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FOREWORD

The fifteenth of August 1947 is significant, not only because India on this day attained political freedom, but even more, because she secured on this date, the privilege of making the will of her people the corner-stone of the national edifice. Before the people's voice and the people's will can become a force for good, it is obvious that the people be afforded a right and an adequate system of education which will train them to make the right demands and work for the right causes. In order, therefore, to shoulder the responsibilities that freedom has necessarily brought in its wake, one of Government's foremost duties is to eradicate, with the least possible delay, the great volume of ignorance and illiteracy that in the past has stifled India's progress and development. This ignorance has to be replaced, as quickly as possible, with education for effective citizenship. Conditions that have hitherto prevailed make it imperative that this problem be tackled at both ends: education of children of the age-group six to fourteen; and education of the adult. A perusal of the pages that follow will indicate that a move in this direction has already been initiated. Endeavours towards introducing a system of free and compulsory Basic Education, and accelerating the implementation of a comprehensive scheme of Adult or Social education figure prominently in the development plans of both the Central and Provincial Governments.

Another aspect which has, fortunately, received special attention is the advancement of scientific and technical education. This is well. Development in this direction will open up the industrial potentialities that exist, and that, in its turn, should augment national wealth which would not only help in raising the standard of living, but also, and this is more important, increase our capacity for promoting nation-building projects including education.

It is true, that the progress achieved is not spectacular; but if we recall the inevitable dissipation of the country's energies in endeavouring to piece together the enormous dislocation and displacement which followed Partition, the success which has been achieved so far, may not be considered wholly inadequate. I can only say that despite the tremendous handicaps, the work of nation-building has not been stayed.

Our trials are not yet over. The economic crisis, in the grips of which we find ourselves today, makes our task even more difficult now, than

what it was in the days of stress which immediately followed the division of the country. We are conscious that if we allow the axe of economic stringency and consequent retrenchment to fall upon nation-building items like education, we will be doing so at our own peril. We know that throughout the most terrible years of war and destruction, and economic depression that assailed western nations in recent times, educational and social reconstruction continued apace.

For the harmonious and even development of a national system of Education, in so diverse a country as India, what is essential is co-ordinated planning. Local variations in the component units of the country must of course be reckoned with, but the fundamentals and basic principles on which a national system must be constructed cannot vary. Some over-all cementing agency appears necessary which could adequately coordinate planning and development, not only with a view to maintaining the cultural unity of India, but to prevent waste and over-lapping, particularly in the spheres of technical and higher education. We cannot certainly afford the latter.

An adequately coordinated national system of education is essential for the maintenance of India's hard won unity.

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