

STATE MONOPOLY OF TEXT-BOOKS



FORUM OF FREE ENTERPRISE
SOHRAB HOUSE, 235, Dr. D. N. ROAD, BOMBAY - 1

"People must come to accept private enterprise not as a necessary evil, but as an affirmative good."

—Eugene Black

INTRODUCTION

Eminent economists like A. K. Cairncross and Colin Clark, and management experts like Peter Drucker have emphasised the importance of the human factor in economic development, and consequently the attention which should be given to education. In this context, the move for state monopoly of text-books, or what is usually termed as nationalisation of text-books, is to be viewed with concern. Apart from the damage it can do to the education of youngsters, and the displacement of large numbers of established and experienced publishers from their trade, the dangers of political indoctrination of the young are ever present.

The scandal occasioned by the grossly defective geography text-books of the Maharashtra state has focussed public attention once again on this subject. The Forum of Free Enterprise has, therefore, thought it fit to present this educative booklet to the public.

Our grateful thanks are due to the Publishers' Association, London, for allowing us to reproduce the article, "Freedom of Choice" from the Yearbook of Education; to the editor of "The Times of India" for allowing us to reproduce four cartoons by R. K. Laxman, and to Mr. M. R. Masani M. P., Mr. S. S. Patke and Mr. A. B. Shah for providing us with the text of talks which they delivered at a meeting on the subject organised by us in Bombay on August 5, 1964.

It is hoped that educationists and parents of school going children will carefully study the implications of state monopoly of text-books and bring to bear on the authorities intelligent public opinion to amend the wrong policies.

You Said It

By

R. K. LAXMAN



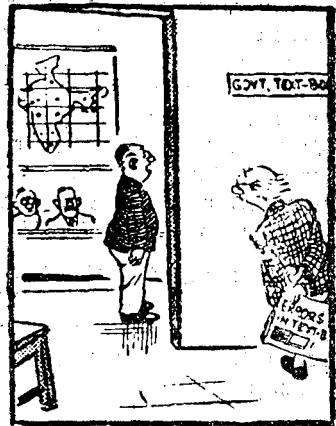
I know, don't try to be clever -- It just happens I have not received the official circular about the ban!



We are finally able to trace who eventually was entrusted with the task of writing the book



Shift those geography textbooks to the section "Light Fiction".



No, Sir, I did not read it. I only wrote it.

Courtesy: "Times of India".

The views expressed in this booklet do not necessarily represent the views of the Forum of Free Enterprise

FREEDOM OF CHOICE *

It seems possible at first sight that government — or at least some semi-official public textbook corporation — could regulate the production of textbooks and the prescribed use of these throughout a national system. This would make possible the production of textbooks embodying all the best printing techniques now available, because the capital cost could be borne by all through the device of selecting only one text for all the schools of the country. As everyone knows, this happens in all Communist countries. As regards writing the text, various systems are in use. Sometimes a well-known scholar or educationist is commissioned to write a book, say, for the mathematical courses in the seventh year. In due time the book appears, is printed in vast editions and distributed all over the country. The author is given royalties, usually of the order of 10 per cent on the first 50,000 copies, thereafter diminishing quickly. Or else a committee of writers is put to work to produce a good text, on the basis of the best books previously produced at home and abroad. In either case the written parts of the text are clear, straightforward, up-to-date in outlook, sometimes fresh and original. The quality of the production, from the point of view of modern printing and publishing techniques, however, leaves much to be desired. It is no exaggeration to say that the school textbooks now available in the schools of the U.S.S.R., let alone China, would have seemed poor in quality and of old-fashioned appearance in Western European and American elementary schools fifty years ago. In other words — state production of textbooks does not automatically guarantee good technical quality nor even full use of present-day printing techniques. Careful examination of the content and presentation of material in Soviet textbooks confirms this

* Reprinted from THE YEAR BOOK OF EDUCATION London and New York, 1960, with grateful thanks to the Publishers Association, 19 Bedford Square, London W.C. 1.

impression: the material itself is good and modern but, judged by good pedagogical standards, the order of presentation as well as the pedagogical outlook is extremely old fashioned. The authors evidently envisage a style of teaching which is purely didactic, formal passive, teacher-centred — the sort of thing found one or two generations ago in Western European secondary schools.

