

LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

SURVEY OF NATIONAL NUTRITION POLICIES, 1937-38.*

The work of the League of Nations on the problem of nutrition, which has already created such wide public interest, has now been carried a stage further by the publication of a book of 120 pages, entitled "Survey of National Nutrition Policies, 1937-1938." This study is of interest not only to those directly concerned with the problem of nutrition but to the general public of the various countries covered. It is written in a style which is readily comprehensible to the ordinary man or woman.

The Survey opens with a chapter on the progress of the work of the League in regard to nutrition problems. In addition to examining a number of technical questions, it is shown that the Technical Commission on Nutrition has been giving practical help to Governments. It has, for example, furnished advice in regard to the planning of a minimum emergency diet for the feeding of refugees in Spain.

In Chapter II, concerning National Nutrition Committees, the creation of which was recommended by the League, it is pointed out that such Committees now exist in over 20 countries. Only three Committees were in existence when the League enquiry started.

A chapter on the most suitable methods of making nutrition surveys is followed by another which is of special interest, since it gives details regarding the surveys undertaken and the results obtained in various countries. There is a section of several pages on the United Kingdom, where extensive surveys are now being carried out. It will be recalled that these were referred to by the Prime Minister in his speech in the House of Commons during the debate on the Address on November 8th last.

Australia is another country about which particularly interesting information is given, and there are also sections on other British countries—New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and India.

This chapter is full of illuminating facts about food habits in various countries. It is stated that, in an enquiry in the United States among the families of wage earners and clerical workers, from 40 to 60 per cent. of the diets of white families in four regions were found to be in need of improvement. In Hungary, it has been found that, if exports are to remain unchanged and if requirements are to be fully met, the present production of milk would need to be increased by 120 per cent. and of eggs by as much as 470 per cent. In Bulgaria the peasant is said to be definitely underfed during the busy agricultural seasons, while the bread, which provides 79 per cent. of the total energy value of his diet, is often unfit for human consumption. An enquiry in Norway showed that 53 families out of a total of 301 did not use any whole milk at all during the four weeks of the investigation. A good many villages of Yugoslavia observe practically all the Orthodox fasts, which may amount to as many as 206 days in the year. These are only a few of the facts brought to light in Chapter IV, which deserves to be read by the intelligent layman who wishes to keep abreast of the problems of our times.

Chapter V, on Special Research, is of interest principally to experts, but the following one, dealing with action taken to improve nutritional standards, can be read and appreciated by all. It contains a brief description of the numerous measures taken in various countries to increase the consumption of milk, to provide cheap food to the poor, to feed school children, to improve the nutrition of mothers and young children and so on.

In the next chapter, reference is made to certain of the economic aspects of the nutrition problem. It is suggested—and a striking illustration of this from Hungary is given—that measures of relief only touch the fringe of the problem, and the Survey indicates other possible measures for making good dietary deficiencies.

In the concluding chapter, the steps taken to educate the public in various countries are described. Much can be accomplished by means of education and publicity, since, as the Survey points out, "it is surprisingly common to find relatively well-to-do sections of the population living on poor diets when, for an expenditure within their means, they could, by the wise choice of foodstuffs, obtain all the constituents of a good diet in sufficient quantities."

This Survey is an example of the type of work in which the League has already had considerable success. There is brought together in one small, readable volume a mass of facts collected from official sources in a large number of countries. It is not merely a work of reference but also a document in which even experts can learn what is being done in other countries than their own. Such a dissemination of knowledge and ideas is of real and immediate practical value.

FIRST AID POSTS IN LONDON.

Proposals for the location of first aid posts have now been submitted to the Ministry of Health by almost all the Metropolitan Boroughs; and these proposals have been agreed with the Department, either officially or provisionally by the London Hospital Officer in 18 of the boroughs and in the City. Eventually the County will have over 200 aid posts, excluding the number which is to be established by the Port of London Authority in the dock area.

Use of Hospitals.

Following the issue of the Ministry's circular in January, which recommended that there should be a doctor at every aid post and that posts should be established as far as practicable in hospitals and other medical buildings, the Borough Councils revised their earlier proposals in order to make as much use of medical premises as they could; with the result that in the schemes already approved more than half the posts will be in hospitals, clinics or health centres. This is thought to be particularly important in London where the public know the hospitals well, and would instinctively make for them if injured in the streets. It has the further advantage that the posts could be ready to function at very short notice.

One Mobile Unit in every Borough.

There is to be at least one mobile unit in every borough. The mobile unit is to consist of a van filled with cupboards containing the full medical equipment of a fixed first aid post. A doctor, and if possible a trained nurse, would travel inside the van.

Underground Posts in Westminster.

The location of the first aid posts in the City of Westminster has been agreed between the City Council and the Department. There are to be ten in all. One in the new Westminster Hospital, which as a frame building of modern construction is well adapted to withstand splinters and the effects of blast; one in the basement of Adelphi House (to serve the Charing Cross Hospital); one in the basement of Kingston House (to serve St. George's Hospital) and two more in the basements of Dolphin Square and Berkeley Square. The remaining five posts will be smaller, and will all be located in hospitals; in St. Vincent Square, Soho Square, and three others still to be decided. The Council are also considering the provision of a mobile unit.

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