

TRAVANCORE EDUCATION CONTROVERSY

MUCH unnecessary heat has been imported into the discussion of the issue raised by the decision of the Travancore Government "to assume control and management of primary education with the definite object of making such education both free and compulsory within as short a period as possible." There is nothing revolutionary in this proposal to nationalise primary education. As the Central Advisory Board of Education points out, "any system of universal compulsory instruction must also be free." Apart from other considerations, the factor of cost would by itself be regarded as decisive in determining that only the State with its unique resources can undertake the responsibility for such a system, with all its implications such as the provision of free mid-day meals and other amenities for the children, a decent salary scale for the teachers and sufficient and up-to-date equipment. It has been argued that while the State should not disown responsibility for primary education and while it should provide in whole or in part the finances needed, it need not take over the management of primary schools in all cases but that, on the contrary, it should encourage as far as possible private agencies which have a creditable record of educational work in the past and which are prepared to bear part of the burden in the future as in the past. While we should be the last to deny the undoubted service to the cause of education done by private philanthropy in the past, we must point out that private enterprise and the grant-in-aid system which has regulated its financial relations with the State are by no means an integral or indispensable

part of the educational structure. Historically speaking, private enterprise in many areas came earlier into the educational field than the Government, which, when it awoke to its positive responsibilities, found that its financial resources would be inadequate to meet the entire cost of educational expansion and so was glad to have the co-operation of private agencies who would meet part of the cost. From those days we have travelled very far in our conception of the basic obligations of the State. And it is now practically universally held that it is the duty of the State, in the words of the Sargent Report, to establish "a national system of education for both boys and girls which will provide the minimum preparation for citizenship." In conformity with this, the Travancore Government propose to make universal, free and compulsory primary education their own concern, to undertake directly the management of these schools and to find the necessary funds. Those who oppose this move point out that the great strides that Travancore has made in the past in respect of literacy and education have been largely due to private enterprise, which to-day is responsible for running the schools in which roughly two thirds of the primary school children are educated. And they contend that if private agencies were to be eliminated from the sphere of primary education and their financial resources were to be no longer available, it would mean a great set-back in the educational progress of the State, since, in their view, the Government's unaided resources would be altogether inadequate for filling up the gap made by the disappearance of private agencies, let alone

making the big advance towards universal education which the Government contemplate. But on this matter it seems to us that it is the Government and the people whose views are reflected in the representative institutions of the State, that must be the final judge. They feel confident they can find the money needed as well as the teaching and organising talent that a great educational spurt would call for.

It has been claimed for private enterprise that, apart from making a valuable monetary contribution, it has a distinctive and legitimate role to play in the field of education. The Sadler Commission put this point of view thus: "Education is not wholly a matter of public concern. It lies across the boundary which divides public functions from private initiative. It is too important a factor in national life for the State to abrogate its responsibilities in regard to it. But at the same time it is too intimately connected with family life and with private conviction to be entrusted to Governmental management alone. Therefore, it is desirable to seek for some new synthesis between State supervision and private effort, *especially in the sphere of secondary and higher education.*" The words we have italicised are noteworthy as implying that so far as primary education is concerned, it would be difficult to sustain the plea that private enterprise has an indispensable role to play in it. Indeed, the accepted need for encouraging in the children of any country a homogeneous national outlook and the obvious importance, in a country distracted as India is by communal and other differences, of not subjecting the impressionable minds of the very young to influences which are likely to multiply and foment such differences, are potent reasons for eliminating dual control at least in the sphere of primary education and seeing to it that the education

imparted there is of a purely secular character. By saying this we must not be understood to undervalue the religious element in education or to support the view that a purely materialistic education will satisfy the deepest human needs or assist in the flowering of the human personality. But it seems to us that the home is the proper agency for ministering to the spiritual needs of the child. And the influence of the home may well be supplemented and fortified by the organised efforts of the various religious persuasions to provide the kind of religious and moral education which they conceive to be necessary as a corrective to a State system of education in which religion as such plays no part. So far as the Travancore Government are concerned, the press communique of August 31 suggests that no alteration is contemplated in the present position regarding religious education. "Religious education," says the communique, "never formed part of the regular curriculum in schools, but is allowed to be imparted in school buildings by all denominations to their own adherents outside school hours. Full advantage is taken of this privilege and it is only the presence in schools of children of many religious faiths which makes it impossible to give religious education to all school children during school hours." While thus continuing to make available the existing facilities for religious education, the Government have stated further that "they retain the fullest discretion to give such encouragement and support to any pioneering educational enterprises as may give useful instruction ancillary to or supplementary to the Government curriculum." In other words, private enterprise will still have a useful and influential if, numerically speaking, restricted role to play in primary education.

