



Vol. XIII] JUNE 1944 [No. 6

Relief for Science Teachers

The appalling position of science teachers, particularly of those serving in non-Government institutions, whose emoluments even during peace-time were hardly adequate for their sustenance, has been brought home through an ever-increasing number of letters which reach me daily from all parts of India. A large majority of them are ill-paid and do not receive even the meagre 'Dearness Allowance' to which their less unfortunate brethren in Government employ are entitled. Their position which has always been acute, has become distressing since the beginning of 1943 due to racketeering in prices of foodstuffs and rents and the picture of pauperism aggravated by extortionate merchants and landlords, presented in these letters, has impelled me to come out into the open and appeal to the philanthropic public to come to their relief.

The position of the school teachers is rendered lamentable in view of the circumstance that no organization exists in this country to bring their case to the attention of the public. The tragedy is that nobody thinks of them; nobody

knows that they need help. What is in fact, a front line tragedy, remains scandalously neglected, even unnoticed. The need for bringing them succour is no less urgent, no less pressing, than, for instance, for the working journalists; but there is no organization like the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference, to espouse their cause.

Humanitarian considerations demand that the lot of the school teachers should be alleviated. Teaching is one of the most ancient and noblest professions and the teacher fulfils a very important and vital role in the body politic. During the war years, the teachers, particularly the science teachers, have trained a large number of students to man the fighting services, the ordnance factories and industrial establishments. Is it too much to hope that in this country, where charity to the deserving is enjoined on every citizen as a religious duty, the industrialists and philanthropic trusts would come forward for relieving the suffering of the teachers, who are on the brink of destitution?

I am enclosing herewith a representative* which I have received from one of my old pupils, Mr Dhirendra Mohan Mukherji, which will lend support to what I have expressed in the letter. I hope you will give your closest attention to this question and see if a plan could be evolved to give some relief to the poor science teachers.

Office of the Council of Scientific
and Industrial research, Delhi,
June 1, 1944.

S. S. BHATNAGAR

*Extracts from the letter referred to above. 'I Do not know whether you are aware of the fact that for more than a year and a half the teachers of non-Government colleges in Bengal are engaged in a mute struggle to save their prestige as teachers. For obvious reasons they cannot go about stating their adverse conditions and begging for private or public help. If some of them have received any dearness allowance it is so meagre and so disproportionate with the manifold rise in the price of essential commodities that they are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain themselves and their families on their petty pre-war salaries.

The Government of Bengal have not found it possible to help in any way the teachers of non-Government colleges. The political organizations have not extended their help to those poor educators of young minds.

Apart from any humanitarian considerations these teachers, especially those of scientific subjects, have a right to live in British India because they are steadily supplying a good number of workers for the ordnance factories and other industrial organizations directly connected with the war effort.

The day is fast approaching when most of these science teachers will have to face starvation. Would it not be a matter of disgrace on the part of the renowned Indian Scientists if they fail to move in an attempt to bring relief to these honest teachers?'