

EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

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MAHATMA GANDHI'S ARTICLES
WARDHA EDUCATION CONFERENCE
PROCEEDINGS
ZAKIR HUSAIN COMMITTEE REPORT
THE PROPOSED SYLLABUS.

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EDUCATION

How to solve the problem of education is the problem unfortunately mixed up with the disappearance of the drink revenues. No doubt there are ways and means of raising fresh taxation. Professors Shah and Khambatta have shown that even this poor country is capable of raising fresh taxation. Riches have not yet been sufficiently taxed. In this of all countries in the world possession of inordinate wealth by individuals should be held as a crime against Indian humanity. Therefore the maximum limit of taxation of riches beyond a certain margin can never be reached. In England, I understand, they have already gone as far as 70% of the earnings beyond a prescribed figure. There is no reason why India should not go to a much higher figure. Why should there not be death duties? Those sons of millionaires who are of age and yet inherit their parents' wealth, are losers for the very inheritance. The nation thus becomes a double loser. For the inheritance should rightly belong to the nation. And the nation loses again in that the full faculties of the heirs are not drawn out being crushed under the load of

riches. That death duties cannot be imposed by Provincial Governments does not affect my argument.

But as a nation we are so backward in education that we cannot hope to fulfill our obligations to the nation in this respect in a given time during this generation, if the programme is to depend on money. I have therefore made bold, even at the risk of losing all reputation for constructive ability, to suggest that education should be self-supporting. By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is the only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would therefore begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the State takes over the manufactures of these schools.

I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done to-day but scientifically, *i.e.*, the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process. I am not writing this without some confidence, because it has the backing of experience. This method being adopted more or less com-

pletely wherever spinning is being taught to workers. I have myself taught sandal-making and even spinning on these lines with good results. This method does not exclude a knowledge of history and geography. But I find that this is best taught by transmitting such general information by word of mouth. One imparts ten times as much in this manner as by reading and writing. The signs of the alphabet may be taught later when the pupil has learnt to distinguish wheat from chaff and when he has somewhat developed his or her tastes. This a revolutionary proposal but it saves immense labour and enables a student to acquire in one year what he may take much longer to learn. This means all-round economy. Of course the pupil learns mathematics whilst he is learning his handicrafts.

I attach the greatest importance to primary education which according to my conception should be equal to the present matriculation less English. If all the collegians were of a sudden to forget their knowledge, the loss sustained by the sudden lapse of the memory of say a few lakhs of collegians would be as nothing compared to the loss that the nation has sustained through the ocean of darkness that surrounds three hundred millions. The measure of illiteracy is no adequate measure of the prevailing ignorance among the millions of villagers.

I would revolutionize college education and relate it to national necessities. There would be

degrees for mechanical and other engineers. They would be attached to the different industries which should pay for the training of the graduates they need. Thus the Tatas would be expected to run a college for training engineers under the supervision of the State, the mill associations would run among them a college for training graduates whom they need. Similarly for the other industries that may be named. Commerce will have its college. There remains arts, medicines and agriculture. Several private Arts colleges are to-day self-supporting. The State would, therefore, cease to run its own. Medical colleges would be attached to certified hospitals. As they are popular among monied men they may be expected by voluntary contributions to support medical colleges. And agricultural colleges to be worthy of the name must be self-supporting. I have a painful experience of some agricultural graduates. Their knowledge is superficial. They lack practical experience. But if they had their apprenticeship on farms which are self-sustained and answer the requirements of the country, they would not have to gain experience after getting their degrees and at the expense of their employers.

This is not a fanciful picture. If we would but shed our mental laziness, it would appear to be an eminently reasonable and practical solution of the problem of education that faces the Congress Ministers and therefore the Congress. If the declarations recently made on

behalf of the British Government mean what they should to the ear, the Ministers have the organizing and organized ability of the Civil Service at their disposal to execute their policy. The Services have learnt the art of reducing to practice the policies laid down for them even by capricious Governors and Viceroy's. Let the ministers lay down a well-conceived but determined policy, and let the Services redeem the promise made on their behalf and prove worthy of the salt they eat.

There remains the question of teachers. I like Prof. K. T. Shah's idea expressed in his article elsewhere of conscription being applied to men and women of learning. They may be conscripted to give a number of years, say five, to the teaching for which they may be qualified, on a salary not exceeding their maintenance on a scale in keeping with the economic level of the country. The very high salaries that the teachers and professors in the higher branches demand must go. The village teacher has to be replaced by more competent ones.

Harijan, 13-7-1937.

M. K. GANDHI.

II.

TWO PROPOSITIONS

What I have been saying as a layman, for the lay reader, Dr. Arundale has said as an educationist, for the educationist, and those who have in their charge the moulding of the youth of the country. I am not surprised at the caution with which he approaches the idea of self-supporting education. For me it is the crux. My one regret is that what I have seen through the glass darkly for the past 40 years I have begun to see now quite clearly under the stress of circumstances.

Having spoken strongly in 1920 against the present system of education, and having now got the opportunity of influencing, however little it may be, Ministers in seven Provinces, who have been fellow workers and fellow sufferers in the glorious struggle for freedom of the country. I have felt an irresistible call to make good the charge that the present mode of education is radically wrong from bottom to top. And what I have been struggling to express in these columns very inadequately has come upon me like a flash, and the truth of it is daily growing upon me. I

do, therefore, venture to ask the educationists of the country, who have no axes to grind, and who have an open mind, to study the two propositions that I have laid down, without allowing their preconceived and settled notions about the existing mode of education to interfere with the free flow of their reason. I would urge them not to allow my utter ignorance of education, in its technical and orthodox sense, to prejudice them against what I have been saying and writing. Wisdom, it is said, often comes from the mouths of babes and sucklings. It may be a poetic exaggeration, but there is no doubt that sometimes it does come through babes. Experts polish it and give it a scientific shape. I therefore ask for an examination of my propositions purely on merits. Let me restate them here, not as I have previously laid them down in these columns, but in the language that occurs to me as I am dictating these lines:—

1. Primary education, extending over a period of 7 years or longer, and covering all the subjects up to the matriculation standard, except English, plus a vocation used as the vehicle for drawing out the minds of boys and girls in all departments of knowledge, should take the place of what passes to-day under the name of Primary, Middle and High School Education.

2. Such education, taken as a whole, can, must be, self-supporting; in fact self-support is the acid test of its reality.

Harijan, 2-10-37.

M. K. GANDHI.

III.

SELF-SUPPORTING SCHOOLS

This article is a striking case of preconceived notions blurring one's vision. The writer has not taken the trouble to understand my plan. He condemns himself when he likens the boys in the schools of my imagination to the boys on the semi-slave plantations of Ceylon. He forgets that the boys on the plantations are not treated as students. Their labour is no part of their training. In the schools I advocate boys have all that boys learn in high schools less English but plus drill, music, drawing and, of course, a vocation. To call these factories amounts to an obstinate refusal to appreciate a series of facts. It is very like a man refusing to read the description of a human being and calling him a monkey because he has seen no other animal but a monkey, and because the description in some particulars, but only in some, answers that of monkeys. The Professor would have been on safe ground if he had cautioned the public against expecting all that I have claimed for the proposal. The caution would, however, be un-

necessary because I have uttered it myself.

I admit that my proposal is novel. But novelty is no crime. I admit that it has not much experience behind it. But what experience my associates and I have encourages me to think that the plan, if worked faithfully, will succeed. The nation can lose nothing by trying the experiment even if it fails. And the gain will be immense if the experiment succeeds even partially. In no other way can Primary Education be made free, compulsory and effective. The present Primary Education is admittedly a snare and a delusion.

Shri Narhari Parikh's figures have been written in order to support the plan to the extent they can. They are not conclusive. They are encouraging. They supply good data to an enthusiast. Seven years are not an integral part of my plan. It may be that more time will be required to reach the intellectual level aimed at by me. The nation won't lose anything whatsoever by a prolongation of the period of instruction. The integral parts of the scheme are:—

(1) Taken as a whole a vocation or vocations are the best medium for the all-round development of a boy or a girl, and therefore all syllabus should be woven round vocational training.

(2) Primary education thus conceived as a whole is bound to be self-supporting even though for the first or even the second year's course it may not be wholly so. Primary Education here

means as described above.

The Professor questions the possibility of giving arithmetical and other training through vocations. Here he speaks without experience. I can speak from experience. I had no difficulty in giving at the Tolstoy Farm (Transvaal) all-round development to the boys and girls for whose training I was directly responsible. The central fact there was vocational training for nearly eight hours. They had one or, at the most, two hours of book learning. The vocations were digging, cooking, scavenging, sandal making, simple carpentry, and messenger work. The ages of the children ranged from six to sixteen. That experiment has been since much enriched.

Harijan, 18-9-37.

M. K. GANDHI.

IV.

SOME CRITICISM ANSWERED

A high educational officer who wishes to remain unknown has sent me, through a common friend, an elaborate and considered criticism of my plan for primary education. For want of space I may not reproduce the whole argument here. Nor is there anything new in it. And yet it deserves a reply, if only for the pains the writer has bestowed on his paper.

This is how my suggestions have been paraphrased by the writer:—

“(i) Primary education should start and end with training in crafts and industries, and that whatever may be necessary by way of general information should come in as auxiliaries in the initial stage, and that formal training through the medium of reading and writing in subjects like History, Geography and Arithmetic come right at the end.

(ii) Primary education should be self-supporting from the first, and that this should and could be achieved by the State taking over the finished articles coming from the schools and

selling them to the public.

(iii) Primary education should be fully up to the Matriculation standard—less of course English.

(iv) Prof. K. T. Shah's idea of conscripting young men and women to teach in the primary schools should be fully examined and, if possible, acted upon."

The writer at once proceeds to say:—

"If we analyse the above programme it seems to us that the underlying ideas are in some cases mediaeval, and in some cases based upon assumptions which would not bear examination. Probably No. iii is a very high standard."

It would have been better if, instead of paraphrasing, the writer had quoted my own words. For all the statements in the first paraphrase are wide of the truth. My point is not that the start should be made with crafts and the rest should come in as auxiliaries. On the contrary I have said that the whole of the general education should come through the crafts and simultaneously with their progress. This is wholly different from what the writer imputes to me. I do not know what happened in the Middle Ages. But I do know that the aim in the Middle Ages or any Age was never to develop the whole man through crafts. The idea is original. That it may prove to be wrong does not affect the originality. And an original idea does not admit of a frontal attack unless it is tried on a sufficiently large scale. To say *a priori* that it is impos-

sible is no argument.

Nor have I said that the formal training through the medium of reading and writing should come right at the end. On the contrary the formal training comes in at the very beginning. Indeed it is an integral part of the general equipment. I have indeed said, and I repeat here, that reading may come a little later, and writing may come last. But the whole process has to be finished within the first year; so that at the end of the first year in the school of my imagination a seven year old child, boy or girl, will have much more than the general information that any boy or girl has in the present primary school during the first year. He will read correctly and draw correct letters instead of making the daubs that the children generally do at present. The child will also know elementary additions and subtractions and the simple multiplication table. He will have learned all this through and while he has learned a productive craft, say spinning, by choice.

The second paraphrase is just as unhappy as the first. For what I have claimed is that education through handicrafts should be self-supporting during the sum total of seven years I have assigned for it. I have specially said that during the first two years it may mean a partial loss.

Mediaeval times may have been bad, but I am not prepared to condemn things simply because they are mediaeval. The spinning wheel is undoubtedly mediaeval, but seems to have

come to stay. Though the article is the same it has become a symbol of freedom and unity as at one time, after the advent of the East India Company, it had become the symbol of slavery. Modern India has found in it a deeper and truer meaning than our forefathers had dreamt of. Even so, if the handicrafts were once symbols of factory labour, may they now be symbols and vehicles of education in the fullest and truest sense of the term. If the Ministers have enough imagination and courage, they will give the idea a trial in spite of the criticism, undoubtedly well-meant, of high educational officers and others especially when the criticism is based on imaginary premises.

Though the writer has been good enough to assume the possibility of Prof. K. T. Shah's scheme of conscription being sound, he later on evidently repents of it. For he says:—

“The idea of conscripting teachers is to our mind an outrage. We shall have in schools, where young children assemble, men and women who have voluntarily dedicated their lives to this profession so far as such a dedication is possible in this world, and who will bring sunshine and zeal. We have made far too many experiments with our young men and women, but this one bids fair in its results to land us in a ruin from which there will be no escape for at least half a century. The whole thing is based on the notion that teaching is one of those arts for which no adequate training is necessary and that everyone is a born teacher. How a man of K. T.

Shah's eminence comes to hold it is inexplicable. The idea is a freak idea bound to be tragic in results if applied. Again, how can each and everyone train children in handicrafts, etc?"