In the non-Communist parts of the world, production of school texts by governments or other public authorities is rarely found. There are interesting exceptions: in Peru, for example a few years ago no publisher had been found able or willing to produce reading books in Quechua for the Indian schools of the Andes. In consequence, inspectors, with the support of the Ministry of Education, themselves wrote texts, and these were duplicated (mimeographed) and distributed. In New Zealand there has been quite a good deal of official textbook production. Examples of this kind are, however, unusual outside Communist states. There is, nevertheless, a fairly widespread and continuing belief that official production of texts for schools might be wise and that it could help some of the newly independent countries which are now endeavouring rapidly to establish mass systems of education — for instance, Burma, Thailand, Nigeria, Ghana, Congo, Indonesia. The arguments supporting this attitude deserve analysis — some have already been listed and examined in UNESCO monographs, such as *Provision of Popular Reading Materials and Primary School Textbooks — Preparation, Selection and Use*.

The first argument, used by those who favour nationalised production and prescription of textbooks, is an economic one. They urge that a monopoly vested in the state would save the taxpayers' money. Yet the only saving, apart from the possible non-payment or underpayment of the authors, would be that of the publisher's profit — a marginal cost easily offset by the ability of the publisher to market his product in a wider area than one single under-developed state. Even the supposed saving obtained through the avoidance of author's royal-

ties may be fictitious; the true cost may be camouflaged by accounting methods because a government department has used its staff without charging up the cost to the books produced.

The possible advantage of a government being supposedly better able than a private publisher to enlist the services of able and scholarly authors has already been dealt with. But in fact, why should a government official — or, for that matter, a committee — be wiser in its choice of authors than a publisher whose own livelihood is involved in the decision he takes? Do modern officials and governments have a monopoly of wisdom? Are amateurs better in this field than professionals?

Are we to accept another justification sometimes urged — that government prescription of texts would ensure that the best and most up-to-date books would be used in schools? Is it likely that there would be officials in the Ministries perfectly familiar with modern printing and publishing techniques? And if special publishing departments have to be set up, where would be the saving in comparison with private publishing houses? Furthermore, it takes the best part of three years to produce a series of school books. Allowing a minimum of another three years of use before scrapping, this would mean that a period of six years at least would elapse between the inception and the scrapping of a new series by a government department. Add to this 'x' years to represent the inertia which seems natural to any official body. On the other hand, there is no difficulty in refusing to adopt nor in scrapping any series of books produced by private enterprise; officials are usually far from being deeply upset by the thought of causing pecuniary loss to entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the private publisher operates under intense competition, both as regards content and sale price of his books. The buyer — in this case the official school system — benefits from the efficiency which is the result of genuine competition. The general conclusion of all this seems clear. Production of school textbooks by independent publishers yields books which tend to be more up-to-date, more attractive in appearance, and

probably less expensive than books published by government agencies. A comparison of the textbooks published in Communist and non-Communist countries confirms this conclusion.*

But the most powerful arguments against government production of school textbooks are those which have to do with diversity and with freedom — freedom of the teacher and freedom of expression. Official production of printed matter — or, of course, of cinema, radio and television — necessarily implies censorship and suppression of whatever views the government does not like together with promotion of what it does like. The very creation of a machine for nationalised publishing is in itself undesirable — even in the most liberal states there is a tendency for government and administration continually to extend the sphere of its powers. From another point of view — surely those entrusted with the teaching of young citizens are capable of choosing whatever books they prefer to use? Teachers vary in their methods according to their own temperament as well as according to local circumstances. The wider the choice of text-books from which they can choose, the more likely they are to find one which exactly suits them; and government publishing could provide as wide a choice as independent publishing does, only at a cost at least as high as the latter.

Certain exceptions should be noted. In some underdeveloped countries it may well be that — because teachers are not well trained — some form of prescription is necessary and even — as in the Peruvian case — some form of official production. So, too, under conditions like those which exist in New Zealand might government publishing be valuable. Yet, even then there should not be a prescription of only one book per subject. Such restriction paves the way to bribery or corruption. In addition,

* It is often thought that Russian textbooks are inexpensive. When judging their price, note should be taken first of the official and tourist rates of exchange, next of the rate of wages and salaries, and next, of possible subsidisation. Taking these factors into account, the books are by no means cheap.

it discourages teachers from thinking for themselves. The list of 'prescribed books', in other words, should always offer as many alternatives as possible.

A policy of this kind would, in any case, be a wise one in every low-income country. The development of adult literacy in those areas is dependent upon all forms of literature, distributed through a network of bookshops. In the early stages of development the only way such bookshops can exist — apart from Communist countries which establish government stores for the distribution of propaganda material — is by the sale of educational books. Without such sale there would be no bookshops and, therefore, no books for public purchase.

