

THE SUGAR SUBSIDY

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. MURIEL BELL, Nutritionist to the Department of Health)



THE other day an experienced orthopaedic surgeon invited me into the Children's Ward to look at his cases. Among them were two little girls with osteomyelitis, a disease resulting from an infection of the bones, a disease that you would do anything to avoid. "This is very common in New Zealand," said the surgeon. "Any theory as to the reason why it is so frequent here?" I asked. "Too much white flour and sugar" came the answer. I looked up the figures in the Year Book and found that for 1939 the total of cases treated in public hospitals was 530.

On encountering a physician, I asked why osteomyelitis was so common here. "Too many lollies" came the answer.

If we are wise, we shall accept statements like these with reservation, but at any rate it seems significant that both of the doctors appeared to agree that too much sugar was one factor in its causation. If you need more than this, go to the dentists and ask what they think about dental decay and its relationship to sugar consumption.

Everyone who comes to New Zealand from overseas remarks on the quantities

of sweet things, particularly cakes, that we consume in this country. The average figure for sugar per person per day is 5½ ounces—far too much.

The trouble about an undue proportion of sugar in the dietary is that, by satisfying the appetite of the child or adult, the sugar displaces good food—the vegetables and milk which are put on the table at the next meal are spurned. Not only that, but anything which, like sugar, supplies energy to muscles and other tissues, requires substances like vitamin B for supervising its utilisation by the tissues. And yet, being a pure crystalline substance, it contains no minerals or vitamins. Thus it increases the need for vitamin B and yet contributes none of this vitamin. Moreover, being a substance which, in solution, exerts a potent osmotic attraction on the cells with which it comes in contact, it is apt to be irritating to the alimentary tract.

Liability Rather Than Asset

And yet this foodstuff is popular and consumed to excess. It is not an asset, but rather a liability. It spoils the

appetite for harder foods that have to be chewed — one reason why dentists blame it as one of the causes of dental decay. It lessens the consumption of milk and dairy products, eggs, meat, vegetables and fruit, while itself devoid of any protective qualities whatever. Its increasing use in this country is to be regarded with concern. Remember, too, that sweet shops are always to be found in close proximity to schools!

On consulting the statistics for this commodity, we find that the yearly total consumption of sugar is up to 86,000 tons. Confectioners (those who manufacture sweets and chocolates) use 7,700 tons annually. One calculates that another 7,000 to 8,000 tons are probably

used for commercial canning and jam making. Another 2,000 tons is used by breweries. Presumably, something in the vicinity of 69,000 tons is used for household purposes. These are the approximate figures, in spite of a revenue tax of 1d per lb for sugar.

In England they are subsisting on small rations of sugar. If rationing of sugar comes our way also, perhaps we shall learn that rationing has its good points—in reduction of dental caries, and in prevention of malnutrition, not to mention lessening of the middle-aged spread.

(Next week: "Faces May Make or Mar Careers," by Dr. Turbott.)

THE OTHER INDIA

(Continued from previous page)

of their own great Aryan Epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Back Through History

History ran backwards for us to the plaintive jangling of the *gamelan*. We saw the Aryan, "noble," invaders of India, perhaps fifty centuries ago. We saw so-distant Java colonised—how remains largely mystery. We saw Buddhism arrive; and remembered the Japanese poet Kagawa, a speck lost in darkness on the immensity of the Barabodoe; and as we brooded on all that lost endeavour, and wondered if it had any cosmic meaning, suddenly the light flashed on us that it was the quiet courageous living of Buddhist saints and missionaries that had tamed savage man in the East, as Christian living had in the West, in preparation for the Universal Reign of God in all human spirits, and over all human institutions. We saw sixty generations of similar peasants, knee-deep in the slush of their rice terraces; the identical stories we were watching played identically, with only slight intentional refinements or fallings away with the passage of the centuries; princes rising and falling according to the only two possible *dénouements* to the one theme of intrigue and violence; taxes flowing in endlessly; the earth never failing in her two crops yearly and her stage settings of riotous colour—twelve hundred years! Except to the disgraced courtier, the merchant under the thumbscrews of a rapacious ruler, the mystic pondering man's creatureliness, God-hungry heart, and self-insufficiency,

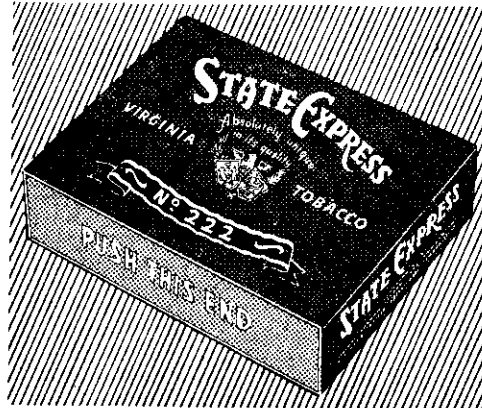
or the peasant homeless and starving by war, flood, plague, typhoon, volcanic devastation, it must have seemed a fairly satisfying—the only conceivable—existence, and destined to continue in the endless cycles predicated in Javanese philosophy.

And Now?

Then suddenly the fanatical missionary-trader-pirate Moslem burst the rhythm of life. And close at his heels strode red-haired green-eyed, long-nosed and long-shanked pink Demons from Utmost West, demanding tribute of spices. (You will hardly recognise the Portuguese, now the darkest of Europeans—largely because of their Malay and Negro mixture. But it is so we of Europe appear to the Far Eastern peoples). Then the Portuguese in turn were violently superseded by even more outlandish, taller, paler, more ruthless conquerors. They left a legend, a trade-way, hundreds of words in the Malay *lingua franca* (which the Dutch and British housewives ordering in it never suspect). And they left the Dutch—the Dutch solidly settled, in the beaver hats and black broadcloth of their own misty flats, strange, unexpected, unemotional heirs to the whole heritage of dashing Portuguese, ardent Arab, flaming rajah, saffron saint, dawn-of-history Aryan adventurer, and blazing colourful provident-improvident Nature. Bloody wars were fought. Harsh capitulations were signed. The whole sun-soaked island of Java became one huge estate toiling for distant shareholders in cold stone cities under a bleak northern sky. The other islands, undeveloped, still jungle-clad, stood by waiting their turn.

But now?

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