

CHAPTER - III

POLITICS OF LIBERALISM AND EDUCATION

The growth and development of education in British India could be linked to the nature of its political developments.¹ As the political developments passed through various vicissitudes, the development of education had to pass through ups and downs. In the present chapter we will discuss the growth of education in British India with reference to the politics of liberalism. The liberal strain in Indian politics could be traced back to the early decades of the nineteenth century and is almost co-existent with the rise of the middle classes in Indian politics. The consolidation of this middle class finally culminated in the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. The nationalist movement in an organised form and on an all-India basis may be said to have begun from this date. But long before it, the nationalist movement had appeared on the Indian scene in the form of various regional groups and associations. The inherent contradictions of the imperialist system were themselves the main cause of creating conditions for the release of forces which helped in the growth of the nationalist movement. To have a better perspective of the rise of

¹See Gunnar Myrdal, Asian Drama, Vol.III, (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1968),p.1657.

"In India, the educational reform program could be linked directly to the thinking and stirrings in the nationalist movement of pre-independence times".

Indian nationalism it is necessary to understand the force that gave rise to it and the role western education played in its growth. A commonly held view is that the Indian National Movement arose because the western system of education opened the flood gates of western ideas, forms of government etc., to the Indians. People holding this view also claim that it were the educated classes inspired by the writings of Burke, Macaulay, Mill etc., who were the main cause for the rise of nationalism in India. We, however, hold the view that the rise and growth of Indian nationalism was a consequence of the social, economic and political forces generated within the Indian society due to the nature of the Imperialist rule. The western system of education which was given the official status in 1835 acted only as a catalytic agent in releasing the forces of Indian nationalism. Men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ranadewere ardent supporters of the social reforms and the western educational system. But at the same time they were also admirers of the British rule, the continuation of which they thought was inevitable and in the best interests of the country. This apparent contradiction was really unreal. In its earlier phase the nationalist movement had to take such seemingly contradictory posture for its own growth when the main contradiction was between the values nourished by it and the conservative forces represented by the caste-ridden

feudal society. But with the rise of the nationalist forces, areas of conflict between them and the imperialist rulers became apparent. Imperialism tried to resolve some of these contradictions and smoothen areas of conflict. A number of measures were taken on social and political spheres to resolve these contradictions. The granting of official status to western system of education was one such measure. It was expected that the western system of education would form a loyal public opinion and create a loyal group of persons who would act as the supporting pillars of the empire. This policy, however, created another contradictory situation. The western educated persons were no doubt admirers of the British system of education and also loyal to the empire. But at the same time they had been inspired by the great strain of English democratic and popular movement. Whenever they thought of applying the standards nearer home, a conflict with the rulers arose.

Contradictions, Conflicts and Compromises

The consolidation of elites on a common political platform in the Indian National Congress in 1885 was a triumph of the liberal leadership in Indian politics. It was also the beginning of a period of disillusionment and doubt. The disillusionment was on the part of the national movement from the real intentions of the colonial power. The doubt was on the part of the rulers towards the educated

classes as a reliable political ally of the empire. The liberal leadership never lost an opportunity to proclaim its unswerving loyalty to the empire and shower praises on the benefits that the British rule had bestowed on the people of India. But it also tried to put the rulers in a seemingly contradictory position of preaching something at home and practising just the opposite in India. Though no agitational methods were followed, the use of press and other platforms by the political leadership alarmed the rulers and made them suspicious. The groundwork for the confrontation between the rulers and the nationalist leadership were already laid when Curzon took office as Viceroy in 1899. We will discuss the growth of education in the context of the growing contradictions between the rulers and the political leadership and the efforts made to resolve them. The major contradiction was inherent in the system of new education that had now taken roots in the country. The educational system had been devised at the first instance to meet the growing administrative needs of the rulers and to create a class of people wedded ideologically to the imperialist system of government. The leadership of the western educated classes went to people who were liberal in political outlook and were firmly committed to the new education system. Politically they were committed to liberal traditions. Their thinking was guided by their loyalty to the Crown and their actions

were motivated by a permanent connection with the empire. Their methods of agitation were strictly constitutional.² However, after the political consolidation of the middle class, the latent contradictions started manifesting themselves as the existing political system was incapable of satisfying the aspirations of this newly emerged class. These came to focus when Curzon initiated his policies on educational reforms.³ The apprehensions of the educated classes on the educational policies initiated by Curzon were mainly on two counts. On the one hand they feared that any curbs put on the expansion of higher education would limit their area of operation and on the other hand, any patronage given to the backward classes would jeopardize their unchallenged leadership in education. The following note submitted by K.Nanoo Satrial to the government reflects this anxiety.

²R.C.Majumdar(ed.), British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, Part II, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1965), p.570.

³See, Michael Edwardes, The Last Years of British India, (London: Cassel, 1963), p.242.

"As ever, there were political threats to be faced when the Government contemplated changes in education. The educated classes, who had at first regarded English education as an instrument which they might use to achieve a share in the profits of British rule (through appointments in Government service, commerce, or the professions) early became conscious that their education should fit them to participate in the decision-making apparatus of Government. Any apparent attempt by the British to limit higher education seemed to them to be a deliberate act of discrimination. This attitude was to come to a head in the response to the educational reforms of Lord Curzon.(Viceroy 1899-1905)".

It is incomprehensible how the Government policy can be consistent which while it tries to lift up the backward races (Panchmas) by liberal educational measures, seems at the same time to countenance an opposite course in the case of the upper classes when they attempt to ascend a high elevation by surmounting several difficulties by dint of intellectual and moral strength.⁴

Political Aspirations of the Liberal Leadership:

The political aspirations of the liberal leadership were bound within the frame-work of the colonial empire. Their main political plan was based on securing more and better representation in the councils and higher administrative services. Gradual extension of self-government was also demanded with the motive of putting the imperial rule on a new foundation,⁵ i.e., new relationships had to be established with the rulers in the interest of educated classes and the commercial classes who had now formed a new alliance.⁶ The search for new relationships with the rulers

⁴Government of India, Home Department (Education), February 1903, Proceedings Nos. 96-97.

⁵See, Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series, (1885-1910), (Madras: G.A. Natesan & Co., 1935), p. 618.

"...by the gradual extension to them of that system of Self-Government which has been the invariable accompaniment of British power and civilization and which, wherever it has been granted, has been the strongest bulwark of Imperial Rule and has evoked the affectionate gratitude of the people".

⁶See, Michael Edwardes, The Last Years of British India, op.cit., p. 24.

"The coming together of the educated classes, deprived of higher posts in the civil service which were reserved for the British, and of the businessmen who regarded themselves as discriminated against economically, was of profound importance in the struggle for freedom. It brought much needed funds, as well as adding a further pressure in favour of non-violent reform rather than bloody revolution, for Indian businessmen also brought the innate conservatism characteristic of capitalists of all races."

See also, B.B. Misra, The Indian Middle Classes, Their Growth in Modern Times, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 367.

was an attempt on the part of the liberal leadership to resolve the contradictions that had of late developed between them and the rulers. There was a recognition from both sides that the existing relationship in the political-administrative set-up cannot continue for long. Sir Henry Cotton in his presidential address to the 1904 Congress session remarked, "The present form of British administration cannot survive the fulfilment of those national tendencies which the British Government itself has brought into existence."⁷ What were these national tendencies and ideals that were conceived by the liberal leadership? The ideal then was the establishment of a federation of free and separate states placed on a paternal footing with the self-governing colonies, each with its local autonomy, cemented together under the aegis of Great Britain.⁸ This ideal was to be achieved in stages. The main demands put forward to move closer to this ideal were reconstitution of the civil services, separation of executive and judicial functions, enlargement of the legislative councils, the gradual substitution of Indian for British official agency and the

⁷ Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series (1885-1910) op.cit., p.671.

⁸ A.C.Mazumdar, Indian National Evolution, (Madras: G.A.Natesan & Co., 1917), p.391.

"The real aim of the Congress is to attain Self-Government within the Empire and the destiny of India which it professes to secure is a great Federal Union under the aegis of the British Crown, — the establishment of a United States of India as an independent unit and an equal partner of the British Empire."

transfer of control of education to the Indians. The reaction of the rulers to these growing Indian aspirations was very aptly presented by the comment in 'Times' which we reproduce. "We must wearily retrace our steps and devote our energies to educating the Indians in character and common sense. Then, and not till then, can we put them out into the polytechnic of local self-government."⁹

Educational Policy of Curzon and Indian Reaction:

The educational policies of the Government of India under Lord Curzon were evolved under a cloud of suspicion that had developed between the government and the liberal leadership of the educated classes.¹⁰ The first measure that aroused this suspicion was the government order of prohibiting the managers and teachers of aided institutions from taking part in political movements or attending political meetings without the consent of the Director of Public Instruction. The resolution adopted at the fifteenth Congress in 1899 recorded its protest against this

⁹ Quoted in Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series (1885-1910) op.cit., p.670.

¹⁰ See, A.C.Mazumdar, Indian National Evolution, op.cit., p.354.

"A tendency had become manifest for some time past to view high education with a degree of suspicion and distrust and in certain quarters even with positive disfavour. It was the educated community which clamoured for increased rights and privileges and it was their agitation which was supposed to be responsible for the increased difficulties of the administration."

measure.¹¹ It was considered that this move will restrict the private enterprise in the field of higher education and also withdraw able and influential men from the cause of education. The main conflict arose when the resolution of the Government of India on education was announced in 1904 and the report of the Indian Universities Commission was made public. We will discuss the main recommendations of the Resolution of 1904 and the Universities Commission having a political bearing and giving rise to conflicts.

Political Significance of the Government of India Resolution on Education, 1904:

i) The government left the spread of secondary education to the private enterprise. This was rather inevitable as the government could not afford to take the entire responsibility on itself and also because it could not afford to antagonise the entire middle class which had taken the lead in the spread of higher education. But the new policy was to "retain a general control by efficient inspection over public institutions".¹² It was now clear

¹¹ K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, Vol. I, (1885-1920) (New Delhi: by the author, n.d.), p.135.

¹² Indian Educational Policy, Resolution of the Government of India, Home Department (Education), Calcutta, 11th March 1904, Proceedings Nos.199-211.

to the government that the educated middle class was a force to reckon with and the best possible course was to contain it. A closer supervision was now proposed over the network of educational institutions which were either managed by these people or were under their influence.

ii) Extension of primary education was emphasized as one of the important duties of the government. The urgent political consideration was the stability of the empire.¹³ It was recognised that growth in primary education had not kept pace with the growth in secondary and college education. The major blame for its inadequate growth was thrown on the middle classes. "Expansion of primary education has received a check due to famine and plague, and further impeded by the indifference of the more advanced and ambitious classes."¹⁴ It was recommended that primary education should be made a leading charge upon provincial revenues and should have a predominant claim upon local funds.¹⁵ The assumption held for decades that higher education was a stabilising influence of the British rule appeared untenable. How did this metamorphosis take place in the

¹³ Indian Educational Policy, Resolution of the Government of India, Op.cit., Resolution, 4.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

thinking of the rulers? The earlier advocates of English education had rightly thought that it would create a class of people who would be the admirers of the British system of government and would work to safeguard that system in India. But this was valid only in the particular phase of the British rule in India. The system as it existed now had outlived its utility. The middle classes could be placated only to a given extent. The awareness among the middle classes that their role was not limited to wresting a few favours from the government was gradually dawning. Now it wanted a share in the power structure of the government which was only possible if some fundamental changes were introduced. The government had a genuine fear that this class may spread its influence on the masses also. To forestall this possibility the Government now wanted to extend primary education among the masses and considered it politically important for the stability of the empire. This policy was thought to act as a deterrent to the spread of nationalistic ideas among the masses. Another consideration was that a leadership would emerge among the rural people and could be depended upon for supporting the government.

iii) The support to the Chiefs' Colleges was also a political decision. These colleges could be depended upon for providing cadres to important services like Imperial Cadet Corps. The clientele for Chiefs' Colleges

was from the aristocratic classes. This class could be relied upon in the confrontation with the middle classes.

The political leadership took up the challenges thrown by the new educational policy. It revised its earlier stand of looking up for government patronage in educational matters. The intervention of the government in educational matters was thought to be superfluous and unnecessary in the changed political context. Henry Cotton in his presidential address to the Congress session of 1904 remarked, "...the educational movement in India now stands in need of no such stimulus. It is in matters of education more than any other that the people of the country have become ripe for self-government."¹⁶

There was also a growing awareness in the political leadership that educational issues cannot be separated from the larger political issues. This was a significant development in the context of the policy changes in education and the turn the nationalist movement took in coming years. Education from now on was considered a part of the nationalist movement. The changes in educational policy and the shifting role of educated classes was now inextricably mixed with the course of the nationalist movement. We quote below the observations

¹⁶ Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series,
(1885-1910), op.cit., p.675.

made by C.Y.Chintamani in the 1904 Congress session in this regard.