Prof. Shah is well able to defend his proposition. But I would like to remind the writer that the existing teachers are not volunteers. They are hirelings (the word is used in its natural sense) working for their bread and butter. Prof. Shah's scheme does contemplate possession of patriotism, spirit of sacrifice, a certain amount of culture, and a training in a handicraft, before they are taken up. His idea is substantial, quite feasible, and deserves the greatest consideration. If we have to wait till we have born teachers, we shall have to wait till the Judgment Day for them. I submit that teachers will have to be trained on a wholesale scale during the shortest term possible. This cannot be done unless the services of the existing educated young men and women are gently impressed. It will not be unless there is a general willing response from that body. They responded, however feebly, during the civil disobedience campaign. Will they fail to respond to the call for constructive service against maintenance money?

Then the writer asks:—

"(1) Are we not to allow for a great deal of wastage in raw materials when handled by little boys?

(2) Are the sales to be effected by a central or-

ganization? What about the cost of this?

(3) Are the people to be compelled to buy these stores?

(4) What about the cases of those communities which are at present manufacturing these? What will be the reaction on these?"

My answers are:—

1. Of course there will be wastage, but there will be even at the end of the first year some gain by each pupil.

2. The State will absorb much of the material for its own requirements.

3. Nobody will be compelled to buy the nation's children's manufactures, but the nation is expected to buy with pardonable pride and patriotic pleasure what its children make for its needs.

4. There is hardly any competition in the products of village handicrafts. And care will be taken to manufacture things which do not come into unfair competition with any indigenous manufactures. Thus khadi, village paper, palm *gur* and the like have no competitors.

V

SELF-SUPPORTING EDUCATION

Dr. A. Lakshimipathi writes:—

“I have seen some institutions conducted by missionaries, where the schools are worked only in the mornings, the evenings being spent either in agricultural operations or in some handicraft work for which the students are paid some wages according to the quality and quantity of work done by them. In this way, the institution is made more or less self-supporting, and the students do not feel like fish out of water when they leave the school, as they have learnt to do some work enabling them to earn at least their livelihood. I have noticed that the atmosphere in which such schools are conducted is quite different from the dull routine of the stereotyped schools of the Education Department. The boys look more healthy and happy in the idea that they have turned out some useful work, and are physically of a better build. These schools are closed for a short period in the agricultural seasons when all their energy is required for field work. Even in

cities, such of the boys as have an aptitude may be employed in trades and professions, thereby enabling them to find a profession. One meal may also be provided at school for those boys who are in need, or for all who wish to partake of the same in an interval of half an hour during the morning classes. Poor boys may thus be persuaded to run to the school with pleasure and their parents may also encourage them to go to school regularly.

If this scheme of half-day school be adopted, the services of some of these teachers may be utilized for promoting adult education in the villages without any extra payment for such services. The building and other apparatus may also be useful in the same way.

I have seen the Minister for Education, Madras, and presented a letter stating that the deterioration of health of the present generation is mainly due to unsuitable hours of education at schools. I am of opinion that all schools and colleges should work only in the morning, i.e., between 6 and 11 a.m. A study of four hours at school must be quite enough. The afternoon should be spent at home, and the evenings should be devoted to games and physical development. Some of the boys may employ themselves in earning their livelihood, and some may help their parents in their business. The students will be more in touch with their parents, which is essential for development of any vocational calling and hereditary aptitudes.

If we realize the body-building is nation-building, the proposed change, though apparently revolutionary, is according to Indian customs and climate, and it would be welcome to most people."

Of Dr. Lakshimipathi's suggestion for restricting school hours to mornings, I do not wish to say much save to commend it to the educational authorities. As to the more or less self-supporting institutions, they could not do anything else if they were to pay their way partly or wholly and make something of their pupils. Yet my suggestion has shocked some educationists because they have known no other method. The very idea of education being self-supporting seems to them to rob education of all value. They see in the suggestion a mercenary motive. I have, however, just been reading a monograph on a Jewish effort in matters educational. In it the writer speaks thus of the vocational training imparted in the Jewish schools:—

"So they find the labour of their hands to be worthy in itself. It is made lighter by intellectual activity, it is ennobled by the patriotic ideal which it serves."

Given the right kind of teachers, our children will be taught the dignity of labour and learn to regard it as an integral part and a means of their intellectual growth, and to realize that it is patriotic to pay for their training through their labour. The core of my suggestion is that handicrafts are to be taught, not merely for produc-

tive work, but for developing the intellect of the pupils. Surely, if the State takes charge of the children between seven and fourteen, and trains their bodies and minds through productive labour, the public schools must be frauds and teachers idiots, if they cannot become self-supporting.

Supposing that every boy and girl works, not as a machine but as an intelligent unit, taking interest in the corporate work done under expert guidance, the corporate labour should be, say after the first year of the course, worth one anna per hour. Thus for twenty-six working days of four hours per day, each child will have earned Rs. 6-8-0 per month. The only question is whether millions of children can be so profitably employed. We should be intellectual bankrupts, if we cannot direct the energy of our children so as to get from them, after a year's training, one anna worth of marketable labour per hour. I know that nowhere in India do villagers earn so much as one anna per hour in the villages. That is because we have reconciled ourselves to the intense disparity between the haves and the have-nots, and because the city people have, perhaps unwittingly, joined in the British exploitation of the village.

Harijan, 11-9-37.

M. K. GANDHI,

VI

THE MEANING OF MANUAL WORK

Sjt. Ravishanker Shukla, the Education Minister, C. P., was good enough to pay a visit last week in company with all his educational experts including the Director of Education, Mr. Owen, and Mr. DeSilva. They wanted to understand from Gandhiji his idea of the revolution he intended in the present system of education, before they actually started the experiment. "It is by making the children return to the State a part of what they receive from it that I propose to make education self-supporting," he explained. "I should combine into one what you call now the primary education and secondary or high school education. It is my conviction that our children get nothing more in the high schools than a half-baked knowledge of English, besides a superficial knowledge of mathematics and history and geography, some of which they had learnt in their own language in the primary classes. If you cut out English from the curriculum altogether, without cutting out the subjects you teach, you can make the children go through the whole

course in seven years, instead of eleven, besides giving them manual work whereby they can make a fair return to the State. Manual work will have to be the centre of the whole thing. I am told that Messrs. Abbot and Wood recognize the value of manual work as an important part of rural education. I am glad to be supported by reputed educationists. But I do not suppose they place on manual work the kind of emphasis I place. For I say that the development of the mind should come through manual training. The manual training will not consist in producing articles for a school museum, or toys which have no value. It should produce marketable articles. The children will not do this as children used to do under the whip in the early days of the factories. They will do it because it entertains them and stimulates their intellect."

"But," objected Mr. DeSilva, "whilst I accept the proposition that we must teach through creative work, how can we expect an immature child to compete with a mature individual?"

"The child will not compete with the mature individual. The State will take over the articles and find a market for them. Teach them to make things suitable for the requirements. Take mats for instance. What they do at home as tedious labour they will do here intelligently. The tremendous problem will become easy when the education you give will become both self-supporting and self-acting."

"But before we can give them this kind of

education, we shall have to wipe out the present generation of teachers."

"No. There is no intermediate stage. You must make a start and prepare the teachers whilst you go through the process."

Later Gandhiji requested these gentlemen to confer at length with Sjt. Aryanayakam, who was taking a keen interest in the new idea, Dr. Bharatan Kumarappa, and Kakasaheb, and others who had enough experience of education and were keen educationists. They are having a very useful discussion in order to evolve a practical scheme, whilst these notes are being written, and we shall soon know the results of their discussions.

In the meanwhile let me help to throw further light on Gandhiji's meaning of manual work. I translate from a letter he wrote to one who has combined manual training with literary training in his school for a certain number of years: "I am afraid," he said, "you have not sufficiently grasped the principle that spinning, carding, etc., should be the means of intellectual training. What is being done there is that it is a supplementary course to the intellectual course. I want you to appreciate the difference between the two. A carpenter teaches me carpentry. I shall learn it mechanically from him, and as a result I shall know the use of various tools, but that will hardly develop my intellect. But if the same thing is taught to me by one who has taken a scientific training in carpentry, he will stimulate

my intellect too. Not only shall I then have become an expert carpenter but also an engineer. For the expert will have taught me mathematics, also told me the differences between various kinds of timber, the place where they come from, giving me thus a knowledge of geography and also a little knowledge of agriculture. He will also have taught me to draw models of my tools, and given me a knowledge of elementary geometry and arithmetic. It is likely that you do not correlate manual work with intellectual training which is given exclusively through reading and writing. I must confess that all I have up to now said is that manual training must be given side by side with intellectual training, and that it should have a principal place in national education. But now I say that the principal means of stimulating the intellect should be manual training. I have come to this conclusion because the intellect of our boys is being wasted. Our boys do not know what to do on leaving schools. True education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of the children. This education ought to be for them a kind of insurance against unemployment."

Harijan, 11-9-37.

M. D.

VII

MORE TALKS ON SELF-SUPPORTING
EDUCATION

In spite of the weak state of his health and the quantities of rest that he needs, Gandhiji has shown his readiness to discuss his theory of self-supporting education with anyone who has thought about the subject and wants to contribute his share to making the new experiment a success. The discussions have been, in view of his health, necessarily few and brief, but every now and then something new has emerged, and whenever he has talked, he has had some fresh suggestion to make and fresh light to throw. Thus on one occasion he sounded a warning against the assumption that the idea of self-supporting education sprang from the necessity of achieving total prohibition as soon as possible. "Both are independent necessities," he said. "You have to start with the conviction that total prohibition has to be achieved, revenue or no revenue, education or no education. Similarly, you have to start with the conviction that looking to the needs of the villages of India our rural

education ought to be made self-supporting if it is to be compulsory."

"I have the first conviction deep down in me," said an educationist who carried on the discussion. "Prohibition to me is an end in itself, and I regard it as a great education in itself. I should, therefore, sacrifice education altogether to make prohibition a success. But the other conviction is lacking. I cannot yet believe that education can be made self-supporting."

"There, too, I want you to start with the conviction. The ways and means will come as you begin to work it out. I regret that I woke up to the necessity of this at this very late age. Otherwise I should have made the experiment myself. Even now, God willing, I shall do what I can do to show that it can be self-supporting. But my time has been taken up by other things all these years, equally important perhaps, but it is this stay in Segaoon that brought the conviction home to me. We have up to now concentrated on stuffing children's minds with all kinds of information, without ever thinking of stimulating and developing them. Let us now cry a halt and concentrate on educating the child properly through manual work, not as a side activity, but as the prime means of intellectual training."

"I see that too. But why should it also support the school?"

"That will be the test of its value. The child at the age of 14, that is after finishing a seven

years' course, should be discharged as an earning unit. Even now the poor people's children automatically lend a helping hand to their parents—the feeling at the back of their minds being, what shall my parents eat and what shall they give me to eat if I do not also work with them? That is an education in itself. Even so the State takes charge of the child at seven and returns it to the family as an earning unit. You impart education and simultaneously cut at the root of unemployment. You have to train the boys in one occupation or another. Round this special occupation you will train up his mind, his body, his handwriting, his artistic sense, and so on. He will be master of the craft he learns.”

“But supposing a boy takes up the art and science of making khadi. Do you think it must occupy him all the seven years to master the craft?”

“Yes. It must, if he will not learn it mechanically. Why do we give years to the study of history or to the study of languages? Is a craft any the less important than these subjects which have been up to now given an artificial importance?”

“But as you have been mainly thinking of spinning and weaving, evidently you are thinking of making of these schools so many weaving schools. A child may have no aptitude for weaving and may have it for something else.”

“Quite so. Then we will teach him some other craft. But you must know that one school

will not teach many crafts. The idea is that we should have one teacher for twenty-five boys, and you may have as many classes or schools of twenty-five boys as you have teachers available, and have each of these eschools specializing in a separate craft—carpentry, smithy, tanning or shoemaking. Only you must bear in mind the fact that you develop the child's mind through each of these crafts. And I would emphasize one more thing. You must forget the cities and concentrate on the villages. They are an ocean. The cities are a mere drop in the ocean. That is why you cannot think of subjects like brick-making. If they must be civil and mechanical engineers, they will after the seven years' course go to the special colleges meant for these higher and specialized courses.

“And let me emphasize one more fact. We are apt to think lightly of the village crafts because we have divorced educational from manual training. Manual work has been regarded as something inferior, and owing to the wretched distortion of the *varna* we came to regard spinners and weavers and carpenters and shoe-makers as belonging to the inferior castes, the proletariat. We have had no Cromptons and Hargreaves because of this vicious system of considering the crafts as something inferior, divorced from the skilled. If they had been regarded as callings having an independent status of their own to the status that learning enjoyed, we should have had great inventors from among

our craftsmen. Of course the 'Spinning Jenny' led on to the discovery of water-power and other things which made the mill displace the labour of thousands of people. That was, in my view, a monstrosity. We will by concentrating on the villages see that the inventive skill that an intensive learning of the craft will stimulate will subserve the needs of the villagers as a whole." *Harijan*, 18-9-37. M. D.

