

adequate information, but Dr. J. P. de Villiers describes conditions among Cape Coloured peoples and Dr. Karl Bremer talks of the nutrition, or rather malnutrition, of Europeans in rural areas.

The second half of the number deals with the future. Here Dr. D. G. Haylett makes an important contribution by analysing the food resources of the Union as a whole under various heads—animal and dairy produce, produce of plant origin, &c. These figures he compares with the estimated calorie needs of the population per head. To all the writers in this section economic and social factors are the chief determinants of malnutrition, and the disastrous effects of low wages, colour-bar legislation, preventing the use of the Union's potential resources in man-power, and the Government's policy of subsidizing the export of food crops are facts deplored in each article.

As a whole the volume gives two main impressions. The first is the seriousness of the Native food question, either in the reserves where the man-power has been reduced by half and the soil is wasted by erosion, or in the towns where low wages drive the people to live on an inadequate diet of bread and tea; an extreme shortage of special constituents—i.e. milk, fats and fresh vegetables—being marked, in both cases. Second, it is stressed that the country as a whole is poor, and hence the vital importance of a forward long-time policy concentrating on increased production of foodstuffs, restriction rather than encouragement of their export and a raised purchasing-power for the poorest section of the community. Few clinical surveys of the results of malnutrition are referred to, but the data on this aspect is only now accumulating in South Africa. The importance and difficulties of research into the nutrition of rural Natives is also hardly touched on, and here again the work has been little more than begun. But we must be grateful for useful material recorded in a handy form, and hope continuously for more. (*Contributed by* DR. AUDREY I. RICHARDS.)

The Learning Ability of the South African Native.

THE South African Council for Educational and Social Research has recently published a pamphlet on *The Learning Ability of the South African Native Compared with that of the European*, by Dr. J. A. Jansen van Rensburg of the University of Stellenbosch. It ends with this momentous declaration: 'It would seem from the foregoing investigation that the South African Native has not the learning ability to be able to compete on equal terms with the average European, except in tasks of an extremely simple nature.' This weighty conclusion is based on the results of four 'learning' tests applied to 181 European pupils 14–15 years of age and 398 Xhosa school children of as near that age-group as could be estimated. The children were tested individually, the same test being repeated successively until the limit of improvement was reached. Dr. van Rensburg stresses the difficulty of

obtaining groups of Native and European children exactly comparable from the point of view of social and economic conditions and schooling facilities but he attempts to allow for these factors in his evaluation of his results. The tests used were: a drawing test with the Moede double-handle apparatus, a mirror drawing test, a sorting test, and a maze test.

In every test the average performance of the European children outstrips that of the Native children. The difference is least in the sorting and maze tests, and after practice the Native children attain a level of performance very close to that of the European children. Dr. van Rensburg's conclusion is therefore based, in effect, on only two tests. His results with respect to these are conclusive. The Native pupils undoubtedly fall far below the European children both in initial performance, their rate of improvement, and the level attained after practice.

To any one familiar with similar work that has been done in America these results will not be unexpected, and Dr. van Rensburg's general inference will remain as unconvincing as similar inferences that have been drawn by some American psychologists and have been severely criticized by others. It is well known that satisfactory tests of ability must consist of batteries, not single tests. Their validity and reliability must be established before they can be of any use, and we must know what exactly they are testing. Dr. van Rensburg gives no information on these points. It is probable, for instance, that his two critical tests involve a considerable element of manual dexterity. He does not apply modern statistical and analytical techniques to investigate this; he is content to speak sweepingly of 'learning ability'. It is significant, in this connexion, that he found a group of Native children from superior homes to approximate more closely to the performance of the European children than the whole Native group. 'Environmental' factors thus obviously influence the performances he tested. (*Contributed by* DR. M. FORTES.)

A Report on Achimota.

In 1938 the Governor of the Gold Coast appointed a Committee 'to inquire into all matters relating to the system of education obtaining in the College', and to endeavour to ascertain 'whether Achimota is fulfilling the aims and objects for which it was established, and to decide whether, in the light of experience and existing conditions, those aims and objects should now be modified'. Stress was also laid on the desirability of investigating the place of West African vernaculars in higher education.

Achimota occupies an outstanding position in West African education; it is almost unique in the whole of Africa in that it shows what can be done under exceptionally favourable conditions for the promotion of African education. Only a colony with a national wealth and a population so far advanced as