When we are told to consider educational questions in the interests of education alone and that political and other considerations are to be totally banished from the discussion of educational questions, I say that it is nothing but unmitigated cant. No, it is impossible to dissociate extraneous considerations from the discussion of educational questions.... It is Lord Curzon, that has so exhorted us, but frankly, what are his own Government's educational measures - legislative as well as administrative - if not political in their character.¹⁷

The reaction of the political leadership towards the policy of the government on higher education was more bitter and violent. This was understandably so because it was here that their interests came into open conflict. During the past half a century or more the educated classes had thrown up a leadership which was strongly entrenched in higher education. Their privileged position in the social milieu was dependent to a large extent on their maintaining this lead. It was possible only if they had an effective control in the administration of the universities. The bitterness of the educated classes

¹⁷K.Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920), Vol.I, op.cit., p.184.

See also, J.R.Cunningham, 'Education', Modern India and the West, (ed.), L.S.S. O'Malley, (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p.167.

"The conflict was political rather than educationalThe impression was gaining ground that Lord Curzon was not in sympathy with the political aspirations of the people and that the proposed reform was sinister in its intention....The 'narrow, bigotted, inexpansive rule of experts' was, it was feared, to be brought into play in restraint of that free development which was India's right and her necessity."

was expressed by Surendranath Banerjea in his presidential address to the 1902 Congress session.¹⁸

The thinking of the liberal leadership on the educational development of the country was based on two assumptions.

- i) The structure of education erected by the British prior to the reforms introduced by Curzon was basically sound. It was lauded as the greatest boon to the country. Their own contribution to the development of this system was cherished and closely guarded by them.
- ii) Growth of higher education should be left to the private enterprise. Government interference in this sphere was resented and considered detrimental to the growth of education.

The exhortations made by Surendranath Banerjea grew out of these assumptions. "...nothing should be done to check the spread of that system of education which has produced such splendid results in the past and which is

¹⁸Supra. p. 72.

cf. Lovatt Fraser, India Under Curzon and After, (New Delhi: Sagar Publications, 1911), Pp. 179-87.

Fraser holds the opinion that the hostility aroused against the educational reforms of Curzon was to a great extent due to Pherozeshah Mehta because his most cherished interests lay in the Bombay University where he was the monarch. This, however, is a very simplistic view of the contradictions and conflicts that had been growing between the liberal leadership of the nationalist movement and the British rulers.

fraught with infinite possibilities of progress for future generations."¹⁹

The conflict in educational policies as propounded by the government and as conceived by the liberal leadership continued during the viceroyalty of Curzon. The resolutions passed in the 1904 session of the Indian National Congress reflect these conflicts and project the future educational policies as visualised by the liberal leadership. In the first resolution, while thanking the government for an increased outlay on primary education and technical scholarships, protest was recorded against the retrograde policy in regard to higher education calculated to officialise the governing bodies of the universities and to restrict the scope of university education. The second resolution demanded more funds for education so as,

- i) to spread primary education more widely among the mass of the people, and to make a beginning in the direction of free and compulsory primary education;
- ii) to make due provision for imparting instruction in manual training and in scientific agriculture;
- iii) to provide for the better manning and equipment of government colleges and high schools so as to make them model institutions; and

¹⁹Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series, (1885-1910), op.cit., p.545.

- iv) to establish at least one central fully equipped polytechnic institute in the country, with minor technical schools and colleges in different provinces.

It is not without significance that in this phase of the nationalist movement, demands were made for technical and agricultural education. The political leadership dominated by the educated classes was now in alliance with the commercial classes. Indian industrial interests were demanding protection from the foreign capital for their own growth. The indigeneous industries were in need of personnel with some technical education. It is significant that the political demand for sharing power in the central and provincial legislatures was co-existent with the demand for more higher education including technical. There was a need for an intelligentsia who could interpret and propagate the nationalist point of view about the future shape and form of government and also be an ally in the struggle with the imperialists. Whatever differences may have arisen in educational policies, the essence of the conflict between the liberal leadership and the government was political. The conflicts in educational policies arose because of the conflicts on major political policies. Curzon by his educational reforms and political measures wanted to dislodge the political leadership from positions of power and leadership in political as well as educational spheres. He wanted to circumvent higher

education so that it could not be used as an instrument for further consolidation and growth of the nationalist forces. He gave more funds to primary education and helped in its expansion. But he could not succeed in the political motive of weaning away the masses from the influence of the nationalist leaders. There was no doubt, a 'considerable stirring of the educational waters' in the first decade of the twentieth century.²⁰ But the avowed political motives of the new educational policies could not be achieved. In spite of the curbs on higher education, it continued to progress.²¹ The political consciousness did gradually spread among a larger section of the population but it was not oriented to the appreciation of the benefits of foreign rule. It moved further towards radicalism.

Though the educational policy of Curzon could not check the expanding frontier of higher education, it did have a positive effect on the growth of primary education. The extent of growth in primary education can be had from

²⁰ John Sargent, Society, Schools and Progress in India, (London: Pergamon Press, 1968), p.42.

²¹ Calcutta University Commission Report, (1917-1919)
Vol.I, Part I, (Calcutta: Supt. Government Printing, 1919), p.77.

"...the number of aspirants after a university education was still increasing more rapidly than ever, not checked, but rather encouraged, by the provisions of 1904;..."

See also, Progress of Education in India, 1902-07,
Vol.I, (Calcutta: Supt. Government Printing, 1909), p.51.

"Upon the whole, the conditions have been such that the desire for a University career has been in no appreciable degree relaxed, though there are some signs of a diversion towards technical studies."

the following statement.

"During the fifteen years ending in 1902 the pupils in primary schools increased in number by 627,912; during the last five years they have increased by 621,539."²²

The appreciable growth in primary education was an outcome of two factors operating simultaneously but with opposite political motives. The one was the increased interest of the government in the education of the masses. The political motive was to gain goodwill among the masses. It was expected that once that goodwill is created, they would keep away from the political influence of the middle classes. The second factor was the growth of the nationalist movement. The political leadership took up the issue of the education of the masses, and used the very plank in asserting its leadership which the government thought could be used in isolating them.

The ground for compromise between the liberal political leadership and the rulers was created when the political awakening created during the anti-partition agitation started spreading among the lower middle classes, especially the teachers and the students. Attempts were now made to resolve the conflict. The first sign of a widespread awakening among the students appeared when a

²²Progress of Education in India, 1902-07, Vol.I, op.cit., p.4.

large number of them in Bengal volunteered to leave the government institutions and sought guidance from the political leadership. Surendranath Banerjea's advice to them to go back to their institutions was a typical liberal response to the developing political situation.²³

The policy pursued by the liberal leadership was now that of 'containment' of the growing radical tendencies. This shift in their attitude was also reflected in their stand on the question of national education. In the earlier phase of its confrontation with the rulers it tried to project its image as the leaders of the new political awakening. For instance when the demand for a national system of education gained momentum, the resolution passed

²³ Note by C. Stevenson Moore, I.G. Police, dated 2nd December, 1905
Government of India, Home Department, June 1906,
Proceedings Nos. 169-86.

"A few days after the 16th the Statesman published a copy of the circular which had been issued by the Magistrate of Malda, on the strength of confidential orders circulated by the Bengal Government with a view to preventing students taking a prominent part in political agitations in districts where the abuse was prevalent. This greatly agitated the student community and all students were called upon to boycott the Government schools and colleges and to join a 'National University'. Many students at Dacca actually left the college on being told that a National University had been started. Surendranath Banerji was away from Calcutta, and on his return he was received by about 15,000 students who hailed him as 'The Uncrowned King of India'. He, however, did not endorse the advice that had been given to the students in his absence, but told them to go back to their schools. This has caused a split among the leaders, and Bipin Chandra Pal and Surendranath are now competing for the allegiance of the students."

in the Indian National Congress session at Calcutta in 1906 declared its policy as "...to organise a system of education - literary, scientific, and technical - suited to the requirements of the country on national lines and under national control."²⁴ In the next two sessions in 1907 and 1908, when the liberal leadership embarked on a policy of compromise, the words 'national lines' and 'national control' were dropped. The resolution on education now declared the policy as organizing an independent system of education, literary, scientific and technical suited to the requirements of the country.²⁵

The compromising attitude of the liberal leadership is reflected more in their utterances on the role they visualised for themselves in the changing political context. We quote below the view of Gokhale who may be considered as the representative of the politics of liberalism in this phase of the nationalist movement.

²⁴K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1835-1920), Vol. I, /op.cit., p.212.

²⁵Ibid., p.230.

See also, Syed Razi Wasti, Lord Minto and the Indian National Movement, 1905-1910, (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.56.

"Gokhale again defended the alteration on the ground that it was more restrained in form and more in accord with what was being actually attempted in different parts of India."

We, on our side, have accepted the rule and have promised it our willing allegiance....Self-interest and good faith, therefore, alike require us to harbour no sentiment inconsistent with a continuance of this rule, and our attitude towards it must be one of loyal acquiescence....loyalty is an active feeling. It implies not merely refraining from any hostile acts against the order to which we are loyal, but also a readiness to rush to its support, if its existence is in any way threatened.²⁶

From which quarters then was the threat expected to the very existence of the 'order'? What was the meaning of preserving the 'order'? For the liberal leadership the continuation of British rule was a sine qua non of any development and reform that could be thought of. Any challenge to the existing order, any departure from the idea of permanence of British rule in India was an anathema to them and had to be fought vigorously.

The Shifting Alliance - Attitude of Reformists and Radicals

The first decade of the twentieth century was a period of shifting alliances between the rulers and the native groups representing different interests. From the time the government had started casting doubts on the educated classes, it was looking around for new allies which could stand by it at the time of any crisis. Curzon was suspicious of the educated classes and followed a dual policy of looking for allies among the aristocratic classes

²⁶Quoted in D.B.Mathur, Gokhale, A Political Biography, (Bombay: Manaktalas, 1966), p.388.

mainly coming from the landed interests and seeking support from that section of population where the influence of the educated classes had not yet penetrated. This policy alienated the educated classes and the confrontation between the government and the educated classes created a new political situation. The political and educational policies followed by Curzon failed to resolve the contradictions between them. On the contrary they deepened further during his regime. The emergence of radicalism in politics added another dimension to the political scene. The formation of a liberal government in England and consequent changes in the Indian Government set-up started a process of reassessment of the policies hitherto followed. The strategy of readjusting to the new situation was evolved during the viceroyalty of Minto. The contemplated political reforms had, however, to be within the existing colonial framework. In his covering memorandum submitting the reform proposals to the Secretary of State, the Viceroy made this point sufficiently clear.

The Government of India must remain autocratic; the sovereignty must be vested in British hands and cannot be delegated to any kind of representative assembly. No such assembly could claim to speak on behalf of the Indian people so long as the uneducated masses, forming nearly ninety per cent of the adult male population, are absolutely incapable of understanding what representative government means and of taking any effective part in any system of election.²⁷

²⁷Quoted in, Ram Gopal, Lokmanaya Tilak, A Biography, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965), p.262.

The reassessment of the policies by the government had to take into account the existence of different classes and interests from whom it could either expect support or opposition. The report by S.E. Skinner on the political agitation and unrest in India speaks of the following classes. Aristocracy, Trading, Servile, Agricultural, Educated, Professional, Fighting, Anglo-Indians, Eurasians and Native Christians.²⁸ According to Skinner the feelings of disloyalty and sedition did not exist among the Aristocracy, Agricultural, Fighting, Anglo-Indians and Eurasians. It were the educated and professional classes supported by trading classes who spearheaded the movement for sedition and disloyalty. Skinner blamed the existing system of education for this state of affairs.

The present system of general education is the chief breeding-ground for the new communities of educated malcontents, who create sedition and disloyalty. It is therefore necessary to alter this system in a manner that will reduce this breed, and one way of doing this is to establish technical schools, where the rising generation will be taught the profession or occupation of their ancestors and will therefore never be ashamed of them.²⁹

²⁸ Government of India, Home Department(Public/Political),
August 1907, Proceedings No.23. --

Confidential report and review of the political condition in India, by Lieutenant Stanley E. Skinner, 1st Duke of York's Own Lancers, Skinner's House, Honorary Magistrate, Hissar District, Punjab, submitted for the information and consideration of the local Government(Punjab) and the Government of India, dated 17th July 1907.