The current controversy centres largely round the declaration of the Travancore

Government that they will not hereafter give any grant to "primary schools run specially or primarily for the purpose of imparting specific types of religious education." The managements of Roman Catholic schools, which represent a considerable part of the private enterprise in primary education in the State, violently oppose this decision. They point out that, while they give religious education to Catholic children they do not force it on children of other faiths who attend their schools. And they argue that so long as their schools conform to the educational standards laid down by the Government they are entitled to grants-in-aid as well as recognition because they are doing an indispensable service to the Catholic community which pays taxes like any other community and is therefore entitled to State support for the education of its children. If it be asked why they should be so keen on continuing to maintain their own schools when the Government propose to establish schools for all children under their scheme they take up the position that the right to teach Catholic children and to bring them up as good Catholics is an inalienable right of the Catholic church which it may not relinquish. Their attitude is thus described in *The Political Quarterly* by a British writer who is by no means unsympathetic to their claim for educational autonomy :

"It is found in the assertion that the teaching of one denomination is that given by divine revelation, that all other denominations are heretical, that this particular teaching is absolutely right, and that any other, so far as it differs, is absolutely wrong.....It is not only necessary that this truth must be taught whole and entire, so far as it can be taught to children, but that the whole atmosphere of the school must be that of the denomination, and in subjects such as history, it is their view that must be taught and not any other. They claim, in short, not only religious teaching but control of the whole school."

Even a country like Britain whose inhabitants profess only one religion in different forms finds it difficult to accommodate this

claim of the Catholics within its educational scheme. Though the new education Act provides for religious education according to agreed syllabuses, it is not likely to solve the problem presented by the Catholic institutions. How much more difficult it must be to concede this claim in a country like India where people of different faiths live side by side. The Government of Travancore point out perfectly justly that, the professed aims and objects of Catholic education being what they are, it would be unfair to compel people of other faiths to send their children to such schools ; that if this is to be avoided State schools will have to be opened even in localities where Catholic schools are existing ; and that this would mean duplicating expenditure if the Government are also to go on financing the Catholic school, and such duplication would not be warranted in view of the need to conserve the by no means limitless resources of the State and to put them to the best possible use. They have, therefore, decided that if the Catholics would prefer to retain their own schools they may, but they must not expect grants-in-aid from the State. The Catholics' claim that, as they pay taxes, they must be given grants to run their own schools even in places where State schools are available or will be established, is on the face of it untenable since the sharing of the benefits arising from the expenditure of the proceeds of taxation is in no country in the world determined purely with reference to the relative contributions made by the different communities or religious persuasions, but only according to the needs of the different sections and in consonance with the dictates of public policy. It seems to us that the Catholics of Travancore will be well advised not to carry on an agitation for which it will be difficult to secure the sympathy of detached and impartial men anywhere and persistence in which may lead to an undesirable intensification of differences and antagonisms which men of good will must deplore. We think it is perfectly possible, if only they have the will, to find a solution which will amply safeguard their just rights and at the same time enable them to work in harmony with the other elements of the State in the cause of educational progress.—*The Hindu*.

CHURCH AND STATE AT WAR

AN unbecoming and unfortunate controversy has been and is being carried on in the Madras and Travancore Press for the last few months or weeks between the Travancore State and the strongly entrenched Catholic hierarchy. The matter arose out of the decision of the Travancore State "to assume full control of primary education within the State and to make it free and compulsory." This is certainly a very laudable object, and one would have thought that it would receive the fullest support of all Travancore subjects and seasoned educationists.

