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FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY BY 1951

ONE of the colossal ventures on which the Government of India have embarked and one of the biggest challenges which they have accepted is, according to the Minister for Food and Agriculture, to deliver the country from the bondage of foreign food. The overall picture of the food deficit can be gathered from the data furnished by Government experts who have carefully examined the situation. Their findings record a 10 per cent. deficit of cereals, a 20 per cent. deficit of pulses, and a 150 per cent. deficit of fats. For meat, fish and eggs together, a three hundred per cent. deficit is recorded. The country suffers from a 200 per cent. deficit with respect to vegetables while with regard to fruits the deficit rises to 300 per cent. The deficit with regard to milk which is considered an essential nutrient, amounts to 350 per cent. When these deficits are made up, it is considered that the Nation would be in a position to feed itself adequately and in accordance with modern standards of nutrition.

Statements made in the press and from

the platform may have given most of us the impression that the country is faced with a deficit of only ten per cent.; but this small deficit, we believe, refers only to that of cereals for whose supply we have been depending mostly upon dollar countries. The import of this important item of our diet has caused a severe drain on our dollar resources which, under normal conditions, should have been utilised for the building up of our industries. If only these imports could be stopped by making the country self sufficient with regard to cereals, the country can take up its programme of industrialisation. The stirring appeal made by our Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, to the Nation in this connection should evoke an instant and spontaneous response from the heart of every citizen of India. He announced that the Government of India had decided to deal with the food problem on a war basis. "In the mighty drive for food production, which is ultimately a war against poverty and ignorance, against malnutrition and high prices," declared the Prime Minister, "every citizen can be a soldier and can

serve his or her country. All of us will have to tighten our belts."

Panditji outlined a three point programme for abolishing the 10 per cent. deficit :—

1. An intensive and better cultivation of the land, which should result in a 15 per cent. increase of yield; 2. the growing of supplementary foodstuffs like sweet potatoes, tapioca and banana; and 3. bringing under cultivation lands in the compounds of the houses in towns and cities. We are all aware of the way in which England mobilised, during its fateful days of German blockade, its resources, every square inch of its land being exploited for food production.

The Central Government will extend all facilities and help to each and every participant in this great and patriotic endeavour and with a view to reduce the red tape and secure quick action and efficient co-ordination, some of the important suggestions of Lord Boyd Orr have been accepted. First, an administrative machinery which can function swiftly and efficiently without the normal delays of the

Government apparatus will be set up. Secondly, perfect and smooth co-ordination and co-operation between the Centre and the Provinces and the States will be secured, and thirdly the organisers "must reach down to the farmer in the field". That is, there must be a closely knit series of links between the high level policy-makers and the farmers to whom belongs the ultimate responsibility of carrying out the policy. The farmer must understand and must willingly co-operate.

It would not be difficult to reach the target set by the Prime Minister by 1951 provided the Government machinery which has to organise this food drive is staffed with conscientious, efficient and competent personnel; the people in general also have a compelling responsibility in this venture. During the World War II, England launched the "Dig for Victory" campaign which inspired the creation of Great Britain's land army who stepped up the production of food by 25 per cent. Let us "dig for self-sufficiency", and attain the target by 1951.

EDWARD JENNER, 1749-1823

1949 marks the Bicentenary of the birth of Edward Jenner—the Father of Vaccination.

Edward Jenner, born on May 17, 1749, at Berkeley, England, studied Pharmacy and Surgery and started his career as the House Pupil of the great Anatomist, John Hunter. In 1771, Jenner was assigned with the task of arranging Captain Cook's Natural History collections. He did this with such skill and success that Cook invited Jenner to join his next expedition. Jenner refused.

Jenner's epoch-making discovery of Vaccination came in 1796. It was the culmination of the careful experimentation and sound reasoning of Jenner who, to begin with, sought to verify the popular belief that cow-pox gave protection against Smallpox. It is an odd fact that the Royal Society rejected Jenner's findings although he was, by then, already a Fellow elected for his paper on "The Natural History of the Cuckoo". Undaunted by this rebuff, Jenner carried on his work and published his classical paper

entitled "*An Inquiry into the causes and effects of the Variolæ Vaccinæ*".

The importance and value of Jenner's work soon became evident and country after country adopted Vaccination as a preventive means against Smallpox. The first vaccination in India was done in Bombay in 1802. Jenner died in 1823 full of years and honours.

This in brief was the life and work of one of the great benefactors of humanity. And a grateful posterity will cherish Jenner's memory not merely for the protection he gave against a dreaded scourge, Smallpox, but for having kindled the trails of a new science—Immuno-therapy. Pasteur and Koch glowed the torch first lit by Jenner.

Like all truly great men, Jenner was unspoilt by his success and remained to the end what he always loved to be—a quiet country doctor, kindly and affable, fond of music, gentle but firm in his convictions, a lover of nature and above all, devoted to his work.

V. N. K.