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University Reform—II.

WE are indebted to the courtesy of one of our editorial co-operators for a copy of the Report of the Punjab University Enquiry Committee. This document which in several particulars adopts the conclusions of the Sadler Commission Report, provides nevertheless many important and illuminating suggestions of reform. It will be remembered that the Committee was instituted by the Government of the Punjab as a result of the acceptance by the Legislature of a resolution moved in 1931 by Khan Bahadur Mian Ahmed Yar Doultana. In the course of the debate speeches were made urging the appointment of a Committee to investigate the administrative details of the University and to suggest reforms for the better control of affairs. The Committee's terms of reference were restricted to a survey of minor issues such as the composition and powers of the University authorities, the income and expenditure, qualifications demanded from candidates for admission to the University classes and so forth and the more important University problems were left out of the purview of the Committee. Within the limits thus prescribed by the Government, the Report of the Committee, however, contrives to present a body of opinion on current educational problems and suggestions of reform which undoubtedly constitute an important contribution to the already extensive literature.

The University of the Punjab, though it is one of the younger members, has achieved a distinction which reflects great credit on the Province; among its *alumni* are found scientists, administrators, judges and writers whose names are honoured in India and abroad and the output of scientific work from its laboratories has in a great degree promoted the prestige of Indian unofficial research. In the chapter on University Teaching, the Committee make generous references to the important contributions of Professor S. S. Bhatnagar whose work on emulsions and the mechanical condition of coagills and the nature of luminescence and the other chemical implications of the Raman Effect is recognised as a real advance in the knowledge of physical chemistry. Similar references are made to the considerable amount of research work produced in the departments of Rai Bahadur Professor S. R. Kashyap and Dr. G. Mathai and Dr.

Vishwa Nath. Professor Kashyap's ecological studies of the Himalayan and Tibetan flora and his work on liverworts are held in great esteem by the leading botanists and the researches of Dr. Mathai on the marine fauna of Karachi and the cytological studies of Dr. Vishwa Nath have added considerably to the prestige of the University as one of the leading research centres in India. The share of the departments of Mathematics, History and Economics in building up the reputation of the University is not inconsiderable. Among the sisterhood of Indian Universities, the place occupied by the Punjab University is an honourable one and within a short time the research carried on in her laboratories has earned for her an international reputation to which the Report of the Enquiry Committee amply testifies. If in a university with such a brilliant record of achievements to its credit, the administrative machinery should have given occasion for criticism, the fault is perhaps due to the extensive territorial jurisdiction over which it exercises control. The Punjab University comprehends within its jurisdiction not only the Province of the Punjab but also the North-Western Province, British Baluchistan and some Indian States including Kashmir. The defects inherent in so vast and complex an organisation have unfortunately been magnified by communal schisms which led to the enquiry and we can only hope that the apprehensions entertained by some of the speakers in support of the resolution will be allayed by the recommendations of the Committee about the governance of the University.

A remedy for the universal complaint in our Indian universities, *viz.*, that the high schools do not provide adequate training for their pupils to be able to profit by university instruction is suggested by the Committee, namely, the institution of an Intermediate grade of teaching under the control of an independent Board. This institution is to be formed by the amalgamation of the Intermediate classes and the class X, which is the highest form of the secondary school. The Sadler Commission recommended an Intermediate College of two classes under a similar Board. We have read this section of the Report of the Sadler Commission and that of the Anderson Committee and we can recognise in the recommendation no merit other than novelty. These recommendations are in the nature of experiments and we fail to discover any educational

justification in their support. The salvation of the universities is not likely to be achieved by truncating the courses here and augmenting them there, but by the formation of a more rational scheme which will secure the progressive development of all forms of instruction. Every reform of Universities must entail readjustments of the pre-university and secondary schools which in some cases are too ill-adapted to secure for the pupils the literary benefits for which they look forward. We would recommend that the twelve classes which precede the university, be remodelled on the following lines :

1. Primary Schools—four years including elementary grade.
2. Middle Schools—four years instead of three. IV Form of the existing High School be made the final class of these schools.
3. The Pre-university Schools—four years composed of V and VI Forms of the High Schools and the two Intermediate classes.

Many of the defects in the educational system and in the training imparted to the pupils obviously arise from faulty psychological assumptions and maladjustment of the age of the pupils to the standard of instruction to which they address themselves. There is no organising principle in the existing grades of the school system, capable of imparting an air of reality either to the content or the methods of instruction. Our suggestion which seems a radical departure from the existing educational practice, is based on the assumption that a liberal understanding is essential even for an average student and it should be thoroughly obtained by every student before he aspires for the cultural, scientific or professional specialisation of the university course. The grades that we have suggested fall into natural divisions in psychological conformity with the ages of scholars and the standards of instructions attempted and they are sufficiently prolonged to give unity of aim and completeness of studies appropriate to the several stages. In any plan of reconstruction the aim ought to be to represent knowledge in its wholeness and not to treat the mind of the pupils in segments, and if no reasonable time is assured for assimilation of knowledge the result must be perfunctory. There is a clear consensus of opinion that the existing grades of instruction are unable to give the pupils the fullest advantage of the educational programme which they set out to fulfil with the result that no one is prepared to assume the responsibility of