VIII

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BOMBAY

In discussing the question of Primary Education I have hitherto deliberately confined myself to the villages, as it is in the villages that the bulk of India's population resides. To tackle successfully the question of the villages is to solve the problem for the cities also. But a

friend interested in the question of Primary Education in the city of Bombay puts the following poser:—

“The Congress is just now preoccupied with the question of financing Primary Education. The cry to make Primary Education self-supporting is in the air. It would, therefore, be worth while to examine as to how and to what extent this can be done in the case of a city like Bombay. The annual budget of the Bombay Corporation for education is said to be somewhere between 35 and 36 lakhs of rupees. But this amount would have to be augmented by several lakhs of rupees before the scheme of introducing compulsory Primary Education in Bombay can be realized. At present over twenty lakhs of rupees are annually spent on teachers' salaries, while another four lakhs go as rent. This gives an average of Rs. 40 to Rs. 42 for each student. Can a student earn this amount in the course of his vocational training? And if not, then, how can Primary Education be made self-supporting?”

I have no doubt in my mind that the city of Bombay and its children would only stand to gain by adopting a vocational basis for Primary Education. At present all that these children can show at the end of their Primary Education course is not worth much and certainly not calculated to fit them for citizenship.

I have no hesitation in recommending the

adoption of a vocational basis for Primary Education for cities. It would enable the better part, if not the whole, of the 35 lakhs of the present expenditure on Primary Education in Bombay to be saved. Taking, for the sake of convenience, Rs. 40 to be the annual expense of giving Primary Education to a child in Bombay, it would mean that 87,500 children in all are at present receiving education out of the educational grant of the Bombay Corporation. Now, taking the population of Bombay to be ten lakhs, the total number of children of the school-going age ought to be at least one lakh and a half. This means that no less than 62,000 children of school-going age in the city of Bombay are at present going without Primary Education. If we take away 6,000 out of this figure, as the number of children who are possibly receiving their education privately in their homes, it would still leave 56,000 children for whom Primary Education has still got to be provided. At the present scale of expenditure this would require a sum of Rs. 22,40,000 which, so far as I can see, is hardly likely to be forthcoming on this side of Doomsday.

I am a firm believer in the principle of free and compulsory Primary Education for India. I also hold that we shall realize this only by teaching the children a useful vocation and utilizing it as a means for cultivating their mental, physical and spiritual faculties. Let no one consider these economic calculations in connection with education as sordid, or out of place. There is

nothing essentially sordid about economic calculations. True economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name must at the same time be also good economics. An economics that inculcates Mammon worship, and enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak, is a false and dismal science. It spells death. True economics, on the other hand, stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life. I therefore make bold to suggest that Bombay would be setting a noble example for the whole country to follow if, by teaching its children a useful industry, it can make Primary education pay its way. Supposing a student works at a vocation for four hours a day, then taking the number of working days in a month to be 25 and the rate of remuneration two pice per hour, he or she would be earning Rs. 3-2-0 per month for the school. The vocational exercise will keep the mind of the student fresh and alert while providing at the same time a means for drawing out his or her intellect. This does not mean that the child would begin to pay 2 pice per hour from the commencement. But he will pay during the whole period of seven years at the rate of 2 pice per hour.

It is a gross superstition to think that this sort of vocational exercise will make education dull, or cramp the child's mind. Some of my happiest recollections are of the bright and joy-

ful faces of children while they were receiving vocational instruction under competent teachers. As against this, I have also known the most fascinating of subjects boring children when taught in the wrong way by an incompetent instructor. But, it may be asked, wherefrom are we going to get capable instructors of the kind that we require? My reply is that necessity is the mother of invention. Once we realize the necessity for reorientation of our educational policy, the means for giving effect to it will be found without much difficulty. I am sure that, for a fraction of the time and expense incurred on the present educational system, and the staff to man it, we could easily train all the manual instructors that we should require for our work. It ought to be possible for a committee of educational experts of Bombay if they are in earnest to draw up a scheme of Primary Education on the lines suggested by me and to put it into operation without loss of time. Only they must have a living faith in it as I have. Such faith can only grow from within; it cannot be acquired vicariously. Nothing great in this world was ever accomplished without a living faith.

What kinds of vocations are the fittest for being taught to children in urban schools? There is no hard and fast rule about it. But my reply is clear. I want to resuscitate the villages of India. To-day our villages have become a mere appendage to the cities. They exist, as it were, to be exploited by the latter and depend on the

latter's sufferance. This is unnatural. It is only when the cities realize the duty of making an adequate return to the villages for the strength and sustenance which they derive from them, instead of selfishly exploiting them, that a healthy and moral relationship between the two will spring up. And if the city children are to play their part in this great and noble work of social reconstruction, the vocations through which they are to achieve their education ought to be directly related to the requirements of the villages. So far as I can see the various processes of cotton manufacture from ginning and cleaning of cotton to the spinning of yarn, answer this test as nothing else does. Even to-day the cotton is grown in the villages and is ginned and spun and converted into cloth in the cities. But the chain of processes which cotton undergoes in the mills from the beginning to the end constitutes a huge tragedy of waste in men, materials and mechanical power.

My plan to impart Primary Education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding, etc., is thus conceived as the spear-head of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and thus go a long way towards eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages

and lay the foundation of a juster social order in which there is no unnatural division between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom. And all this would be accomplished without the horrors of a bloody class war or a colossal capital expenditure such as would be involved in the mechanization of a vast continent like India. Nor would it entail a helpless dependence on foreign imported machinery or technical skill. Lastly, by obviating the necessity for highly specialized talent, it would place the destiny of the masses, as it were, in their own hands. But who will bell the cat? Will the city folk listen to me at all? Or, will mine remain a mere cry in the wilderness? Replies to these and similar questions will depend more on lovers of education like my correspondent living in cities than on me.

Harijan, 9-10-37.

M. K. GANDHI,

IX.

"THE EDUCATION PUZZLE"

"The cruellest irony of the new Reforms lies in the fact that we are left with nothing but the liquor revenue to fall back upon in order to give our children education," said Gandhiji in one of his numerous talks he has been giving on the subject, ever since the Congress Ministers took up office. "That is the educational puzzle but it should not baffle us. We have to solve it and the solution must not involve the compromise of our ideal of prohibition, cost whatever else it may. It must be shameful and humiliating to think that unless we got the drink revenue, our children would be starved of their education. But if it comes to it, we should prefer it as a lesser evil. If only we will refuse to be obsessed by the figures and by the supposed necessity of giving our children the exact kind of education that they get to-day, the problem should not baffle us." That explains Gandhiji's emphasis on our educationists putting their heads together in order to evolve a system of education which is at once inexpensive and also in consonance with the needs

of our vast rural population.

"Then you would really abolish what is called secondary education and give the whole education up to matriculation in the village schools?" asked a questioner in great surprise.

"Certainly. What is your secondary education but compelling the poor boys to learn in a foreign language in seven years what they should learn in the course of a couple of years in their own mother tongue? If you can but make up your minds to free the children from the incubus of learning their subjects in a foreign tongue, and if you teach them to use their hands and feet profitably, the educational puzzle is solved. You can sacrifice without compunction the whole of the drink revenue. But you must resolve to sacrifice this revenue, and think of the ways and means about education later. Make the beginning by taking the big step."

"But would just the mere declaration of prohibition mean prohibition? May it not be that we may sacrifice the revenue without touching the curse of drink, not to talk of abolishing it?"

"The declaration does not mean that you will thereafter sit still. You will impress everyone into your service. In fact the whole staff is there—the staff of excise inspectors, their superior officers, and the whole of their subordinate staff. You will tell them that they will serve on no other terms but those of working for total abolition of drink. You will convert every grog-shop into a recreation centre. You will

concentrate on places where opportunities for getting drunk are greatest. You will ask the mill-owners and factory owners to provide bright refreshment stalls, you will provide there refreshing drinks for them like sugar-cane juice, games for them, lantern shows for them, and make them feel that they are like you. Impress everyone, without exception, into your service. The village school-master and the other officials should be all prohibition workers."

"Very good. But in many places you will find the village *patel* and others joining the drinking folk in their drunken revels. What about them?"

"Every one of your school children will be a prohibition worker. Ministers will be going up and down the country visiting the grog-shops turned recreation centres, have their cup of refreshing drink with the common folk and make these houses fashionable."

(Only the other day Minister Raman Menon told his audience that the whole nation should be interested in the stupendous experiment. Prohibition is the task of not one individual but of the whole nation. And apropos of the idea of converting the grog-shops into recreation centres, one may remember the famous "Dew Drop Inn" of Mary Hughes, that indefatigable worker in the cause, the daughter of the author of "Tom Brown's School Days", who has given more than fifty years of her life to the task, and built the "Dew Drop Inn" over the ruins of a grog-shop.)

"Don't," said Gandhiji, "be deterred by the thought that Prohibition failed in America. Remember that the stupendous experiment was tried there, where drinking is not looked upon as a vice, where millions usually drink. Here drink is held reprehensible by all religions, and it is not the millions who drink but individuals who drink."

There is but a glimpse of the direction in which Gandhiji's mind is working and in which he wants all the Congressmen's minds to be working. Premier Rajagopalachari is burning the candle at both ends in making prohibition a success. "If people were generous-minded," he said at one of the innumerable meetings he is addressing, "they would say that they would do without education and have prohibition instead. What after all is the benefit of this education? The drunkard gets intoxicated with his drink and the educated man gets intoxicated with his luxuries. This educated man is not more cultured than the drunkard!"

Harijan, 21-8-37

M. D.

X

WHAT ABOUT LITERACY?

I have received many opinions on the ideas I have been propounding in these columns on education. I may be able to reproduce the most important of them in these columns. For the moment I wish to answer a grievance a learned correspondent has made of the neglect of literacy of which he imagines I have been guilty. There is nothing in what I have written to warrant such a belief. For have I not contended that the children in the schools of my conception will receive every instruction through the handicrafts they may be taught? That includes literacy. In my scheme of things the hand will handle tools before it draws or traces the writing. The eyes will read the pictures of letters and words as they will know other things in life. The ears will catch the names and meanings of things and sentences. The whole training will be natural, responsive, and therefore the quickest and the cheapest in the land. The children of my school will therefore read much more quickly than they will write. And when they

write they will not produce daubs as I do even now (thanks to my teachers) but they will trace correct letters even as they will trace correct figures of the objects they may see. If the schools of my conception ever came into being, I make bold to say that they will vie with the most advanced schools in quickness, so far as reading is concerned, and even writing if it is common ground that the writing must be correct and not incorrect as now is in the vast majority of cases. The children of the Segaoon school may be said to be writing in accordance with the orthodox standard; they spoil slate and paper according to my standard.

28-8-37

M. K. GANDHI.

XI

FOUR THINGS NECESSARY

The modulation of the voice is as necessary as the training of the hand. Physical drill, Handicrafts, Drawing and Music should go hand in hand in order to draw the best out of the boys and girls and create in them a real interest in their tuition.

That this means a revolution in the system of training is admitted. If the future citizens of the State are to build a sure foundation for life's work, these Four things are necessary. One has only to visit any primary school to have a striking demonstration of slovenliness, disorderliness and discordant speech. I have no doubt, therefore, that when the Education Ministers in the several provinces recast the system of education and make it answer the requirements of the country, they will not omit the essentials to which I have drawn attention. My plan of Primary Education certainly comprises these things which easily become possible the moment you remove from the children's shoulders the burden of having to master a difficult foreign language.

Of course, we have not the staff of teachers who can cope with the new method. But that difficulty applies to every new venture. The existing staff of teachers, if they are willing to learn, should be given the opportunity of doing so, and should also have the immediate prospect of a substantial increase in their salaries if they will learn the necessary subjects. It is unthinkable that for all the new subjects that are to become part of Primary Education separate teachers should be provided. That would be a most expensive method and so wholly unnecessary. It may be that some of the Primary School teachers are so ill-equipped that they cannot learn the new subjects within a short time. But a boy who has studied up to the matriculation standard should not take more than three months to learn the elements of music, drawing, physical drill and a handicraft. If he acquires a working knowledge of these, he will be able always to add to it while he is teaching. This presupposes, no doubt, eagerness and zeal on the part of the teachers to make themselves progressively fit for the task of national regeneration.

11-9-37

M. K. GANDHI.

XII

THE SEGAON METHOD AS I SEE IT

1. The Segaoon Method is the name given to the Principles and System of Education enunciated by Mahatma Gandhi.

2. It is the application of the law of Non-violence in the training of the child as a prospective citizen of the world.

3. It is claimed that the method is applicable with appropriate changes, to children of all countries and classes where the military spirit it is to be substituted by the peaceful. Anyway it is the only proper system for the people of India.