But the Catholic hierarchy is at war with the Travancore State, for it believes that the "Church of Christ is essentially a teaching organisation for she has received a Divine Mandate from her Founder: 'Go therefore, teach ye all nations...teaching to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you'."

Preposterous Claims

This is a quotation from the speech of Archbishop Mathias, who thinks it is the business of the Catholic Church to save "souls and for that She must instruct" children. He also thought it was the prerogative of the Catholic Church to teach "all those truths which are necessary to salvation." One can go on quoting from this speech to show how incompatible is the position taken up by the Catholic Church, to put it mildly, in relation to the State.

If every religion believed it was its business to inculcate religious teachings in primary schools to children of tender and impressionable age and with the same zeal and same methods which have come into some notoriety in the Central Provinces,

among the aborigines, then all reasonable and rational minded men must strongly protest against such preposterous pretensions.

The Travancore State has taken upon itself the entire financial responsibility for compulsory primary education, no doubt with all the implications which compulsion means.

This suggests that the 'Travancore State is anxious to spread education, and what is more the right kind of education without any religious bias in it, whether of the Catholic or Hindu or Muslim kind.

Too much Religiosity

India, unfortunately, has an excess of religiosity and any effort to discourage this evil must be supported and encouraged by all right-minded men. It is only natural that the imposition of a purely secular primary education should be resisted by the Catholic hierarchy with all the strength and publicity of which it is capable, particularly by appealing to the religious sentiments of Catholics all over the country.

It is satisfactory that the Travancore State's new educational scheme has secured the support of the general public of that State including Catholics who are not carried away by their religious zeal.

The Bishop of Travancore, however, claims the right to have Catholic Schools for Catholic children for teaching Catholic religion. The State naturally is opposed to this claim, and very rightly one should say.

In India education is secular in Government institutions though the Catholic and Protestants and other religions are permitted to start their own educational institutions

for the benefit of the souls of the faithful.
No Surrender

But the tendency in all civilised countries is to eschew religion from State educational institutions.

In England the battle between the Church of England and the non-conformists raged for years, the issue being that the latter refused to pay rates for Church schools in which doctrines obnoxious to them were taught.

In the end, the principle was recognised that the State could not tax people of other religions to pay for Church teaching.

"The New Leader" of Madras is full of warlike propaganda against the Travancore State and all kinds of allegations are made against it.

So far the Travancore Government has not shown any signs of surrender. In a letter the Secretary to the Government even threatens action against the Bishop of Changanacherry for making subversive statements against the State, unless the objectionable pastoral letter issued by him to his faithful flock is withdrawn.

The Bishop has refused to accede to this request and will not even express his regret for his action. The next step lies with the State, though in the meantime an intensive propaganda has been carried on

throughout the country and the cry that Catholicism is in danger has been raised.

Commendable Stand

The Archbishop of Madras argues that the Church has a right to have her own schools and claims that "All those truths which, by their nature, are not spiritual and moral, but purely profane, as pure science, pure economics or politics, etc., are not directly her domain. They would, however, be subject to her vigilance and care, if her children and especially the youth cannot learn them without incurring great danger to their faith and morals."

Persons professing other religions have seriously to consider whether it is proper for them to send their children to Catholic schools, in view of the claims of the Archbishop.

The same sort of freedom was claimed in the Central Provinces by the Dutch Catholic Missionaries, who were being deliberately patronised by the Government there, particularly where the aborigines live.

That Education in State schools and colleges should be purely secular is obvious and the stand made by the Travancore State is highly commendable and worthy of support.

--*The Bombay Sentinel.*

STATE CONTROL OF EDUCATION

ALL over the world education is being considered as the primary duty of the State. In India too, the need for State control of education is being realised and agitated for. It is rather understandable why an unseemly opposition should have been got up by a small section of people, namely the Catholics, against the Travancore Government's decision to give effect to that very desirable idea. On the contrary that measure has to be welcomed by

all right-thinking people and that Government has to be congratulated on taking up such a progressive move in the right direction.