The general conclusions are quite clear. Government production of textbooks would be justifiable in countries with a liberal tradition and a free economy only if it could be shown that it ensured: (a) economy of production and distribution; (b) better and more modern books; (c) a wide choice of books so that experimentation in school would be encouraged; (d) rapid changes in books, so as to keep constantly up to date. It may be that, in theory, all these criteria might be met — if only government officials were always very wise, very bold, very generous and far-sighted. In fact, however, government production is likely to turn out hackneyed, old fashioned, formal, badly printed books. Exceptions to this are rare. In Communist countries, naturally enough, all textbooks are and will be produced under the sponsorship of the state authorities and prescribed for use in school. Given the forms of ownership, production and distribution, this is unavoidable. A good result will be that books are made available even in the poorest parts of the Soviet Union and China. The disadvantages, however, are so obvious that there is no temptation to follow an example unattractive when judged by the quality of its production. The success of Russian education comes from the tremendously hard work of the pupils and the excellent quality and devotion of the teaching staff — it is a success earned in spite of, and not because of, the kind of textbook used.

TEXT-BOOKS IN INDIA

by

M. R. MASANI, M.P.

“Nationalisation of text-books, a popular catchword, is a misnomer. One does not nationalise text-books. Probably we are the only country that uses that term in that sense. What is really meant is a State monopoly of text-book publication at the level of the States. In some States there is a State monopoly; in others there is partial publication by the State and partially the publishing trade is allowed to perform this service.

On a point of theory, it is obvious that a State monopoly of text-books is a most dangerous institution in a democracy. The fact is that only Communist and Fascist dictatorships practice such a monopoly of indoctrination of children. It is obvious that, if the Government of the day is allowed to monopolise the kind of information given to young people in schools, then there is a danger — I do not say the danger is always real; but the danger is there — always present — that some people in Government might misuse this power to give loaded information in order to indoctrinate children as is done in totalitarian regimes. That is a theoretical objection.

In fact, there is nothing new or novel or progressive about this so-called “nationalisation of text-books.” It is only a reversion to the British imperialist practice from which we have emancipated ourselves in the recent past. From 1824, a **Lipidhara**, a **Gannit**, **Bal Goshtee** and several books were published and this went on for a century. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the publishing and book-selling trade developed in this country and the Government very wisely withdrew from the field to a certain extent, allowing publishers of repute to publish their books and make them available for readers in schools. So what started as a Government monopoly under British rule became a mixed economy under free

India from 1947. This continued for the first decade of our freedom.

In 1942, a committee was appointed to investigate this matter and it came to the conclusion that there should be competition between publishers on the one hand and between publishers and Government on the other in regard to the publication of text-books. The Committee of 1942 said: "We are strongly opposed to any scheme that may eventually restrict the freedom of authors and publishers in producing books. Secondary schools now enjoy freedom of selecting the books that are most suitable to them and in the interest of education they should not be deprived of the freedom. If this right of free choice of books is denied to schools, whether primary or secondary, there will be no experimentation with new methods of approach and new methods of treatment."

It also said: "We are in agreement with the view that more than one set of books on the same subject are necessary to suit different environments and different teachers."

It added: "We subscribe to the view that education should not be used as an agency of propaganda of any nature....."

These are very wise findings come to by an official committee.

In September, 1957, at the State Education Ministers' Conference, when Maulana Azad was the Education Minister, this unfortunate move for what was called nationalising text-books came up. Mr. Dinkarrao Desai, Minister of Education from Bombay, vehemently opposed this move. He said that nationalisation of text-books was not a democratic policy and not for a democratic society. Unfortunately, Bombay was in a minority in holding this enlightened view and generally it was left to the State Ministers and Education Departments to do whatever they liked. The result has been the drift towards State monopoly in the publication of text-books in many States.

There were other committees that gave the same warning as that of the committee of 1942. The Mudaliar

Committee was one of these. Another official committee said: "The monopoly of State textbooks leads to regimentation of thought..... danger of hack work compiled through lack of competition in an intellectual and economic ivory tower....."

But these warnings have all been ignored so far. Leave aside the theoretical dangers of a State monopoly of education in the way of text-books. Experience shows that it has been a miserable failure. Three facts have come to light in the last few years: first, that the text-books published by State Governments are, by and large, of poor quality; that they are published at high cost and at high prices and this is a disguised tuition fee actually raising the cost of education and that there is profiteering on the part of many State Governments; and, thirdly, that they are not even competent enough to put the books on the market and make them available to parents and children in time. Year after year, there is a scandal that text-books prescribed by State Governments are simply not available.