4. Its aim is to make the child share the obligations of citizenship from the earliest age at which it begins to show some power of discrimination.

5. The centre of the Method lies in a productive industry. All training will be principally through the medium of and in correlation with such industry. Thus history, geography, mathematics, physical and social sciences and general literature will centre round and be related to that industry. Other matters in the above subjects

will not be omitted, but greater emphasis will be laid on the former.

6. Industry will not be only the means and medium of instruction; but, to the extent it is an inevitable condition of human life, it will also be an end of instruction. So that the aim will be to inculcate in the pupil a sense of the dignity of all manual labour—even scavenging—and the duty of earning an honest livelihood by labour.

7. It shall be the aim of the teacher to bring out the moral, rational and physical capacities of the child through the industry it is taught.

8. Social sciences and hygiene will not be taught as mere class-room subjects, but by planning joint and several programmes of service to the whole village not excluding dumb creatures. The school shall be the centre for the radiation of culture to the surrounding society.

9. The Method may be shortly summed up in the phrase, "From the hand and the senses to the brain and the heart, and from the school to the society and God."

10. It is held that three to four hours' joint daily labour in the corporate life of a school is a healthy and educative engagement for children of both the sexes, whatever the class they come from. "In the interests of both science and industry, as well as of society as a whole, every human being, without distinction of birth, ought to receive such an education as would enable him or her to combine a thorough knowledge of science with a thorough knowledge of handi-

craft." (Kropotkin).

11. Under the present system most pupils do not know even at the end of their college career what they will do after completing their studies. Young boys and girls, unless their material circumstances are hopelessly adverse, pass on from primary to secondary schools, and from secondary schools to colleges at an enormous expense, not for the love of cultural and other education which the schools and colleges profess to give, but simply because they do not know what else they should or can do. They go on with their studies merely in order to put off till the last day the difficult question of settling the main career of life. More than twenty years of the growing period of life spent in such aimless manner must inculcate in the pupil habits of procrastination, hesitation, irresoluteness and inability to take decisions in the pursuits of life. The Segalon Method will aim to bring about in the child at as early an age as possible the determination of the future career it should expect to pursue, and will arm him with at least one occupation, which will give him a wage enough for a healthy subsistence.

12. In the Segalon Method, literacy (that is, information on various matters through reading and writing, and capacity to follow logical or pseudo-logical controversy) is not considered knowledge or even the medium of knowledge, but is regarded only as a symbolical representation both of knowledge as well as accomplished

ignorance. The knowledge of these symbols is necessary and useful if the sources of knowledge are alive. It will be the aim of the Segaoon Method to keep these sources alive. The means of doing so are work, observation, experience, experiment, service and love. Without these, learning through books acts as a hindrance to the development of the spiritual and rational faculties of the student, and also impairs his physique.

13. The Basic Course under the Segaoon Method should include a good knowledge of the mother-tongue, a fair acquaintance with its literature, a working knowledge of the rational language of India, a general knowledge of such subjects as mathematics, history, geography, physical and social sciences, drawing, music, drill, sports, gymnastics, etc., as well as of a vocation to a degree which should enable an average student to start a modest career, and a zealous and bright student, if he will, to take up a course of higher general or vocational training. It should not include at that stage English or such academic courses of other subjects as are not generally required in practical life, are not absolutely essential for the training of the intellect, or are not necessary as a fair background for further self-education.

14. The Basic Course should extend to not less than seven years, and may be a little more if necessary. If the schools become self-supporting, as explained later on, and if the guard-

ians also get something out of it, the maintenance of boys for a longer period will present no obstacle to the parents.

15. Underlying the Segaon Method, there are a few fundamental principles regarding the Functions and Duties of the State and the minimum living wage. They are stated in the following paragraphs.

16. A State is not worth its name, if it cannot usefully employ all adults willing to work for it and trained by it under a measure of compulsion, and pay them the minimum wage necessary for healthy subsistence.

17. Under the present market rates, it is held that the living minimum wage for India should not be less than one anna for each hour of work at the average speed.

18. The present system of government and the structure of society do not come up to this standard. We are not, therefore, worthy of the name "State." Whether the deficiency is due to foreign domination or to ourselves, it has to be remedied. It is claimed that the Segaon Method, rightly and courageously applied, will give us sufficient strength and means to bring about the necessary changes.

19. In order to achieve this the Government must establish its hold over at least one such industry, in which it can employ practically an unlimited number of workers without loss to itself.

20. It is submitted that hand-spinning and

hand-weaving is the only industry which can do so in India. It has all the natural advantages of raw material, small outlay and enormous manpower for specialization in that industry. It has also the tradition for it, having been for centuries the sole manufacturer of cotton fabrics for the world.

21. But the spinner's wage, which was never very satisfactory, suffered still more in trying to compete with machine-made goods. The Government as well as the public must remove the competition and, until that is done, entirely disregard it by supporting the khadi industry at a price which will give the spinner the living wage.

22. It is also necessary that the wage should increase all round at least to the level of the minimum living wage. The Government must gather strength and the people must co-operate to make this possible.

23. The minimum wage mentioned above is the adult's wage. For a pupil of a primary school it is taken to be $\frac{1}{2}$ anna per hour.

24. Reckoning on an average three hours of work per day for about nine months in the year, the test of the efficiency of a Segson school should be that a full school of not less than seven classes, with on an average 25 pupils per class and eight or nine members on the staff, should be able to earn the annual salaries of the staff from the products manufactured in the school. The minimum salary of a teacher is expected to be Rs. 25 per month; (in no case should it be

less than Rs. 20.)

25. The capacity of the pupils must be increased and the implements and methods of instruction must be improved until at least this standard of efficiency is reached.

26. With the school wage reckoned as above, there is no apprehension of the school products entering into competition with private artisans' products at the present village wage. By the time the village wages rise to the standard expected above, the same progress in capacity and implements will have been made by the village artisan also. Consequently the apprehension of competition seems groundless.

27. The school wage mentioned above must for the present be guaranteed by the State. At any rate it should be at a par with the rates prescribed by the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. and progress with them, till it reaches for the basic school the standard of half an anna per hour. For the present, this will seem like subsidizing the school in an indirect manner and, according to present market prices, be felt as a financial burden on the Government. But it is felt that there is so much room for improvement in the capacity and implements of workers that within a period of five years, it should be possible for the school as well as private artisans (who take to similar training and implements) to rightfully earn the minimum wage desired for them, without making the products appreciably more costly than what they are now.

28. The principle that the school must be self-supporting in the sense explained above, has not been laid down from merely economic considerations, but because it will also provide a practical test of the efficiency of the school as an educational institution on its vocational side.

29. The method as outlined above has been worked out mainly for the Basic Education through the khadi industry. Other industries are not to be discouraged or neglected; only there are not enough data for working out other handicrafts.

30. The principles of the Segson Method can be applied, with appropriate changes, also to higher stages of education. All education should have a self-supporting factor in its scheme. In the higher stages, either the institution must be supported by the pupils' labour or fees, or the pupil must be able to support himself from his school or other labour, if he does not pay fees.

Harijan, 4-12-37

K. G. MASHRUWALA.

PROCEEDINGS
OF
THE ALL INDIA NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL
CONFERENCE.
HELD AT
WARDHA
(22nd & 23rd October 1937.)
UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF
MAHATMA GANDHI.

QUESTIONS BEFORE EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Marwadi High School, recently renamed Navabharat Vidyalaya, is celebrating its Silver Jubilee. The management conceived the idea of calling on the occasion a small conference of nationally minded educationists to discuss the plan of education I have been endeavouring to propound in these columns. The Secretary, Shri Shrimannarayan Agarwal, consulted me as to the desirability of convening such a conference, and asked me to preside if I approved of the idea. I liked both the suggestions. So the conference will be held at Wardha on October 22nd and 23rd. Only those will attend who are invited thereto. If there are any educationists who would like to attend and who have not received invitations, they may apply to the Secretary, giving their names and addresses, and such particulars as would enable the management to decide whether they can afford to issue the invitation. Provision is being made only for a limited number who are deeply interested in the problem and can make a useful contribution to the discussion. The conference is not intended to be at all spec-

tacular. There will be no visitors. It will be a purely business meeting. A limited number of press tickets will be issued. I advise pressmen to elect one or two representatives and share the reporting.

I approach the task in confidence but in all humility, with an open mind, and with the will to learn and to revise and correct my views, whenever necessary.

The propositions I shall submit to the conference for consideration will be, so far as they occur to me at present, as follows:—

1. The present system of education does not meet the requirements of the country in any shape or form. English, having been made the medium of instruction in all the higher branches of learning, has created a permanent bar between the highly educated few and the uneducated many. It has prevented knowledge from percolating to the masses. The excessive importance given to English has cast upon the educated class a burden which has maimed them mentally for life and made them strangers in their own land. Absence of vocational training has made the educated class almost unfit for productive work and harmed them physically. Money spent on primary education is a waste of expenditure inasmuch as what little is taught is soon forgotten and has little or no value in terms of the villages or cities. Such advantage as is gained by the existing system of education is not gained by the chief taxpayer, his children getting the

least.

2. The course of primary education should be extended at least to seven years and should include the general knowledge gained up to the matriculation standard less English and plus a substantial vocation.

3. For the all-round development of boys and girls all training should so far as possible be given through a profit-yielding vocation. In other words vocations should serve a double purpose—to enable the pupil to pay for his tuition through the products of his labour and at the same time to develop the whole man or woman in him or her through the vocation learnt at school.

Land, buildings and equipment are not intended to be covered by the proceeds of the pupil's labour.

All the processes of cotton, wool and silk, commencing from gathering, cleaning, ginning (in the case of cotton), carding, spinning, dyeing, sizing, warp-making, double twisting, designing, and weaving, embroidery, tailoring, paper making, cutting, book binding, cabinet making, toy making, *gur* making are undoubted occupations that can easily be learnt and handled without much capital outlay.

This primary education should equip boys and girls to earn their bread by the State guaranteeing employment in the vocations learnt or by buying their manufactures at prices fixed by the State.

4. Higher education should be left to pri-

vate enterprise and for meeting national requirements whether in the various industries, technical arts, belles-lettres or fine arts.

The State Universities should be purely examining bodies, self-supporting through the fees charged for examinations.

Universities will look after the whole of the field of education and will prepare and approve courses of studies in the various departments of education. No private school should be run without the previous sanction of the respective Universities. University charters should be given liberally to any body of persons of proved worth and integrity, it being always understood that the Universities will not cost the State anything except that it will bear the cost of running a Central Education Department.

The foregoing scheme does not absolve the State from running such seminaries as may be required for supplying State needs.

It is claimed that if the whole scheme is accepted, it will solve the question of the greatest concern to the State—training of its youth, its future makers.

Harijan, 2-10-37.

M. K. GANDHI.

A STEP FORWARD

A record of the work of the Educational Conference will be found elsewhere. It marks an important stage in the presentation of my plan to the public and the Congress Ministers. It was a happy augury that so many Ministers attended. The objection and criticism centred round the idea of self-support even in the narrow sense I have mentioned. Therefore the conference has made the very cautious declaration it has. There is no doubt the conference had to sail on an uncharted sea. There was no complete precedent before it. If the idea is sound, it will work itself out in practice. After all it is for those who have faith in the self-support part to demonstrate it by working schools in accordance with the idea.

There was a remarkable unanimity so far as the question went of imparting full primary education including the secondary course less English through a vocation. The fact that the whole person in the boys and girls has to be developed through a vocation automatically saves the schools from degenerating into factories. For over and above the required degree of proficiency in the vocation in which they are trained, the

boys and girls will have to show equal proficiency in the other subjects they will be expected to learn.

Dr. Zakir Husain's Committee's labours will show how the scheme can be worked in practice and what exactly the boys and girls will be expected to know from year to year.

Objection has been raised that the conference's resolutions were a foregone conclusion. It has no validity. In the nature of things it was impossible to invite educationists at random to pronounce their views all of a sudden on what to them is undoubtedly a revolutionary plan. The invitations had therefore to be restricted to those who as teachers had had at least something to do with vocational training. I had myself no idea that the coworkers in the cause of national education would receive the new idea with sympathy. The wider circle of educationists will undoubtedly be invited to consider the scheme when it comes before the public in a concrete and fuller form through the Zakir Husain Committee. I would request those educationists who may have helpful suggestions to make to send them at once to Shri Aryanayakam, the Convener and Secretary of the Committee, at Wardha.

One of the speakers at the conference emphasized the fact that education of little boys and girls could be more effectively handled by women than men and by mothers rather than maidens. From another standpoint, too, they are in a

better position than men to answer Prof. Shah's conscription scheme. Here is undoubtedly an opportunity for patriotic women with leisure to offer their services to a cause which ranks amongst the noblest of all causes. But if they come forward, they will have to go through a sound preliminary training. Needy women in search of a living will serve no useful purpose by thinking of joining the movement as a career. If they approach the scheme, they should do so in a spirit of pure service and make it a life mission. They will fail and be severely disappointed if they approach it in a selfish spirit. If the cultured women of India will make common cause with the villagers, and that too through their children, they will produce a silent and grand revolution in the village life of India. Will they respond?

