

## Overhaul Textbook Board

Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) recently gave readers a sampling of what our children are obliged to learn from a 'Social Science' textbook, written by three luminaries, and edited by four more of equally enlightened officials, and approved, since the year 1996, for classes nine and ten. It is inconceivable that the 'National Curriculum and Textbook Board' should be getting away with such reductionist and utterly moronic texts for so long without the sensible sections of teachers and guardians protesting and demanding their heads for their misleading and unjust conclusions.

In Chapter Five, (Social Problems of Bangladesh) page 42, the authors draw up a list of eight causes of crime which categorically puts geographical location and physical abnormalities as causes number one and two. They claim, quoting one scientist Lombroso, that hill people are more prone to committing murder and other crimes than those on the plains! Also, those living on the 'chars' in Bangladesh commit more crimes, so do people who have physical abnormalities! That such questionable conclusions, could be incorporated in a school textbook for years together, without anyone noticing so long, goes to show to what extent the apathy of Bangladesh's intelligentsia has gone.

But is it simply this pathological indifference to national interest or an abysmal poverty of the intellect that permits such prejudicial lessons to be imparted? Thinking sections must seriously take up this issue and compel the education authorities to scrap such arbitrary and offensive content forthwith. No good can come of lessons that seek to blame the marginalised (the poor and the physically challenged have been named as potential criminals) more than the advantaged for all the ills in society.

How can anyone in his/her right mind, and with education worth the name, present such simplistic and unscientific statements, as the so-called social science book does? Surely this calls for a serious scrutiny of the entire textbook outfit, including the decision makers. If the sample book under discussion is any indication, it reveals a sorry standard of school education in Bangladesh. We better overhaul the Textbook Board, sooner rather than later, if we really want our children to get a balanced school education.