Correspondence

Calories

SIR,—Prof. J. R. Marrack's letter (June 7, p. 821) is a welcome contrast to what was said in "another place." A further objection to the use of global statistics is that all the "calories" legally assigned to human stomachs do not reach them by a direct route. It is even said that some hardened criminals feed their chickens on potatoes. Whether this is a mere debating point or an appreciable source of error I do not know.

One might have hoped that "calories," like foreign affairs, would have been kept out of party politics; this has not been done—with potentially serious consequences. It may not be true that Government departments pigeon-hole scientific reports the contents of which are disagreeable to departmental chiefs, but it *might* be true, and a contributor to your editorial columns quoted (April 19, p. 535)—but without indication of source—some ominous sentences. Indeed, quite apart from political emotions, most of us retain something of a child's pleasure in secrets. During the late war I sent in to an official committee a note on a small statistical matter. A few days later I extracted from a nest of sealed envelopes a numbered copy of my little note, which I was instructed to peruse and return to headquarters by a similarly romantic route. For quite 30 seconds I was so thrilled that I could almost believe that the binomial theorem was my own invention, a deadly secret weapon I was aiming at the enemy's heart.

Dietary samplings on a sufficient scale to be valuable can only be undertaken by public authorities—central or local. It may still not be too late to revive the waning public faith in official statistics of "calories." In the first place an accurate and *readable* account of the way in which the official surveys are carried out should be prepared. I have little doubt that an accurate statement is already printed in some official document, but official accounts of statistical investigations tend to be either too curt or too technical for a general reader. The best plan would be to circulate a draft to the editors of the medical and other serious weekly journals. The final product should be well advertised. Then the monthly or quarterly statistics of "calories" should be sent to all the newspapers, whether they show improvement or deterioration. No doubt political half-wits on both sides would try to make capital out of rises or falls; but Ministers and Civil Servants always underrate the intelligence of the general public—naturally enough, because both are the prey of talkative fools and mistake a biased for a random sample of the public. If Government departments are too haughty and too secretive to do this, perhaps some of the more important local authorities could take on the work.

A statistical veteran is bound to have a (rather pathetic) faith in the efficacy and popular appeal of statistics; but almost anything would be better than the partisan handling of a subject of universal interest, to which Prof. Marrack has drawn attention. I need hardly say that the faults have not been only on one side. In fact, if I had to pick out the worst and most reckless statements I—but this is to pass from statistics to politics, of which I am an even worse judge than of statistics.—I am, etc.,

MAJOR GREENWOOD.

Dried Egg and Salmonella

SIR,—In the leading article, "The Egg as Poison" (April 5, p. 456), reference is made to the isolation, by Gordon and Buxton^{1,2} of *Salm. typhi-murium* from ducks and *Salm. thompson* from chickens. We would point out that in addition to these two salmonella types and to *Salm. pullorum*, *Salm. gallinarum*, and *Salm. enteritidis*, the following have also been recorded³: *Salm. californica*, *Salm. bareilly*, *Salm. montevidео*, *Salm. anatum*, and *Salm. london*. Recently, we have also isolated *Salm. bovis moribificans* from a serious outbreak of disease in chicks. There is little doubt that the presence of these latter types is associated with the importation into this country of American spray-dried egg, which is known to have been fed to poultry either directly or indirectly in canteen or camp swill. The incidence of these salmonella types in poultry is very similar to that recorded⁴ in

man and pigs during the same period, and an increase of over 200% in the incidence of avian salmonellosis was reported⁴ during the years 1941-4.

Unlike *Salm. pullorum* these other salmonella types do not usually infect the ovary of the adult bird, and in a study of the pathogenesis of *Salm. thompson* (in press) it has been shown that the infection of egg meat generally occurs only when conditions of egg storage are suitable to allow the penetration of the organism through the egg shell. It is probable, therefore, that the danger to public health from the consumption of clean chicken eggs is almost negligible.—We are, etc.

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REFERENCES

- ¹ *Mon. Bull. Emerg. Publ. Hlth. Lab. Serv.*, 1945, 4, 46.
- ² *J. Hyg., Camb.*, 1945, 44, 179.
- ³ *Med. Res. Cncl. Rep.*, 1947, No. 260, London.
- ⁴ *Vet. J.*, 1946, 102, 187.

Treatment of the Maladjusted Child

SIR,—I agree with the statement of Drs. Elizabeth G. W. Barker and W. Liddell Milligan in their article (June 7, p. 805) that in the treatment of a maladjusted child removal from home is sometimes essential for a time. However, I cannot feel that admission to an adult mental hospital is the correct solution for this problem. If adequate hostels are provided by local authorities in connexion with their child guidance services, only a very few children cannot be given the accommodation they need. These few are those whose behaviour is too grossly disturbed for hostel or foster-home, and they are usually psychotic or pre-psychotic cases.

But according to the paragraph indicating the sources of the children admitted to St. James's Hospital such cases only amount to 4% of their admissions. To admit other types of maladjusted children to an adult mental hospital seems to be just the state of affairs one wishes to avoid at all costs. If they could go to a special children's admission ward or villa it might not be so bad. But the article states: "Some children were treated for a time in the male or female admission wards or villas, but the majority were housed in a special wing of the female convalescent villa." Reference is made to an annexe where children "are transferred after a preliminary period of observation and, if necessary, treatment in the main hospital." This must mean the children mixing with various types of acute and chronic psychotic adults, which seems to be highly undesirable.

I would suggest that psychiatrists should stimulate local authorities to open more hostels for maladjusted children rather than open the doors of the adult mental hospital admission wards to children who, though maladjusted, do not show psychotic features. However, other mental health services would do well to follow the example of Portsmouth and make some special provision for the more seriously disturbed child who cannot be cared for in a hostel.—I am, etc.,

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W. H. WHILES.

SIR,—It is unfortunate that the work of seven years on "In-patient treatment of the Maladjusted Child" should have been reported by Drs. Elizabeth G. W. Barker and W. Liddell Milligan (June 7, p. 805) in terms so vague that its evaluation is impossible. Ages, we are told, "varied between 4 and 15 years, but the majority admitted were between 7 and 11 years old, with a peak at 9 years, . . ." etc. This tells us almost nothing about the scatter. In this context, "the majority" might be anything from 51% to 98%. Period in hospital is similarly treated. The paragraph on intelligence adds little but inaccuracy to the general vagueness. The average intelligence was not unnaturally above the normal after the lower end of the distribution curve had been gratuitously eliminated. No mention is made of the test used. From the girl of 13 with an I.Q. of 170 I think one can safely infer that the test used was Cattell Scale III. It would have been less misleading if this fact had been mentioned, since I.Q.s on this test, particularly at the upper end of the scale, are not comparable with other tests. Though Cattell's scale does go up to 20 years, further than most psychologists would allow, there is certainly no justification for speaking of a mental age of over 20.