Harijan, 30-10-37.

M. K. GANDHI.

ALL INDIA NATIONAL EDUCATION
CONFERENCE WARDHA

PROCEEDINGS

The All India National Education Conference was held at Nava Bharat Vidyalaya, Wardha on 22nd and 23rd October 1937 under the presidency of Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Marwari Education Society.

Welcoming the delegates of the Conference Seth Jammalal Bajaj, the President of the Marwari Education Society, said that, the idea of holding the Conference originated in some talks of Sjt. Aryanayakam, Principal Nava Bharat Vidyalaya, and Sjt. Shrimannarayan Agarwal, Secretary Marwari Education Society, with Mahatma Gandhi in connection with the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Society. In the beginning the organizers of the Conference wished to invite only a few workers in the field of National Education to discuss the scheme of self-supporting education as adumbrated by Gandhiji. But the number of invitees began to rise considerably, and the organizers then requested

Mahatma Gandhi to preside over the deliberations of the Conference. The Marwari Education Society was fully conscious of the responsibilities which it had undertaken and he hoped that all those interested in the cause of national education would co-operate with the Society in carrying out the important educational scheme.

MAHATMA GANDHI'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Mahatma Gandhi gave the following inaugural speech lasting for about 85 minutes:—

Brothers and Sisters,

I am thankful to you for the trouble you have taken in attending this Conference. You know that I have been asked to preside over this Conference; but it does not imply that I have to carry on the whole work singly. I have very little responsibility in organizing this Conference. Sjt. Shrimannarayanji who is the Organizing Secretary of the Marwari Education Society has taken great pains in convening it. It was he who first suggested to me the idea of convening a small Conference to discuss my educational scheme on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Educational Society. I liked the idea and so here I am to place before you frankly all my ideas on National Education which I have been adumbrating through the columns of the 'Harijan.' I am open to free and frank criticism so that I might clarify some misunderstandings in connection with my scheme. The proceedings of the Conference will be mainly in Hindustani; and I think it is quite natural, although it might be

slightly inconvenient to some of you to follow the proceedings in details.

The ideas that I wish to place before you to-day are new in their method of presentation at least to me, although my experience behind those ideas is very old. The proposition that I wish to put forward refer to both the primary and college education. But we will have to give special consideration to primary education. I have included secondary in primary education because primary education is the only education so-called that is available to a very small fraction of the people in our villages many of which I have seen during my peregrinations since 1915. I have seen, perhaps more than anybody else, the conditions of the Indian villages. I gained good experience of the rural life of South Africa as well. I know fully well the type of education that is given in the Indian villages. And now that I have settled down in Segaoan I can study the whole problem of national education from closer quarters. I am convinced that if we wish to ameliorate the rural conditions we must combine the secondary with primary education. The educational scheme therefore, that we wish to place before the country must be primarily for the villages. I have no experience of college education, though I have come in contact with hundreds of college boys, have had heart to heart chats and correspondence with them, know their needs, failings and the diseases they suffer from. But we must restrict ourselves to a consideration

of primary education. For, the moment the primary question is solved the secondary one of college education will be solved easily.

I am convinced that the present system of primary education is not only wasteful but positively harmful. Most of the boys are lost to the parents and to the occupation to which they are born. They pick up evil habits, affect urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education. What then should be the form of primary education? I think the remedy lies in educating them by means of vocational or manual training. I have some experience of it myself, having trained my own sons and other children on the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa through some manual training e.g. Carpentry or shoe-making which I learned from Kallenbach who had his training in a Trappist Monastery. My sons and all children, I am confident, have lost nothing, though I could not give them an education that either satisfied him or them, as the time at his disposal was limited and his preoccupations were numerous.

But the scheme that I wish to place before you to-day is not the teaching of some handicrafts side by side with so-called liberal education. I want that the whole education should be imparted through some handicraft or industry. It might be objected that in the middle ages only handicrafts were taught to the students; but the occupational training, then, was far from serving an educational purpose. The crafts were taught

only for the sake of the crafts, without any attempt to develop the intellect as well. In this age those born to certain professions had forgotten them, had taken to clerical careers and were lost to the countryside. As a result, it is now impossible to find an efficient carpenter or smith in an average village. The handicrafts were nearly lost and the spinning wheel being neglected, was taken to Lancashire where it was developed, thanks to the English genius, to an extent that is seen to-day. This, I say, irrespective of my views on Industrialism.

The remedy lies in imparting the whole art and science of a craft through practical training and therethrough imparting the whole education. Teaching of Takli-spinning for instance, presupposes imparting of knowledge of various varieties of cotton, different soils in different provinces of India, the history of the ruin of the handicraft, its political reasons which will include the history of the British Rule in India, knowledge of Arithemetic and so on. I am trying the same experiment on my little grandson who scarcely feels that he is being taught, for he all the while plays and laughs and sings. I am especially mentioning the Takli and emphasizing its utility because I have realized its power and its romance; also because the handi-craft of making cloth is the only one which can be taught throughout the country, and because the Takli is very cheap. If you have any other suitable handicraft to suggest, please do so without any hesitation so

that we might consider it as well. But I am convinced that Takli is the only practical solution of our problem, considering the deplorable economic conditions prevailing in the country. The constructive programme of Khadi since 1920 has led to the formation of Congress Ministries in seven provinces, and their success also would depend on the extent to which we carry it out.

I have placed the scheme before the ministers; it is for them to accept it or to reject it. But my advice is that the primary education should centre round the Takli. During the first year everything should be taught through Takli; in the second year other processes also can be taught side by side. It will also be possible to earn quite enough through the Takli because there will be sufficient demand for the cloth produced by the children. Even the parents of the children will be sufficient to consume the products of their children. I have contemplated a Seven Years' Course which so far as Takli is concerned would culminate in practical knowledge of weaving including dyeing, designing etc.

I am very keen on finding the expenses of a teacher through the product of the manual work of his pupils because I am convinced that there is no other way to carry education to crores of our children. We cannot wait until we have the necessary revenue and until the Viceroy reduces the military expenditure. You should bear in mind that this primary education would include the elementary principles of sanitation, hygiene,

nutrition, of doing their own work, helping parents at home etc. The present generation of boys know no cleanliness, no self-help, and are physically weak. I would therefore give compulsory physical training through musical drill.

I have been accused of being opposed to literary training. Far from it! I simply want to show the way in which it should be given. The self-supporting aspect has also been attacked. It is said, whereas we should be expending millions on primary education we are going to exploit the children. It is also feared that there would be enormous waste. This fear is also falsified by experience. As for exploiting or burdening the children, I would ask whether it was burdening the child to save him from a disaster? Takli is a good enough toy to play with. It is no less a toy because it is a productive one. Even to-day children help their parents to a certain extent. The Segaoon children know the details of Agriculture better than I, for having worked with their parents on the fields. Whilst the child will be encouraged to spin and help his parents with agricultural jobs, he will also be made to feel that he does not belong only to his parents but also to the village and to the country, and that he must make some return to them. That is the only way. I would tell the ministers that they will make children helpless by doling out education to them. They would make them self-confident and brave by their paying for their own education by their own labour. This system is to be common to all

Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and Christians. Why do I not lay any stress on religious instruction? People ask. Because I am teaching them practical religion, the religion of self-help.

The state is bound to find employment if needed, for all the pupils thus trained. As for teachers, Prof. Shah has suggested the method of Conscription. He has demonstrated its value by citing instances for Italy and other lands.

If Mussolini could impress the youth of Italy for the service of his country, why should not we? Was it fair to label as slavery the compulsory enlistment of service of our youth for a year or longer before they began their career? The youths had contributed a lot to the success of the movement for freedom during the past 17 years, and the speaker would call upon them to freely give a year of their lives to the service of the nation. Legislation, if it was necessary in this respect, would not be compulsion, as it could not be passed without the consent of the majority of our representatives.

I would therefore ask them to say whether this imparting of education through manual training appealed to them. For him to make it self-supporting would be a test of its efficiency. The children ought at the end of seven years be able to pay for their instruction and be earning units.

College education was largely an urban proposition. He would not say that it was an unmitigated failure, as primary education was, but

the results were fairly disappointing. Why should any one of the graduates have to be unemployed?

Takli I had proposed as a concrete instance because Vinoba had the largest amount of practical experience in it, and he was there to answer their objections, if any. Kakasaheb would also be able to tell them something, though his experience was more theoretical than practical. He had especially drawn my attention to Armstrong's *Education for Life*, especially the chapter on "Education of the Hand." The late Madhusudan Das was a lawyer, but he was convinced that without the use of our hands and feet our brains would be atrophied, and even if it worked it would be the home of Satan. Tolstoy had taught the same lesson through many of his tales."

BASED ON NON-VIOLENCE

Gandhiji concluded by inviting the attention of the audience to the very fundamentals of his plan of self-supporting primary education: "We have communal quarrels—not that they are peculiar to us. England had also its Wars of the Roses, and to-day British Imperialism is the enemy of the world. If we want to eliminate communal strife, and international strife, we must start with foundations pure and strong by rearing our younger generation on the education

I have adumbrated. That plan springs out of non-violence. I suggested it in connection with the nation's resolve to effect Complete Prohibition, but I may tell you that even if there was to be no loss of revenue, and our exchequer was full, this education would be a *sine qua non* if we did not want to urbanize our boys. We have to make them true representatives of our culture, our civilization, of the true genius of our nation. We cannot do so otherwise than by giving them a course of self-supporting primary education. Europe is no example for us. It plans its programmes in terms of violence because it believes in violence. I would be the last to minimise the achievement of Russia, but the whole structure is based on force and violence. If India has resolved to eschew violence, this system of education becomes an integral part of the discipline she has to go through. We are told that England spends millions on education, America also does so, but we forget that all that wealth is obtained through exploitation. They have reduced the art of exploitation to a science, and might well give their boys the costly education they do. We cannot, will not, think in terms of exploitation, and we have no alternative but this plan of education which is based on non-violence."

Dr. Zakir Husain, Principal Jamia Milia, Delhi, said:—

Mahatmaji thinks that the scheme which he has placed before you is absolutely original, and

that it can be accepted only by those who believe in Non-violence, and in rural civilization. But those who are working in the educational field will not find Mahatmaji's scheme very new. They know that true learning can be imparted only through doing. They also know that children have to be taught various subjects through manual work, no matter whether one believes in urban civilization or rural, violence or non-violence. It is known to us, teachers, that upto the age of 13 children want to do and undo, break and mend things. This is how nature educates them. Asking them to sit with books at one place is to do violence to them. Many educationists have, therefore, been trying to make some manual work the centre of education. This method is called the Project Method in America and the Complex Method in Russia. We can surely impart education to our children through the Takli and the Charkha and some other suitable handicrafts.

But the greatest difficulty in carrying out this scheme will be the paucity of trained teachers. If we have to teach all the subjects through the Takli we cannot pull on with untrained teachers. I myself am a teacher; but if I am asked to-day to teach all the subjects through spinning, I shall have to encounter great difficulties. Of course, if I have with me books which show the way of correlating general education with the various processes of cloth-making, I shall be able to teach my students with the help of those books. The pre-

paration of such text-books will require some time and labour.

There may be some aspects of a subject which cannot be taught through the Takli. Shall we leave them altogether? No. We will teach as much of these subjects through the Takli as possible. The rest we cannot leave untouched. It should be our principle to develop the intellect through hand-work; but we should not be tied down to it. We should try to find out some other handicrafts through which all other aspects of the various subjects can be taught to our children.

I wish to say a few words regarding the self-supporting aspect of education. Wherever this experiment has been tried it has not been possible to make education self-supporting. Prof. Dewey in America had a similar plan which was welcomed enthusiastically, but he had to close down his school after a few years. America is a country where there is no paucity of funds, or state help. If the experiment could not succeed there, what hope is there for its success in a poor country like ours?

But you will say that we want self-supporting schools because we are poor. But I should like to utter a note of warning. Quite. But I should like to utter a note of warning. The greatest evil of the present system of education is examinations. All the energies of the teachers at present are concentrated on the examinations. But there is danger in laying too much emphasis on the self-supporting aspect of education. Teachers may, in

consequence, become slave-drivers and exploit the labour of poor boys. If this happens, Takli would prove even worse than the books. And we shall be laying the foundations of hidden slavery in our country.

I know that the Government has not sufficient funds to spread compulsory universal education. If the Government tries to do so it would soon be bankrupt. But this bankruptcy would be better than the bankruptcy of national energies. We should not, therefore, forget this inherent danger in sponsoring the shame."

