

## Private Initiatives In Education

The recent government order which lays down that no private school or madrasa can either have recognition or financial support without clearance from the Ministry of Education breaks no new ground and is at best a reiteration of the existing regulations. For prior inspection by a government team or official has always been a condition of an educational establishment's affiliation to the examining boards and also of the validity of its claim to a subvention from government funds. It is consequently difficult to see why it has been found necessary to reiterate the old rule in a new form.

But that is perhaps not all that there is to it. Hitherto grants from government funds as well as recognition have been obtainable from the Directorate of Education and its branches. The new order seems—we have not seen the details—to transfer these powers from the Directorate directly to the Ministry. Although they represent, in the final analysis, the same thing, the Directorate being a limb of the Ministry, the Directorate does enjoy a degree of autonomy in administration and has power to dispose of smaller matters like the recognition or support of private schools, and it is this power which it will now forfeit.

Presumably, the argument is that some tightening of the rules is called for by widespread rumours of indiscipline and corruption. But we cannot understand why stricter inspection under the existing structure has been dismissed as a remedy. Our reason for saying this is that in a society where even today, most schools, madrasahs and even colleges, owe their existence to private initiatives any measure calculated to discourage the public from coming forward to establish educational institutions in areas where there are none, may prove counter productive.

We are fully aware that there do exist a great many anomalies in the organisation of education, and that from time to time, schools and colleges are sought to be founded by people for purely commercial purposes; we also know how once an institution is established somehow, pressure is brought to bear upon the government to recognise and support it without the routine tests on which recognition and financial support have been made contingent. Yet allowing for the problems and headaches to which the present situation often gives rise, the progress the country has achieved in education must in large part be credited to these private efforts.

There is another aspect of the matter which may well give cause for concern. Are the comparative liberties private institutions enjoy in the matter of their curricula and text-books to be snuffed out? What we have seen of the activities of the National Curriculum and Text-Book Board does not encourage us to think that total regulation will mean an allround improvement. On the contrary there is reason to fear that it will further lower whatever standard we have.

The new order is typical of the tendency in our country to create a new bureaucratic machinery to add to an existing one when the latter is not working well. The Ministry of Education is a more impersonal and unapproachable body than the directorate, and we are afraid that by strengthening the former at the expense of the latter, we may end up by adding to the number of obstacles and bottlenecks that educational pioneers or Private philanthropists may have to face.

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