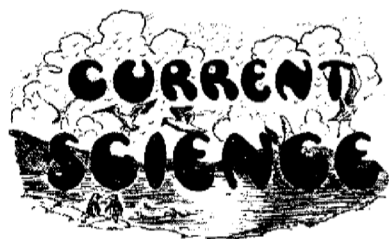


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FROM THE ARCHIVES



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Future citizens

Compulsory education for a population of thirty crores is the gigantic enterprise framed by the Sargent Scheme, short name of the plan for post-war Indian educational development laid by the Central Advisory Board of Education, whose report thereon was released last March. It will not be an exaggeration to say that if this plan can be made operative, the result will be a New India, fitted to assume the burden of world responsibility to which she is entitled by history, numbers, natural resources and the genius of her people. The difficulties of accomplishment are great, and the effort demanded by their solution enormous: but they must be surmounted if India is to take her proper place among cultivated and progressive nations.

A bare outline of the plan will facilitate its consideration. Pre-primary, con-

veniently called nursery education, will begin at age 3 and remain voluntary until 6, at which the compulsory system begins with junior basic (primary) school until age 11 followed by senior basic (middle) school until 14. Dovetailed with basic will be the high school whose course should cover 6 years, normally beginning at age 11 for only those pupils who show promise of benefiting fully by the opportunities provided; and preparation being made for at least one child in every five of the appropriate age-group. There follows the university, conditions of admission to which will be adapted to ensuring entrants' capability of profiting by the classes. It is contemplated that ultimately the intermediate course will be merged in high school, when the minimum degree course will be 3 years; meanwhile, only the first year will be transferred to high school, the second year being taken at the university. Finally, provision is made for technical, commercial and art education, for adult education and for training of teachers . . .

From the foregoing it follows that the age-limits of compulsions will be 6 and 14. This period of education without any charge to the parents is considered sufficient to equip the pupils for citizenship provided the training of character proceeds conjointly with training of intellect at every stage. There is great scope for improvement in both fields. An overall

illiteracy of 85 per cent is a ragged garment for democracy, and would bode ill for this country if that form of government is finally adopted. Citizenship has been usefully defined as an activity of the personality to secure certain benefits for the community to which the citizen belongs, and its proper exercise involves such qualities of character as consideration for others, commonsense and self-discipline. That these are sadly lacking is apparent in many little ways, notably the misuse of roads, where animals wander and children play while bicycles dart here and there regardless of rules; and controllers of the slowest traffic have no compunction in occupying the middle. It is noteworthy that in Travancore, with an overall 45 percentage of literacy (56 for men; 34 for women), these abuses are not observable . . .

Thomas Jefferson, who wrote (1776) the declaration of American Independence, also wrote (1786): 'I think by far the most important bill in the whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness.' Lovers of this country, whether Indian or British, will devoutly hope that these brave words may find fulfilment in the Sargent Scheme.

M.O.F.