²⁹ Ibid.

It was true that it were mainly the middle classes drawn from educated, professional and trading classes who were agitating for political reforms. But it was equally true that only from among these classes the government could draw the support it needed for popularising its scheme of reforms. The aristocratic classes had only a narrow appeal. The general mass of agricultural classes were not yet politically strong enough to stand on their own and the rest of the groups were an insignificant minority. Morley admitted that political concessions were necessary to ensure 'true, solid enduring efficiency' and also accepted the inevitability of introducing occidental form of machinery to work out the reforms. It was recognised that a complete reversal of the educational policies was neither possible nor desirable. The policy had to be so devised that the total alienation of the educated classes could be avoided. The contemplated reforms were intended to win over the liberal leadership. It was a recognition of the fact that a contradiction had developed between the political and educational policies pursued by the government. In the period following Curzon's viceroyalty an attempt was made to resolve the contradiction and evolve a new policy of restoring the equilibrium.³⁰ The policy gravitated

³⁰ cf. Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p.343. "The imposition of colonial rule had meant a shuffling of the elites in British India; its continuance meant that they had to be continually reshuffled. Collaborators came and went; new allies and new enemies envenomed the rivalries inside the country."

towards seeking alliance with the liberal section of the educated classes which were still in control of the Indian National Congress and the sectarian elites which had also consolidated its position by coming together on a common political platform in 1906. The conflicts that arose during the anti-partition agitation and over the educational policies of Curzon had brought to focus a few important issues in political and educational spheres. The most important political issue was that of favouring the 'swadeshi' and 'boycott' of foreign things. The educational issues that emerged were those of national education, education of the masses and the participation of students and teachers in politics. The significance of 'swadeshi' and 'boycott' lay in the fact that it, for the first time, elevated the national movement from the strictly constitutional path to that of wider participation by the masses. The active involvement of a larger section of population in the movement made the government as well as the political leadership to redefine their attitudes towards various issues emanating from the movement. There was a growing sign of disillusionment with working in the existing colonial framework. The feeling was gaining ground that India's salvation lay in completely breaking away from the imperialist orbit. Everything associated with the imperialist system including the institutional structure that it had built up was considered as derogatory to the

national prestige. The advocates of this line of thinking were associated with radicalism in politics.³¹ Here we will confine ourselves to the attitude of liberal leadership towards the various issues that had now cropped up. The liberals followed a policy of 'containment' of the movement. The sweep of the movement always alarmed them. For instance, Gokhale differentiated between the boycott of British goods and institutions and swadeshi. He treated the former as a political weapon and feared that it would invite a vindictive action from the government.³² How the liberals thought about the growth of radicalism is an interesting reading. Rash Behari Ghose in his presidential address delivered at Surat in 1907 remarked.

...this mood (of the radicals) betrays an impatience ...which may readily slide into a temper which would be a menace to law and order and would furnish our enemies with the plea that public tranquillity can only be secured by repression. You may deny it, but I fear you are in danger of slowly drifting into treason.³³

National Education:

The question of 'national' education cropped up during the phase of growing contradictions between the middle

³¹The growth of radicalism in politics and the attitude of radicals towards swadeshi and boycott has been discussed in Chapter IV.

³²Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series (1885-1910), op.cit., Pp.697-98.

³³Ibid., p.775.

class elite groups and the alien rulers. It was a manifestation of the breach that had occurred in the confidence reposed by the elites on the everlasting bonds with the British rulers. The educational policy enunciated by Curzon and continued by Minto undermined this cherished faith of the elites. The main edifice on which the elites had built their faith was that of higher education/^{on}western lines. The foundations of this edifice were now shaken. Due to the political developments during this phase, three distinct elite groups had appeared in the political canvas of the country. These were liberals, radicals and sectarian elites. The first two were mainly represented in the Indian National Congress and formed the main stream of the nationalist movement. The sectarian elites were mainly represented in the Muslim League and formed a separate stream often at cross purposes with the main stream of the nationalist movement. The reaction of these different elite groups towards national education was different manifesting their political aspirations and their objective assessment of the political situation. The attitude of the government to the national education movement was determined to a large extent on its assessment of the influence of different elite groups on it. Two crucial issues were brought to focus regarding the development of a national system of education.

- i) Should national education be developed along lines of total opposition to the existing educational system? That is, should it completely replace the existing system of education?
- ii) . Should national education be developed as supplementing the existing educational system.

The reactions of different elite groups to the national education movement were based on their attitude to these two issues, or else it was of total opposition to the whole movement. The participation of students and teachers in the 'swadeshi' and 'boycott', the repressive measures taken by the government, the call for the boycott of educational institutions culminated in the establishment of National Council of Education in 1906. The objectives of the Council were stated thus.

The object of the Council is to impart Education - Literary as well as Scientific and Technical - on National lines and exclusively under National Control, not in opposition to, but standing apart from, the existing system of Primary, Secondary and University Education.³⁴

The stand taken by the Indian National Congress on the question of national education underwent a change after the split in 1907, when the radicals were eased out from the organisation. Education on 'national lines' and under

³⁴Quoted in, Haridas Mukherjee and Uma Mukherjee, The Origins of the National Education Movement, 1905-1910, (Calcutta: Jadavpur University, 1957), p.44.

'national control' did not figure in the resolution adopted in the 1908 Congress session at Madras.³⁵ What new factors had intervened between the anti-partition agitation and the Madras session that had caused this change in the attitude of the Congress leadership. The main factor responsible for this change was the compromising attitude of the liberal leadership towards the Morley-Minto Reforms. Once they had compromised on the political front they could not but yield ground on the question of national education. National education was now viewed by them as 'supplementing' the existing system of education. The position taken up by the radicals was, however, different. For them the model to be emulated was not that of England whether for political or educational purposes. Unlike the liberals they were not overwhelmed by the parliamentary traditions of England and held the view that education evolved and developed under the colonial system was hampering the growth of a national spirit in India.³⁶

³⁵K.Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1910), Vol.I, op.cit., p.230.

The resolution passed in the Madras session in 1908 read as, "In the opinion of this Congress the time has arrived for people all over the country to take up earnestly the question of supplementing the existing institutions and the efforts of the Government by organising for themselves an independent system of Literary, Scientific, Technical and Industrial Education suited to the conditions of the different Provinces in the country".

³⁶The position taken by the radicals has been discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

The government's reaction to national education movement was also conditioned by the extent of influence that the liberals and radicals were thought to exercise on its course. In the earlier phase the national schools were looked upon as rival institutions and centres of seditious activities.³⁷ But till the national education movement was confined to mainly urban areas and was largely under the influence of the liberals, there was not much cause for worry. But when there was an apprehension that it may spread to rural areas and come under the influence of radicals, anxiety was expressed and urgent need was felt to introduce reforms in the existing system.

The second phase of the movement is capable of much more dangerous development. This is an attempt made at the close of the last year and the beginning of this, to extend these schools to the villages and to get hold of primary education.³⁸

³⁷ Government of India, Home Department (Political), March 1909, Proceedings Nos.10-11. Copy of demi-official letter No.524C, dated Shillong, the 28th October 1908, from H.Sharp, Director of Public Instruction, to the Chief Secretary to Government.

"In the first place, these schools are avowedly anti-government rivals to institutions recognised by the University and the Department. They have been founded as a counterblast to disciplinary measures adopted by the University or by Government. Seditious textbooks form a part of the curriculum. Instruction in 'politics' is a special feature, and the 'swadeshi' vow is imposed on teachers and pupils."

³⁸ Ibid., Proceedings Nos.10-11.

The demand for a national system of education outside government control forced the government to make a reappraisal of its educational policies and make improvements within the broad political objectives of placating the liberals and preventing the radicals from spreading their influence. The note by G.Fell, dated 25.3.1908 accepted the absence of good government institutions and hoped to meet the challenge by introducing reforms.³⁹

A few distinct features of this period may be marked which distinguish it from the earlier phases. For the first time, there was an organised challenge to the existing order of government from the nationalist forces. The challenge was on all fronts; political, economic as well as educational. The political and economic challenge was symbolised by 'swadeshi' and 'boycott'. On the educational front it came in the form of 'national schools' as an alternative to the existing educational structure. The challenging forces were led by the educated middle

³⁹Ibid., Proceedings Nos.10-11.

"It is partly due to the absence of good State or aided secondary schools that these institutions have had even the chance of existing for a short time. There are, of course, other forces at work, such as the development of the 'national' spirit in the two Bengals, and, I am afraid, the desire on the part of professional agitators to establish schools in which they can create an atmosphere of disaffection and sedition. We must trust to the influences of time and to the provision of better secondary schools to cause these schools to die a natural death. We have no power to interfere with them at present, even if it were politic to do so."

classes who in their earlier phases of development had been the ardent admirers of the British rule. Of course, the whole of this class was never alienated from the 'glory' of the British rule. But the section which did not approve of the political agitation against the ruler was not vociferous and could exercise little influence outside their own narrow circle. They soon melted away either in the political wilderness or survived in the shady grove provided by the rulers. The political movement henceforth did not confine itself to deliberations in the cosy atmosphere of the conference rooms but made its presence felt in streets, shops, schools and other public places. It found among teachers and students its most ardent supporters. The active involvement of teachers and students in the movement affected the educational structure so assiduously built up for the political support of the empire. It is significant that the movement received greater support from the school population than from colleges and universities. It was an important indicator that the lower-middle class population was also getting involved increasingly in the political movement. This had important implications both for the rulers and the political leadership. The rulers while taking steps to have stricter control on higher education, also diverted their attention to the education of the lower classes. The political leadership made full use of the

support from the lower middle classes, students and teachers. At the same time it tried to keep the upsurge from going beyond the boundaries of their own political interests.

Education of the Masses:

For the first time the issue of mass education gained political importance during the period of shifting alliances between the rulers and the nationalist forces. The broadening of political movement raised it to a live issue. Some of the political factors which affected the thinking on mass education were,

- i) the growing contradictions between the rulers and the nationalist forces;
- ii) the search for new allies by the rulers;
- iii) the conflict between the liberals and the radicals in the nationalist movement;
- iv) the growth of sectarianism in politics and
- v) efforts to resolve various contradictions and forming of new alignments.

The importance of mass education was being discussed long before Gokhale introduced the bill for compulsory primary education in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1910.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ See, Dr. B. S. Goel, Development of Education in British India (1905-1929), Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Delhi University, 1968, Pp. 202-04.

But the issue gained political importance during this period. H.H.Risley, the then Secretary to the Government of India emphasized the political significance of introducing free primary education.

I doubt whether we are in a position to press the view that secondary education is entitled to take precedence of primary education. The question of course is purely one of political expediency and regarding it from that point of view, I am prepared to admit that there is a strong case for introducing free primary education as soon as possible.⁴¹

In a similar vein A.T.Arundel, member Viceroy's Executive Council also stressed the political importance of the education of the masses. "I think it must be recognised that primary education must on political grounds alone take precedence of the improvement of secondary education,...". Why were these 'political grounds' considered so important in giving precedence to the education of the masses? The conflicts that had arisen on the educational policies initiated by Curzon and the political upsurge during the anti-partition agitation had shaken the earlier attitude of taking the masses for granted. The ignorance of the masses was considered to be the important factor for the influence that the political leadership could exert on them.⁴²

⁴¹Government of India, Home Department (Education),
December 1906, Proceedings No. 78.

⁴²Government of India, Home Department, June 1906,
Proceedings Nos.169-86.

"That it should have been possible for a few school-boys and Zamindari agents to exercise the amount of influence they did may well seem an extraordinary feature in the case. This influence is due primarily to the extraordinary ignorance and the extraordinary docility of the great mass of the population."

The overriding consideration with the government for giving importance to the education of the masses in this period was to broaden the political base of the empire. The narrow 'inverted educational pyramid' of education was considered to be too weak to support the empire. The extension of the educational base was now considered important for sustaining the empire. In its political approach the government was now evolving a policy of winning over the liberals and isolating the radicals.⁴³ The

⁴³ See, A Berriedale Keith, (ed.), Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750-1921, Vol.II, (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), Pp.82-83.

