NOTES AND MEMORANDA

COMPARABILITY OF 1961 AND 1951 CENSUS ECONOMIC DATA

A Comment by PRAVIN VISARIA

THIS brief note attempts to discuss some of the points made by Dr. J. N. Sinha in his important contribution to the study of the comparability of the 1961 and 1951 Census Economic data (See: *Artha Vijnana*, Vol. 6, No. 4, December 1964, pp. 273-289).

First, the categorical statement that the "popular" notion that "non-earning workers, commonly known as unpaid family workers were ommitted in 1951 Census" is "simply not true" (p. 275) seems to be unwarranted. It may be emphasised that the popular notion referred to by Dr. Sinha is originally inspired by the remark of a Deputy Registrar General in 1956 in Mysore, the "unpaid family helpers who should have been enumerated as self-supporting persons or earning dependents, have been largely classified as non-earning dependents"[1]. In fact, Dr. Sinha's analysis itself shows that the Deputy Registrar General's remark, taken as a broad description of the situation, as distinguished from its causes, holds not merely for Mysore but also for the then State of Madras, which included much of Andhra Pradesh, Madras and a part of Kerala, as they stand today. Further, Dr. Sinha's contention is based on the argument that "the eligibility test" for reporting an individual as a self-supporting person or an earning dependent was "not the actual receipt of income by an individual but a mere recognition of his claim to a share in family income based on participation in work of family-enterprise". (Ibid.) This argument is based on an illustrative clarification in the 1951 census instructions that "where two or more members of a family household jointly cultivate land and secure income therefrom, each of them should be regarded as earning a part of income".[2] It seems, however, that in this illustrative clarification, the crucial term is 'joint' cultivation which would entitle a participant in this joint activity to a recognised claim to a share in income. It seems that the amount of work contributed and its quality, affected in various ways by the age and sex of the contributor, are bound to influence the

[1] Census of India, Paper No. 4 of 1955, *Economic Classification by Age Groups — 1951 Census : Mysore*, Foreword.

[2] Census of India, 1951, Vol. I, *India*, Part I-B, *Appendices to the Census Report, 1951*, p. 168.