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**CURRENT SCIENCE — 50 YEARS AGO**


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**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN INDIA\***

**T**HE intense agitation now proceeding in the educational world for reforming both its content and system is manifestly the outcome of the desire of the Government and of the intelligent section of the public to provide relief for the educated unemployed. The doctrine on which the reforms are proposed to be founded is that Education is at once the cause and cure of unemployment. If it is assumed that practically every educated young man should possess the necessary training and equipment for earning a living by his own unassisted exertions, then there is truth in the theory. If, on the other hand, he offers his skill and knowledge to be employed by other agents, then it is obvious that unless the power of these agents for absorbing all the output of educated men and women keeps pace with their multiplication, there is bound to be employment lag. Unemployment is the outward expression of the socio-economic conflict, and the severity of its manifestation is proportionate to the divergence of the interest of the State and those of its population. Where such divergence prevails, education in the universities and schools becomes monastic, secluded from the growing needs and realities of the highly materialized civilization. Existence, whether in human society or in a state of nature is competitive, and if, in the latter sphere, natural endowments and acquired training are a means of success in the struggle for life, then education in the former cannot afford to be decorative appendage, where the struggle is equally keen. The necessity for the provision of reasonable opportunities for gaining a livelihood by individuals becomes all the more imperative in the community, from which the natural factors controlling its size are at least partially eliminated. If the growth of society is permitted to outstrip its economic property, it is obvious that unemployment must inevitably result, unless the needs of the population are identified with those of the State, by the totalitarian claims of national socialism.

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We have before us the Abbott-Wood report on Vocational Education in India and the Wardha Scheme of Vocational Education. The latter has eclipsed the importance of the former which has been produced at great expense to the public. The Wardha Report is definitely optimistic, and its authors and

supporters are absolutely clear that if its proposals are courageously followed, all the young men and women who have passed through the basic education will have received sufficient vocational training to set up independent gainful occupations. We are familiar with the criticisms of the Scheme. Perhaps, some of the more fundamental defects may be remedied as experience and knowledge are gained. Perhaps the scheme will succeed if governments and local bodies purchase the products of the pupils and teachers' handiwork, and distribute them among school and district museums or create an emporium for their sale. The pupils will be most certainly happy so long as they remain at school. But they must ultimately enter the world, which has none of the tender solicitude and softness for its fresh recruits which they enjoyed during the school days. After their school days are left behind, will these young men and women, either individually or in joint corporation, have sufficient financial resources to set up even small-scale industries for which they have been trained. Assuming for the sake of argument that they have, can they reasonably hope to compete in the open market with similar articles of mass production. How will the general consumer react to the industries carried on in small undertakings? The soundness of any educational reconstruction is to be judged not by the academic perfection of its details, but by the success achieved by those who have received its benefits. At the present moment the critics and supporters of the Wardha Scheme are very much concerned with the educational aspects of the systems but they do not seem to be troubled by the prospects awaiting its beneficiaries. If the attitude of the framers of the scheme is that they can furnish manual skill and technical knowledge to those who seek for them, and that their responsibility does not extend to the post-school achievements of the scholars, then the Wardha schools must be as far removed from the concrete understanding of the social and economic facts of public life, as the much maligned present-day Universities and secondary schools are innocent of the realities of social and political developments in the country. At least in the case of the latter institutions, the worth of their education could be judged by the employability of the graduates and undergraduates, but in the case of the Wardha schools, we have a new criterion for judging the value of their vocational

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instruction viz. the independent industrial occupations which the pupils will establish for themselves as a means not only of their livelihood but also of their contribution to the public revenues. If the results of their knowledge and training are used by the Wardha pupils for purpose of employment in the larger industries, the problem of unemployment must still remain unsolved. It is, however, too premature to judge the merits of the scheme which purports to be an experimental measure and the critics and advocates of this "Basic Education" must wait until it has justified the expectations of its authors.

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Some of the difficulties which militate against the success of the technological and vocational schools are common with those found among the systems of public education viz. young men having taken post-graduate courses in Science are appointed to posts in the Railway and Police service. It is true that employment is obtained, but without any the re-

motest connection between the knowledge and training of the young men and the duties of the office they are embarking to discharge. There is bound to be a deep sense of frustration on the part of the employees, with the consequence of inefficiency. The misfits in public service are as much a concern of the public as their unemployment. In the case of candidates who have been trained in a particular department of industry or vocation, his failure to be employed in the special field must lead to graver consequences. If the pupils leaving the vocational schools do not expect to be absorbed in the industries, but are able to establish their own, on a small or large scale, then these schools will succeed in fulfilling the objects with which they are established. If, however, these pupils hunger and thirst for service, then the two problems, unemployment and misfits, will continue to engage the anxious consideration of the public and governments, presenting almost inseparable obstacles in the way of their solution.

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

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### INSA MEDAL FOR YOUNG SCIENTISTS — 1989

Instituted by the Indian National Science Academy in 1974 the Medal is awarded annually in recognition of outstanding work of scientists below the age of 32 (as reckoned on 31 December preceding the year of award). Only those born on or after 1 January 1957 are eligible for consideration in 1989. The work done in India by the nominee will be taken into consideration for the award.

The awardee is presented a medal and a cash award of Rs. 5,000/-. In addition, the recipient is considered for a research grant by the Academy not exceeding Rs. 20,000/- per year, including stipend for a JRF for a period of three years for continuing research work, provided the research proposal is

considered worthy of such support. Preferential consideration may be given under partial travel grant scheme for attending international conferences.

Nominations for the awards for 1989 may be made by Fellows of the Academy, established scientific societies of all India character, University faculties and departments, or the research institutions.

The last date for the receipt of nominations in the Academy is **15 November 1988**.

Nomination Proforma can be obtained from the Indian National Science Academy, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110 002 by sending a self-addressed envelope of 28 × 12 cm size.

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