

described in this report exemplifies man's increasing control over his environment and heralds a time when all foods will be available at all times and always in their most palatable and nutritional forms. (It will make life easy for the dietitians, but I wonder if it may not prove a little dull!)

However, that time is not yet, and meanwhile much of importance is being discovered. It is only to be expected, in view of the variety of problems that have to be tackled, that progress towards their solution is sometimes held up by lack of data on some fundamental issue. But a glance over the titles of the papers which have been published shows that even under war-time conditions these additional problems were tackled as they came, and in many cases a considerable advance was made in our understanding of the chemistry and physics of biological processes.

One of the most interesting points of advance—and the one which seems to have attracted most attention from other workers—was “the discovery of the reversible formation of starch from glucose-1-phosphate”. A preliminary report on this work appeared in *Nature* of March 23, 1940, p. 451. No less important, however, are the contributions in other fields: the study of mucoproteins, of the chemical changes accompanying the development of rigor mortis, the general problem of the denaturation of proteins, the characterization of the components of connective tissue, the cause and cure of the lessening in biological value of milk powder stored with too high a moisture content.

None of this work is reported in full in this publication. For details the reader must refer to individual papers published in various scientific journals (references are given in full). This report is merely the outline picture; but worthy of attention at that. It is a good example of science applied for the benefit of mankind and of the value of close co-operation between the scientific worker in the laboratory and the trader and administrator in the field. This co-operation was largely brought about by the urgent needs imposed by war-time conditions; it is to be hoped that it may still be maintained now that the need is less obvious than it was.

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WORLD ECONOMIC SURVEY

THE broadsheet “World Economic Survey”, issued as No. 283 by Political and Economic Planning, gives a very useful and concise summary of two large and valuable reports produced by the Department of Economic Affairs of the United Nations Organisation. This Department is carrying on the essential functions of the Economic, Financial and Transit Department of the League of Nations, which issued almost as its swan song the “World Economic Survey, 1942–44”. The comprehensive picture which that report gave of the world economic situation on the eve of victory was supplemented by two other reports, “Commercial Policy in the Post-war World” and “The Cause and Control of Inflation”, the former reviewing the problem of post-war trade policies and trade relationships and the latter monetary experience in Europe after the First World War, which especially for their review of the inter-war years are almost equally valuable in providing the background for the discussions of the Economic and Social

Council and the Economic Commission for Europe, which it is the prime purpose of the two new reports to provide. These reports, “Economic Report: Salient Features of the World Economic Situation 1945–1947”, with a subsequent supplement, and “A Survey of the Economic Situation and Prospects of Europe”, are also intended to find their way into the universities and libraries, and the summary provided by P.E.P. will indicate to the industrialist the extent of the assistance they can give them as well as the economist and research worker.

The European survey provides the more precise and detailed body of information; the most notable feature of the industrial progress of the European countries is the extent to which recovery was retarded in 1947. Agricultural recovery since 1945 has been less satisfactory than in the corresponding period after the First World War, and the volume of food imports into Europe was running in 1947 at about 10 per cent below the pre-war level. The scanty evidence available suggests that, in Europe as a whole, industrial output per man-hour was lower than before the War. The foreign trade of European countries expanded only moderately in 1947 after a rapid recovery in 1946, and an unsatisfactory feature was the sharp decline in intra-European exchanges of food, coal and other essential goods, while trade in luxury products increased. Little hope is entertained that imports of foodstuffs and raw materials can be reduced below pre-war levels, and restoration of equilibrium in Europe's external balance of payments will require a concentrated effort over a period of years. Success depends on the conquest of open or suppressed inflation, the restoration of trade within Europe to pre-war levels and a further expansion of production of the right kind of goods. The survey concludes that, given the continuation of the present high levels of employment, the prospects of attaining the existing production targets for the early 1950's are not unpromising, provided that intra-European trade and credit arrangements can be developed sufficiently to permit a more rational utilization of European resources, and that financial difficulties do not interrupt the flow of overseas supplies.

As regards the rest of the world, while the population is almost 10 per cent greater than ten years ago, food production is still well below pre-war levels, and even if the high hopes for harvests in 1948 are realized, serious deficiencies will remain. Reduction in livestock population is adversely affecting soil fertility and crop yields. Latin-American countries have all suffered from inflation, and the high prices of foodstuffs have lowered the standards of living of many of the inhabitants. Prospects for output and exports of primary commodities other than food in Asia and the Far East are still not very bright, and production, transport and administration will have to be improved greatly before Far Eastern foreign trade is likely to meet the needs of the situation. Areas of Africa which suffered heavily during the War have made marked recoveries, although agricultural output has tended to lag behind the increases in population. Apart from cereal shortages, Africa's most serious problem is the shortage of textiles. The level of industrial production in Australia and New Zealand has been high, but both countries are suffering from shortage of dollars. Both are anxious to continue industrialization, but to do this must promote a high level of immigration. The survey also throws a little light on the disruption of Soviet economy by the War, and the extent of its recovery.