

The Chlorophyll Hoax

THE West may have discarded chlorophyll, but India is determined to take it up in a big way. The Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun, a recent press note says, has been conducting researches to help the establishment of a chlorophyll industry in India. Rabindranath ranted against his countrymen for running after the discarded clothes of the West. But who cares? Not-content with suggesting the use of chlorophyll as a pigment for the colouration of Vanaspati to prevent its use for adulterating ghee, the Dehra Dun Institute, or rather the Press Information Bureau release mentioned above which publicises the activities of the Institute, holds forth approvingly on the process that had been developed at the Institute for the preparation of copper chlorophyll. This is made from the dry leaves of stinging nettle. " Besides being used as a colorant for soaps and oils," the note goes on to say, " it forms a base for preparing a water-soluble chlorophyll, widely employed in America in a variety of preparations such as deodorant tablets, breath candies, air freshners, mouth washers, tooth pastes and chewing gums ". Water-soluble chlorophyll has also been prepared from edible leaves of both forest and field. This product is intended only for edible purposes and we are told that "it serves as a tonic and a *deodorant*" (italics ours).

Apparently, neither the research workers at the Dehra Dun Institute nor the copy writers of the Information Ministry appear to be aware of the stir created by chlorophyll in America and of its sequel Britain. Of its use as pigment, high pressure selling has made people in this country only too familiar with its sickly green colour. It will be useful to have something to stop the adulteration of ghee. But one wishes, it could be something more pleasing than the sickly green that meets the eye now-a-days almost the first thing in the morning when one brushes one's teeth. Granting its value as a 'strategic' pigment for saving ghee from adulteration, what about its Aforesaid properties as a deodorant? The US Bureau of Standards has dismissed it bluntly; " We have no reason whatever to believe that chlorophyll has anything to do with deodorisation ". The claims for chlorophyll as a

deodorant have also been categorically rejected by chemical and clinical trials reported in the *British Medical Journal*. The chlorophyll vogue which swept the United States has invaded this country. It is one of the biggest hoaxes that have been perpetrated on an unsuspecting public in this country, surpassed only by the high pressure selling campaign for hall-pointed pens with guaranteed service that swept the country immediately after the war. The gullible lost their money then as they are doing now. But this time it is more serious since it has vitiated our institutes of research. One should not talk about ethics of advertising in this country, but Calcutta recently started an advertisement club, one of the objects of which was to set up and maintain high standards of advertising. One wonders what this Club is doing to spread or check this strident falsehood, masquerading as science!

Where existing productive capacity in industries is not being fully exploited, for one reason or another, there is little justification at sight in increasing such capacity. This is the view that the Planning Commission has taken in setting up targets for industries. But even where idle capacity is very large and there is little chance of its being fully exploited in the plan period, the Commission has not suggested that such idle capacity should be scrapped and resources thus released put to more productive uses. The Commission has gone by simple arithmetic, not always tempered by commonsense. It makes no assumptions that are remotely macro-economic, based on expectations of higher demand that may follow from increased national income resulting from the investment the Commission envisages. One may not quarrel with the Commission for taking a practical, commonsense view, instead of going into the finer points of changing expectations. It does strike one as odd, however, that while accepting it as a general principle that consumption, except in the case of the essential necessities of life, are to be maintained at a given ceiling, in no single case in its programme of industrial development has the Commission thought of recommending that idle

capacity should be scrapped.

Now, a caveat has been entered against the general principle that existing capacity should not be expanded, merely because much of it lies idle and unutilised. The existing capacity may be high cost capacity, in which case, clearly, advantage lies in replacing it by more efficient or lower cost production. This is made into an argument against imposing restrictions on foreign investment in spheres which can be marked off as forbidden territory on purely *a priori* grounds. One may be disposed to agree, since it is difficult to resist the claims of superior efficiency in any sphere of production. But when this argument is further buttressed by the highly sophisticated reasoning that foreign investment may mean not only more efficient production but also that it may create the demand for its product by superior and high pressure selling, eg, advertising to create demand for the product in question, one begins to be assailed by doubts. The implied assumption is that more sales and increased consumption, whatever the product, will necessarily raise the standard of living and augment welfare. The cloven feet of such sophisticated reasoning are exposed when this claim for expansion of capacity is in respect of products, the sales of which can be increased with such spurious appeal as in the case of the imaginary virtues of a deodorant which just do not exist. There are other ways of creating demand the economics of which is no different, whatever its ethics. The accent is on modernisation, even when it means nothing more than flippant and wasteful consumption. The argument can be stretched to the point of extolling conspicuous consumption which can be held up as the most effective incentive to greater exertion, enterprise and therefore, in the long run, to increasing output which —if quality discrimination and control is abandoned— will automatically lead to increased consumption and greater welfare.