In regard to quality, the best comment comes from a judgment of the Madras High Court, a judgment by Mr. Justice Balakrishna Ayyar of the Madras High Court on 12th January, 1959, on a writ petition directing Government and the D.P.I. to withdraw from the List of text-books an abridged version of Sir Walter Scott's **Quentin Durward**. A lady called Mrs. Shanmugasundaram published a certain abridged edition and the petitioner went to the High Court to stop this pernicious abridged edition from being put on the market in the hands of young children. The High Court dismissed the petition on the ground that the examination was only a month away and that it would not like to disturb things. But the Judge made some very interesting comments. The Judgment of the Madras High Court said: "One becomes less ready than before to condemn, as proceeding from a purely conservative attitude of mind, the view that matters of this nature are best left to private initiative and private endeavour. Attempts to create monopolies in the channels of learning are liable to be even more harmful than in

purely economic fields..... I agree that the petitioner has just cause for his indignation. To no literary virtue can this book lay any claims. It is badly written and badly printed. The author and the printer alike disdain the use of punctuation marks. In the matter of bad spelling, they had original views of their own and recognised allegiance to nobody. In the matter of grammar and syntax the author was 'an individualist', who declined to be bound by the tiresome rules of food grammarians. The book is an example of what a good text-book should not be".

Very shortly after that, the **Mail** of Madras, of 28th August, 1959, commented on another book, **Oliver Twist**, published by the D.P.I., Andhra State. The **Mail** had this to say on this other epic: 'It is regrettable that to them, when they are at an impressionable age, should be presented such expressions as, "shown him a roof over his head," "opened his eyes on the consciousness again," "out on shopping," "The next die was cast," "Rose had gone in for a higher and dangerous fever," and "his weekdays growth of beard." The rules of punctuation have been totally neglected or flouted. Such a book would hardly have been selected by a text-book committee if it had not borne the **imprimatur**, which no doubt, is tantamount to a command, of the Government.....'

In other words, the danger is that the prescribing authorities will accept from the State text-book committee or board something that they would throw into the waste paper basket if a private publisher dared to put it before them. The **Mail** continued: "Let it, by all means, publish books, but let these compete fairly with those produced by private publishers. The evils of monopoly will be obviated and the students will read the best books available. This is no more than fair and just. The public abhors the Government treating the publication of text-books as a source of revenue, and it distrusts the possibility of this monopoly being utilised for indoctrination."

This is not an evil confined only to Madras and Andhra. The **Statesman**, of 10th March, 1964, made a

survey of school education and it said that in U.P. and Punjab there is an extensive resort to the serious menace of sub-standard text-books got approved for schools under pressure from appropriate quarters. This comment shows that this evil is by no means extinct.

This matter came up as mentioned earlier in 1957, and at that time, I took the liberty of writing a letter to Dr. K. L. Shrimali, who was then the Deputy Minister of Education, warning him a few days before this conference took place — my letter was dated 16th March, 1957 — and pleading with the Ministry of Education here to stop the State Governments from trying to make profit by selling text-books and reducing text-books to this kind of mockery. I am sorry that that kind of warning went unheeded. Today, after five years, we can see what damage has been wrought. It is necessary to look into the quality of the text-books put out by the State Governments and really to consider whether something should not be done to protect the children of this country from this kind of misinformation and poor quality of staff which is put before them. If they do insist on publishing text-books, let the State Governments at least agree to compete with private publishers, so that some standards are maintained. At least, let there not be a monopoly. I realise that in some States that is the position today. But let the Ministry of Education at the Centre use its position to see that at least the doors are kept open to both State publications and free publications simultaneously; that at least would be a guarantee of some kind of standards being maintained.

As regards spurious and counterfeit books, this has now become a nation-wide evil, like the poor quality of nationalised text-books. I understand that a body exists — called the All India Anti-Spurious Text Books Committee, and I read a report in the press that they approached the Education Minister recently and put the facts before him.

The facts are that, according to a Press Trust of India report recently published, not less than seven

States in this country have become the victims of a large-scale trade in pirated books and it is estimated that the result of this pirating of State-published books has resulted in a loss to the State Governments of about Rs. 10 crores. According to the Anti-Spurious Text Books Committee, the States affected are Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal, Orissa and Maharashtra. The Government of Maharashtra had issued a denial saying that Maharashtra at least is not suffering in a big way from this evil.

