

Book Banks

EVER since the abolition of slavery as an institution, investment in men has been limited by the foresight, self-sacrifice and the wealth of their parents. Though this remains broadly true to this day. State expenditure on education, private endowments and of late educational-cum-training schemes initiated by the bigger Joint Stock Corporations have modified the situation to some extent. Therefore, those who can give evidence of exceptional ability in their studies may go up farther than is permitted by the means of their parents.

It is extraordinary, however, that even considered purely as a commercial proposition, educational investment in youth has been found by those who have tried it as reasonably sound. But so few have tried it, the reason being that it is taken for granted that education is either a matter *at* charity and or a duty of the State to provide; so the field is regarded as closed to and unsuitable for commercial investment, though it still remains free, at least partially, for commercial enterprise, mostly of an undesirable kind, such as coaching and tutorial classes, training courses to enable the trainees to qualify for jobs etc.

It is an agreeable surprise to find that in a few cases where investment in education has been undertaken primarily as an Investment rather than benevolence or charity, it has proved reasonably risk free. The Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, Professor Siddhant proposed the other day the establishment of Book Banks to help the students who cannot afford to buy their text books. The idea is that students will get their books on loan from such banks and return them after they have taken their examination. A Calcutta College, we are told, tried this experiment very successfully. It started a book bank some years ago on a small scale, with ten sets of text books. The books loaned out were returned duly after the examination and no bad debts have been complained of. When trusted, students generally return the trust and prove themselves worthy of it. At the last meeting of the Calcutta University Senate, a member proposed that a book bank should be started for MA and MSc students, with twenty sets of text books for each subject. The Vice-Chancellor agreed to consider the proposal favourably. The

cost of text books for the graduate and post-graduate courses is so high that it is beyond the means of most students. Few college, or for that matter, University Libraries have many sets of text books to spare. Hence, it is not possible for them to meet the demand from the students.

Canara Bank Loans for Students

A MUCH more ambitious scheme has been started by the Canara Bank for helping students to meet the expenses of higher studies. The scheme is based on the experience of two educational funds in the South over a period of twenty-five years or more, which shows a remarkably low proportion of bad debts or non-realisation. If the realisation of loans has been so good in the case of charitable funds which did not have a proper organisation for collection of dues, the Board of Directors of the Canara Bank have no doubt that if the bank operates such funds, the recoveries will be even more satisfactory. With this object in view, the Canara Bank has inaugurated a Jubilee Education Fund which has been registered as a society. The object of this fund is to underwrite loan scholarships to be advanced by the Canara Bank, in the normal course of its business, to the extent of one per cent of its deposits, to deserving students and the Fund will guarantee the due repayment of such loans in accordance with the terms and conditions under which they are granted. A beginning is to be made with a small number of scholarships but as the money advanced is returned by the students after they have completed their education, the revolving fund will go on increasing and it will be possible to increase steadily the number of scholarships that the Fund is able to underwrite year by year.

The Fund takes care of the risk while the bank can go on expanding its investments. As already mentioned the risk, judging from the experience of similar funds operated under private auspices, has proved so small that with the organisation and the collection facilities at the command of the bank, the scheme should prove a sound commercial proposition as well as a very worthwhile endeavour in the advancement of the youth of the country. All told, it is an excellent scheme with which to celebrate the jubilee of this progressive bank which has expanded steadily and

amazingly, from very humble beginnings, over a period of half a century.

Unitary or Federal

IN almost all the newly-independent countries, the ruling party favours the creation of a strong unitary type of government. This is understandable, as in all these countries there are centrifugal tendencies which, unless kept within control, may endanger the future strength and cohesion of the countries concerned. In many of these countries, however, the emergence of new political parties and of powerful regional interests have provoked the demand for regional autonomy under a federal system of government. This was the main issue on which the recent elections were fought in the Gold Coast. This has been a live political issue in Pakistan. Though Singapore is eager, the Malayan mainland's opposition to a federation of Malaya and Singapore is well known. Ever since independence, this has been a major political issue in Indonesia.

Soon, the Constituent Assembly will meet to frame a new Constitution for Indonesia. Whether the country should have a unitary or a federal type of government, will be the main topic for discussion. Djakarta has so far managed to keep the centrifugal forces in check. But the resentment against Javanese dominance of Indonesian politics persists. This is a political issue which is not as much a danger as the gradual exploitation of these political differences by the Army. In Indonesia, the Army has emerged as a major influence. In Sumatra, the Army is openly exporting rubber in defiance of the Centre. In the Celebes, the Centre's monopoly of the export of copra is being seriously threatened. In both Sumatra and the Celebes, the Army justifies its actions on the ground that thus alone can it secure the finance needed for its existence. But the open defiance of Djakarta by the Army is a serious danger which may yet force the various political parties to reach an agreement about the future type of government.

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