



Educational Reform.

ACCORDING to the Press report published recently the Government of India is contemplating the appointment of a special committee to suggest reforms in the present educational syllabuses and methods, as a sequel to the report of the Sapru Unemployment Committee. The special committee is proposed to be assisted in its deliberations by two or more British experts on technological education. In the meantime the Central Government is considering the report of the Sapru Committee with a view to discover the extent and direction of the application of its proposals for relieving unemployment, in the light of the opinions received from the provinces. The main conclusion of the Sapru Committee is that the problem of unemployment will ultimately be solved by the institution of more technical schools, and by the improvement and adaptation of the existing system of education to the needs of a growing community. The Committee has also suggested measures of reform in the conditions of service with reference to wastage and recruitment. The general aspects of unemployment have been discussed by a number of special committees, the legislative bodies and the leaders of public opinion, who have expounded the causes and remedies of such unemployment. The announcement in the Press that a new committee is speedily to be appointed might lead to the impression that Government is not already surfeited with documents, and it is almost certain that this new committee, however much it may be strengthened by the British experts, is not going to be the last. The problem of unemployment is far too complicated in India to invoke the aid of educational reform alone to provide remedies.

Every school girl knows that unemployment results where the output of trained men and women exceeds the power of their absorption in occupations for which they are fitted. The institution of technical schools and colleges is not a remedy, for they are bound to become crowded by young men and women who, irrespective of their tastes and aptitudes, must necessarily flock to them in the hope of finding suitable employment at the end of their training, and unless commerce and industries keep pace with the annual output of a large number of technical graduates and certificate holders, there is bound to be unemployment among

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them, unless they have sufficient capital to launch upon independent commercial or industrial enterprises. The prosperity of these private industries, however, depends upon favourable markets for their products, and also upon their survival value in their competition with the large financial syndicates. We fully sympathise with the desire to encourage technical training, though we feel bound to emphasise the possibility that such training of experts is bound to produce unemployment among them far more speedily perhaps than general education has done among the purely academic graduates. The advocacy for the extension of technical schools might temporarily relieve congestion in the universities, provided careers are offered to all who benefit from training in such institutions, and provided also that Government and other employing agents abandon their insistence on the university degree as a passport to service. The growth and popularity of the technical institutions are generally governed by the rapid expansion and development of commerce and industries in the country, which must demand in an increasing measure the services of a large number of highly trained men. They are the necessary ingredients in the normal evolution of the economic life of the country and their significance and value to its prosperity are practically lost when treated as emergency measures. The causes which have led to unemployment in other countries are not the same as in India; in the former, machinery and women have gradually ousted men, and in the latter, an eager contest for Government posts, a scramble for prizes in all the learned professions which only the specially gifted persons can win and finally the great concentration of the rural population in towns must account for the economic disturbance. This unsatisfactory state of affairs is to be accounted for by the fact that the education imparted to young men and women has generally produced a profound aversion for the profession of their fathers and a fatal madness for positions of power and patronage in the Government service. The attraction, therefore, of the universities and colleges to men who may or may not possess the power to profit by their discipline is frequently alleged as the cause of unemployment in India and naturally the remedy is proposed to be sought by introducing reforms in education. But it must be remembered

that so long as the employer requires qualification in either reformed or unreformed education such as colleges and schools can impart, for employment, we need entertain no hope of betterment. It seems to us that the cure for unemployment lies neither in the reforms of education, nor in the establishment of technical institutions, but in the replacement of the university degree by Government examinations so designed as to suit the requirements of the different branches of service, the redistribution of population so that the sparsely populated and unexploited areas in India are developed, the encouragement of emigration within the Commonwealth to enterprising Indians by offering them facilities for settling and acquiring property, and Indianisation of all the branches of service including the Railways.

Although the problem of unemployment is not directly connected with the existing system of education, yet it has not kept pace with the spirit of the modern tendencies in public life. The conception of a New World which the Constitutional Reforms will shortly introduce, is stored, with riches waiting for the Minister of Education to be explored, assimilated and turned to national account. Before him lie the greatest possibilities of the future, perhaps the most fascinating prospect of a great creative effort and an endless field of achievement. Education, interpreted in a broader sense than any acknowledged by its professors, is not at present the dominant concern of the State. The dominant interests of the public are the economic and the political, and education revolves as a dark subsidiary planet in a distant orbit round these self-important bodies. But real and important as they are, they have very little claim to dominate the life of the community for ever. It is this subordinate position into which education has been forced, which must account for the retardation of progress in the country. In the coming order of social and political system for whose appearance the new Reforms have raised hopes, education should be an equal partner in a community of interests. As long as education is made to give way to the demands of politics and economics, which we may arrange into the League of Nations, individualism or socialism, so long we shall make no headway, but rather reinstate on another level the social evils we are trying to cure on this. The fortunes of the

community do not depend on the rearrangement of the political and economic puzzle. They lie in another region, the minds and characters of the citizens which are the fundamental assets of the State. The educational reform to which we look forward is the creation for education a position where, though it may not claim to dominate politics and economics, it shall not permit itself to be dominated by them. It should have the rights and privileges of Dominion Status in the Commonwealth of State interests, in order that its genius might develop on its own lines, freed from the tangle of other departments and the electioneering vicissitudes of party politics.

But as things now are, the control of education is tied up to the wheels of the political chariot, and whatever disasters overtake this chariot, they are immediately reflected in a corresponding injury to the interests of education. The more intelligent section of the public has not visualised the anomaly of a Minister of Education, who has set on foot what is practically a life's work, being thrown out of office, because the party to which he belongs has come to grief in the elections on totally different ground, and his successor, not being interested in his ideas, pulling to pieces the far-reaching plans laid by the defunct member. It is this egregiously vicious system of collective responsibility of the cabinet, which has arrested the development of education, by being associated with interests of a lower level of value. Political vicissitudes break its continuities and discredit its significance. The first step in the educational reform, as we conceive it, is to free the management of its affairs from the baleful political exigencies, and education must cease to be a party product.