Morley in his speech delivered in the House of Lords on 23 February, 1909 on reform proposals analysed the situation thus,

"There are, I take it, three classes of people that we have to consider in dealing with a scheme of this kind. There are the extremists, who nurse fantastic dreams that some day they will drive us out of India. In this group there are academic extremists and physical force extremists, and I have seen it stated on a certain authority - it cannot be more than guessed - that they do not number, whether academic or physical force extremists, more than one-tenth, I think, or even three per cent, of what are called the educated class in India. The second group nourish no hope of this sort, but hope for autonomy or self-government of the colonial species and pattern. And then the third section of this classification ask for no more than to be admitted to co-operation in our administration, and to find a free and effective voice in expressing the interests and needs of their people. I believe the effect of the reforms has been, is being, and will be to draw the second class, who hope for colonial autonomy, into the third class, who will be content with being admitted to a fair and full co-operation."

educational policies had to be worked out in a manner that a large section of educated opinion in India could extend their support to the new measures. But this new orientation to political and educational policies suffered from a basic flaw. Placating the liberals could work only to a limited extent. The political reforms could satisfy them only in a meagre way. In the educational sphere the educated classes were not prepared to forego any advantages that they had gained so far. The advantages were mainly due to their control and influence on institutions imparting higher education. As far as education of the masses was concerned they beat the government with its own stick by putting claims for compulsory and free primary education which the government was not in a position to implement. The demand was put forward through the media of press, in the floor of the assembly and also voiced in public platforms. All this succeeded in building up a public opinion in favour of compulsory and free primary education. Its more important effect was to nullify the government policy of weaning away the masses from the political influences. The role of the radicals in spreading political consciousness has been discussed elsewhere.⁴⁴ Here we will confine

⁴⁴See, Chapter IV, Pp. 278-79.

ourselves to the role played by that section whom the government was trying to win over to their side.

Liberal Advocacy of Education of the Masses:- Necessary groundwork had been prepared long before Gokhale piloted the bill for compulsory and free primary education in 1910. The Indian National Congress was completely under the control of liberals after the Surat split in 1907. The Madras Congress session in 1908, which was described by the liberals as the 'rebirth' of the Congress formulated its educational policies in these terms.

- i) To make primary education free at once and gradually compulsory throughout the country.
- ii) To assign larger sums of money to secondary and higher education.
- iii) To make adequate provisions for imparting industrial and technical education.
- iv) To give effective voice to the leaders of Indian public opinion in shaping the policy and system of education.⁴⁵

In fact in all the sessions of the Indian National Congress during the period 1907 to 1910 the demand was made for introducing free primary education and its gradual

⁴⁵ K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920), Vol.I, op.cit., p.230.

extension on a compulsory basis.⁴⁶

The demand was also voiced through native newspapers published during that period in line with the thinking of liberal leadership. We give below a few references from the newspapers. 'Khalsa Advocate' (Amritsar) of the 26th October, 1907 observed "As far as the people are concerned, there can of course be no two opinions about the urgent necessity of a reform which aims at imparting free Primary Education to the Indian masses."⁴⁷ 'Hindustan' (Lahore) of 29th November 1907 said "Our constant efforts should be to spread education and ideas of liberty among the people. All patriotic natives should spread education and swadeshi movement in the country with the help of the government."⁴⁸ The 'Tribune' (Lahore) of 10th April 1907 observed.

The whole country has found reason to rejoice at the announcement made by the Hon'ble Mr. Baker in the course of the recent Budget Debate that free elementary education was within a measurable distance of time to be within the reach of the unlettered masses of our countrymen."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series (1885-1910)
op.cit., Sessions 1907-1910.

and also, K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920),
Vol. I, op.cit., Resolutions 1907-1910.

⁴⁷ Government of India, Home Department, Selections from
the Native Newspapers, 1907.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Apart from voicing the demand for the education of the masses through the political platform and the press, there were other factors responsible for arousing a national feeling and awareness for this cause. These were the political movements waged in the wake of partition of Bengal, emergence of national schools and the victory of Japan over Russia. There was a growing awareness that mass ignorance if allowed to continue would stagnate the growth of political consciousness. It would also be an impediment to the political bargain that the liberals were striking with the rulers. There was another consideration which impelled the liberals to come forward as champions of mass education. They sensed the danger that if the growing political consciousness among the masses was not channelized into constructive channels, it may undermine their own leadership. The demand for free and compulsory primary education was included by them as an integral part of their demand for political reforms. Thus the piloting of the bill for free and compulsory primary education in the Council by Gokhale was a typical liberal response to the existing political situation. The demand was not for building up an entirely new structure of education. Instead, it was the extension of the existing system to the masses. The light of western education was to enlighten the dark corners of the illiterate and silent masses. But the light admissible

to them was still the diffused light from the main spectrum which was the exclusive province of the privileged educated and professional classes.

The New Deal

The significance of Morley-Minto Reforms introduced in 1909 lay not in the actual quantum of constitutional changes but in the direction they laid for the future advance in political and educational spheres. By introducing the reforms the rulers recognised the role of the middle classes in the political advancement of the country. It was at the same time a recognition of the inevitability of the western models of political institutions. In fact, it was now realised that only by the gradual introduction of western models could the country be prevented from taking to violent and revolutionary path.⁵⁰ The liberal leadership in general supported the reforms⁵¹ and also reiterated

⁵⁰ Percival Spear, India, A Modern History, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1961), Pp.324-26.

"Morley realized that the new middle classes could not be disregarded and that the now well-established tradition of western education compelled the use of western models for political institutions."

⁵¹ Congress Presidential Addresses, First Series, (1885-1910), op.cit., p.783. Dr.Rash Behari Ghose in his presidential address in the 1908 Congress session remarked:

"One of the leading features of the proposed reforms which are all based upon a progressive policy is the extension of local self-government, perhaps the most potent instrument of political education."

their political loyalty towards the empire.⁵²

The constitutional reforms of 1909 were welcomed by the liberals as a step towards self-government. The role of the educated classes in taking the country nearer to the goal of self-government was emphasized in the deliberations of the Indian National Congress.⁵³ In the Congress session of 1910, it was emphasized that the reforms had provided an opportunity to the popular representatives to discuss with the officials various problems that the country was facing. The main problems listed were the economic and industrial regeneration of the country and the development of education. The main features of the reforms that appealed most to the liberals were the proposal to appoint Indians to the Executive Council of the Governor-General of India and the Governors of Madras and Bombay and the proposal to create similar

⁵²Ibid., p.780.

The president of the 1908 Congress session emphasized, "Our National Congress has, ...strictly adhered to constitutional methods of agitation and has never encouraged disloyalty of any sort or kind, ...it has never, never faltered in its loyal devotion to the Empire."

⁵³Ibid., p.801.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in his presidential address to the 1909 Congress remarked,

"...it was the educated class in India who first felt the desire for the introduction of Self-Government - the government of the people through the elected representatives of the people - in India."

councils in the other larger provinces of India, which were placed under the Lieutenant Governors.

The period beginning from the introduction of Morley-Minto Reforms (1908-09) to the advent of first world war in 1914 was a period of compromise and capitulation of the educated classes under the influence of liberalism to the British rulers. They tried to improve their own position in the power structure of the government by demanding more representation in the services, in the Central and the Provincial Legislatures. There was also a demand for broadening of the franchise by simplifying the qualifications of electors, basing it on education, property or income. It is interesting to note that there was a demand for declaring a person ineligible to the membership of the Council if he was ignorant of English.⁵⁴ The demand for more representation of educated classes in higher services occupied the place of pride in the sessions of the Congress. R.H.Madholkar in his presidential address to the 1912 Congress session said that, "...the admission of Indians into the Executive Government is even a more momentous step than the expansion and reform of the Legislative Councils."⁵⁵ The larger employment of Indians

⁵⁴K.Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1385-1920), Vol.I, op.cit., Resolution passed in the XXVII Congress, 1912, p.268.

⁵⁵Congress Presidential Addresses, Second Series, (1911-1934), (Madras: G.A.Natesan & Co., 1934), p.67.

in the higher grade of public services was considered necessary in "...the interests of good government and the necessity of securing the attachment of the people to the British rule,..."⁵⁶ This overemphasis on securing higher executive posts for the educated classes, blurred the main issue of the political movement which was in fact, being waged outside the liberal perimeter. The earlier turmoil due to anti-partition movement and the educational policies of Curzon had subsided by 1910. With the arrival of Hardinge as the new Viceroy and the political and educational deal in the offing, chances for the liberals to gain full confidence of the government had brightened. But in spite of this political amicability between the government and the liberals, the activities of the radicals were not showing signs of abatement. The educated youth of the country was mainly involved in these extremist activities.⁵⁷ Though the general mass of the population was largely unaffected by the political and educational movements, the heightened political consciousness generated by these various factors made the government realise the urgency of appraising the political and educational policies. The important political decisions made were the annulment of partition of Bengal and the change of capital to Delhi. Both these decisions were welcomed by the Congress. The grant of ^{fifty lakhs of rupees} / for the education of

⁵⁶Ibid., p.85.

⁵⁷See, Chapter IV, p. 276.

masses was welcomed as a message of hope for the future growth of education. The article of faith with the liberals that education was the greatest boon of the British rule was reiterated and was related to the political advancement along constitutional lines. The president of the Congress session of 1911 expressed it in these words. "The spread of English education, as it has instructed our minds and inspired us with new hopes and aspirations, has been accompanied by gradual and cautious concessions of political rights."⁵⁸

Appraisal of Educational Policies

The appraisal of educational policies was in the context of the place and role of education in the political development of the country. The issue of mass education and higher education were discussed and policies were framed against this background. The final outcome of the educational appraisal was the 1913 policy resolution on education. Before we discuss the implications of this resolution, it is necessary to give a background of the thinking on educational issues during and after the introduction of Morley-Minto Reforms. The political reforms, recognised the necessity of wooing a section of the educated

⁵⁸Congress Presidential Addresses, Second Series, (1911-1934), op.cit., p.11.

classes and in spite of the policy of stricter governmental control on higher education, realised that the growth in higher education could not be checked. The continuation of the policy of control on higher education was now justified on the ground of curbing the influence of radicals in educational institutions, among the teachers and students. The liberals though opposed to any move of putting restriction on the growth of higher education still viewed the extension of education as a cementing force of maintaining permanent connections with the empire.

With the increase of education the Indians will no doubt clamour for greater rights and privileges; but with the growth of education they are also bound to grow in their intelligent attachment to the British connection. It is the educated community which has a correct appreciation of British rule, which is in a position to form a comparative estimate of the relative strength, status and genius of other civilized Governments, and however unsparing or disagreeable its comments and criticisms at times may be, it is this community alone which can and does weigh the serious consequences of a change of hands in the Government of the country. It is the dictates of self-interest - the highest of impulses in human nature - which draw the educated Indians towards the British connection."⁵⁹

Extension of primary education on a free and compulsory basis was now getting a precedence over other demands on education. The resolution passed in the 1910 Congress session

⁵⁹ A.C.Mazumdar, Indian National Evolution, op.cit., p.371.

demanding, "That in the opinion of this Congress the time has arrived when a substantial beginning should be made in the matter of Elementary Education - free and compulsory throughout the country."⁶⁰ The government accepted the policy of extension of primary education on a free basis but was not prepared for the policy of compulsion at this stage. The policy on mass education was based on the principle of education acting as a stabilising factor for the preservation of the empire. Another feature of this period was the growth of sectarianism in politics which gave rise to the demand for denominational institutions by both Hindus and Muslims.⁶¹ This period also witnessed the growing disenchantment of the radical groups with constitutionalism and the widening breach between them and the liberals.⁶² All these factors had to be taken into account for evolving any new scheme of educational development. The criteria against which educational policies were evaluated may be stated as,

- i) to what extent it helped in strengthening the forces of constitutional advancement;

⁶⁰K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920), Vol. I, op.cit., p. 249.

⁶¹This aspect has been discussed in detail in Chapter V.

⁶²The growth of radicalism in politics and its implications on education has been dealt in Chapter IV.

- ii) to what extent it helped in isolating and curbing the influence of radicalism; and
- iii) to what extent it was able to provide the type of leadership that was needed to maintain the equilibrium necessary for stability and growth in the prescribed direction.