The situation appears to be worst in Bihar. In Bihar, the Government established a Text-books and Education Sub-Committee five or six years ago, and the mischief started about the same time. Half the books are published by this Committee under the Education Department, and the other half are published by publishers who pay a royalty to the Bihar Government. In a journal called **Rashtra Nirmata**, the organ of the Bihar Teachers' Association, a great deal of valuable material is to be found in Hindi about this evil. Its January 1964 issue is, in fact, devoted exclusively to this aspect. It is called the **Jali Pustak Virodhi Visheshank**. It says that the rot set in six or seven years ago when the Government came into the picture and published text-books for standards I to XI. Government books proved to be no cheaper or better, and the production and distribution was so mismanaged that the field was thrown open for these counterfeiters to come in. This journal has published a table of 56 books published by the Bihar Government. The statistics have been taken from the Bihar Government Text Books and Planning Committee. As on 30th March, 1963, this tabulation shows that of the series of four **Free India Readers** published by the Bihar Government, 1,50,000 should have been sold, but, in fact, the sale for these four text-books were only 17,000, 16,500 and 1,200 and 1,100; in other words, much the larger part of the market was appropriated by the counterfeiters who put out spurious editions of the same text-books. The shortfalls in the series of seven arithmetic books are even more striking. Instead of selling 16½ lakhs of copies of

Part I, only 24,000 were sold, instead of 2 lakhs copies of Part VII, only 25,000 were sold. In terms of money, the loss to the Bihar Government exchequer is put at over Rs. 106 lakhs over the last three years. In other words, the Bihar Government have been losing around Rs. 35 lakhs a year through this pirating of text-books.

There are two ways of printing text-books; one is to set them up again by letter press. Since no decent printing press will counterfeit a book, they have to go to shabby presses, and the result is that the original appalling quality of the Government text-books is further lowered by more mistakes made by the counterfeiters. Some other people are more progressive and modern in their technology. They photograph pages of books; that is fool-proof, because only the original mistakes are repeated!

For instance, Nesfield's Grammar which many of us studied at school, is done by photographic means. It is a Macmillan book which has been pirated and it is exactly page by page the same, and no mistakes have crept in.

In fact, it is safe to say that this kind of thing would not have happened if the Government had not taken on the publication of text-books. There are three reasons why nationalised text-books lead to this kind of piracy. The first is that the prices are unduly high. The State Governments profiteer like all good monopolists, and that being so, the margin or profit is so high that the counterfeiter is attracted more to pirating a Government text-book than a private text-book because it gives a good margin. This is a fact — that the margin between the cost and the sale price is much higher in the case of Government monopoly than when there is competition. This is a law of economics and nature, because all monopolists are extortionate and profiteering.

The second reason is that the Government books are not easily available and are not on time. The private publishers who want to make a profit see to it that their books are on the market when the schools open. The

Bihar Government and other Governments default on this requirement. This gives a counterfeiter a wonderful opportunity to be first in the field, and when a child or a parent is given a choice of buying a book which appears to be authentic, because there is no sign that it is counterfeit, or of waiting for the Government text-book to come, he naturally buys the book that is available in the market.

The third reason is that the Government does not give a fair margin of profit to the trade. While private publishers give 15 per cent discount and credit to the book trade, the Government gives only 10 per cent discount and no credit but only on cash. The result is that the book-sellers therefore are tempted to keep the pirated edition and not the official edition. And, lastly, Government books are easy to copy because of the poor quality of the original, and both look more or less equally bad.

There are two remedies for this. One is the legal remedy, and another is the more real remedy. You cannot make people moral by legislation. We have found that out in the case of prohibition; we shall find it wherever else we go against human nature. Now, you can amend the law. Somebody has suggested that section 482 of the IPC should be amended so as to make it a cognizable offence. Certainly, if that can help, let the Government do that.

The real remedy, however, is to see to it that this State monopoly of text-books is ended. Until that is done there can be no check on counterfeiting for the reasons that I have given. The only thing is to throw the text-book trade open to those who know how to publish text-books and who know how to put them on the market at a reasonable price. When that is done, let those gentlemen fight their war against the counterfeiters, just as private manufacturers of dye-stuffs or soaps or other things are able to keep the evil of counterfeiting within certain limits. The problem of nationalisation of text books and of spurious text-books is thus a combined one.

