The rule of seven is not always trotted out in front of every program, but it is evident in the background just the same. Take the parity price idea, for instance. It amounts to the same thing, because its leading proponents assert that maintenance of farmers at a fixed "parity" of prosperity is essential to assure the prosperity of others in the nation. And the same principle applies to essentially all the other farm programs.

The source of the money to serve as seed for the seven-fold national income presents another political problem, but it is one which its proponents resolve easily in terms of the concept itself. If the rest of the nation is predestined to share in the harvest, it is obviously their responsibility to share in the cost of the seed. So the cost is declared to be a proper use of funds collected under the compulsion of taxation. Were anyone to be allowed to shirk his share of the cost of the seed, he would then become a free-riding reaper. Therein lies the rationale for the source of funds to operate the scheme.

## NO BASIS IN FACT

WHAT, if anything, is wrong with the idea of turning the national income into this gigantic "numbers" game?



In the first place, the fixed ratio of seven to one has no basis in fact. Over the period from 1929 to date, with its ups and downs, the ratio between gross farm income and gross national income has varied rather widely and has averaged eight and one-half to one instead of seven to one. The person who assumes it to be seven to one will have erred, on the average, by more than one-fifth of the figure he was estimating. And yet something with this degree of error is proffered as justification for a controlled economy for an entire nation.

One can easily see why this ratio can't be so. In the early days of the nation, essentially everyone was a pioneer farmer, close to self-sufficiency. Even in 1790 farmers still made up 96 per cent of the population. The ratio then had to be near one to one – farmer incomes, that is, were nearly all of the national income, rather than merely one-seventh of it. And over the years the nonfarm part of our economy expanded more than did the farm part. The nonfarm end of the ratio had to increase; it couldn't have remained fixed. And there is no reason whatever to assume that it will remain where it is at any given moment. At some time in the future it is conceivable that farmers may be prosperous at only one per cent of the national income.