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Food Supplies and Health

THIS paradoxical situation, poverty in the midst of plenty, presents a problem the solution of which has proved beyond the power of individual national policies. A more equitable distribution of foodstuffs and renewed prosperity in the farming industry can only be secured by far-sighted co-operative planning on a world scale.

At the League of Nations Assembly in September, Mr. Bruce, speaking for the Australian Delegation, suggested combining the studies of national health and agricultural economics, in the belief that a practical treatment of the one question may help to solve the other. Delegates from twelve countries asked that an international inquiry into the relation of health to nutrition and their bearing on agricultural problems might be discussed by the present Assembly. On behalf of the Government of the United Kingdom, Lord De La Warr welcomed these proposals and looked forward to fashioning practical schemes which will turn increased powers of production into a blessing instead of a disaster and make possible a healthier and fuller life. The adjustment needed is the extension of consumption and not the restriction of output.

Every country has tried to stave off the ruin of its farmers, and some of the emergency measures adopted in self-defence have cut two ways. Restricted imports at first forced up the prices of home produce, but by reducing consumption in the long run reacted adversely on the farmer. Everyone prefers home produce if able to afford it. The extent to which lowered prices increase consumption has recently been demonstrated by two interesting experiments. By issuing vouchers to the unemployed, who formed one third of the population in a Durham town, the Potato Marketing Board effected a price reduction equivalent to 3d. a stone, and the total consumption of potatoes

in the district increased by ninety-six per cent. Through another Government-aided scheme, the price of milk to school children was halved and within nine months the consumption was trebled. The price of meat might be lowered if it became customary in Great Britain, as on the Continent and in the United States, to market veal and 'baby beef' in place of old and costly fat-stock.

By judicious controlling of prices, the current of popular demand can be diverted towards the purchase of the right kinds of foods more surely and quickly than by any educational process. The artificial stimulation of the consumption of such foods as potatoes, milk and milk products, fish, eggs, fresh fruit and vegetables, will repay in health the money expended and may eventually pay in cash. It is good to read in a memorandum just issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries that the wisdom of having spent millions on subsidising production is now questioned, and the financing of price cuts advocated as an alternative likely to pay a dividend in improved national health with less drain on the taxpayer.

From the point of view of nutrition, subsidies for sugar and wheat are unnecessary. Both these foodstuffs were already consumed in sufficient amounts and cannot be produced economically in Great Britain. For health reasons also, the growing consumption of sugar is to be deprecated. A subsidy might more profitably be devoted to the distribution of basic manures for those soured fields which produce nothing but fine crops of sorrel and daisies.

We look forward to the realisation of Mr. Bruce's ideal, the marriage of health and agriculture. At present there is no unity of action. Municipal sanitarians project ever larger and more expensive schemes for swilling wastefully into the sea the

precious mineral salts and organic matter, which, by the appropriate treatment of sewage, could be conserved and used to restore fertility to exhausted soil.

Foodstuffs are the material of which mankind is built, and cannot be viewed dispassionately as purely commercial commodities. An international committee might consider the bill-of-fare which each country can produce and advise how its deficiencies can best be supplemented in the promotion of health by suitable imports. The effect upon land-locked countries of a reduced import of sea-fish and fish-liver oils is now visible in the

prevalence of goitre and rickets in Central Europe. Curtailed importations of citrous fruits, tomatoes, etc., may also prove harmful to health in winter-time.

The extent to which malnutrition exists cannot be assessed in the absence of a proper standard. The figures returned present obvious absurdities; a relatively prosperous borough like Twickenham claiming a malnutrition rate about six times as high as that of Wigan; and Bootle a rate twelve times as high as Liverpool, of which it is an extension. The immediate task is to create a higher standard of life in terms of health and proper food.

The Warburg Institute

Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliographie zum Nachleben der Antike

Band 1: Die Erscheinungen des Jahres 1931. In Gemeinschaft mit fachgenossen Bearbeitet von Hans Meier, Richard Newald, Edgar Wind. Herausgegeben von der Bibliothek Warburg. (A Bibliography on the Survival of the Classics. First Volume: The Publications of 1931. The Text of the German edition with an English Introduction. Edited by the Warburg Institute.) Pp. xxiii+333. (London, Toronto, Melbourne and Sydney: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1934.) 21s. net.

FOUNDED at Hamburg by a wealthy Jewish family who had made a fortune in America, and inspired by Prof. Warburg of that stock, the Warburg Institute has within the last two years been transferred to the banks of the Thames, and now takes rank with the numerous benefactions which our more tolerant nation owes to foreign persecutions. It consists of a rich and specialist library, well arranged in part of Thames House on the Embankment, near the new Lambeth bridge. The volume under review is the first issued from the Institute's new headquarters, and is for the first time introduced by a full and interesting English chapter, giving the general object of the Institute and the general scope of this issue. Both the volume and the Institute deserve the notice and the encouragement of readers of *NATURE*, because, though starting with a literary tradition, they offer promise of providing in England a more adequate library for the study of the history of civilisation (including, and based on, science) than can be found elsewhere. There is in fact no such collection of books anywhere available to the public, though a few

private collectors, such as Dr. Merz at Newcastle-on-Tyne, have been inspired by the idea.

This *catalog raisonné* of more than 300 pages purports to be an account of only the books published in the year 1931, though, as the dates are not given after the separate entries, it is impossible to satisfy one's self on that score, and no doubt many are included which had appeared by then, though not exactly in that year. The editors explain in their introduction that their general ideal is that of promoting the study of the history of *Cultur*, and quote Burckhardt as the fountain-head. The notion has, however, been enlarged in one direction and narrowed in another, since Burckhardt's time, in the programme of the Institute, and this the editors attribute to Prof. Warburg himself. The 'culture' studied is not civilisation as a whole, but 'culture' as represented in the West by the tradition of Greece and Rome. But, while thus limited in extent, it became deeper in content by the inclusion of all forms of tradition in western Europe. Thus folk-lore and magic are included, as well as the æsthetic ideals which appealed to Burckhardt and the earlier students of the art of the Renaissance. Warburg refused to separate literary from artistic or religious documents, on the ground that the student who seeks to understand how the Olympian gods were revived in the Renaissance as æsthetic ideals must also study how they survived in the Middle Ages as astrological and magical demons.

The bulk of the volume is in German, and one can only indicate here in the briefest way the riches of its content. The survival of the classical tradition is discussed, first, in a general way—what does survival in this sense mean, and then, under