



All India Conference of  
Education Ministers

*PROCEEDINGS*



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**“ Foreword ” by H. P. Minister, to the proceedings of the Conference of Education Ministers held at Poona.**

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As India enters on a new era of freedom and self-Government, the question of providing a truly national system of education for the country, assumes supreme importance. Education is the very life-blood of a nation's growth and development. It is the foundation on which alone can be built any structure of national progress—whether social, economic or political. Any country that aspires to take its place in the society of civilized nations, must provide for every one without exception, at least that modicum of education which is to-day regarded as the minimum preparation for good citizenship. India has a tremendous lee-way to make before she can achieve this ideal. One has only to remember that 87 per cent of the population is illiterate, to realize the magnitude of the task that faces those on whom has devolved the responsibility for initiating a programme of national education at this fateful hour in the country's history. The problem bristles with difficulties not the least of which is the difficulty of finance.

It was both natural and desirable that those engaged in this common endeavour should meet to exchange ideas and to compare notes. When, therefore, a suggestion was made by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh that a Conference of Education Ministers of all Provinces should be held, I readily took up the suggestion. The response from other Provinces was most encouraging. We also took advantage of the presence of Mahatma Gandhi in Poona, to arrange that the Conference should have Gandhiji's blessings and advice. In his brief address to the Conference, Gandhiji with characteristic sincerity and frankness, unfolded the true ideal of national education and dispelled the doubts that were expressed. The Conference was also fortunate to have the advice of eminent educationists like Acharya Kriplani, Acharya Kaka Kalelkar, Dr. Zakir Husain and others.

I think the Conference served a very useful purpose. The very free and frank exchange of views at the Conference not only helped to crystalize ideas, but I was greatly heartened—and I am sure the other ministers present, too, must have been greatly heartened—by the knowledge that the problems and difficulties that we are experiencing in this Province in implementing a programme of national education, are also common to other Provinces and that there is a very large measure of agreement on all fundamental issues among those engaged in the task of implementing a system of education appropriate to the needs and circumstances of each Province.