The overall aim of reviewing the educational policies hitherto followed and putting across new schemes of educational development was to promote a 'solidarity of feeling' between the Indians and the British. What was the implication of this 'solidarity of feeling' in the then existing political circumstances? The continuation of the colonial relationship between England and India was still the political creed of the liberals. It was also the proclaimed policy of the government. The basis of political advancement was still the Morley-Minto Reforms which did not conceive of any self-governing status for India. Under the circumstances, the 'solidarity' meant strengthening of the faith in the everlasting bonds between the empire and the colony, the rulers and the ruled. This was to be achieved by a thorough reform of the educational system. We quote below from the note, regarding the new educational policy submitted by H.B. Butler, member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

It is, I venture to claim, a modest practical programme involving no revolutionary change or abrupt transition of ideals. For the present we must be content to build up the foundations of a better system. I have based my demands on the educational needs of the time. But on the broader grounds of high policy also I can conceive no act more timely, more better calculated to promote solidarity of feeling between Indians and ourselves, than to announce large Imperial grants for education in connection with the visit of His Most Gracious Majesty the King Emperor.⁶³

The contemplated reforms in all stages of education were linked with the role of educated classes in the new political context. The policy of distrust of educated classes grew over a number of years especially after they embarked on the path of political struggle. Though the main demands of the educated classes were confined to securing more representation in higher services, in the Councils and an effective say in the Viceroy's Executive Council, the political consciousness generated during the struggle could not be contained and spread to lower middle classes and the general masses also. The anxiety of the liberal political leadership for maintaining their hold on higher education and taking up the cause of mass education was motivated by the desire to have an effective control on the direction that the political consciousness may take in the lower middle classes and the masses. In the existing political

⁶³Government of India, Department of Education,
November 1911, Proceedings No.64.

situation, the danger of discontent spreading among the hitherto deprived classes was very real. The participation of these classes in the political movement could give it more militancy and the likelihood was that it would follow unconstitutional and non-liberal paths. In the reform of both primary and secondary education, the political aspects were always kept in view. The urgency of reform in secondary education was emphasized in the note submitted by Butler. "In no branch of education is reform more urgently required both from the educational and the political point of view."⁶⁴ In the preceding period, many controversies had arisen in the field of higher education. It was now necessary to allay the fears harboured by the educated classes. The suspicion that the government wanted to arrest the growth of higher education had to be dispelled if the policy of compromise had to make any headway.

The 1913 Educational Resolution:- The policy resolution of 1913 on education was preceded by a note submitted by the Viceroy to Crewe, the then Secretary of State for India. It made the following specific recommendations.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Government of India, Finance Department, September 1911, Proceedings No.234.

- i) Provision of additional grants to education. Provincial and local resources were considered inadequate to give necessary impetus for educational development which the political and industrial situation urgently demanded.
- ii) To provide for 91,000 primary schools in addition to the 100,000 schools already existing and to double the enrolment of four millions of pupils.
- iii) Large extension in the direction of free primary education.

The note also emphasized the political importance of the comprehensive scheme of educational development.

It provides for the extension and improvement of primary education on a large scale and as a matter of imperial importance and gives needed attention though on a small scale to other branches of education.... We advise that the occasion of the King's Coronation Durbar is a peculiarly fitting occasion on which to make the announcement of our policy.... The political advantages flowing from such an announcement will, we believe, be very great.⁶⁶

The above recommendations were incorporated in the resolution of 1913. In addition to fixing specific targets of growth the policy statement on education emphasized that the development of a national system of education in India will have to take due care of the political and social organization in which it will be expected to operate. The

⁶⁶Ibid.

difficulty of imposing western systems of education upon communities which were the inheritors of ancient eastern civilizations and retained their impress in social organization and mentality was realized. In the field of higher education the emphasis was laid on character-building and an orientation of students towards independent research work. Provision of good hostels, suitable school buildings, building up sound traditions, religious and moral instructions were recommended as means to achieve the aim of building up sound character among the students. The growth and development of secondary education was mainly left to private enterprise. But their efficiency was to be maintained through government inspection, control on recognition and by the aid of government funds. The resolution did not accept the demand for free and compulsory primary education on administrative and financial grounds. While declaring itself against compulsion it recommended the widest possible extension of primary education on a voluntary basis and requested the local governments to extend the principle of elementary education amongst the poorer and more backward communities.

The Resolution of 1913 on the educational policy of the Government of India is an important document both from the educational and political point of view. Its importance lies in the fact that it marked the culmination of controversies raised in the early decade of the century

due to the policies in education initiated by Curzon and followed up during Minto's viceroyalty. The control of higher education, the question of free and compulsory primary education, the education of depressed classes, technical education; all these issues had created a lot of controversy as well as confusion. The resolution of 1913 made the policy of government clear on these issues. The more important aspect of this policy resolution was the political setting in which it was formulated. For the first time it was felt by the government as well as the political leadership that the political awakening created during the period could not be ignored any longer. The awareness among the hitherto deprived classes about education threw up certain challenges which the government or the political leadership could ignore at their own risk. The political leadership had already put forward the demand for the free and compulsory primary education through various media like the resolution in the council, press and public platforms. The distinction made by government between free and compulsory primary education was with definite political motives. The following political motives could be said to operate behind the move for making this distinction.

- i) To sidetrack the demand for primary education on a compulsory basis. This was expected to blunt the thrust of the middle class leadership among the lower classes hitherto deprived from educational opportunities.

- ii) To check the growth of uncontrolled institutions so that finally they are absorbed in the comprehensive system of primary education. The note submitted by H. Sharp, the then Joint Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Education, also stressed the political importance of this policy decision.⁶⁷

It appears from the tenor of the resolution on education policy of 1913 that the government had now adopted a liberal posture towards official control of education. The view commonly held is also that after Curzon's viceroyalty the policy of governmental control over education was relaxed. But this view is not substantiated by the prevalent official thinking at that time. On the contrary it was considered politically important to exercise more control over the educational institutions. The policy now contemplated was to have such control that the teachers and students were not drawn towards the national movement. The training to be provided in educational institutions was to be such

⁶⁷ Government of India, Department of Education, May 1912, Proceedings Nos. 79-94.

Sharp made the following points.

"...I think that if elementary education is to have any wide expansion in the near future, it must be largely given free in the areas and among the classes now to be tapped."

Further, the depressed classes need "...attention not only educationally but politically, for the agitators are trying to enlist their sympathies by relaxation of caste rules,... They have not had much success as yet. But we ought to be prepared."

that the teachers and students would imbibe a sense of loyalty towards the preservation and continuation of British rule in India. We cite below the extracts from a letter dated Delhi, the 11th December, 1913, sent by the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India.

"On political grounds our educational policy requires revision, and we can no longer afford to accept the view that Government should not interfere in institutions whose existence is independent of its aid."⁶⁸

The analysis of the appraisal of educational policies would not be complete unless the attitude of the liberal political leadership is also taken into account. This is reflected in the deliberations that went on in the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress. It is difficult to say to what extent the educational policy announced in 1913 was the outcome of the political developments. But this much could certainly be said that its influence is seen at every stage of appraisal of educational policies and in the final recommendations that were made in the 1913 resolution. The Congress came out in full support for the policy of free and compulsory primary education. The following resolution was passed by the

⁶⁸Government of India, Department of Education,
December 1913, Proceedings No.89.

Congress in 1911 in support of Gokhale's bill on elementary education.

That this Congress accords wholehearted support to the principles of Gokhale's Elementary Education Bill and expresses its earnest hope that the Government will be pleased to afford the necessary facilities for the further stages of this Bill in the Council.⁶⁹

The Congress supported compulsion on the ground that without it success could not be achieved in the extension of primary education even to a small extent. It supported the levying of a local education rate to meet partly the expenditure on extending primary education on a free and compulsory basis. In the political aspect of mass education the Congress position was very near to that of the Government. Both felt and hoped that the spread of mass education would help consolidate the British rule in India.⁷⁰ The political justification for making primary education free and compulsory was also sought on the ground that it, "...will give more food to the masses, reduce to an appreciable degree the actueness of the economic problem, remove most of the social evils and conduce to the stability of the British rule."⁷¹

⁶⁹K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920), Vol. I, op.cit., p. 256.

⁷⁰See, Congress Presidential Addresses, Second Series, (1911-1934), op.cit., p. 52.

"...the only way to enable the masses to appreciate British rule is to communicate to them something of that knowledge which is the glory of western civilization."

⁷¹Ibid., p. 139.

The Congress support for mass education was based on two major considerations.

- i) To ensure political stability by securing the attachment of masses to constitutional procedures.
- ii) To give more representation to the educated classes in higher services, provincial assemblies and local bodies so that a popular support for the measures to make primary education free and compulsory could be generated.

The question of higher education was discussed in relation to the representation of the educated classes in various elective and nominated bodies. It was contended that in all such bodies their representation was very inadequate. It was further stressed that only highly educated people were fitted by their training to help the government in moulding the institutions according to the needs of the time. The educated classes could hardly feel satisfied by the so called popular institutions in view of the limited franchise. The demand was put forward that, "...all men possessing certain educational and property qualifications should have votes for electing members to the Councils"⁷² In the sphere of university education, opinion was crystallising in favour of teaching and residential

⁷²Ibid., p.31.

universities. The Congress also approved of the move for establishment of teaching and residential universities. But at the same time it did not approve of any radical change in this direction. A complete overhaul of the university system would have jeopardized the position of the educated classes. The vested interests were powerfully entrenched in the academic and administrative bodies controlling higher education. It was from these bodies that they were able to draw active support. Throughout the educational history of India, any attempt to dislodge these interests was met with powerful resistance. Curzon had attempted to do it, though with political motive, but failed. In subsequent years also attempts were made to minimise the influence of these vested interests but they were not successful. The Congress session of 1913 expressed apprehension that the move for teaching and residential universities might endanger the existing system of higher education. The resolution passed in the Congress session of 1913 made its position clear regarding higher education. "...that system should supplement and not replace, the existing system of University Education, as otherwise the progress of Higher Education among the poorer classes will be strongly retarded."⁷³

⁷³K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920), Vol. I, op.cit., Pp. 275-76.

University education was still mainly confined to the upper and middle classes. The claim that doing away with the affiliating type of universities would hamper the entry of poorer classes to the university education was not very tenable. The argument was a part of the strategy of maintaining their own influence.

Another issue that cropped up during this period was that of denominational institutions for higher education. The movement for separate Hindu and Muslim universities had gained momentum by this time.⁷⁴ In the name of independent institutions, free from government control, the movement got support from the Congress. The Congress in its 1913 session, appealed to the government to concede this demand and also allow them to preserve their non-official independent identity.

Looking back at events both in the political and educational spheres since the beginning of the twentieth century, a few issues stand out on which the policy pursued by the British and the liberals had crystallised. In the political sphere the rulers had succeeded in drawing the support of the liberals for the constitutional reforms. In the educational sphere, the principle of free and compulsory primary education had been recognised though

⁷⁴For details, see chapter V.

difference in approach still existed between the rulers and the political leadership in the policy of enforcing the principle of compulsion with immediate effect.

There was a growing recognition that any neglect of mass education was politically dangerous. In higher education, though the government wanted to contain the influence of the educated classes, the policy of political alliances ruled out any possibility of undermining their influence and dominant position. The government needed the support of the products of higher education, especially from the universities, for both efficiency and stability. The idea of residential and teaching universities was gaining ground but under the existing circumstances, it was thought that a separate university for each of the leading provinces would enable the government to keep a watch on the development of university education. Another important development which matured during this period was the demand for denominational institutions. The gulf in the educational development of Hindus and Muslims was narrowing but the political breach was widening. The political breach was not the effect of the growth in education. But once the political advancement of the two communities was moving in two separate channels, the growth in education instead of repairing the political breach tended to widen it further.⁷⁵

⁷⁵For details see chapter V.

The Lengthening Shadow - Ruse of Reforms

The period beginning from World War I in 1914 to the launching of non-co-operation movement in 1920, was fateful in the political history of India. It was so because the period is marked by events which determined the future political direction the country was to take. Two events stand out in the political developments during that period. One was the constitutional reforms which put India on the road to representative form of government within the colonial framework. The other was the launching of non-co-operation movement. The former was the culmination of the liberal faith in the 'glorious traditions' of England. The latter was a challenge to the concept of India's political development within the colonial framework. It was also a challenge to the typical middle class response to political developments built over a long period of western education. The major intervening event between the Morley-Minto Reforms and the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms was the first world war which engulfed the major European powers for a period of about four years beginning in 1914.⁷⁶ What we want to emphasize at this stage is that the political and educational appraisal made in the period beginning with Morley-Minto Reforms and the Resolution on Education in 1913 lost much of its

⁷⁶ The effects of first world war on the growth of education in India have been discussed in Chapter VI.

significance due to this major event. The liberal political leadership had termed the educational policy enunciated in 1913 as an 'active' educational policy and had assured support for its successful implementation. But due to the intervention of war this 'active' educational policy could not be pursued actively. However, in spite of the financial stringency put by the war,⁷⁷ the period was that of educational growth especially in the field of higher education. The overall educational growth during the period 1912-17 is indicated by an increase of 16.5 per cent pupils in primary schools, 28 per cent in secondary schools and 53.9 per cent in arts colleges.⁷⁸ In absolute terms there was an increase of 16,530 institutions and 1,071,225 pupils over a period of five years. (from 1912 to 1917).⁷⁹ But these figures of growth did not mean much for a country where only 3.22 per cent of the population was under instruction in 1917,⁸⁰ and where glaring inequalities in education were described by the existence of "... a middle class widely instructed in those arts which qualify for the

⁷⁷Government of India, Department of Education, December 1916, Proceedings No.7.