However much private enterprise might have been useful and beneficial to the citizens of the State it could never be adequate to meet the requirements of the times. After all, the Government's object in bringing up this measure is to provide good and sound education for the children of the

State in the most impressionable period of the lives of its future citizens. That object can be achieved only with the resources of the State which can be expected to provide good teachers and adequate pay for them, necessary buildings and other facilities for such a purpose.

The poverty of the average people is such that all of them cannot afford to pay for the education of their children and as a result they have been allowing them to go without its benefits. While the State can free them from that anxiety about the cost of education, it can also bring in necessary compulsion to see that all children of school-going age receive the benefits of education. For want of such facilities on a large scale, many parents have been sending their children to whatever schools were available and submitting them to many things that they would not ordinarily like.

Christian missions have for a long time been doing noble work in the matter of providing education and the country is grateful to them for what all they have done. But along with the general education they have also been forcing religious instruction of their own faith on children born and brought up in other faiths. Not in all cases has it led to proselytization. But it has had tremendous effect in that direction. Nobody objects to the Catholics still continuing their mission in their own way. But they cannot expect the State to aid their object.

Strictly speaking, the State has a right to enforce a conscience clause preventing even Christian institutions from insisting upon their pupils receiving instruction in that religion even though they do not belong to it. What the Travancore Government proposes to do is to provide facilities for all the children of the State for secular education so as to prepare them as useful citizens. It does not prevent the Catholic institutions from imparting any education they like; only they cannot expect the State to continue to help them financially if they choose to go their own way, nor have they any right to demand that help.

The agitation of the Catholics is due to the fear that if the State takes education

under its control their predominating influence will be reduced and many of the children who had been flocking to their institutions will now leave them and resort to the State schools. If it is true there is nothing to be sorry about it. They have done their best to spread education in the days when the State did not come to the aid of the citizen in that matter. They can either retire from the field of elementary education and confine themselves to higher education or conform to the policy of the State.

Their argument that the Travancore Government gives financial aid to Hindu Temples and Devaswoms and hence should not object to giving such help to the Christian missionary institutions, cannot hold water. After all, that provision to the Hindu Devaswoms in the budget is poor compensation to the revenue derived from the properties endowed for those institutions and taken over by the State. The Catholics cannot forget that in the British Indian province of Madras the budget provided for a non-votable item of expenditure called ecclesiastical to help the religion of a microscopic minority at the expense of the non-Christian majority of tax-payers and in the face of it the objection of the Catholics to the budget provision in Travancore for Hindu Devaswoms comes with ill-grace.

Above all, it is not as if the measure for State Control of education in Travancore has come in a surprise fiat of the Government. The question has for long been considered by committees including representatives of all communities. The measure has been discussed threadbare and passed by the Travancore Legislature and an overwhelming majority of the people of the State are for it. The clock of progress cannot be kept back for the sake of the religious fanaticism of the Catholics nor can they force their will upon the people and their Government as a whole. It is high time that they move with the times and conform themselves to the requirements of modern citizenship without impeding progress by their old-world notions and religious fanaticism.

—*The Free Press.*

WHEN VESTED INTERESTS ARE UPSET

THE Government of Travancore published on September 12 a *Gazette Extraordinary*, declaring a new and radical policy regarding primary education in the State. It stated: "The Government of Travancore have come to the conclusion that the responsibility of imparting education throughout the State devolves upon and has to be shouldered by them and they have accordingly decided to assume control and management of primary education with the definite object of making such education both free and compulsory within as short a period as practicable and they have instructed the Director of Public Instruction to formulate detailed proposals on the basis of a ten-year programme for implementing this decision." This policy is so obviously right and reasonable that the Government of Travancore deserve to be commended for setting a great example not only to the other States but also to British India. This policy was not announced by the Government in an arbitrary fashion. The initiative came from the Legislature. A Committee was set up a few months ago to make recommendations regarding the reorganization of education in the State. The Committee found the conditions in many primary schools very unsatisfactory owing to the meagre salaries paid to the teachers and suggested that in order to enable the grant-in-aid schools to pay higher salaries the State should undertake to meet 75 per cent. of the pay of teachers. When the matter came up before the Legislature of Travancore both the Houses resolved that the State should take up the entire responsibility for primary education. The Government accepted this decision of the Legislature and declared the policy referred to above. This has, however, evoked protests from the Roman Catholics of the State who have been conducting a large number of the privately managed schools. They have been trying to organize a virulent agitation within the State and enlist the sympathy of Catholics outside the State. It is argued on their behalf that the Catholics have a right to impart religious education to Catholic children and it is the duty of the

