

Weekly Notes

Census Profile

CAN one draw the profile of the population from the census reports? For the whole of India, it would be premature to make the attempt until the reports on all the States are available. Even when they are, the profile may not come out sharp and clear, for in the process of totalling up, the outlines get blurred and the composite picture that emerges is bound to be hazy. The profile of a particular State is easier to attempt as its lines are more clear. The Census Report for Bombay Saurashtra and Kutch offers a particular temptation in that it brings into focus the operation of a number of factors which can be studied with some profit within this limited sphere. Not that the area covered is any sense homogenous. Far from it. On the contrary, the movements of population, the differences in the livelihood categories and the inter-zonal variations are the main attractions for such a study.

For the States covered by him, Mr Bowman, the Superintendent of Census Operations, notes a slight fall in the percentage of married women in the child-bearing age group. The proportion of married women in the age group 15 to 45 to the total population determines the future rate of growth. This percentage rose from 22.24 in 1921-30 to 22.45 in 1931-40 but declined to 22.18 in 1941-50. The slight fall seems to be hardly of any significance especially when we have a birth rate in the region of 40 per 1,000 which is extremely high, judged by any standard. The birth rate has also fallen since the turn of the century but only very slightly.

What about the effects of internal emigration and immigration on the rate of growth? These are of considerable importance for some of the States, particularly Bombay and West Bengal, which being the centres of industry attract a stream of people from other States. Apparently, this trend has greatly intensified since the number of immigrants to Bombay State doubled during the last two decades. Bombay has drawn people from Saurashtra, Hyderabad, Uttar Pradesh, Madras, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, the number of immigrants from Madras having been quadrupled by comparison with 1931 and nearly trebled in the case of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pra-

desh and 2½ times that rate in the case of Rajasthan.

Have the methods of livelihood of the population changed to any significant extent that it may throw some light on the direction in which the economy of these parts has been moving? The most remarkable feature undoubtedly is the lower percentage engaged in agriculture in the population of Saurashtra and Kutch, as compared to that of the Bombay State. In the first two halves the population belongs to non-agricultural classes as compared to only 2/5ths in the case of the Bombay State. The reason for it is a matter of considerable interest since it is admitted on all hands that any improvement in the conditions of the people can come only from a reduction in the numbers engaged in agriculture. An intriguing hypothesis put forward by Mr Bowman is that the comparatively high rate of non-agricultural population in the States of Kutch and Saurashtra is due to the lack of centralisation in their economic lives, and the consequent need of securing greater self-sufficiency. That is to say, because people in these States could not have their requirements satisfied by a centralised administration and did not have a ready supply of manufactures, they were forced to attempt a greater degree of self-sufficiency.

This is a startling hypothesis and worth pursuing. If the suggested conclusion is confirmed by further study, it will strengthen the case for decentralisation, though on grounds quite different from those usually advanced in its favour. Decentralisation can then be suggested as a ready solution for two of our baffling problems which are not unrelated, viz the alarming rate of population growth and unduly large proportions engaged in agricultural operations.

Wool Export

EXPORTS of wool are still controlled, but the system of fixing an overall quota has been given up. Instead, applicants for exports will be allotted quota on the basis of their past exports. Licences will be granted for up to 60 per cent of actual exports made by them during January-June this year. Shipments can be made until the end of February, 1954. Earlier, in September the Government had announced

that export of wool would be licensed to actual shippers up to 20 per cent of the shipment effected by them during the first half of this year. The Government will consider applications also from those who had not exported in the period January-July 1953, but did so in the first half of either 1952 or 1951.

This system gets round the difficulty of fixing the export surplus for raw wool for the year. The estimates made by the Government and the track varied widely in past years and gave rise to a great deal of dispute.

The All-India Wool Trade Federation has entered a vehement protest that the policy is against the "unanimous demand of the trade" for a "first-come-first-served" licensing. The trade fears that "an artificial pressure" on prices will be created, and further, that the basic period has been arbitrarily chosen.

The Government has already taken up the question of checking the quality of wool exported. An *ad hoc* committee was recently set up to examine the grade specifications which had been notified for wool meant for export. With a quality check in force, the system of licensing will naturally limit freedom in giving permission for export. In the circumstances, it is difficult to see how a "first-come-first-served" licensing policy can be adopted.

Equipment for River Valley Projects

The Government of India have appointed a committee to report on measures necessary for the efficient operation and maintenance of construction plant and machinery used on river valley projects. It consists of the following:

Shri K Gopal Iyengar, retired Superintendent Engineer, Tungbhadra Project, Madras (Chairman); Mr B H landmark, Mechanical Engineer attached to the Mangal Project, and Mr K R Harvey, Colombo Plan Specialist attached to the Hirakud Dam Project (members); and Shri G G Dhimak, Public Works Department, Bombay (Member-Secretary).

After studying problems connected with the construction plant and machinery, the Committee will make recommendations on standardising the makes, types and sizes best suited for various kinds of work, the combination and matching of plant where more than one unit is involved and correct apportionment of labour