"Not only was there a complete cessation of new grants but an embargo was placed upon all unspent balances of non-recurring and recurring grants. Thus while the provincial expenditure on education increased considerably during the years 1912-13, 1913-14 and 1914-15, the revised budget for 1915-16 shows a decrease of £ 42,000 in comparison with the expenditure in 1914-15."

⁷⁸Progress of Education in India, 1912-17, Vol.I, (Calcutta: Supt. Government Printing, 1918), p.20.

⁷⁹Ibid., Table at p.21.

⁸⁰Ibid., p.22.

learned professions ; a proletariat of which only a fraction is literate; a whole sex almost totally devoid of any education whatever."⁸¹

Disillusionment

The closing of war brought disillusionment among the Indian public opinion, liberals included. A number of factors were responsible for this disillusionment. The first and foremost reason was the attitude taken by the rulers towards the new situation. The emergency powers that the government had assumed during war years were not relaxed. On the other hand measures were taken to give the emergency measures a permanent character. Stringent measures like the Press Laws, Rowlatt Act etc; were passed. Ostensibly these measures were justified on the ground of controlling the politics of violence. But this was in fact a recognition of the growing influence of radical elements. The policy of repression burst in all its fury in the Jallianwala massacre which shook the very foundation of the political relationship of India with Britain. There are some moments and events in the life of an individual or a nation which count for more than a chequered history of long years. The 'Jallianwala Massacre' was one such event. The chill that it sent through the spinal chords of many a

⁸¹Ibid., p.9.

person showed the 'otherside' of British liberal policies. Even before this tragic event a process of estrangement of the main political current from the path of collaboration with the ruling power had started. The factors responsible for this were the waning influence of liberals in the Congress after the re-entry of extremists in 1916 and the rapprochement between the Congress and the Muslim League in the same year. This estrangement led to decisive shifts in political and educational policies propounded by the nationalist leadership. Till now there had been differences in approach and emphasis between the government and the nationalist leadership towards many educational issues. But the major premises of educational foundations had not been challenged except during a brief period of anti-partition agitation in 1905-06. But the limitation of this movement was that it was mainly confined to provincial boundaries and affected primarily the educated classes in urban areas. The changed tone of the Congress towards the educational policies is noticeable from the remark in the presidential address delivered in the Congress session in 1916 that "There is, ... no room for doubt that under the plea for creating a 'serene atmosphere of education' political considerations have been largely introduced in the department of Education."⁸²

⁸²Congress Presidential Addresses, Second Series, (1911-1934), op.cit., p.240.

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The resolution on education passed in the 1916 Congress session also reflect the changed political mood of the Congress. The resolutions were to the following effect.

- i) To foster the development of higher education it was necessary that administrative and educational services should be filled mainly by qualified Indians.
- ii) A substantial majority of the members of the senates of the universities should be elected by the graduates of the universities and by the professors and teachers of the affiliated institutions and the senates should have full control over their own executive and educational policy.
- iii) Government should assign larger sums of money to secondary and higher education. Facilities should be afforded to all deserving pupils irrespective of race, caste or creed for receiving the benefits of higher education.
- iv) Government should take early steps to make elementary education free and compulsory in view of the paramount importance of educating the masses. The diffusion of elementary education is essential for the industrial and general progress of the country.
- v) Adequate number of industrial, agricultural and commercial schools should be started.

- vi) Voluntary organizations should be started and developed for the purpose of founding and expanding schools and colleges and for imparting general, technical and commercial education till national control is effectively secured over the educational system.⁸³

The change in emphasis is obvious from the nature of demands. The demand for free and compulsory primary education had been voiced from the beginning of the century. But the political justification given to it earlier was to secure a willing and conscious response of loyalty from the masses towards the empire. Now the motive was for the industrial and general progress of the country. The idea of 'national control' over the educational system was the precursor of the demand for an alternative system of education independent of government control. The demand for an effective say in higher education, especially university education, was also voiced more effectively and in more concrete terms.

The Educational Debate:

We will give a brief review of the educational debate that was going on in official circles before the

⁸³ K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920), Vol. I, op.cit., Pp. 309-10.

constitutional reforms were announced in 1919. The issues for this debate were not different from what they were in the earlier period but the political context was different. The question of free and compulsory primary education could no longer be ignored under the new political situation.

The question of compulsory and free education is once more coming to the front. There has been a Resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council.... More than all this, there is the stirring which has been created by the war and the expectation of the post-war concessions, the agitation for autonomy and the suspicion that illiteracy may be used as an argument for withholding concessions.⁸⁴

The demand for compulsory primary education was now being supported by the major political parties, viz., the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League.⁸⁵ Even groups and individuals who did not support Gokhale's Bill in 1911 for this demand were now in favour of this measure. Thus practically the whole of Indian political opinion lent its weight in favour of this measure. The only exception were the masses themselves for whom this measure was meant. This anomalous situation was due to the non-emergence of leadership among the masses. This was not unexpected as the political movements were still mainly confined to the middle and lower middle classes.

⁸⁴Government of India, Department of Education,
October 1917, Proceedings Nos.67-70.

⁸⁵Note by C.S.Nair, dated 21.5.71, Ibid.

The official thinking was to make a definite announcement in favour of large grants and fixing priority targets for the expansion of primary education. It was proposed that the responsibility for primary education should rest definitely on local and Imperial resources. The main justification for the policy on primary education was sought in its political importance. The note by E.D.Maclagan, dated 28.6.1916 mentioned, "...that primary education is in the present stage of development far more important to the country than other forms of instruction,..."⁸⁶

The concrete proposals for the expansion of primary education that were finally formulated were on the following lines.

- i) The doubling of enrolment in the primary schools within a period of about ten years.
- ii) The responsibility for providing adequate educational facilities for the growth of primary education will be that of local bodies such as district boards and municipalities.
- iii) Enforcing this duty on the local bodies will be at the discretion of local governments.

⁸⁶Government of India, Department of Education, Dec. 1916, Proceedings No.7.

- iv) The financial obligations for the growth of primary education should be equally spread on the Government of India, Local Government and the Local Body.

The whole question of educational advance including that of primary education was linked up with the political reforms. The telegram from the Secretary of the State for India to the Viceroy reflected the thinking of the government on this issue clearly.

I feel that the whole question of educational progress is so closely allied to general reform question especially from standpoint of local autonomy and administrative devolution that it might profitably be deferred till it can be considered with reference to shape which the reform proposals may eventually seem likely to take.⁸⁷

The linking of primary education to the political reforms brought the question of the political education of the electorates or as it was called the 'awakening of the masses to political consciousness' and the 'creation of an electorate.'⁸⁸ The political reforms proposed greater decentralisation and a greater freedom to local bodies in managing local affairs including primary education. It also proposed greater freedom of action to provincial

⁸⁷ Telegram P. Dated London the 30th August 1917, Government of India, Department of Education October 1917, Proceedings Nos. 67-70.

⁸⁸ Note by E.D. MacLagan, dated 29.1.1918, Government of India Department of Education, April 1918, Proceedings No. 23.

governments and a larger control on primary education by the Legislative Councils. Education was to be a provincial subject. It was therefore emphasized that,

...political opportunity and educational development should progress hand in hand and we look confidently to our political reforms as a stimulus to education, but we also realise the dangers of experimenting with electorates as uneducated as those on which we must for many years rely,...⁸⁹

A lot has been said about the political education of the masses. In most of the official notings and the despatches, the creation of an enlightened electorate through primary education had been repeatedly emphasized. But this argument was fallacious on two counts. One, the role of education was overemphasized in bringing about political enlightenment. In the colonial situation, education as devised and institutionalized could produce an efficient administrative cadre or serve as an instrument to help in the consolidation of the elites. It could also help the middle classes to come together on a common political platform. These functions it had already performed in the earlier phase of its growth.⁹⁰ But in its existing

⁸⁹Note by the Viceroy dated Simla, the 15.4.1918 to the Secretary of State for India, Government of India, Department of Education, 1918, Proceedings No.6.

⁹⁰See Chapter II, Pp. 39-44.

form it was a very poor means of arousing political consciousness among the masses. In the colonial relationship that India had with Britain, the only means of bringing in political awakening was through political movements.⁹¹ Secondly, the much talked of electorate was still very limited and based on the rate paying capacity, i.e., the property held by them or the economic position by way of holding certain professions. There was another snag in the argument for linking the spread of primary education to the political reforms. The compulsory primary education was certainly not meant for the age-group which entitled a person to be a voter.

The interplay of politics and education was clearly discernible in problems linked with the growth of higher education. Higher education was the vital nerve centre for the politically conscious middle classes and howsoever the government may have tried to belittle the role of the educated classes, they formed the main public opinion in the country. It was with a section of the higher educated middle class that the government had come to terms in the past and was now banking on this very section for the

⁹¹See, Congress Presidential Addresses, Second Series, (1911-1934) op.cit., P.330. Mrs. Annie Besant spoke of the influence of political meetings in the awakening of the masses.

"In many parts of the country, where conferences are carried in the vernacular, the raiyats attend in large numbers, and often take part in the practical discussions on local affairs. They have begun to hope and to feel that they are a part of the great National Movement, and that for them also a better day is dawning."

acceptance and successful working out of the political reforms. It was therefore not surprising that the question of higher education was taken up simultaneously with the political reforms. The Calcutta University Commission was appointed in 1917 and its report discusses the growth of higher education in the new political setting. We quote from the Calcutta University Commission Report describing the direction and trend of higher education and the possible dangers inherent in the situation.

...it must be admitted that the existence of the proletariat and the steady increase, of a sort of intellectual proletariat not without reasonable grievances, forms a menace to good government, especially in a country where, as in Bengal, the small educated class is alone vocal....the problem with which we have to deal is by no means purely an academic or intellectual problem. It is social, political and economic problem of the most complex and difficult character; and the longer the solution is postponed, the more difficult it will be.⁹²

Constitutional Reforms, Implications For Education

The Constitutional Reforms of 1919 known as Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms transferred education as a provincial responsibility and placed it under the transferred subjects under the system of dyarchy. Henceforth major changes in educational policies were linked

⁹² Calcutta University Commission Report, 1917-19, Vol.I, Part I, op.cit., p.23.

with the working of the reforms and the issues that were of importance in relation to the reforms assumed significance for education also. A fresh look at education necessitated the appointment of Calcutta University Commission which made a review of higher education in relation to the political reforms. At a later stage when Simon Commission was appointed to review the working of the reforms, it appointed an Auxiliary Committee to review the growth of education and to suggest reforms in relation to the contemporary political situation. Thus, we find that educational issues were closely linked with political changes and reforms in education were suggested keeping in view the larger political issues.

The authors of the Constitutional Reforms of 1919 gave a prominent place to the role played by the educated classes in bringing about an intellectual renaissance which made possible the transfer of partial authority to Indians.

The politically minded portion of the people of India...are intellectually our children. They have imbibed ideas which we ourselves have set before them, and we ought to reckon it to their credit. The present intellectual and moral stir in India is no reproach, but rather a tribute to our work.⁹³

⁹³Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 1918, p.115, quoted in R.P.Dutt, India To-day (Bombay: People's Publishing House, 1947), p.249.

But the Constitutional Reforms fell far short of the political aspirations of a large section of the educated classes who were leading the national movement. What the authors of reforms belittled was the widening political activity. It ultimately wrecked the reforms and placed that section of the political leadership in an obscure corner of history which Montagu proudly declared as the intellectual product of British rule.⁹⁴ However, it did lay the groundwork for the future political set-up that the rulers envisaged for the advancement of India. It also succeeded in mobilising the support of a section of the liberal leadership which had seceded from the Indian National Congress.⁹⁵

Role of Education:

The role of education in the new political setting was to bring an end product which would be inclined to look at India's political advancement along pre-determined constitutional lines as sacrosanct. But the changes contemplated in educational policies failed to take into account the new political forces. The liberal leadership which was

⁹⁴cf. Anil Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, op.cit., p.349.