imperfections of training. A system of education whose component grades are well articulated may reasonably be expected to provide the necessary time and means for successfully completing a definite programme of work and where such a co-ordination is lacking there is inevitably a tendency for disclaiming the responsibility for work inefficiently performed. Some of the defects of the higher secondary schools arise from the inability of the department to exercise constant vigilance and to render helpful guidance chiefly on account of the increasing number and the variety of schools under its jurisdiction. The Director of Public Instruction, a generation ago, found time to visit the elementary classes and knew enough of educational theory and practice even to teach the little pupils; but to-day the number of schools and pupils is so inflated that a dozen directors will find the task of inspection in the real sense of the word, simply insuperable. Since the progress of education is measured in terms of numbers of schools and pupils, its quality is bound to deteriorate on account of want of effective and periodic supervision and of assistance in the actual day-to-day teaching, apart from all other causes. The redistribution of classes such as we suggest may hopefully be expected to improve the existing unsatisfactory conditions. The first two grades of schools alone need be permitted to remain under the administrative control of the Department and the pre-university or collegiate school should be under the direction of an independent Board such as the one suggested by the Anderson Committee. The independent character of the Board should not, however, preclude it from seeking and establishing opportunities of consulting the university authorities in respect of the prescription of courses of studies and the conduct of examinations, while the inspection of these institutions should be vested solely in the senior members of the university staff. We do not agree with the Sadler Commission in their views that the best interests of the university could be secured by defining the line of demarcation between university and school work at the intermediate stage. A proposal of this nature would imply that the human mind is compartmental and can be taken up in parts for treatment separately and it is this conception of mind that is at the root of all the evils in the domain of education. We are convinced that the educational process must

be a continuous effort, the different stages of which should co-operate to achieve the common aim and the transition of one stage to the other must be easy and natural.

(Since writing the above we discovered that the Sadler Commission advocate the creation of a "New type of institution to be called an Intermediate College which should consist of either two intermediate classes or of these and also the two upper classes of the high schools". The latter recommendation appears to us to be the more appropriate one and the compromise suggested by the Anderson Committee is indefensible.)

The removal of the intermediate classes from the University should give it some relief, but no recommendations of a definite character are made by the Enquiry Committee to lighten the strain imposed on it by the extensive territorial jurisdiction which it exercises. Though the terms of reference do not include within their scope an invitation to the Committee to examine and recommend on the prospects of establishing teaching universities in the Punjab, still we obtain a glimpse of their views on this important problem. The claims of Khalsa College are briefly examined for its conversion into an independent unitary university and the Committee content themselves with advising the authorities that "a superior college is infinitely better than an inferior university". The Committee's suggestions in respect of the gradual evolution of independent universities are "a bold policy of higher educational developments in the mufassil" and "a bold constructive plan for mufassil development". The Committee admit that these proposals are vague, but hope that they would be made definite by "the logic of future events" implying "certain principles which if consistently pursued should result in the creation of a number of independent unitary universities".

A great part of the reproach on the governance of the University to which Khan Bahadur Shaikh Din Mahomed and Pir Akbar Ali gave vent in their speeches, is to be attributed to its unwieldy jurisdiction and responsibilities which are too wide and varied to be satisfactorily discharged. The amendments proposed by the Committee in respect of the function of the university in mufassil may not be a relief to its onerous burdens, but definite proposals for the

transformation of certain groups of colleges into constituent units of an independent university would be a more effective and speedy remedy. Having placed the Khalsa College in a category by itself and having recommended "that it should receive special consideration and representation", the Committee would obviously be glad of its elevation into a unitary university. Then it proceeds to lay down certain conditions essential to the well-being of the proposed university and one of these is that "as Khalsa College is situated outside the city of Amritsar, there should be no objection to colleges within the city being connected with another university or authority should they so desire". This option will tend to emphasise the communal character of the Khalsa College the removal of which the Committee urge and it will not strengthen the financial resources of the "potential university". If a number of constituent colleges were to become vital members of this proposed university there is greater likelihood of the Committee's recommendation that it "should not attempt to traverse the whole field of university education" but should "concentrate its energies and resources on a few departments of study,

especially those of the professional type" will have some chance of fulfilment. A self-contained or independent university with limited resources should have the means of spreading its faculties over a number of integral colleges instead of concentrating them in one centre. The Khalsa University should be permitted to evolve on its own lines and develop an individuality without becoming complementary. It seems to us that the Sikh community with their enthusiasm for the promotion of higher learning ought to be proud to have a university of their own and, without impairing their cultural traditions, ought to make it sufficiently catholic in its organisation and outlook.

The other recommendations of the Committee are cautious, designed to meet the specific problems falling within the scope of enquiry and their application will probably be found satisfactory. Given the spirit of co-operation and willingness to serve, the province of the Punjab with her great cultural and material resources is bound to become one of foremost centres of learning in India, and her endeavours to augment this distinction will be watched with sympathetic interest by her sister provinces.

Acknowledgment.

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culture in conjunction with Western science. With practically unlimited financial resources of the State and supported by the energetic forward policy of its enlightened ruler, the State and the University, we anticipate, will be able to achieve the happiest results. We shall watch with sympathetic interest the progress of this infant institution.