After the speeches of Prof. Abdul Huq and Shrimati Saudamini Mehta, *Prof. K. T. Shah* delivered the following speech:—

"I think it is difficult to have self-supporting education. For, even those who render free service have to spend from somewhere. It is wrong to think that the State should not bear any burden of Education. Of course, I believe, that the present expenditure on Education can be reduced a great deal, and the benefit can be made much greater. There is lot of wastage in primary education and hardly 20% of the boys reach the Final Class. It is also found that boys educated in the village schools lapse into illiteracy after some time.

Dr. Zakir Husain has pointed out that Gandhiji's scheme is not original. This only means that all educationists believe in the efficacy of manual work. But the expenses incurred in teaching the handicrafts is much more than the

return. We want that the largest possible number of boys should be educated with the present amount of expenditure. You will all agree with me when I say that the intellectual development of children begins at the age of 12 or 13. At that age they can easily assimilate what is taught to them. It is therefore imperative to chalk out a complete scheme of education in which all children should be given the same education upto a certain age and then they should be given scope for individual development.

It is all right to emphasize manual work, but we should not forget that we are living in the Machine Age. If you therefore lay too much emphasis on hand-work and keep the machines at a distance it would be detrimental to the economic well-being of the country. You might be able to increase the production of wealth but how to distribute it properly, is the real question. I believe in manual labour but I do not wish to eliminate machines altogether, because, they save human energy.

If you make self-supporting education your ideal the Ministers would naturally take full advantage of the situation and the result would be that instead of the present evil of cramming the evil of over-work and undue extraction of labour from the students would silently but surely creep in, and the real aim of education would recede into the back-ground. You can imagine what the consequences of this evil will be when the scheme is launched throughout the country.

We have about three-and-half crores of children in India. What would happen to the market when all these children produce marketable goods? The students will be given free raw material and there will be every facility for the marketing of their goods. This would mean unjust competition with professional artisans. The real solution therefore would be to ban all imports from foreign countries and produce all goods in our own country with the help of machines. I think the State should bear the whole burden of education and should also buy the school products. I cannot believe that all the expenses of education should be borne by the students themselves."

After the speeches of the principals of Tilak Vidyalaya, Nagpur and Khamgaon National School Dr. Bhagvat suggested the starting of experiments in a few selected villages. *Hon'ble Dr. Syed Mam-mud*, Minister of Education, Bihar, who spoke next said:—

"The scheme that Gandhiji has placed before us is very original and important. His ideas are fundamentally connected with our culture and civilization. The scheme is based on a particular ideal of citizenship. It might be difficult for us to carry out the scheme under the present circumstances of the country, but if we can successfully launch the scheme it shall be certainly a great boon to the country. Educationists maintain that education should begin with the hand and I think the co-ordination of the hand and intellect is very much needed in our country. I am doubt-

ful whether the whole of the Seven Years' education can be made self-supporting. The State will have to go in for some expenditure at least. The Seven Years' course of Primary Education as outlined by Mahatmaji is quite necessary: but as Dr. Zakir Husain has pointed out, we should provide for some specialized course of two or three years after the primary stage."

In the afternoon Gandhiji opened the session with answering some of the criticisms. He said:-

"By means of the scheme which I placed before you in the morning we can make our boys self-confident and courageous. Takli will not be the only thing that will be taught during the seven years. I am of the opinion that in the first year we should teach boys a little carding, even before the Takli. Then the boys should be taught the collecting of cotton in the fields. After this they can be taught spinning, first with Takli and then with Charkha. After spinning the making of the Takli and the Charkha should also be taught to the students. They can learn carpentry and smithy as well. Thus, if we plan out the whole course during the Seven Years, the scheme is bound to succeed.

Prof. Shah thinks that this scheme will create unequal and unjust competition between the professional artisans and the school boys... To my mind there is no cause for such fear; and if there will be any competition it will be first with the mills and then with the Spinners' Association. Both the mills and the Charkha Sangh, I am sure,

are not afraid of such competition. You also forget that my scheme is meant specially for the villages. When the ministers will create a suitable atmosphere in the country people would like to buy the school products even by paying a higher price. This is how there will be no difficulty in marketing the school products. And so far as cloth is concerned. I think the State will have to buy all the necessary cloth from the schools even though at a higher price. For example, take the Printing Press in Yerawada jail. Although its rates are higher than the other local presses the Government does all the printing there, and the question of competition does not rise at all. Our work has to be done in the same way.

In the beginning there is bound to be some waste in the village schools; but a clever and tactful teacher will see that the boys learn most with least waste. It is true that the articles produced in these schools would not be so cheap as those produced outside. But, as in the case of Khadi, there will be no problem of competition. Even in the villages nobody needs be afraid of any competition with the school articles. Take paper for example. This cottage industry has almost altogether disappeared from the villages. The All-India Village Industries Association is trying to revive it at some places. And people like to buy it even though at a higher price. In the same way the public would buy the articles produced by the school children. The same thing

will happen in the case of gur-making of palms. As Palm-Gur-making is not prevalent in the country, there will be no problem of competition with the professional gur-makers who use sugar-cane as their raw material.

Then take the question of machinery. I wish that machinery is not necessary for us at all. We should use Khadi cloth; and therefore, we do not require cloth-mills. We should try to produce all the necessary cloth in the villages, and we need not be the slaves of machines. I am afraid, by working with the machines we have become machines ourselves, having lost all sense of art and hand-work. If you still think that we cannot do without machines the scheme that I have placed before you will be futile. You wish to keep our villages alive by means of machines and think of imparting education to the village children through them. I am confident that this would be impossible in our country. Machines will only help in making all the 35 crores of people unemployed. If you think that machines are really indispensable you must reject my scheme and suggest a new one. I shall be thankful to you.

Dr. Zakir Husain has told us of the failure of Prof. Dewey's scheme in America. I think he could not succeed in his scheme not because it was very expensive but because he could not work it on a large scale. My scheme is absolutely different, because it is a rural one. It is said that my scheme will bring about slavery in the schools. But this can be said about all good things, be-

cause in bad hands even the good things become bad. Therefore I do not wish that my scheme should be carried out by those who have neither the faith nor the confidence.

I wish to make one more point clear. I do not want to teach the village children only hand-icrafts. I want to teach through hand-work all the subjects like history, Geography, Arithematic, Science, Language, Painting and Music. All this teaching will have to be done according to a definite plan. Dr. Bhagwat has suggested 9 hours daily for school work; but I do not agree with him because I do not want to be cruel to the children. I want only five hours daily because I am sure the boys will also practise for some time at home what they are taught in the schools. I am confident that if we make calculations for the Seven Years together we shall find that education can be self-supporting. In the First Year if each boy is able to earn two pice a day, he will be able to earn an anna the next year. In this way their power of production would go on increasing, and they shall be able to earn their living in later life.

It has been suggested that Agriculture should be made the medium of instruction in the village schools. But, the shame of it all is that we have not the necessary means. Agriculture as it is taught at present in the schools and colleges is useless for our villages. Because it is not intimately related to the rural conditions. But if you accept my scheme and are able to find suitable

teachers, I am sure it would be very useful for the village folk. The students also will go with their teachers to the fields and learn many subjects while ploughing, sowing, irrigating, and weeding the fields. They will also have sufficient physical exercise and artificial exercises, therefore, would be unnecessary.

I also think that there might be some waste in the First Year of my scheme; but it is bound to be self-supporting in the third Year. I say this from personal experience. There is no danger of slavery because there would be no room for it. Of course, if all the teachers and the inspectors are worthless, there is no hope.

You should not accept anything out of your regard for me. I am near Death's Door and would not dream of thrusting anything down peoples' throats. The scheme should be accepted after full and mature consideration so that it may not have to be given up after a little while. I am not very particular about the duration; it may be 7 years or 9 years. I agree with Prof. Shah that a State is not worth anything if it cannot provide for its unemployed. But providing doles is not the solution of unemployment. I would provide every one of them with work and give them food, if not money. God did not create us to eat drink and be merry but to earn our bread in the sweat of our brow. And there should be no dearth of work in our country. When we have 30 crores of living machines, why should we depend on the dead ones? I say that

each of us must work eight hours a day. Nobody becomes a slave by working. Just as we do not become slaves of our parents at home when we carry out their instructions, so the question of slavery should not arise at all in our proposed schools. But if you insist on machines, I feel quite helpless, because I have no other scheme to suggest."

Acharya Vinoba Bhave, head of the Nalwadi Ashram at Wardha said:—

"The proposition that primary education should be free and self-supporting seemed to me self-evident the moment I read it. It may not be a new thing, but it has been presented in a new light. I am sure that all the ills of the world have sprung up because man has given up manual work, and the revolutionary proposal of Gandhiji would cancel the ills at a stroke. But it is no use giving one's verbal assent to the proposition that manual training is necessary. What Gandhiji means is that manual training and education are one and inseparable. Goody-goody talk of manual training is not going to be of much avail, whilst man goes on planning schemes for getting rid of manual work. The Westerners may have accepted manual training as a part of their curricula, but they are exploiting nations, and manual training does not for them mean freedom from exploitation. When I went to the villages I found what self-supporting education meant. In Japan children of poor agriculturists are ex-

empted from compulsory education. In India we shall have to exempt all children which only means that all these children should be rendered earning units, if they and their parents are to live. One may or may not call the institutions schools, but they are a crying necessity.

I have an industrial home at Nalwadi where boys from four to five miles are coming to do their eight hours' spinning between 7 to 11 and 1 to 5. They have to leave home early in the morning and to give them their day's meal their mothers have to get up at a very early morning hour. When I examine the life they lead, I find enough to learn therefrom. Legislation making education compulsory will not solve the problem. The problem will be solved only when we enable the children at the end of the seven years to add substantially to the income of the home. The whole school atmosphere has to be revolutionised—the children's books, their posture, their way of walking and talking, and so on. Most schools are nothing but dusty and dirty floors. It is absurd to suggest that the schoolmasters will be slave-drivers. Far from it! The schools will automatically evoke an unprecedented interest in the parents, who will keep vigilant watch on them. The state of course will have to produce ideal teachers and necessary text-books."

Sir P. C. Ray said in a short speech:—

"I hold up the ideal of Sjt. Satisbabu before all. He had made himself a pauper and become

a tanner and scavenger and sweeper rolled in one. The world's biggest men like Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin had risen from low estate, they were all workmen. All Labour Ministers in the first Labour Ministry had worked in coal mines."

Then Acharya *Kakasaheb Kalelkar* spoke as follows:—

"I began to take active interest in national education since 1907. In the beginning I used to think that the aim of national education was to create revolutionaries. Later I found that it was impossible to have such revolutionaries unless there was a strong wave of patriotism throughout the country. The aim of national education, therefore, I thought, was to create patriots. My experience taught me that true patriotism could not be created without the study of national culture. Thus, the idea of national education became wider and deeper.

The problem of unemployment has taught us the futility of literary education. Despite the veering of public opinion towards manual training we did not think much of it because, we imagined that those who were learning manual work had no culture or patriotism. Later on we found that the so-called liberal education did not develop clear and logical thinking. Experience has taught us now that in order to develop the whole personality of the students education through manual work is essential. So far we have used the tongue and the ear for the evolution of the mind and the heart. Eyes also

have been used more for cramming than observation. But now we should realise that the true development of the mind and the heart can be only through manual labour.

When my teacher friends tell me that we should impart both intellectual and vocational training to the students, I feel both surprised and hurt. They think that there is no intellectual training in handiwork. As a matter of fact real development of the intellect can be attained in a natural manner only through manual training. We have all agreed on the importance of vocational training: but what place should be given to it in the curriculum is still a matter of controversy. I have never believed in mere "vocational bias." It is no use giving some time for handiwork in the present curriculum, just for a change. In the Gujarat Vidyapith we gave one hour for manual training to begin with. Later on, we allotted half of the time to manual work and the other half for book-work.

The present education is not education at all. It neither benefits the pupils nor the teachers. Somebody has truly said, "Never allow your studies to interfere with your education." The same truth is expressed in another educationist's advice: "You must rescue your education from the four walls of the schoolroom." I think true education should get rid of even the term "education" because of its frozen traditional associations. Our new schools as suggested by Gandhiji may be called by the diffident public

“Child-labour institutions.” But it will be found before long that they will be the dynamic centres of real and all-round education. So far, I have taught only in the towns but I am convinced that unless we impart general education to the village-folk it would be impossible to emancipate the country. Our real culture and strength is in the villages and not in the towns.

It is doubted that in making education self-supporting undue labour will be extracted from the boys. I have no such fears, because I know that unless teachers work themselves they shall not be able to make the students work. More over the detailed records of work will be kept in the schools and the inspectors will keep a vigilant watch. I may add that if I had to choose between intellectual and labour slavery I would choose the latter.

