

116

Educational Scandal

The scandals unveiled by the committee appointed by the Education Ministry to investigate the affairs of the Laboratory High School came as no surprise to those who have any idea as to what has been going on in the name of education. The case of the Laboratory High School is typical of the situation in many others, if not all. There exists from this point of view little difference between government and privately run institutions.

These have been transformed, directly or indirectly, by those in charge into businesses. Parents and their children have to submit quietly to extortion and exactly on pains of being denied admission or of expulsion. The investigation committee discovered that a kind of organised mafia among the staff violates every rule that educational institutions are expected to follow, keeping places vacant throughout the year in order to attract "customer" against payment; requiring the pupils to mind their lessons on their own, while they attended to their "business" interests, and imposing new charges on every conceivable excuse.

In some schools, it is reported, promotion to a new classes at the end of the academic session carries with it the obligation of seeking admission anew on payment of the usual charges.

These scandals are of nature which people who left school two decades ago would find it difficult to credit. Yet the bitter, almost incredible truth is that government complacency has allowed them to grow into an evil of gigantic proportions.

Lamentably, the offenders unmasked by the investigating committee are teachers themselves, supposedly immune to corruption. The public have long been aware of these offences; they have occasionally been written about. But no action has ever been taken. On the contrary, the same people use their professional grievances to attract sympathy; threats of strikes and actual strikes are employed to press home demands which on paper seem well-grounded.

Cynics may well comment that the corruption revealed in the Government Laboratory High School is only one aspect of the general malaise from which society suffers. That however is no consolation. What we foresee, unless drastic reform follows, is a catastrophe condemning the whole of the younger generation and consequently the future of the country itself to real perdition.

We shall wait to see whether the gravity of the crisis that has overtaken us is appreciated by the Education Ministry. We are tired of platitudes, fed up with promises, sick of empty reassurances. What is needed is firm positive action to rescue our youth.