



The Education Of Women

We published a few days ago a letter from a woman correspondent protesting against the proposed establishment of a Cadet College for Girls at a cost, which she said, would adequately pay for seven girls' schools in the capital. A Cadet College is a pretty expensive proposition. If it is at all felt that such an institution would serve a useful purpose, the idea, as our correspondent argued, has to be balanced against the need for more girls schools to meet demands arising out of a phenomenal increase in the city's population.

We do not know how far plans for the proposed Cadet College have advanced. The Education Department or the Directorate of Public Instruction, whichever is responsible for approving projects of this kind, has regrettably a habit of not inviting public opinion on new schemes, with the result that when objections on one ground or another are raised, it is discovered that cancellation or modification would entail greater loss than completion. We trust this will not or is not happening in the case of the cadet college idea.

Cadet Colleges for boys have a proven usefulness. No one wants them scrapped. They impart, within the general framework of the existing system of education, a process of training with special emphasis on discipline. They are also intended to motivate pupils to opt for the armed services as a career, and a fair proportion have since their establishments been doing so. As a matter of fact the primary purpose behind Cadet College is to give youths the sort of instruction which would enable them to join the military easily.

We wonder whether the same motivation is being sought to be extended to girls. If that is the idea behind the proposal to create a cadet college for girls, we think it betrays a rather mistaken notion about our educational priorities. What the country needs at the moment or what our conservative society would approve is not to spend several millions on a girls' Cadet College when we cannot provide enough schools for them that would be, we are afraid, unjustifiable misuse of public funds.

We do not deny that girls need discipline. But that should be achievable by improving the standard of girls' schools, helping them to recruit better-paid and better-qualified staff, and giving educated women a greater say in the planning of women's education. That women need a different kind of orientation is a truth that has begun to be almost overlooked or ignored in the clamour for greater rights for them. Advocates of women's equality who appear to be more vocal than others have practically forced educational authorities to consider co-education at all stages to be absolutely desirable. Under their pressure, many girls' schools have opened their doors to boys, and conversely, most boys' schools, even in remote rural areas, admit girls. We wish we could say that the results have been encouraging. On the contrary, we have seen in recent times a rise in sex crimes among adolescents. There are many conservative parents who would rather keep their girls at home than send them to institutions where they would be exposed to unorthodox ways.

The greatest need of the hour is not an expensive Cadet College or two, but more exclusive girls' schools in healthy surroundings staffed by dedicated teachers. The scarcity of places in the existing schools in the city is so great that every year at the start of the academic session in January parents with daughters have to spend sleepless nights worrying about their luck. A large number have to be refused admission, and we have also been told that many private institutions turn the situation to a commercial account by charging unreasonably high admission fees, sometimes to the tune of several thousand. This is absolutely scandalous. We urge the authorities to tackle this scandal rather than waste money on grandiose projects.