

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Bangladesh Times, 1 DIT Avenue, Dacca 2

Notebooks

It is well known that notebooks to accompany the official school textbooks are being prepared by some publishers and printers and that some booksellers are refusing to sell textbooks without notebooks. More than one letter has been published complaining that guardians are compelled to purchase books of less utility at exorbitant prices. This complaint is, in our opinion, fully justified but the matter is much more

serious. Guardians are being exploited but actual harm is being done to the students.

We intend to discuss only one notebook here but it is probable that similar points could be made about other books of this kind. *Notes English for Today* (six) costs Tk. 13.50. Of its eighty pages six are devoted to a list of words and meanings repeated from the textbook and the rest contain translations of stories and attempts to answer questions and exercises. We feel that this notebook is harmful for the following reasons:

- 1) The requirements of the syllabus for Class VI English have been ignored. Although the syllabus states that translation is not to be taught in Class VI, about half of the notebook consists of translations. And although not prescribed, the passive voice is used.
- 2) Students are exposed to wrong spellings and their spelling and pronunciation will become confused. On the contents page alone we find "Qurrel" for quarr-

rel, "My Boby" for My Body, "Joke's" for Jokes, "The pants Make the whol" for The parts make the whole, "Help Fine" for Help! Fire! and several other errors. Even the name of the press contains three errors, "Moden Bongal Press."

- 3) Students will learn sub standard English. The expert author failed to follow a simple instruction and wrote, "A safe Intrine is needed to make. A pencil is not wanted to buy. Goats

are needed to look after."

Most important, the use of notebooks, even competently produced ones, prevents students from learning properly and cripples their minds.

Notebooks are part of a vicious circle of pseudo-education in which rote memorisation predominates over problem solving and creative thinking.

We strongly protest against this nefarious practice and appeal to guardians, teachers and the relevant authorities to work to prevent it.

M. S. HOQUE,
Teachers' Training College,
Dacca and
J. G. MUMME,
Education Extension and
Research Institute,
(Co-authors of English for
Today Book IV).