NATIONALISATION OF TEXT-BOOKS

S. S. PATKE,

ex-President, Maharashtra State Federation of Headmasters' Associations

This subject has come up again to the forefront of public discussions on account of the tragedy which has taken place in July 1964 in the State of Maharashtra in respect of Government-produced Geography text-books for Standards IV and V. These books proved extremely defective and hence the Government had to withdraw them at the huge cost of more than Rs. 7 lakhs to the public Exchequer. The Government is not willing to reconsider this policy inspite of this tragedy. On the other hand, it has come out with a firm resolve to pursue this policy. It has, therefore, become imperative to place before the Government and the public the educational implications of this policy. Of course, we cannot ignore the political as well as the commercial aspects of nationalisation. But as an active worker in the field of education, I shall confine myself only to the educational aspects of this policy.

It is interesting to note that the Government of Bombay State had stoutly opposed this policy. It was a great surprise and shock to all educationists to find the Government of Maharashtra State reversing the old policy all of a sudden in the year 1960. The Maharashtra Government announced in 1960 its decision of producing Government text-books, stage by stage, starting with English for Stds. V. to Std. X.

It is annoying to find that the Government did not find it necessary to take the sanction of the Legislature for this major departure in its avowed policy. It is still more embarrassing to find that the Government flouted the considered advice of great educationists and educational organisations, who very strongly disapproved this policy on very sound educational grounds.

By way of amplifying this important point, let us consider a few selected pronouncements on this policy.

(I) Let us begin with the views of the Secondary Education Commission (known as the Mudaliar Commission). This august body of educationists observes (page 97 and 98) as under:—

(i) "So far as subjects other than languages are concerned, the Text Book Committee should approve a number of suitable books in each subject and leave the choice to the institutions concerned."

(ii) "In suggesting that this High Power Committee should undertake the publication of certain books, we shall not be restricting the choice of books nor limiting the scope of free enterprise in the publication of books."

(iii) "Single text-books should not be prescribed for every subject of study but a reasonable number of books which satisfy the standards laid down should be recommended leaving the choice to schools."

(II) The Report of a study by an International Team contains observations on text-books (page 80) as under:—

"We do not consider it desirable that State Government and educational authorities should take up the production of text-books. We however think that State Governments should undertake the responsibility of organising educational research which will offer material for the production of better text-books and general reading books."

(III) At the XXXII All-India Educational Conference held in Madras, from December 28 to 31, 1957, the following resolution was passed at the General Sessions:—

"This Conference records its opinion that schools should have freedom in selecting text-books suitable for the children. It records its emphatic protest against the steps being taken by certain Governments for preparing, publishing and imposing a uniform set of books for all schools. It has, however, no objection if the State Governments, through properly constituted Text-Book Committees, review the books published and prepare on

educational grounds an approved list from which schools may be free to select their text-books."

This resolution was repeated at the same conference held at Chandigarh in 1958 and also in 1962 at Trivandrum.

Over and above this let us see what some of our great educationists have to say on this subject.

Dr. A. L. Mudaliar, in his speech in Madras on 22-11-'61, emphatically said: "I would like students to live in a free atmosphere and grasp for themselves whatever principles they would like to adopt in their lives. I have never been able to support the idea of the Government publishing textbooks, whether for the infant standard or for the college classes. It should be a competitive enterprise as it is in any other civilised country."

Dr. Shrimali, former Union Minister for Education, observed in unequivocal terms: "It is my belief that in the field of production of books, there is scope for free private enterprise. In fact, in a democratic society, it is essential that the State should take over the responsibility of production of books as little as possible and leave this work more in the hands of voluntary organisations and private societies. It is only then the minds and imaginations of the authors and the creative faculties of the people would find fuller and clearer expression."

Acharya Vinoba Bhave's views, based on his vast knowledge and experience, are very thought-provoking. He said: "Education must be free from the control of Government, whatever its complexion. Government-controlled education is bound to become formal and rigid. It becomes a sort of large-scale factory which produces a standardised commodity. Secondly, it turns a teacher into an employee. Today, the Government plans out every detail of the curriculum. The teacher has merely to carry out the orders he receives from above. He is, therefore, unable to leave any impress on the minds of the students. He does not become their friend, philosopher and guide. He has no place in the life of the young."

It was in 1957 that Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer and

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari severely castigated Madras Government's policy of nationalising text-books. This would result, they warned, in monopolistic intellection, lowering of standards, indoctrination and inefficiency.

