitable distribution of food, it may be necessary for the State to assume the responsibility of controlling the production of food in the country and its retail and wholesale distribution. The dietary change intended to be introduced is an enlightened reform of the habits and appetites of the people, and if the reason for the change is understood, there must be ready acquiescence even by those who are put to the most inconvenience. The problem of animal nutrition introduced for the first time in India, is not likely to land in the question of man *versus* animal; human food in the form of cereals and potatoes may not be employed for fattening animals to the extent of diminishing their supply for man's consumption. On the other hand, the Board ought to indicate the policy of increasing, as far as possible, the food available for man by planting more disease-free cereals, by ploughing up grass lands for wheat and rice cultivation, and by increasing the culture of potatoes. The collection of carefully tested information about nutrition

understood by the average person and about dietary standards suited to different levels of income is the province of experts in land economics, who will have to compare nutritional standards and requirements, the nutritive values of common foods and the cost of their supply. The patterns of diet based on their investigations for the different classes of people and tested by the Public Health Department, should take the form of broad specifications permitting adequate room for individual family selection. It seems to us that the Nutrition Advisory Board should have included in its personnel a food economist and a physiologist whose expert knowledge and guidance are almost indispensable in dealing with the extensive and complicated programme of work undertaken.

Before the Board produces a scheme for dietary plans in relation to incomes, its investigations in India will presumably be based more or less on the lines analogous to those of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration in the United States, dealing with Agricultural production and land use. The information collected by these bodies embraces the scientific results regarding the nutrition values and standards, the practical adoption of these findings into the daily meals of the people, the relation of public welfare to the people's diet and the capacity of land for producing the requisite quantity and quality of food. It ought to be the function of the food economist to investigate the family budgets and fix the prices of the different articles, and even seek for legislative sanction against stocking and for enforcing sales at non-remunerative prices. When complete and sufficiently simple and flexible plans have been prepared, the Nutrition Advisory Board has to employ all the devices of propaganda for popularising the results of their labours for national benefit.

The need of building up a physically stronger, healthier and more efficient population by means of better nutrition has been engaging the attention of Governments for the past thirty years, and that need is obviously the result of the play of forces in modern civilisation. Its problems are machinery and money, its conflicts, labour and capital, its ideals, records and impatience and its achievements, poor health and weak stomach. It should be remembered that the

