

THE EAST LONDON OBSERVER

Text-Book Board Fails Once Again

Year after year it is the same story of failure on the part of the National Text-book Board to reach in time the new books to students at the primary and secondary levels. Although blames and counter-blames abound at the failure, no one is formally held accountable—much less punished. Thus the way for creating a mess next year is cleared. No one—either in the ministry concerned or in the text-book board—seems to be eager to learn from the mistakes of the previous year.

This is quite intriguing. A closer look into the matter however will reveal that it is not too intriguing to be incomprehensible. Involved in this stupendous task of printing crores of books is a huge amount of money. Since no government facility is capable of printing such a large number of books, the responsibility is handed through contracts over to private printing houses. No printing establishment in the country however has the capacity to do the job alone. So the standard practice for long was to give the responsibility to a large number of printing presses.

Collective responsibility such as this is not bad so long as honesty is not made a casualty. Soon the collective strength of the printing houses gave them the feeling that they could earn more than their due profits through arm-twisting of the text-book board. That together with the greed of some of the more ambitious of the printing presses sowed the seed of discord in the first place. Then underhand deals were allegedly made to gain the printing contract from the authority. Now a report has it that the caprice and short-sightedness of a section of corrupt officials of the text-book board have been responsible for the failure in timely supply of books to the intended candidates.

Such allegations may not be without a basis. We understand there are several interested quarters to frustrate the genuine moves by the text-book board to reach the books to the students at the start of the new academic year. But the text-book board has been created precisely for planning well ahead of any mishaps or reversals. One can accept an unavoidable delay at times but when the same failure continues to crop up year after year, one cannot help smelling rat in the entire functioning of the process. It is bewildering to know that this year only three printing organisations were given the responsibility to print as many as 8,00,00,000 books within one and a half months, whereas last year 590 printing houses were assigned to print a fewer number of books. Sure the authorities have an explanation for this and we would like to know the whole truth. Unless such an attempt is made to go deep into the functioning of the text-book board, there is little hope for setting the record straight. Let the text-book board function independently and at the same time let it be held accountable all its doings. Only then things will brighten up. The young learners will get their books in their in time.