How very prophetic are these observations in view of the tragedy which has recently taken place in Maharashtra! It is simply shocking to find that a number of State Governments have flouted all sound advice from very responsible bodies and great thinkers.

Let us see what are the effects of this policy on students. In the ultimate analysis, this policy can be justified if it is going to benefit the students for whom it is meant. It is in this context that the nationalisation of text-books can be objected to as very ill-conceived. Nationalisation in its true sense must be for the good of the school-going children. Our experience as educationists is otherwise. It can be pointed out that nationalisation of text-books has done a lot of harm to the students.

(1) Government books are not available when the schools open. A lot of time is wasted. Schools in rural areas where, by and large, both the students and teachers are below average suffer a good deal in the absence of text-books. Their work comes to a standstill.

(2) Nationalisation in practice amounts to monopolisation of a single book or a single set of books produced by the Government. This measure of presenting the same book all over the state is very uneducational. Under this system, brilliant students, mediocre students and subnormal students are measured by the same yardstick. If a book is fit for average students, the other two categories of students find it uninteresting. As a matter of fact, variety in presentation, in illustrations and in style is very helpful for effective learning and teaching. In the learning process a rich variety of text-books with their varied illustrations and different methods of presentation is a boon. For variety attracts the attention and interest of the young learner. Interest is a powerful factor by which a child's mind perceives and learns new things. As variety in food is essential for physical health and growth,

so is variety in books for mental health and progress. State monopoly is the very negation of this sound educational principle and practice.

(3) One book or one set of books, if it contains defects of a serious nature, adversely affect the standard of education in that particular subject. As an example, Government Readers of English in Maharashtra can be cited. So far five Readers have been published. All of them are bulky, dull and dry in subject matter, full of clumsy constructions, grammatical flaws and unidiomatic expressions. The standard of English is adversely affected by this set of Readers. The teaching of English has become a dull, dry and boring task. One cannot simply imagine the state of affairs in this respect in schools situated in rural areas.

Government's Mathematics books for Standards IV and V, it is reported, are very difficult. They might be suitable for a few brilliant students. Thus, the average students will think that the learning of Mathematics is a big hurdle on account of these books.

(4) A single set of books, particularly produced by the Government, is bound to possess defects like dull standardisation, regimentation of thought, attempt at indoctrination and monotonous approach. All these defects are bound to make learning a dull process. As a matter of fact, education ought to be a delightful experience to the young learners. Thus, a high standard of education mainly depends upon a variety of good text-books. State monopoly of text-books has ill-affected and will continue to ill-affect the standard of education.

Let us now consider the consequences of this measure from the teachers' point of view.

(i) Compulsion of one set of books is a grave encroachment on the universally accepted right of teachers and schools of selecting books of their choice.

(ii) When teachers are deprived of their choice of suitable books, they cannot adopt the 'group system' in their teaching. Generally such books are meant for average children and so brilliant children as well as retarded children are neglected under this system.

(iii) If the books are not available in time, many teachers feel confused about alternative arrangements.

(iv) Under this system of state monopoly, promising teachers are deprived of the opportunity of writing books from different points of view. It is quite possible that either due to communal or due to regional considerations really deserving authors will be thrown out. It is apprehended that if undeserving persons are entrusted with this task, the books they will produce will not be really the 'best books'. Substandard books do ill-affect the standard of education as it has happened at present in the teaching of English in Maharashtra.

In a State monopoly, the position of selected writers is more or less invulnerable. There is nobody to sit in judgement as regards the quality of their work. This very feeling of enjoying an invulnerable position is detrimental to quality.

(v) Stereotyped books result in stereotyped methods. There is no scope for the teachers to use their initiative and originality. In the absence of variety in approach, our educational system will produce pupils of a single track of mind. Intellectual growth of the pupils is very likely to be stunted considerably.

(vi) In private enterprise, a large number of authors gets scope to write books. Healthy competition among authors and publishers is always conducive to the progress of education. In this very context, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari has rightly remarked that "If nationalisation is introduced, all enthusiasm to write good books is chilled and all scope for the encouragement of artists removed."

It is very unfortunate that the Government of Maharashtra has made this a prestige issue. Since 1957 so many State Governments have tried this experiment with disastrous results. If the Maharashtra Government is not ready to learn a lesson from the failure of other States, one can only say that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread". The Government must consider this issue

solely from the educational point of view. If Government is keen about producing their 'Best Books' let it not curb the initiative and scope of private enterprise. Progressive education must be broadbased in all respects. Under a progressive system the schools, the authors and private enterprise must have freedom. Let us have healthy competition between Government agency and private agencies.