"..., the Raj had now found new moderates with whom to deal, men whose caste and communal rivalries with other Indians inclined them to work with the British."

⁹⁵See, Percival Spear, India, A Modern History, op.cit., p.356.

now driven to political isolation viewed the extension of political movement with a sense of alarm. The reaction of this section of the highly educated classes towards a political movement which was transgressing the limits permitted by their intellectual sophistication was natural and true to their character. They could no longer control the movement and so dissociated themselves from it. This new phase in the political development supports our hypothesis that the role of education as an effective instrument of social and political change is operative only within the boundaries set by the political-economic structure of the society. The ideological orientation given by education in a particular phase of political development becomes inoperative and so ineffective to cope with the new forms of political developments in another phase. Sometimes the forces representing the ideology of the previous phase of development become an obstruction for the further growth of the movement. This was what happened with the liberal leadership in the new phase of political developments. Their actions were typically directed towards maintaining the status quo in educational matters which even the government now wanted to disturb in response to the rapidly changing political scene in the country. This is how the Calcutta University Commission described their attitude.

...a feeling of some alarm at the danger of any sudden extension of primary education among the masses of Indian people, a conservative disposition towards existing methods of higher education; and a distinct, though rarely expressed, reluctance so to throw open the avenues of access to higher education as to impair the preferential advantages enjoyed by the sons of the already educated classes.⁹⁶

The need for a transformation of education was realised by the Calcutta University Commission. It admitted that this could only be effected by "... a representative (we do not mean by this a directly elected) central authority commanding the confidence and support of public opinion."⁹⁷ This confidence and support was only possible if the politically conscious section could get represented at the central and provincial levels. But the limited nature of representation precluded this. Even in provinces where dyarchy was introduced, the elected representatives did not reflect the public opinion which had cast its lot with the national movement. Giving the limited character of the electorate in the first general elections held in 1920-21 under the new constitution, Chitrol writes, "The registers...contained over 6,000,000 names or altogether 2½ per cent of the male population throughout

⁹⁶ Calcutta University Commission Report, 1917-19, Vol.I;
Part I, op.cit., Pp.130-31.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.6.

that part of India to which the Act applies - a very small fraction, no doubt, of the whole population,..."⁹⁸

But what was of more consequence was that even this small electorate was drawn from a particular class or group of people.⁹⁹ Though no fundamental changes could be brought in the educational system, the general conditions were favourable for the continued growth of higher education.

⁹⁸Valentine Chirol, Indian Unrest, (London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1910), p.233.

and also, V.V. Balabushevich and A.M. Dyakov, (eds.), A Contemporary History of India (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1964), p.59.

"According to the new act a very narrow circle of the propertied classes were allowed to vote. In the central legislative organs about one per cent of the Indian population was allowed to vote; in the provinces about three per cent."

⁹⁹cf. Valentine Chirol, Indian Unrest, op.cit., Pp.233-34.

Chirol emphasizes the point that apart from the fact that the electorate was numerically small, it did not represent classes who had not acquired western education. At the same time, the western educated classes had only assimilated the forms rather than the democratic spirit of British parliamentary life. But there is one significant omission. Amongst the educated classes also, there was a major segment who did not accept the constitutional reforms and had boycotted the first elections. It was the opposition from the nationalist forces which was the main factor in depriving the central and provincial legislatures from the needed support of public opinion.

Economic, political and social conditions continued to be conducive to the growing demand for secondary and college education.¹⁰⁰ It was not only economic advantages that were expected out of higher education. It had also become an index of social prestige. The knowledge of English gave an air of respectability to the individual. The social prestige associated with higher education was even valued more than its economic advantages.¹⁰¹ The political awakening during this period enlarged the dimension of educational growth. Recruits to higher education were now no longer confined to the upper and middle classes. Lower middle classes in urban areas and cultivating classes in rural areas were also showing eagerness to acquire higher education. The social and political significance of this

¹⁰⁰ Calcutta University Commission Report, 1917-19, Vol.I, Part I, op.cit., p.2.

"The most striking feature of the situation is the eager demand for secondary and college education in which English is the medium of instruction."

The quinquennial review (1912-17) records the rapid growth of higher education during this period. There was an increase of 58.9 per cent students in Arts Colleges over a period of five years (1912-17).

¹⁰¹ Calcutta University Commission Report, 1917-19, Vol.I, Part I, op.cit., p.4.

"Higher education in Bengal is being bought at the price of self-denial and, in many cases, of actual hunger. To the members of the respectable classes English high schools are a social necessity."

new development has been highlighted in the Calcutta University Commission Report.

The adoption of academic ambitions by even a small proportion of the cultivating class is an event of great moment in the social history of Bengal. It may be the herald of a social revolution.... The movement is just beginning, it is not too late to transform its character and consequences by giving a more practical bent, and a more varied character, to the educational system.¹⁰²

Decisive Turn

Before any transformation in the educational system in India could take place in line with the constitutional reforms, the political situation took a decisive turn in 1920. It was due to the launching of non-co-operation movement by Mahatma Gandhi. This new development freed the political movement from the cob-webs of the educated classes and released new forces. It did not fit in within the rationalised political framework of the educated classes which was a legacy of the British and had taken a definite shape during long years of political developments and educational training. There had been many situations of compromises and conflicts in the past. But attempts to resolve the contradictions and arrive at new compromises had been within the existing framework of the colonial system. For instance, the existing educational system was considered as incapable of meeting the rising expectations

¹⁰²Ibid., p.27.

of politically awakened classes and also not in tune with the existing political, economic and social situations. But the answer sought to meet this situation was within the existing institutional framework. Rather the further expansion of the educational provisions were demanded. Even the genuine attempts to introduce measures for qualitative improvements were resented and suspected as politically motivated to place curbs on the influence of the educated classes. The educational superstructure created to sustain the political system was not to be disturbed in any decisive way. The decision to launch mass movement was certainly a political challenge to the British hegemony over India. It was also a challenge to the whole edifice of the western educational system built over since 1835. The political scene till the launching of mass movement had largely been dominated by liberal thought. Western education had provided a leadership which was largely the mouthpiece of liberal principles and was trying hard to implant these in the Indian society. The new phase of mass movement was a challenge to this deep-rooted ideological obsession of the educated classes.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ See, B.B.Misra, The Indian Middle Classes, Their Growth in Modern Times, op.cit., Pp.338-39.

It is significant that the educated elites were ineffective in transforming the character of the political movement. It was Gandhi who shifted the emphasis from the classes to the masses. It is a different matter altogether whether or not the mass movement later developed according to the tenets of Gandhism. But this very fact demonstrated that education as it had so far developed could not play an effective role in giving any decisive turn to the political movement.

The government's assessment of the role of the educated classes vis-a-vis the mass movement was based on different premises. It was still depending on that section of the liberals who had broken away from the Indian National Congress and in its anxiety to minimise the role of the participation of masses in the movement it tried to equate the opinion of the entire body of educated classes with that of the liberals.¹⁰⁴ The fact, however, was that the section

¹⁰⁴ Extract from the Government of India's Resolution on the Non-co-operation Movement, 1920, Gazette of India, 6 November 1920, Resolution 4484.

"The confidence of Government in the good sense of India has already been in great measure justified by the unanimity of her best minds in their condemnation of the folly of non-co-operation. For a most weighty body of educated opinion has rejected this new doctrine as one that is fraught with the most mischievous potentialities for India. But having failed to secure a favourable verdict from educated India, the leaders of the movement have now been driven to increase the violence of their appeal to the masses and to endeavour to enlist under the banner of non-co-operation the sympathy and assistance of immature school boys and college students".

of the educated classes which was opposed to the mass movement was drifting away from the main stream of the nationalist movement.

The educational base now being wider, the political movement was able to attract a larger number of educated classes than was the case in earlier phases. But certainly that section of the educated classes which till now had based their entire strategy on constitutionalism brought their own reservations and limitations in the political movement. The major limitation was the constraint put on the mass movement by the political leadership. These constraints prevented the mass movement from taking to revolutionary path. Both the launching of non-co-operation movement and the constraints put on it had their impact on the course of educational development. We will discuss the major educational issues of the period in their relationship to both these dimensions.

Boycott of Educational Institutions and National Education:

The emergence of a national system of education was closely linked with the boycott of the existing system of education. The boycott of educational institutions under direct government control or recognised by it was a part of the political programme adopted by Congress in the phase of non-co-operation movement. The main premise on which the boycott was based was the belief that the

existing system of education was incapable of meeting the national aspirations and was now an impediment to the growth of the political movement. It was alleged that the existing system of education was nurturing a slavish mentality. Boycott was also a part of the strategy to render the administration impotent. It was also intended to draw active cadres for the movement. The political leadership laid down specific guidelines for the boycott of educational institutions. In the second special session of the Congress held at Calcutta in 1920, the resolution passed by the Congress resolved, "...gradual withdrawal of children from schools owned, aided or controlled by Government, and in place of such schools and colleges, establishment of National schools and colleges in the various provinces."¹⁰⁵ In the thirty fifth Congress held at Nagpur in 1920, the above policy was reiterated and a call was also given to the trustees, managers and teachers of government affiliated or aided schools and Municipalities and Local Boards to help to nationalise them.¹⁰⁶

Extent of the Movement:- It is hard to estimate the number of students who left their institutions at the behest

¹⁰⁵ K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920), Vol. I, op.cit., p.362.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.374.

of the political leadership because it is difficult to isolate the single factor of 'boycott' and see its effect. Other factors like poverty, failure in examinations etc., were also operating simultaneously. It must, however, be borne in mind that the impact of the political movement was not confined merely among the students who responded to the call of boycott. Those who remained in the institutions were also affected by the movement. The following account gives the extent of boycott in different provinces.¹⁰⁷

- Bengal: There was an approximate loss of 10 per cent enrolment in government colleges. Colleges as a whole suffered to the extent of a loss of more than 27 per cent of the total enrolment. In recognised schools, withdrawal amounted to about 23 per cent of their total students.
- Madras: The boycott did not find a fertile field in the province of Madras. The loss amounted to 487 students.
- Delhi & Ajmer-
Merwara: The boycott did not affect to any appreciable degree the enrolment. In fact, there was a total increase of 356 students in all stages of education.
- Punjab: At the school stage the boycott was responded to by 593 students. In colleges 142 students took the lead.

¹⁰⁷ Government of India, Department of Education, January 1922, Proceedings Nos. 52-68.

U.P: The decrease in enrolment in colleges was 450
and in schools 4336.

Bihar The total decrease due to the movement was
and
Orissa: 18,012 students or about 2.46 per cent.

Describing the overall impact of the boycott
movement the quinquennial review of 1917-22 made the
following observation.

...the period closed with an ebb of reaction and
doubt which sought to empty the schools of even
their voluntary attendance.

.....
All classes of students have been affected and
among those who responded to pressure are those
whom colleges could least afford to lose as well
as those whose departure caused no regret.¹⁰⁸

Table I gives the extent of loss in enrolment
at different stages of education due to the boycott
movement.¹⁰⁹ The figures would certainly be an approximate
estimate.

TABLE - I

LOSS OF ENROLMENT DUE TO THE BOYCOTT MOVEMENT

Year	Arts Colleges		Secondary Schools				Total		Primary Schools	
	Insti- tutions	Scho- lars	High Scho- Sch- ools	Scho- lars	Mid- dle Sch- ools	Scho- lars	Insti- tutions	Scho- lars	Insti- tutions	Scho- lars
1919-20	150	52482	2113	632032	6595	649778	8708	1281810	155344	6133521
1920-21	160	48170	2184	600583	6739	653942	8923	1254525	159345	6327973
1921-22	167	45933	2248	594910	6739	644614	8937	1239524	160072	6310451

¹⁰⁸ Progress of Education in India, 1917-1922, Vol.I, (Calcutta:
Supt. Government Printing, 1923), Pp.1-3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., Table at p.4.