State not only to permit it but to provide financial assistance to such schools. The Travancore Government *communique* recognizes the right of private agencies to conduct primary schools provided the general curriculum formulated by the State is adhered to. But as the State proposed to provide schools throughout its territory for all children without any distinction of religion, caste or creed, the cessation of grants to privately managed schools is an inevitable consequence. The tax-payer cannot be expected to pay twice over for elementary education. State education in India has to be secular if it is to serve impartially all sections of the population, and parents and religious organizations which are anxious to impart religious instruction should make separate arrangements for that purpose at home or outside school hours.

The real trouble in Travancore is that though the policy is correct and unexceptionable, it upsets the existing vested interests. The privately managed Catholic schools function largely out of the funds provided by the State as grant-in-aid and the fee income of non-Christian pupils both of which will disappear under the new scheme. These schools have been useful to promote Christian propaganda among non-Christians which resulted in conversion in some cases. Though the action of the Travancore Government does not interfere with the legitimate freedom for religious propaganda and conversion, it would remove the artificial facilities which have been available hitherto. A large number of teachers employed in these schools may also lose their jobs. Catholic resentment at the new policy can, therefore, be easily understood but we would urge upon the Catholics of the State of Travancore and outside to realise that we are living in an age in which vested interests have to make room for impartial and equal justice to all. It is recognized all over the world that primary education is the direct responsibility of the State and ultimately, the large Catholic population of Travancore will gain by the new measure as much as the other sections

of the people. If the community is reasonable, it should be possible not only to absorb the majority of the present teachers in the new scheme but also to come to some arrangement by which religious education may be permitted to be provided even in State schools out of class hours in accordance with the wishes of parents of the pupils provided the Catholic church organization undertakes to provide the teacher and bear the cost thereof. The same privilege may be extended to other communities on the same

terms. Factions and unreasonable agitation will only rally public opinion all over India in support of the authorities of Travancore and force it to insist that the policy adumbrated in the communique should be strictly adhered to. We have no doubt that the Government of Travancore will be anxious to make the transition as smooth and painless as possible. But they have taken a stand on right principles to which they should stick at all costs.

The Hindustan Times.

CATHOLIC AGITATION UNSUITED TO TIMES

THE Travancore Government's policy and programme of free and compulsory primary education has provoked from Catholics both within the State and outside a hectic agitation to which the prelates of the Church have been seeking to impart special sanctity with such slogans as "Religious neutrality in danger". One would think, from some of the speeches of the Catholic leaders that the very integrity of their religious faith was being most wickedly assailed by the Government of the State. Actually what the Government have set out to accomplish is to banish illiteracy from their territory. To this end they have decided to assume as their own special responsibility the running of primary schools in the State. State control would necessarily mean the ousting of private control. But except in the case of the Catholic schools, there has been no protest on the part of the private managements thus affected. And for very good reasons. Not less than three-fourths of the cost or upkeep of the schools in their charge has come hitherto from Government contributions, and none of them could

naturally challenge the propriety of the Government themselves, meeting as they did so large a part of the expenditure taking over the entire conduct of the schools into their own keeping. Secondly, the Government did not embark on their policy rashly or arbitrarily. They appointed a commission to examine the whole question, presided over by Mr. Papworth, a renowned educationist. The report of the commission was placed before the legislature and secured its support. Fortified as the Government were with the approval of the legislature, their policy carries with it the imprimatur of democratic sanction and has received warm approbation from all sections of the people with the single exception of the Catholics.

The Catholic agitation has not been confined by any means to subjects of Travancore State. It has been elevated to the level of an encyclical, with fervent exhortations to the glory of the Church thrown in to rouse religious sentiment against the proposed State policy, the lead being taken by no less august an ecclesiastical personage than the Archbishop of Madras. In