Really speaking, Government's job is to offer a good deal of technical know-how required in this task. The Government should conduct State Bureaus of text-book research and offer advice and guidance to authors and publishers as suggested by the Mudaliar Commission.

To put the whole question in a nutshell, nationalisation which is in practice State monopolisation, is a retrograde measure. It is bound to affect adversely the standard of education. It is high time for the general public to take active interest in this problem as this policy has ill-affected and will continue to ill-affect the education of children. Unless strong public opinion is mobilised on this issue, the Government will not reconsider this policy.

GOOD EDUCATION REQUIRES EXPERIMENTATION AND HEALTHY COMPETITION

A. B. SHAH

Executive Secretary, Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom

Educationally, it is not right to have one single text-book for all types of students. It should be open to a school to select the book most suitable to its students, for there is no reason to imagine that a book that is suitable for the students of a school in a metropolitan town will also be the best for their counterparts in a village or small town. Their equipments, backgrounds and environments differ so widely in many respects that to prescribe the same book for both the groups would be educationally unfair to one of them at least.

There are good reasons why there should be more than one text-book and text-book publisher. It is indispensable for experimentation and healthy competition without which change and steady improvement would be difficult to ensure. If the government were to have a monopoly of publishing and prescribing text-books, both change and improvement would be at a discount for all sorts of superficially plausible reasons such as economy, uniformity, and the like. Generally, all but one text-book would be found "unsatisfactory". The only book that is found worthy of study would be the one that some busy bureaucrat in the Department of Education considered good — and safe in the political and cultural climate for the time being prevalent in government circles. Not only the much publicised text-books in Geography but also those in English and Arithmetic in Maharashtra State may be cited in this connection.

Perhaps that is why the Mudaliar Commission on Secondary Education appointed by the Government of India in 1953 recommended that text-books should **not** be prescribed for any subject except languages. They also suggested that a high-power, **independent** committee, consisting of a High Court judge, vice-chancellor, a headmaster, and the Director of Education as Secretary (not as Chairman) of the committee, with two more educationists, should be appointed in each State for approving text-books. Only if none of the books submitted to it comes to the mark, should the Text-book Committee described above commission a new book. Generally, however, the Committee is expected to approve and **recommend, not prescribe**, a reasonable number of books for each subject, instead of prescribing only one book as the State Government has done. It is no use for the latter to reply that the Director of Education could not get a single good book out of those that were submitted to him. For, so long as Government used to **approve** books, not much difficulty was experienced on this score. In my own days, for example, we had a variety of good books to choose from. It is only with the introduction of government monopoly that good text-books have become scarce.

One aspect of the problem does not seem to have received adequate notice so far. Apart from the merits of Government monopoly in text-books, and assuming also that the book prescribed by the Government is the best possible of its kind, it is still wrong educationally to prescribe translations of a book as text-books in languages other than that of the original text-book. The reason is obvious. Every language has its idiom and associations which are characteristic of the life and culture of the people who speak it. Knowledge and skills which can be effectively communicated through certain lessons in one language cannot necessarily be equally well communicated through their translation, however good, into another language. For instance, the lesson on the post-office in the Arithmetic text-book for standard IV introduces the subject through a preliminary talk about **Haldi Kunku**. Now **Haldi-Kunku** is a women's socio-religious function unknown to Gujarati, Parsee, Christian, Sindhi and North Indian children in Bombay. Similarly, to talk to them of **Pola**, the festival of the oxen, is not likely to create in them interest in the geography of Maharashtra. This would, *mutatis mutandis*, be true of most of the text-books. What is, therefore, necessary in a multilingual State — and almost all States in the Indian Union are such — is for the Department of Education to lay down the contents of a course of study and the general approach to it, and let the text-book on it in a given language be written by one who is familiar with its idiom and tradition independently of a similar book in another language. To insist on translations is a mechanical and educationally most unwise way of going about the job.

One last question remains: what are teachers and parents to do in a situation where the Government refuses to listen to the language of reason? I suggest that parents and teachers should talk to the Government in the only language it seems capable of understanding — a mass 'strike' whereby we refuse to teach or allow our children to be taught government-prescribed text-books unless they are of the highest educational standard.

“Free Enterprise was born with man and shall survive as long as man survives.”

—A. D. Shroff

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