

Cigarette Maker's Puff

BRITAIN'S three million anglers are by their numbers a tempting bait for any producer of mass consumer goods. This has not escaped the attention of John Player and Sons of Nottingham, makers of Players No. 6, a brand of cigarettes.

Last week Players moved into a country hotel on the Thames to launch its "£10,000 Research Scheme to Help British Angling". The research scheme, a grandiose venture indeed, calls for a team of fisheries experts to cross the Channel and spend a whole three weeks in Holland, Belgium and Germany, where they will examine continental methods of conserving fish. On their return they will apply their findings for the benefit of British anglers. The team will be accompanied by a film unit which, to plagiarize the firm's own publicity, will make a "colour documentary film showing the work and findings of the delegation, to be available at lectures and on free loan to all angling clubs".

Some may suppose that a search of the scientific literature would with greater efficiency reveal any startling continental advances in fish conservancy. But such an endeavour would hardly make the subject of a film, prominently sponsored by Players and on free loan to all angling clubs. It is also hard at first to see why Players is contributing only £1,000 to the £10,000 "research" scheme and allowing the rest to be raised by angling competitions throughout Britain. But the prizes for all these competitions are being donated by Players, which is unlikely to take pains to conceal its generosity.

The fact that the scheme will take people out into the open air doubtless explains why the Minister of Sport sent a representative. He went as far as to say that "This is a great new development in the angling world, and Players are to be congratulated on their public spirited action in launching the scheme". Other members of the British Government, who have banned cigarette companies from advertising on television, and who intend to prevent them from giving away coupons with their products, may not feel quite so cheerful about the scheme.

Measles Vaccine

THE Ministry of Health will launch in May a campaign to vaccinate against measles all children between the ages of 1 and 15 years who have not yet contracted the disease. Trials carried out by the Medical Research Council, and experience in the United States and elsewhere, indicate that the vaccine is highly effective and that its widespread use could lead to the eradication of measles as a childhood disease. Measles is a biennial epidemic and reported cases in an epidemic year, of which next year in Britain is one, may rise to 750,000. For most people the disease is mild, but about one person in a hundred has to be admitted to hospital and in some cases the disease may be fatal; between 1962 and 1966 there were 434 deaths attributable to measles.

The cost of the campaign is expected to be about £1 million during the first year if the maximum number of susceptible children—between 3·4 and 4 million—come forward for vaccination. In each subsequent year there will be about 800,000 newborns to be vaccinated in their second year of life. The money saved

from not having to treat measles in the population is expected to cover amply the costs of the vaccination campaign. It is not yet known what period of immunity is conferred by the vaccine, but it is thought unlikely that booster injections will be necessary. Antibodies have been detected in children's blood up to six years after vaccination.

Children in Britain are already offered immunization in their first year of life against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough—these vaccines are injected together in a single "cocktail"—and against polio, which is given orally. Vaccines for smallpox, and now measles, are given in the second year of life.

Health in Vietnam

by Anne Clayton

NOT least among the troubles of the population of Vietnam is the increasing incidence of plague, cholera, typhoid and other dengue-like diseases. These infections increase wherever there are large-scale uncontrolled movements of the population. A preliminary report on the subject has now been prepared by the World Health Organization. It indicates that there is a grave danger that infections may spread to other nations of the Pacific basin. The report, prepared during the past six months at the request of the World Health Assembly, was designed to answer several questions. Is there evidence of deterioration in the level of general health of civilian populations? Have the health services been adversely affected? Has a situation arisen in Vietnam which creates potential health hazards or problems for other countries? Any report of this nature is necessarily incomplete, but in view of the many difficulties faced by the investigators the report is a commendable effort.

For South Vietnam, the information has been provided by the official records of the WHO, WHO Epidemiological and Vital Statistics Reports, the Government of South Vietnam through the Regional Office for the Western Pacific and by reports received by the WHO quarantine unit. The account of the situation in North Vietnam is based on more limited information contained in a number of booklets which have appeared in North Vietnam together with the report of a long technical interview with the Minister of Health in North Vietnam, Dr Pham Ngoc Thach. The WHO document now issued is at pains to emphasize the incomplete character of this information, "which is not open to the usual methods of confirmation". The most recent figures in the reports refer to 1964, and the WHO report says that until official statistics are available, "the health situation in North Vietnam must remain somewhat obscure". On the basis of the comparison which it has been possible to carry out, however, it does seem that North Vietnam is less seriously afflicted by disease than the south, and that it is taking measures to prevent the situation getting out of hand.

In South Vietnam, epidemic plague, cholera and an upsurge of syphilis and gonorrhoea are distinctive features; other communicable diseases, especially tuberculosis, together with the lack of adequate sanitation and water supply, are, however, major public health problems. Plague infection has been reported to be widespread among rodents and fleas at certain ports and airports, and cases of the disease have now

been recognized in 27 of the 47 provinces. This situation is worsened by the large-scale movements of the civilian and military population, the prevailing environmental and sanitary conditions, the large number of vermin with their accompanying ectoparasites, the disruption of control programmes and the prevalence of antibiotic-resistant strains of *Pasteurella pestis*.