Indeed this highly sophisticated claim on behalf of foreign investment has been staked very ingeniously. The answer to it should not be delayed for such delay will only spell much waste and store up

trouble for the future. Critics who condemn division of markets for the less efficient producers by artificial controls on production or by fiscal measures, eg, in the case of handlooms, have to face this problem squarely sooner or later. The principle which they condemn in one case, ran it be supported in another. eg, in organised industry where idle capacity is sought to be protected against the entry of more efficient foreign enterprise merely on the ground that there is enough capacity to meet existing demand? On the other hand, if we are short of capital, there is a case for ordering its most effective utilisation, which can be assured only by directing it into certain preferred channels. This means that the choice cannot be left to the investor, it has to be exercised at the governmental level. If the principle is clearly enunciated and firmly adhered to, it would help to avoid friction in spheres in which such friction will do no good either to foreign or domestic enterprise. On the other hand, it may do a world of good by directing foreign capital to the more desirable channels.

An interesting exhibition of hand made toys was organized at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi by the Handicrafts Board. The Exhibition was opened by the Finance Minister who put the organisers in a very awkward position by offering every kind of assistance, except financial. One wonders what other assistance the Finance Minister had in mind. Any way Shri Chintaman was considerate and forbearing. He did not deliver a lecture on folk art nor did he presume to tell the organisers how they should set about the tricky business of collecting toys. But why does he think the organisers got him for opening the exhibition, for his superior knowledge of art?

There are two kinds of hand made toys, the commercial toys which can be picked up almost anywhere and the village toys, often beautiful specimens of folk art, which are only made for local consumption and are difficult to come by, except in the village fairs of the locality held in certain seasons of the year. So one cannot just set forth with plenty of cash and buy up all the special toys to hold an exhibition.

To collect specimens from all over the country, it would be necessary to look in at every nook and corner, to visit the fairs as and when they are held, and **that too**, not in

any one province or district. For every district and every province has its own distinctive toys. The organisers of the Exhibition did not have that much time on hand nor had they planned things so long in advance. So the next best was to locate private collections, empty the State Emporiums and, supplement with such purchases as could be made within a short time, select and arrange the exhibits in an effective manner. This itself entailed very hard work and many long hours. The results, though not reported except by the Delhi papers, were extremely encouraging.

Toy makers are in no better plight than other handicrafts men. Imported toys have invaded their markets, tastes have changed and the attraction of mechanical contrivances which move, though not for long, under the impulse of spring, are irresistible, as much for the child as for most adults. The more elaborate toys which need a lot of skill and labour have no longer their old patrons. The following report from a toy collector who scoured the whole of Rajputana in the hope of picking up interesting specimens is representative of many other parts of the country.

"The handicrafts men who used to make tops have given up their hereditary occupation. Formerly it was the custom in the State that toymakers presented the Rajah with the first specimens of their craft. The craftsmen got in return a reward of Rs 50 each. Now the Rajah spends most of his time in Europe. The last time when he was here, one of these craftsmen paid his *nazaar* with a toy for half-a-dozen times but got nothing in return. They can no more make a living by making articles which have no use value, in the absence of patronage." The Handicrafts Board has to turn the tide!

The exhibition is a preliminary selection for the toy section of the Museum of Handicrafts which the Government are going to set up. As in other exhibitions organised by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, toys were on sale at 25 per cent of cost price, charges for transport, breakages and other incidentals being borne by the Ministry. For every rupee realised from sales, the Ministry had to incur an extra Rs 20 in expenses and overheads. This is a rough measure of the subsidy to which some will object on the ground that benefits are passed on to the actual toy makers in very unequal proportions. This is, however, too shortsighted a view, pro-

vided one shares the hope that by holding exhibitions and other means, demand can be created for the products of handicrafts, at home and abroad.

More pertinent is the question, is the money being spent to some purpose? Creating demand means continuous and sustained propaganda for which all known methods of publicity have to be utilized in a systematic manner. An exhibition held once in a blue moon is just a flash in the pan. It will not leave a permanent impression on the public mind, unless it is followed up in a systematic manner. Is the right type of handicraft being chosen and something being done to improve quality and the taste, both of producers and prospective consumers? At the Delhi Exhibition, the toys collected from the State Emporiums had to be rejected as their selection was so bad. Will the selection be any better if it is done by the employees of the Handicrafts Board? Or by high society ladies, who run these shows, who are more prone to fall for depraved imitations and have rarely the cultivated taste of the connoisseur, the eye for the really beautiful?

A feeling for good and beautiful can be created, no doubt, if the public gets an opportunity of seeing the genuine in preference to the tawdry and meretricious. But it is an uphill task. Lovers of folk art must be prodded to action when they find that toy makers are actually been taking clay casts of celluloid dolls in order to be able to meet the current demand. Why blame them? After all it is the purchaser who has the last word.

Second Wheat Estimates

The All-India second estimate of wheat for 1952-53 puts the area under wheat at 22,1.1 1,000 acres compared with the corresponding adjusted second estimate of 21,594, 000 acres of 1951-52. This shows an increase of 2.5 per cent in acreage which is distributed uniformly over almost all the major wheat growing States. favourable weather conditions at the time of sowing accounts for this increase which more than offsets the fall recorded in a few States, mainly Madhya Bharat.

This estimate is for the period upto the middle of February but does not cover the entire area sown to wheat. The past three years' experience shows that the final estimate is 7.2 per cent higher than the second estimate.