

### Better Schools

Concern about the progressive deterioration in the quality of education is now widespread. A certificate from a school or a degree from a university no longer means what they used to do twentyfive years back; neither is a correct clue to the intellectual attainments of those who acquire them. At best a diploma or certificate is a measure of the amount of time a student has spent at a school or college; at worst it doesn't mean even that. For unfortunately some of the educational institutions are so corruption-ridden that it is alleged they do not hesitate to issue certificates to those who want them for a certain consideration. These are unpalatable facts but they need recognising for a true appraisal of what is happening in education.

One of the factors which we think has greatly contributed to academic deterioration is the craze for higher diplomas or degrees at the expense of quality. Good primary or even secondary schools are considered much less important than a college as an index to the progress of an area. Hundreds of schools have in the last decade or so been overnight converted into colleges, funds not enough for a good school diverted into what is termed higher education. The result is a phenomenal increase—we speak in comparative terms—in the number of graduates whose deficiencies are widely deplored. They enter different professions and services on the strength of their certificates and tend to bring the standard of administration down. Obviously the quality of administration in a country is to a large extent determined by the quality of education its citizens are given.

The most important stage in the education of the citizenry is what they learn at the first stage, that is in schools. They form the base of the educational pyramid. Higher structures erected on a weak base are bound to be shaky, and it is no wonder that the standards of our colleges and universities are declining fast.

We need a complete reassessment of the position of the schools and a well-thought-out programme of reform aimed at them. The policy of laissez-faire which allows local citizens to set up colleges in a hurry and then press the government to recognise and finance them must go. The widely held belief that the establishment of a college in a village raises it immediately to a higher pinnacle of glory, while its schools languish, must be shown to be wrong and unfounded.