The second stage in the process of reform is to abolish from the theory and practice of education the pernicious idea that it has a tripartite division, elementary, secondary and higher, arranged in order of importance, and designed for the different classes of people. The growth of the human mind is continuous and, whatever agency is employed to promote its development, it must be a unitary whole. A great deal of intellectual snobbishness has arisen by treating education as distinct compartments, which, on the other hand, must be conceived as the bond of union which embraces the mind in its entirety. The human

mind is not conscious of its own divisions corresponding to the three grades, which, however necessary for administrative purposes, represent only a common enterprise. The conception of education as a unitary process of civilising the human mind amounts practically to the elimination of the examination system. We have assigned to examination a value far greater and more important than really belongs to its function and purpose. This hand maiden now dominates and overshadows the entire household of education, which has quietly receded into the background and its restoration to its proper position of the legitimate mistress is a measure of reform which must necessarily follow the change of our conception of its ideals and functions, as the greatest reconciling element in social life. In the mansion of education, there is a single story, which may be many-sided but still single.

The present system of education is not, as is commonly and frequently criticised, rooted in the life of the people. Its purpose is not relevant to their needs. It is the creation of Government to suit the special needs of administration. It supports their interests and embodies their prejudices. It brings a foreign culture imposed upon the genius of the people from above by the ruling people who think that they know what is good for the country. The country suspects the motive behind it all. These criticisms are as familiar to us as the things by which we are surrounded from childhood. The people are undoubtedly keen for education, if it is good for something, but they are naturally indifferent to what is offered to them in the name of education leading their children nowhere. Education is mixed up with a multitude of other extraneous things, which have nothing to do with it, and of which people do not approve,—institutions and interests which in a very subtle but powerful way it bolsters up and perpetuates. They agree with everything we might tell them about the need and urgency of education, but the actual system and the purpose of education now in practice they distrust. This feeling which is undoubtedly widespread explains the prevailing indifference of the working classes to education. The reform of education must attack this indifference; it can do so only by making the schools so efficient and popular that children will cheerfully and of their own accord come to them, and will not willingly leave them. It is through

children that education hopes to reach the parents and society, and it must be remembered that every child who leaves the school unwillingly is a missionary for education, and everyone who leaves it in a contrary frame of mind is a dangerous force on the other side.

We cannot enter here into all the general and special aspects of educational reform, but can only indicate its general principles

and the future policy of its control and management. If we think of education in all its bearings and its nature, as lifelong, as interpenetrating all occupations, as teaching every man and woman of doing their work in a better and more intelligent way, as co-extensive with the entire field of social activities, then education should be autonomous in its own territory. This reform being effected, all else will follow.

Madras Fisheries Department.

AS in the previous years, the Administration Report of the Madras Fisheries Department for the year 1934-35 marks another year of continued progress in the working of the Department under the able and enlightened guidance of its Director, Dr. B. Sundara Raj. The year was one of prosperity to the fishing industry on both the West and the East Coasts in spite of the fact that sardine, the most important shoaling fish of the Presidency, was absent during the year and the mackerel was only moderately abundant.

For the students of Indian ichthyology, both pure and applied, the Report is a regular mine of information regarding the progress in our knowledge of the bionomics of some of the principal food fishes of India. During the year under report the discovery of the breeding grounds of the oil-sardine (*Sardinella longiceps*) and the direct proof of the establishment of Catla (*Catla catla*) in the Cauvery river are announced, and it is a pleasure to note that the persistent efforts and the continued application on the part of departmental officials have been crowned with success. One can now confidently hope that the utilisation of the knowledge thus gained will lead to a much greater prosperity to the fishing industry of the Province.

It is also a matter for gratification that the spawning season, eggs and early stages of the half-beak (*Hemirhamphus georgii*) have been worked out and it should now be possible to deal more adequately with the important seasonal fishery of this species in the Palk Bay. A great advance has been made in the breeding of *Etroplus* and it has been proved that it can thrive in ponds where the elimination of natural enemies, such as murrel, snakes and frogs, is not practicable. This fact renders the fish very suitable for stocking ponds, etc.

As was to be expected, the adverse effects of the construction of the Mettur Dam are now being gradually felt in the decrease of the fisheries of the Cauvery below the dam. Unfortunately throughout India no attempt is made to reconcile the needs of the fisheries and of the irrigation projects; the latter invariably lead to the deterioration of the former, resulting in the undermining of a valuable source of food supply.

According to the Director, "The most noteworthy result of technological research is the production for the first time of sardine oil with a vitamin A potency equal to one-fourth that of cod liver oil and the discovery of four other Indian sea fish which yield oils with a high vitamin A content. The remarkable fact has also been ascertained that South Indian shark liver oil is more than 4.2 times as potent in vitamin A as cod liver oil." These researches indicate that a very valuable source of vitamin A will soon be brought within the reach of the poor people leading ultimately to a great improvement in their health.

Besides the fisheries (*sensu stricto*), the Department achieved considerable success in the rearing of Pearl oysters and the possibilities of the production of culture pearls in India on a commercial scale can now be visualised. It is, however, regretted that two and a half years of cultural experiments in the Pulicat edible oyster beds had to be terminated abruptly owing to a disastrous drought during the year under report. All the same, these experiments have furnished precise data concerning the zone at which maximum spatfall occurs and the reason for such occurrence. The Chank market showed a glut and very little business was done, but in spite of the fall of revenue from this fishery, research on Chank Fisheries was continued with considerable success.