Prof. Shah thinks that we can emancipate the country through machines. I am not against small hand-machines like the Charkha. To-day, owing to the advent of Machine Age we are an exploited nation, because we buy machine-made goods. If we also begin machine manufactures we can become an exploiting nation. But until all men and the domestic animals are employed in the country we have no right to snatch their living with the help of the machines. We should view education from the standpoint of non-violence, because, I think, that Education and Violence are fundamentally opposed to each other. To begin with, I was a revolutionary and

believed in violence and corporal punishment; but I am now convinced that true education must be given through non-violence; and this is a central idea in Gandhiji's educational scheme.

There has been a good deal of controversy about the duration of primary education, *i.e.*, four years or seven years. I think that when education would become self-supporting the public would not mind keeping the children for some years more in the schools. The universal and compulsory primary education should be given from the 7th to the 14th year. The infant education from 3rd to the 6th year can be imparted by the parents at home. The state should of course publish useful literature on child education. That the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue, and not English, is beyond controversy. The only difficulty in carrying out Gandhiji's scheme will be that of suitable teacher-craftsmen. We shall have to start training schools for that purpose. I suggest that women should be given preference over men as primary teachers."

Shrimati Ashadevi, Wardha, said that they had to give up all the "idols" of the cave and the market place and bring a fresh outlook to bear on the question and remember that it was a new age that we were to create, a new social order that we were out to bring into being, and so we had to unlearn all we had learnt and go back to

the old Gurukula educational ideal which was based entirely on manual training.

Hon'ble Pandit Ravishankar Shukla, Minister of Education, C.P., said: "I wish to study Gandhiji's educational scheme from the standpoint of the prevailing economic conditions of the country. I might tell you that 80% of the agriculturists in C.P. have less than 10 acres of land and an examination of the accounts kept at the Government Agricultural Farm shows that it is impossible to secure a livelihood out of a holding smaller than 25 acres. This shows that a supplementary occupation is a *sine qua non* for the bulk of our agriculturists. I have in my province high schools where handicrafts are being taught; but we have never tried to make them self-supporting. For the present an annual subsidy of 40 rupees is needed for each school. Mahatmaji thinks that the schools can be self-supporting through the handicrafts. In my own Vidya Mandir Scheme, which I shall place before you to-morrow, I have provided for some land attached to every village school. So far, no experiments in this direction have been made. I shall be only too glad to try the experiment as suggested by Gandhiji in my province. I hope the first school of this kind will have to be started in Segaoon, under the guidance of Mahatmaji. As the experiment succeeds and we gather more experience, it shall be possible to start schools of this kind throughout the province."

The meeting came to a close at 5 p.m. and

at 8 p.m. they again met to frame resolutions in the light of the day's discussions on Gandhiji's proposition. Dr. Zakir Husain was in the chair. After free and full discussion the following resolutions were drafted for being submitted to the open session the next day:—

1. That in the opinion of this Conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.

2. That the medium of instruction be the mother tongue.

3. That the Conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should centre round some form of manual and productive work, and that all the other abilities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child.

4. That the Conference accepts that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers.

The Conference met again at 8 a.m. on 23rd when Dr. Zakir Husain submitted the draft resolutions before the Conference. *Mahatma Gandhi* read them aloud and said: "I am glad to know that almost all of you participated in the sitting last night. I know that the draft resolutions have been passed unanimously: still some differences of opinion are bound to remain. I would earnestly request anyone who does not agree with

my proposal to tell me so frankly. I do not want to impose my opinions on anybody. We have to sit together and thrash out some concrete scheme for national well-being in this hour of great need. I know that Pro. Shah has his doubts about my proposal. It is quite natural, because he belongs to a different school of thought. I should like to hear his criticism first.

Prof. K. T. Shah: "I like two points in Gandhiji's scheme: first, that the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue and secondly, that education should be given through some form of hand-work. Manual training not only develops the intellect and trains the nervous system of the body but also creates self-confidence. But the idea of making education self-supporting by marketing the products of the school children is undesirable, because it will be service and not education. I know that our country is economically very poor and we require more money to ameliorate its present condition. But we should not try to find money like this. It is the primary duty of the State to give free and compulsory education to all the children. The money that the State spends on education should be regarded as a kind of national investment which repays itself in the form of able and efficient citizens. By trying to make education self-supporting you will create in the boys from the very beginning a feeling of exchange-motive which is, by no means, desirable. I am sure that if you involve the students in this eco-

nomic muddle at the age of 7, a kind of slavery would creep in.

It has been proposed to impart education through one handicraft. You cannot expect every student to take interest in the same handicraft. You will, therefore, have to provide for different crafts in the same school. This will mean huge expenditure and the question of self-supporting education will have to be given up. Mahatmaji's scheme is absolutely new for the country. I would therefore, suggest that only a few experimental schools should be started, to begin with. If the scheme proves successful the country will have no hesitation in accepting it, wholesale. Before completing my observations, I should like to repeat that this scheme will hit the professional artisans hard by creating ruinous competition."

After the speeches of Acharya Dev Sharma, Maulavi Mohamed Hussain, and Shri T. S. Avinashilingam, M.L.A., (Central), *Prof. N. R. Malkani, Delhi*, spoke as follows:—

"I think the fears expressed by Prof. Shah with regard to making education self-supporting are exaggerated. Too much emphasis is being laid on the production of commodities by students for the market, resulting in competition with the ordinary craftsman. In my opinion the rendering of service is more important than producing for a market. Each school should be a self-sufficient unit and should make cloth, shoes, soap, furniture, etc., for its pupils. Boys may be

allowed to bring raw materials from home and make finished articles in the schools for relatives. School parties should help in rural reconstruction—in sinking wells, digging pits, making roads, etc. All this service should be and can be, valued and credited to the boys' work account without being charged in a market.

I think the real difficulty will arise later when the boys take up a vocation for earning a livelihood. Unless the agriculturists' lot is improved the revival of the handicrafts will be hampered by the want of a market. I also suggest that in order to give a fair chance to Mahatmaji's scheme training centres should be opened for preparing a new class of artisan-teachers and committees should be appointed to prepare suitable text books."

Hon. Mr. B. G. Kher, Premier, Bombay Presidency, said:—

"It has been said that Gandhiji's scheme is not new; but I regard it as epoch-making, because it introduces non-violence in the field of education. I have learnt four things here; first, that education should be imparted through some handicraft, secondly, that education should be self-supporting; thirdly, that education should be universal and fourthly, that the State should guarantee employment to all the educated boys. I think all these principals are revolutionary.

"There is a village in my Province where some people from the north are doing Tannery work. I have been working there for about four years.

The workers there have succeeded in creating a new artisan class, getting free every day of their prejudices and having a consciousness of being the citizens of India. I have received several letters from managers of institutions near Poona and Satara, Dhond and Ankleshwar where the experiment is being tried with very encouraging results. When I became the Education Minister, people suggested that I should introduce compulsory primary education throughout the province. We required about three crores of Rupees for the purpose. I did not want to launch the scheme before fully investigating into the details. In the meanwhile I read about Gandhiji's scheme which is so hopeful for the country. Gandhiji's scheme requires teachers imbued with feeling of national service. If we are able to find such teachers I am sure the scheme is bound to succeed, and education can be made self-supporting even within a year. Mahatmaji has clearly told us that a teacher who cannot make his students self-supporting within seven years is worthless. I am afraid he may not add that those Ministers who cannot launch the scheme, are useless. I, therefore, wish to listen and understand the whole scheme before I openly give my assent to it. Several experiments in this direction are being tried in my province, and after seeing their results I feel very hopeful about Gandhiji's revolutionary and epoch-making proposals. As Pandit Ravishankar Shukla has pointed out, we will have to start a few experimental schools in

each province before introducing the scheme wholesale."

Hon. Pt. Pyarelal Sharma, Education Minister, U.P., made the following speech:—

"Mahatmaji has been emphasizing the need of primary education in the country. Some people feel that he should give a constructive and uniform scheme for higher education also. But it is better to solve our problems one by one.

In my province only 6% of the people are literate. According to the new scheme education will be given through handwork. The result would be that we shall no longer have the distressing problem of unemployed B.A.'s and M.A.'s, because after their education the students shall be able to stand on their own feet.

There are some schools in my province where handicrafts and agriculture are taught exclusively. But they are not under the Education Department. The schools which are under my jurisdiction are those which create the army of educated unemployed young men. I am convinced that this problem cannot be solved unless the whole educational system is overhauled. But before launching Gandhiji's scheme, I think it is necessary that all the Ministers should sit together and frame practical proposals, of introducing it in the country on a large scale."

Hon. Dr. Subbaroyan, Minister of Education, Madras, made the following observations:—

We should all agree with Mahatmaji that education through some handi-craft will be a

solution of the problem in this country, because education has never been related to the occupation in a particular locality and has made pupils not being able to go back to their surroundings when their education is completed. Every government, therefore, should be willing to try the new scheme in their reorganization of primary education. The question whether education at the elementary stages can be self-supporting or not is a very difficult one and can only be tried as an experiment in many schools. As far as I am concerned, we as a government will be willing to try this in a number of schools. The question of curriculum and trained teachers imparting this new system of education should be considered at the earliest possible date, and arrangements should be made for training teachers who will understand the question of education through handicraft. The country will be thankful to Mahatmaji even if education could be half self-supporting, because that would be a solution of the problem.

Hon. Mr. Vishwanath Das, Minister of Education, Orissa, said:—

Education is not worth its name unless it is national and useful. The present system of education that is imparted in our schools is neither the one nor the other. It is a system of instruction which kills the creative genius of the boy and the man both at the School and at the

College. Ever since the day I took the reins of office I was feeling this miserable position and was thinking of a change. I glorify God for having vouchsafed to us this great change through Mahatmaji. The difficulty is peculiarly shocking to Orissa. Orissa has been created a separate province with areas from 3 different provinces. I have, therefore, to-day with me 3 different Educational codes, syllabuses and courses of study. I must frankly confess that none of these do fulfil the conditions so very essential for the training of our children and also necessary to create a nation. The ideal of education is to bring out the best in man, to create a love for God and man. Judged by these standards, education imparted in this country falls far short of its ideal.

A charge has been levied that the proposed change would revolutionize education. I welcome a revolution in the existing conditions. Mahatmaji, it has been your privilege always to bring out revolutions. The revolutions that you bring in are not of bombs and pistols but of "Ahimsa" and "Satya". With these weapons you affect an entire change in one's mentality and outlook. It has been always the privilege of great souls to affect such changes. Such changes are therefore bound to be revolutionary. They are proposed to change not only the system of instruction but the very notion and conception of education. Your changes are proposed to make education in India really useful to men so as to

develop the creative genius of the young and the youth. I, therefore assure you on behalf of myself and all the Ministers of Education from various provinces that we will give this new conception of education and the system adumbrated under it, honest and fairest possible trial.

The discussions make it clear that though education may be able to a great extent to make itself pay in the long run, we have to spend a little more money in the initial stages. Nothing will deteriorate us from finding this initial investment. I know that I had a minus balance in the last budget. It is not money alone that will solve our difficulty. The education that is proposed to be imparted demands new books, different type of teachers and altogether a different atmosphere. May I, therefore, suggest that you appoint groups of educationists not only to draw a detailed syllabus but also to write new text books on lines adumbrated. The teachers that we have at present, I am afraid, will not be useful for the changed conditions. Some of them are incorrigible. I do not propose that any attempt should be made to cure them. There are a good many of them who could be usefully employed but a course of training is necessary even for this class of teachers to inculcate in them the changed method and system of instruction. I have all along been feeling that the country will in no way be a looser if all the text books available are gathered and burnt. The vernacular languages have been starved and

thrown to the background since the days of Macaulay and Raja Ramamohan Roy. Everything should be revived, regenerated and innovated.

While stating what little I had to say I will be failing in my duty if I do not place before you, Mahatmaji, my difficulties about this scheme. You have, first, stated that education must pay itself and that it should be imparted to children making use of their hand. This may be possible to a great extent after the boy attains his 10th year. True education, it has to be admitted, follows the needs of the child. If at this stage an outturn is expected, I am afraid, education will be sacrificed for a mechanical outturn. Then again the other difficulty is present before us which cannot be neglected. The teacher will be told that he has to depend for his existence from the outturn of the work of the students. Human nature being what it is he will care more for the outturn than for education. Long hours of work and a rub between the parents and the teacher may be necessary consequences of such a course. I only present the difficulties as suggestions.

One word more and I shall have done. I have seen your anxiety to have the existing education changed. For our part we are equally anxious to give an honest trial to this changed system of education. Need I, therefore, suggest, Mahatmaji, that you send a deputation of educationists to all the provinces in India to explain this to our educationists. I am anxious to have your

system introduced as early as possible. This will make the passage smooth. Again Mahatmaji, propaganda in favour of this system is to be carried on and nothing could be done better than such a deputation going round the provinces. For myself I welcome a deputation and agree to meet their expenses."