The numbers of cases of typhoid and paratyphoid are also alarming; a total of 934 people were infected in 1966. Similarly, cases of cholera have risen from none in 1957 to 835 in 1966 and cases of encephalitis from 10 in 1957 to 330 in 1966. The incidence of diphtheria, poliomyelitis, malaria and rabies is also increasing at an alarming rate. Reliable figures of the incidence of venereal diseases are not easy to obtain, and the problem is complicated by the presence and movement of military personnel and others living apart from their families and homes. It is certain, however, that an increase of gonorrhoea reaching epidemic proportions has occurred among adolescents and young adults.

To judge from the figures available, the situation in North Vietnam is surprisingly mild by comparison. Plague, cholera and other dengue-like diseases seem to be absent. Poliomyelitis has been virtually eradicated and tuberculosis has been substantially cut back: typhoid fever is also on the way to extinction. The reasons for these differences are not clear, but, as the report emphasizes, the information available for North Vietnam is not open to the usual methods of confirmation. Bacterial dysentery seems to be one of the most widespread diseases and all venereal diseases are present. Leprosy is also endemic.

What measures are being taken to combat these large-scale infections? According to the report, vaccination and immunization are being used, but once again North Vietnam seems to have taken the lead. As many as 13 million people in the north have been inoculated against smallpox and up to 18 million against cholera. These compare with the figures of more than one million and more than two million respectively in the south. In 1967, there were 1,184 hospitals and other establishments in South Vietnam for the care of in-patients and out-patients, and twenty-six operating theatres in provincial hospitals have been built or redesigned: the number of medical personnel of the Ministry of Health has increased over the years between 1962 and 1967. Long-range planning in South Vietnam is not easy, the report maintains, because of the unsettled state of the country. It has been suggested that an expert group should be appointed to study the situation and establish a national health plan, and a short-term consultant was provided by the WHO during the early months of 1967 to review the existing situation and to advise on national health planning. A comprehensive study of health problems and services has also been made by a United States appraisal team which made recommendations for long-term developments.

Although these findings may seem more encouraging for the North Vietnamese, the nutritional standard in the north is lower than in the south. Calorie intake in the south seems to be uniformly adequate, and protein intake is ample, but there are a number of deficiencies, particularly of thiamine, riboflavine and vitamin A. In the north, on the other hand, the inadequacy of the diet is evident, especially in children: the diet is monotonous, and consists mainly of foods rich in carbohydrate and poor in protein and animal fats.

Parliament in Britain

Decimal Currency

LORD BESWICK said that the Government had no intention of postponing the change to a decimal currency system. Decimalization was now well advanced: two out of the preparatory five years were over and much capital had already been expended. Because of the real economic benefits which would accrue it was the view of the Government that it was in the best interests of the country as a whole to proceed with decimalization as planned. The change was expected to be of real help to the expansion of the British export trade. (Oral answer, House of Lords, January 31.)

Committees of Inquiry

THE Secretary of State for Defence, Mr D. Healey, gave the membership of six committees of inquiry for the Ministry of Defence appointed since October 1964. The committees and their chairmen are: Sub-Committee on Research and Development for Anti-submarine Warfare (Dr J. C. Kendrew); Space Review Committee (Professor H. Bondi); Armoured Warfare Sub-Committee (Professor J. L. M. Morrison); Conventional Armaments Working Party (Professor B. H. Flowers); Personnel and Anti-Personnel Research Working Party (Professor P. L. Krohn); and Working Party on Materials Research (Professor A. H. Cottrell). The Defence Research Committee was responsible for keeping the defence research programme under review to ensure that it was geared to defence needs within the resources available. Agreements with universities to carry out longer term research in aid of defence operational analysis were made wherever appropriate and two studies, involving exploratory work of interest to the study of land warfare, were at present being undertaken at Newcastle and Nottingham Universities. The Defence Operational Analysis Establishment also had frequent, but less formal, contacts with university faculties. Arrangements had been concluded with certain universities to create an additional post in an existing faculty to specialize in the defence aspects of its discipline. Five such appointments had so far been made, at Aberdeen, Edinburgh, London (King's College), Oxford (All Souls College) and at Southampton, and two further appointments were under consideration. (Written answer, January 31.)

Research Establishments

THE Minister of Technology, Mr Anthony Wedgwood Benn, stated that the programmes of the Ministry's research establishments were kept under review by committees on which industry was strongly represented. The ministry was encouraging the establishments to take on more work for industry on a repayment basis. In defence and civil aviation, joint research programmes had been set up with the Society of British Aerospace Companies, aimed at rationalizing the location and finding of the work. At the Royal Radar Establishment, an Industrial Applications Unit had been set up to act as a focal point for the application in industry of the results of the establishment's defence research. Generally, the policy was that the programmes of the establishments should be closely related to the needs of industry and drawn up in collaboration with them. (Written answer, January 31.)