

ly improved and recovery of sugar from cane can be maximised. These are matters which cannot be satisfactorily settled by an occasional reference to the Tariff Commission or some other body and if control over price and distribution is to be continued, the problems created for the sugar mills by the failure of nomi-

nated distributors to life their stocks or by the persistence of pockets of shortage either due to defects in the system of distribution or transport bottlenecks have also to be continuously looked into. All these call for continuous study and timely decision. There are so many committees, commissions and administrative

bodies already in existence that one hates to suggest the creation of one more. But the problems of the sugar industry do call for adequate treatment at the expert level. The formation of a Central Sugar Board is therefore obviously called for: in fact, it is overdue.

## Mismanagement in Sindri

THE management of industrial undertakings in the public sector and the accountability of the Minister in Parliament in respect of such undertakings are delicate questions that come up time and again. The case for complete autonomy for such undertakings has often been accepted in principle; in practice, however, none of these undertakings runs as autonomous bodies, whatever may be the form of their organisation

The obscurity of the relationship between the actual management, the board of directors or advisers and the Ministry concerned, it is widely believed, is largely responsible for mismanagement and inefficiency. Publicity given to the actual operations of the industry, however, is a dangerous thing in that it cuts both ways. On the one hand, the glare of publicity is the final insurance against mismanagement and inefficiency: on the other, initiative and bold execution are liable to suffer, if not completely inhibited, if the people in charge have constantly to think of attracting embarrassing attention from others. As larger and larger investments go into the public sector of industries, the nation's stake in the efficiency of management of these industries increases and the Government has to do something to ensure the public that all is well on this particular front. The Committee of Parliament whose business it is to look into these undertakings are an ever present thorn on the side of the Government and whenever there is talk of something being done, the suspicion is aroused that it may end up with sheltering these public sector undertakings from the public eye rather than stepping up the efficiency of their management.

The controversy raised in Parliament over the operation of the Sindri Fertiliser Factory pinpoints the sort of difficulty which arises

when the relationship between the management, the board of directors or advisers and the Ministry is obscure. Not so long ago, Sindri used to be the show-piece of the public sector. It had a bad start: but, once it got going and attained capacity production, its performance was exemplary; but that was until a couple of years ago. Then, something went wrong: a new plant was set up, but production from the old plant, which had been the show-piece earlier, dropped and dropped very sharply. The setback in production, it was given out in Parliament, was due to certain repairs and overhauls which had been put off for years in order to maximise production in view of the fertiliser shortage in the country. The explanation given hardly makes sense. It was stated that 8 generators were being overhauled and that it took 2 to 2½ months for each, and

hence it will take 18 months before production can be restored to normal. But obviously, the failure was of maintenance,

when such facts come to light, the public has a right to know what went wrong and why, and who was responsible for the derision which led to such drastic fall in production was it the Managing Director, the Board of Directors or Advisers or the Ministry concerned? That the Speaker should intervene in the debate and want the Estimates Committee to look into the matter instead of supporting the Minister concerned, goes to show how lame the defence was. When a specific question of management comes to light, it is curious that, instead of the Minister answering for it, the Parliament should have to wait for its own Estimates Committee to explain what had happened !

