

USE OF COLOURING MATTERS IN FOODS

THE addition of colour to food is common practice; but many colouring substances are toxic and some have already been prohibited. The main issue before the Food Standards Committee set up by the Ministry of Food* was whether the public health would best be safeguarded by extending the present list of prohibited colours or by introducing a list of permitted colours. At first it considered recommending the adoption of the list approved in the United States and Canada; but representation was made to it that "this list would be insufficient to meet the present needs of the food industry in this country". The United States list contains nineteen colours; the colours in use in Britain at the present time number seventy-nine.

The Committee came to the conclusion that "the present Regulations under which in practice almost all known synthetic colours can be used in foods are unsatisfactory", and it states that "a review of scientific literature reveals that for only comparatively few colours is there information as to chronic toxicity or carcinogenicity". It is disturbing to note that, out of the list of seventy-nine colours at present in actual use, the Committee found it necessary to recommend the rejection of thirty-five "because examination of the experimental evidence shows that they have definitely harmful effects on health, or that their chemical structure includes groupings likely to be set free in the body which have been shown to cause cancer or other harmful effects in animals or man". Only twelve out of the seventy-nine seemed definitely safe, the remaining thirty-two being colours "about which there was no direct

evidence of toxicity or harmfulness" but about which there was equally room for doubt.

The Committee states that it has not been able to meet in full the stated requirements of the trade; but there is no doubt that it has gone as far as it could without subjecting the public to quite unnecessary risks, and it includes a recommendation that provision be made for additions to or deletions from the list as further information becomes available.

In view of the widespread use of colourings, it is perhaps not surprising that the Committee should so readily accept the need to continue to permit the use of at least some; but from a nutritional point of view there is much to be said against the practice, quite apart from any danger of toxicity. One can agree with the Committee that "it is generally accepted to be physiologically sound that food should be presented in as attractive a form as possible" and perhaps also that "without the addition of colour many foods would have a drab unattractive appearance". It should, however, be stressed that a drab unattractive appearance indicates a poor standard of catering and is commonly produced by methods of cooking which greatly lower the nutritive value of the food being cooked. If, for example, fish looks drab, let it be served with tomatoes or a naturally green vegetable; these will greatly add to the nutritive value of the meal, whereas dyeing the fish will not. Processing and cooking methods which give a high nutritive value to the food do not require the addition of dyestuffs to make the products attractive. It is necessary to emphasize, far more than the Committee has done, that colourings can be used "to mask the use of inferior ingredients and to give a false impression of quality".

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* Ministry of Food. Food Standards Committee Report on Colouring Matters; Recommendations relating to the Use of Colouring Matters in Foods. Pp. 27. (London: H.M.S.O., 1954.) 1s. net.

SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF FILMOLOGY, PARIS

IT has been found necessary to coin a word to distinguish the study of the film in all its aspects from more limited forms of film study—such as study from the æsthetic angle or study directed towards film-making. Like 'musicology', the term 'filmology' seems to have become established. The Institut de Filmologie, under the double sponsorship of the Faculty of Letters and the Faculty of Science, was founded in the University of Paris in 1948. A course in filmology is provided, and a diploma granted for this subject.

The Second International Congress of Filmology was held in the University of Paris during February 19–23, under the presidency of M. Mario Roques. The executive delegate was M. G. Cohen-Séat (who is the director of the Institut de Filmologie), and the convener was Dr. W. D. Wall, of the Department of Education, Unesco; the presidents of the two Congress Sections were Prof. A. Michotte van den Berck, of the University of Louvain (unfortunately prevented from attending owing to ill-health), and Prof. H. Laugier, of the Sorbonne. Of the three hundred and thirty participants representing twenty-six countries, eight were from Great Britain, and two of these—Miss G. Keir and Prof. G. P. Meredith—

presided over Congress sessions. The work of the Congress was at first carried out by seven groups, acting independently; then followed sessions of combinations of these groups, and, finally, all the group members came together to take part in symposia.

Group 1 of the Congress dealt with psychophysiological effects of cinematograph projection. Problems of three-dimensional and of colour representation, and of sound-recording, were considered, as well as physiological effects and a number of isolated perceptual phenomena; attention was also paid to the electro-encephalograph in relation to the film. Among those contributing were J. Faure, Y. Gallifret, C. E. M. Hansel, G. Heuyer and S. Lebovici. Prof. M. J. Colle, who presided, pointed out that some of the effects of the stimulation of films can be studied by normal physiological procedure, for they are the result of innate reactions. But another and more important category of effects are those resulting from an interpretation of the stimuli, and are partly dependent on acquired experience. These latter effects can best be investigated by the methods of the psychologist.

The psychological approach was employed by Group 2 in its study of the reactions of cinema