Hon. Dr. Syed Mahmud spoke as follows:—

"Before coming to this Conference I had outlined a scheme of compulsory primary education through manual training. Now that I have understood Gandhiji's scheme of self-supporting education I feel very hopeful about introducing it successfully in my Province, I think the problem of new teachers can be solved, if we persuade the young men who pass matriculation every year to devote one or two years to teaching in primary schools in the villages. I think their expenses of boarding and lodging can be easily borne by the villagers themselves. The State may pay them a few rupees for pocket expenses. Thus primary education can be spread throughout the Province with an expenditure of only a few lakhs of rupees.

I think we should take the help of the radio and the cinema in spreading general education in the villages. Russia has made very successful experiments in this direction, and we should take advantage of their experience.

One point is not clear to me; what shall happen to the present primary and secondary schools, when the new scheme is launched. I

hope Mahatmaji will make this issue clear.”

Hon. Pt. Ravishankar Shukla, gave the following speech:—

“The Central Provinces Education Department has started manual training in some schools, but so far we have not been able to correlate general education with handicrafts. We will have to change our system in introducing Mahatmaji's scheme. We shall have to find teachers for the new schools; and I hope to train such teachers in the Wardha Normal School. Dr. Syed Mahmud thinks that matriculates will be able to teach in the new type of schools. I personally think that it will not be possible for these matriculates to teach all the subjects through handicrafts. They can be utilized for the purposes of adult education.”

Explaining his “Vidya Mandir” Scheme, Pt. Shukla said: “The present position in the Central Provinces and Berar is that the population is 15,567,723; the number of villages is 39,762; the number of villages having schools is 4,746; and the number of villages from which boys attend these schools is 9,762. This means that there are 25,254 villages which have no approach to any school. The present expenditure per head comes to Rs. 10|8. At the present rate, the total expenditure in educating all the boys would be Rs. 2,44,24,627. It is wholly inconceivable to get from the provincial exchequer and other sources, even half of the amount. The only way to achieve the end therefore, lies in the

adoption of the "Vidya Mandir" scheme. The scheme contemplates that every village or group of villages within a radius of a mile having no schools and where about 40 boys and girls of schools-going age are available, shall have a Vidya Mandir. In all Vidya Mandirs, education shall be through the medium of the mother-tongue. The name is attractive in more ways than one. To the 99% of the population in the villages, it will be a source of inspiration, and it is hoped that it will appeal to their generous and charitable minds. Vidya Mandirs will be people's schools. They shall not be divorced from the environment. They will make the children realize the problems of village life and train them to take part in it. The welfare of the village community shall be one of the Vidya Mandir's principal aims, and there shall be close co-ordination between the school and the community life. It shall be an important social centre where teachers, parents, boys and girls shall meet and discuss and solve the problems with which they are faced. In fact a Vidya Mandir shall be a radiating source of light and learning in a village. Agriculture, Hygiene, Sanitation and all other things which make for the happiness of life will be taught there. The Vidya Mandir shall be established on a voluntary basis first and, if necessary it would become a statutory obligation on each village or group of villages to have a Vidya Mandir. The Grant of Land will be the primary source of income for the support

of a Vidya Mandir. Grant of Land sufficient in area to give the teacher a living wage of Rs. 15 per month, and the net income of Rs. 200 per year to a Vidya Mandir, will be necessary. There are other sources from which income can be augmented, such as Village charities, Dharmadao, Panchayati kothis, etc. A limited number of Vidya Mandirs shall be started in every tehsil in the first year at Government expense. It is estimated that a Vidya Mandir will require from 11 to 30 teachers of land, and the sum of Rs. 1,000 to 2,000 to start the school.

An important, if not the most important, item in the Vidya Mandir scheme is the staff. A Vidya Mandir is generally expected to be one-teacher-institution, inasmuch as only boys and girls of the village where it is situated, shall join it. If the number exceeds 50 and goes even to 80, double shift system may be adopted. A teacher of a Vidya Mandir shall have to be of a different type. His minimum qualifications shall be the present vernacular middle school certificate. Higher the qualifications, the better. He shall be on probation for five years after which he shall have to serve for twenty years more. There shall ordinarily be no transfer from one Vidya Mandir to another. It shall be a life-long work for twenty-five years. After confirmation the life of the teacher shall be insured for about Rs. 500. The teacher shall reside in the Vidya Mandir, and shall be *ex-officio* Secretary of a Vidya Mandir trust. He shall do much social

service, village up-lift work, etc., as may be entrusted to him. Subjects of study shall be related to the environment of children and shall have an industrial and agricultural bias.

I am not proposing the Vidya Mandir scheme in place of Mahatmaji's scheme. My scheme is only to prepare the ground for the inauguration of the scheme as outlined by Gandhiji."

Sjt. Mahadev Desai said:—

"The idea of self-supporting education cannot be divorced from the ideological background of non-violence, and unless we bear in mind that the new scheme is intended to bring into being a new age from which class and communal hatred is eliminated and exploitation is eschewed, we cannot make a success of it. We should therefore approach the task with firm faith in non-violence and in the faith that the new new scheme is evolved by a mind that has conceived non-violence as the panacea for all evils. Those who talk of machine age do not know of the dangers ahead of us, and labour under the illusion that socialisation tacked on to industrialization is the solution of all evils. But I may tell you, that socialisation cannot eradicate the inherent evils of industrialisation, and it is necessary that socialisation should be tacked on to a handicraft civilization and not to factory civilization. I fear, no competition between the artisan and the student producer.

A Minister who cannot dispose of the products in the school without avoiding a clash with

professional artisans will have to declare bankruptcy and I say that Prof. Shah betrays a woeful ignorance of the countryside, of the many production centres in villages, and of the artisan class in general. If he leaves his study-room and sees these people, he will find them blessing Gandhiji's proposal which will clothe them with a status, that they have not enjoyed before. In Russia a bridge has been built between theory and practice, artisan and student, industry and letters. Our effort is of a similar kind, though based on a different ideology. The one necessity is faith in the ideology and determination to face the task and stamp out the existing evil."

Replying to some points raised by Sjt. Mahadev Desai, Dr. Zakir Husain said:—

"Mahadevbhai has said that without faith it shall not be possible to make the scheme a success. He thinks that I have no faith in the scheme. I may say that I agree with Mahatmaji's proposal and am hopeful of its success. But this does not mean that I should not point out any shortcomings of the scheme.

Some of my friends have resented my statement that Gandhiji's proposals are not original. I do not mean any insult. Mahadevbhai himself has quoted from a book to show that this kind of education is being tried in Russia. But the way in which Mahatmaji has placed his present scheme is, certainly, original."

The resolutions were then put to vote and they were all but unanimously accepted, Prof.

Shah not accepting only the self-supporting part of the resolutions.

Gandhiji in winding up the proceedings of the conference, said:—

“After considering my proposals, a question arises: Shall we close down the present primary and secondary schools? I have no hesitation in making an affirmative answer. But it is for the Ministers to decide finally. I think that if the present teachers accept my scheme, there will be no difficulty in overhauling the present schools. At places where there are no schools at all, we can easily start institutions of the type suggested by me. I will myself try to run the schools of this type in Segaon and Wardha.

I am told that there are some doubts still lurking in your minds regarding my scheme. I want to know them so that I may be able to clear some possible misunderstandings. I think Prof. Shah's fears are groundless because there is no possibility of starting the new type of schools at once in all the villages which number about seven lakhs. Before making the scheme compulsory and universal, we shall have to vindicate its truth in some experimental schools. If the scheme fails, no Mahatma shall be able to save it. But I have no such fears because I combine in myself the visionary and a practical man. We should to-day appoint a committee to continue the work and prepare a detailed scheme.

I wanted to place before you my ideas about college education. But I shall not do so to-day. I may write them later in the *Harijan*. I think we can postpone the question of higher education for some time; but the problem of primary education cannot be postponed even for a minute. We have been criticizing the present form of education for the last 20 years. Now that we have the Congress Ministries working in seven provinces, we shall have to tackle the problem with constructive seriousness.

I am grateful to all of you for having come and co-operated with me. I look forward to further co-operation as the Conference is but the first of the many that will have to follow. Malaviyaji has sent to me a warning telegram, but I can put him at ease by saying that there is nothing final about the Conference, as it is a conference of seekers, and every one is invited to offer suggestions and criticisms. I have never the idea of carrying through any thing by storm. The idea of national education and prohibition are as old as non-co-operation. But the thing in its present shape came to me under the changed circumstances of the country."

Thereafter a Committee composed of the following friends was appointed to prepare a detailed syllabus on the lines of the resolutions, to submit their report to the Chairman of the Conference within a month:

1. Dr. Zakir Husain, (Chairman);
2. Sjt. Aryanayakam, (Convener),
3. Sjt. Kawaja Gulam Saiyudin;
4. Sjt. Vinoba Bhave;
5. Sjt. Kakasaheb Kalelkar;
6. Sjt. Kishorlal Mashruwala;
7. Sjt. J. C. Kumarappa;
8. Sjt. Shrikrishnadas Jaju;
9. Sjt. K. T. Shah;
10. Shrimati Ashadevi.

With power to co-opt more names.

THE EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

What ultimately became a momentous session of the Educational Conference was held at Wardha on the 22nd and 23rd of October under the auspices of the Silver Jubilee of the Marwadi Shiksha Mandal. Gandhiji was in a weak state of health, and it was feared that he may not after all be able to stand the strain. The Convener or the Secretary of the Conference

Sjt. Shriman Narayan Agrawal, lay ill with enteric fever. And suggestions were therefore made that the Conference might be postponed until December. But Gandhiji resolutely rejected the suggestion. Sjt. Aryanayakam bore the brunt of the arrangements, Gandhiji conserved his strength by taking long periods of silence, and the Conference did come off with the results which, I can say without fear of contradiction, satisfied all. The proceedings were studiously businesslike, no time being wasted on the election of the President, thanks to the Chair, introductory musical programme, etc. The speeches were almost all in Hindi or Hindustani, with but four exceptions. On the first day the Conference met in the morning from 8-30 a.m. to 11-30 a.m. and 2-30 p.m. to 5 p.m., on the second day from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. After the first day's proceedings the Conference converted itself into a committee to express its opinion on the following propositions originally formulated by Gandhiji:—

"1. The present system of education does not meet the requirements of the country in any shape or form. English, having been made the medium of instruction in all the higher branches of learning, has created a permanent bar between the highly educated few and the uneducated many. It has prevented knowledge from percolating to the masses. This excessive importance given to English has cast upon the educated class a burden which has maimed them mentally for life and made them strangers in

their own land. Absence of vocational training has made the educated class almost unfit for productive work and harmed them physically. Money spent on primary education is a waste of expenditure inasmuch as what little is taught is soon forgotten and has little or no value in terms of the villages or cities. Such advantage as is gained by the existing system of education is not gained by the chief taxpayer, his children getting the least.

2. The course of primary education should be extended at least to seven years and should include the general knowledge gained up to the matriculation standard less English and plus a substantial vocation

3. For the all-round development of boys and girls all training should so far as possible be given through a profit-yielding vocation. In other words, vocations should serve a double purpose—to enable the pupil to pay for his tuition through the products of his labour, and at the same time to develop the whole man or woman in him or her through the vocation learnt at school.

Land, buildings and equipment are not intended to be covered by the proceeds of the pupils' labour.

All the processes of cotton, wool and silk, commencing from gathering, cleaning, ginning (in the case of cotton), carding, spinning, dyeing, sizing, warp-making, double twisting, designing, and weaving, embroidery, tailoring, paper making cutting, book binding, cabinet making, toy making, ting, gur making are undoubted occupations that can

easily be learnt and handled without much capital outlay.

This primary education should equip boys and girls to earn their bread by the State guaranteeing employment in the vocations learnt or by buying their manufactures at prices fixed by the State.

4. Higher education should be left to private enterprise and for meeting national requirements whether in the various industries, technical arts belles-lettres or fine arts.

The State Universities should be purely examining bodies, self-supporting through the fees charged for examinations.

Universities will look after the whole of the field of education and will prepare and approve courses of studies in the various departments of education. No private school should be run without the previous sanction of the respective Universities. University charters should be given liberally to any body of persons of proved worth and integrity, it being always understood that the Universities will not cost the State anything except that it will bear the cost of running a Central Education Department."

The next day the draft resolutions of the Committee were placed before the house and discussed and ultimately passed. Here is the text of the resolutions:—

"(1) That in the opinion of this Conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.

(2) That the medium of instruction be the mother-tongue.

(3) That the Conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should centre around some form of manual and productive work, and that all the other abilities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child.

(4) That the Conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers."

Thereafter a Committee composed of the above mentioned friends was appointed to prepare a planned syllabus on the lines of the resolutions, to submit their report to the Chairman of the Conference within a month.

Harijan, 30-10-37.

M. D.