From the above table it is clear that the main impact of boycott was on colleges and high schools. Though the number of institutions showed an increasing trend during 1919-22 the enrolment decreased. It is obvious that the age-group in primary and middle schools was too young to get emotionally or otherwise involved in the political appeal of boycott. Many of the students who boycotted the educational institutions joined the national schools. The enrolment in national schools was, however, not confined to only students boycoting the existing institutions. Table II gives the national schools and the result of boycott on students in different provinces.¹¹⁰

TABLE - II
NATIONAL SCHOOLS AND EFFECT OF BOYCOTT
ON STUDENTS IN PROVINCES

Province	National Schools and Colleges in 1921-22		Approximate Effect of 'Non-co-operation' on certain Recognised Institutions up to March 1921.	
	Institutions	Scholars	Scholars	Withdrawn from Institutions.
Madras	92	5,072	1,71,111	820
Bombay	189	17,100	42,416	2,350
Bengal	190	14,819	1,03,107	11,157
United Provinces	137	8,476	49,171	2,626
Punjab	69	8,046	1,11,078	1,309
Bihar & Orissa	442	17,330	23,190	1,826
Central Provinces	86	6,338	71,759	1,824
Assam	38	1,908	12,186	1,139
N.W.F.P.	4	120	41,342	Nil
Minor Adms.	10	1,255	45,508	571
Total	1,257	80,524	6,70,868	23,622

¹¹⁰ Progress of Education in India, 1917-1922, op.cit., data taken from table at p.5.

An analysis of the table reveals that while the percentage of students withdrawing to the total number of students was approximately 3.5, the percentage enrolled in national institutions to the total number of students was approximately 12. Thus the national institutions also attracted those who were not receiving any kind of education. This fact was in itself significant. The national education movement gave an impetus to the educational awareness which manifested itself in the following years when there was a heavy pressure on the educational system.

Failure of National Education Movement:- The failure of an alternative system of education to emerge has been attributed mainly to economic causes. The products coming out from the national institutions could not compete with those in government recognised institutions in the job-market and with the loss of initial enthusiasm they returned to their previous institutions. This was no doubt one of the factors for the failure of national education movement. But the deeper cause lay in the confusion regarding an alternative system of national education for the country and the ups and downs in the political movement. The constraints put on the mass movement also acted negatively in the resurgence of a national spirit in education. The confusion regarding the national education arose out of the contradictions within the national movement which did not disappear by

the mere fact of deciding upon a path of mass movement in 1920. These contradictions were reflected in the attitude adopted towards educational issues thrown up by the national movement. For instance, primary education of the masses was now a widely accepted policy. But with the call of boycott of all types of educational institutions the Indian National Congress had to take a definite stand on the question of a national system of education. The resolution passed by the Congress in its 1920 session declared, "As free elementary education is the primary and urgent need of the masses of India, this Congress urges on all Congress organisations to introduce and enforce the same in their respective areas on national lines."¹¹¹ The Congress President in the same year came out with the call that national primary education should be started immediately. The question of mass education was also related to the success of true democracy.¹¹² The contradiction, however, appeared

¹¹¹K.Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia, (1885-1920), Vol.I, op.cit., p.376.

¹¹²Congress Presidential Addresses, Second Series (1911-1934), op.cit., p.510.

"Besides a true democracy implies universal suffrage and a universal suffrage where only less than 6 per cent of the population receives any kind of instruction is futile and may be even at times dangerous."

in the approach of the Congress to higher education. The following remark by Vijiaraghavachariar, Congress President, of 1920 session reflect the contradictory approach.

...is it prudent and just to the masses of the people that we should,...think of replacing University, Collegiate and Secondary Institutions merely because they are in the hands of Government, and more or less controlled by Government by independent national institutions and continue to starve the masses.¹¹³

The issue of the education of the masses had assumed a national dimension. The Congress had to take notice of this due to political considerations. It was obvious that the provincial assemblies formed on the basis of the reform of 1919 would take up the issue of compulsory and free primary education. In line with the political stand the Congress had taken on the Constitutional Reforms, it gave a call for the education of the masses on national lines and establishment of national institutions as an alternative to the existing educational system. This was also a means to popularise the political movement among a wider strata of people, especially in the rural areas. The mass movement created conditions for the emergence

¹¹³Ibid., p. 508.

of a leadership among the classes who had till now been largely unaffected by the national movement. This leadership could have created the necessary atmosphere for the growth of the education of masses. The political restraints put on the mass movement not only prevented this but also encouraged vested interests among the newly emerging leadership in the rural areas. The existing system of education which already had powerful vested interests among the classes in urban areas now found additional support among the vested interests in the newly awakened classes in the rural areas. It was mainly because of this that the national system of education independent of government control could not make much headway. In the field of higher education, from the very beginning there was a hesitation whether an alternative framework of national institutions could be provided. A national system of education for the masses and continuance of the government controlled system for the classes showed nothing but confusion about national education.

With the suspension of the mass movement the main source of strength behind the national education movement was withdrawn and the quinquennial review of 1917-22 reported, "...the educational organisation of India emerged triumphantly from the ordeal, but the crisis has left behind the conviction that our educational aims need re-statement."¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴Progress of Education in India, 1917-22, Vol.I, op.cit., p.9.

The educational system withstood the challenge not because of the inherent strength of the system but because of the weaknesses that cropped up in the political movement. It was the policy of containment of the mass movement that blurred the line of distinction between the system patronised by the government and the emerging system as an alternative to it.

Reforms Within the Educational System:

The movement of non-co-operation involving boycott and the participation of students in politics raised the fundamental issue of the success or failure of the existing educational system to meet the socio-political needs of the society. Many of the issues raised had relevance in the particular historical context in which they were raised. But some are as relevant today as they were about half a century ago. For instance, to what extent the education imparted was capable of creating that awareness which would sustain the values of the existing socio-political structure? Was it creating the proper leadership with a sense of responsibility towards the society? Was it developing an awareness among the general mass of the people? Was the education provided meeting the expectations and demands of the people? All these problems crop up today also and start a reappraisal of the educational policies. These issues cannot, however,

be detached from the contemporary political developments. The solutions sought for are also circumvented by the limitations imposed by the political structure. The non-co-operation movement leading to the boycott of educational institutions, though failed to build up an alternative system of education, started a process of re-thinking about the role education was expected to perform in the new political setting. The following note deserves attention.

Another important fact to be remembered is that the movement, though no doubt mainly of a political character, derives no small part of its strength from the expression it gives to the revolt against the system of education hitherto in vogue and wrongly ascribed to the Education Department. The outcry against the literary form which education has taken in this country is no doubt genuine being inspired chiefly by economic conditions. The people ignore the fact that they have the kind of education that they have asked for and that all attempts by the Department for the last thirty years or more to make education more practical have been thwarted by the people themselves.¹¹⁵

The following telegram sent by the Viceroy to the Secretary of State for India also emphasized the unsatisfactory aspect of the educational system.

One marked result of the movement has been a general dissatisfaction with the present school and college curricula and a demand for more practical and technical instruction. The demand is generally vague and chaotic, but the

¹¹⁵ Extract from copy of a D.O. letter sent by the D.P.I.'s to the P.S.G. Confidential, Poona, 13th October 1922.
• Government of India, Department of Education
December 1922, Proceedings No.8.

dissatisfaction is genuine and is voicing itself in resolutions to be moved in Bengal Council next week.¹¹⁶

Another dimension regarding the failure of Indian education was raised in the memorandum submitted by E.ff.W. Lascelles, Lieutenant Colonel, Army Educational Corps, General staff.

The failure of Indian education from primary school to university, to train for citizenship by either direct or indirect means, has been much more marked than have been the shortcomings of education in any other country over which the British flag is flown. It has failed signally to nationalise those entrusted to its charge; its influence has in fact tended towards denationalizing them.¹¹⁷

The most signal failure of the educational system was considered to be its inability to check the orientation of students towards radicalism.¹¹⁸ We will examine these charges laid against the educational system and see how far they were genuine. There was no doubt that the education was predominantly literary. It was also true that the sporadic attempts made to provide alternative courses like agriculture had met with failure. The failure on this front was mainly due to two reasons. One, there were not enough channels to absorb the

¹¹⁶ Government of India, Education Department
June 1921, Proceedings No.108.

¹¹⁷ Government of India, Department of Education and Health
December 1922, Proceedings No.56.

¹¹⁸ See, Chapter IV, p.179.

products of technical courses in appropriate jobs and two, the provision of alternative practical courses was linked with the political danger of rapidly expanding literary form of education. The problem of literary vs. technical education also assumed a class character. The educated classes which had occupied important positions in the political and social life of the country continued to expand literary education and made it their main preserve. The rising educational expectations of the lower classes was to be met by providing alternative courses like agricultural courses, vocational and technical courses etc. Thus technical education came to be regarded as of inferior status and was associated with the education of the lower classes. But this failure was not of the educational system as such. It could not be blamed for the task which it was not assigned. The other failure was attributed to the fact that it could not create an awareness for upholding the democratic institutions and a sense of citizenship with all its duties and rights. It was also blamed for its failure to develop an awareness for nationalism and common citizenry. This charge against the educational system was also misplaced and started from wrong premises. The aim of Indian education was not to develop nationalism. Neither was it expected to be an instrument for developing

the democratic traditions. The first and foremost aim was to help build the superstructure to sustain the political set-up which was neither meant to sustain Indian nationalism nor to foster democratic traditions. It succeeded in this aim considerably, at least in the initial stages. Another aim was to create a class of people ideologically oriented towards political support to the empire. This was also partially achieved. But due to the contradictions inherent in the system of an alien rule, there arose stresses and strains which could not be resolved by any reforms in the educational system. This dilemma at different periods of the history of Indian education created many controversies like higher education vs. mass education; government control vs. private control; quality vs. quantity; literary vs. technical education and so on.

If the Indian education system could really be blamed on one count, it was the active participation of a section of students and teachers in the national movement. This was so because the system was expected to create a loyal body of men and also to uphold the liberal traditions of constitutionalism. But here also the limitation of the educational system was obvious. The impact of the national movement was far more than could be absorbed by it. Once education spread among the wider sections of people, the hold of liberal minded educated

classes on political events started declining. Any reform in the educational system with the aim of preventing the spread of radicalism and to check the participation of students in the national movement was bound to fail.

Political Movements and Educational Growth:

The progress of education in India as recorded in reports issued by the Government of India have described the negative outcome of the nationalist movement on the growth of education. For instance, the anti-partition agitation (1905-07) and the non-co-operation movement (1920-22) were considered to have a dampening effect on the growth of education. The comparative periods of stability immediately following these two events were thought to have acted as the major stimulus for the rising numbers in educational institutions. The review of 1922-27 reported.

The post-war economic distress has gradually disappeared and gradual financial improvement has been reflected in the accelerated rate of progress in the expansion of education. The non-cooperation movement, which cast a shadow over the closing years of the last quinquennium, had become almost a spent force by the end of 1922, and much of the ground that had been lost between 1920 and 1922, was regained during the following year. A period which has witnessed great political changes, considerable economic improvement and the gradual cessation of non-cooperation activities, has also witnessed an exceptionally large increase in the number of schools and scholars, the inception of many new educational ventures, and the development and fruition of schemes initiated in the previous quinquennium. The progress of education has been very satisfactory and bids fair for the future. The foundations of further advance have been laid.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Progress of Education in India, 1927-32, Vol.I, (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1934), p.1.

Table III gives the growth of education in terms of institutions and enrolment for the period 1917-1927.¹²⁰

TABLE - III

TOTAL NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS(RECOGNIZED AND UNRECOGNIZED) AND PUPILS.

	1917	1922	1927
Institutions	192,755	208,106	246,264
Increase	-	15,351	38,158
Pupils	7,851,946	8,381,350	11,157,496
Increase	-	529,404	2,776,146

As the above table indicates, the growth in the number of institutions during 1922-27 was approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ times compared to the period 1917-22. The corresponding increase in enrolment was approximately 5 times. In terms of percentage of total population receiving instruction in all institutions (recognised and unrecognised), the position was as follows.¹²¹

¹²⁰Ibid., Table I, p.7.

¹²¹Ibid., Table XII, p.15.

	1917	1922	1927
Percentage of Males	5.31	5.49	7.33
Percentage of Females	1.03	1.18	1.53
Percentage of Total	3.22	3.39	4.51

There were multiple reasons for the accelerated growth of education during the period 1922-27. But taking relative political stability as a major contributing factor is not wholly justified. It should be noted that the period preceding the relative political stability was marked by a period of turmoil and created conditions for the participation of larger sections in the political movement. The political awareness that now spread among the general population could not but create conditions for advance in other spheres as well. The domination of the political leadership by the educated classes was a major contributing factor in accelerating the educational demand, particularly in the field of higher education, in this period.

In spite of the rapid quantitative growth of education in all sectors during 1922-27, the existing system was considered to be inadequate to adjust to the changing requirements of society, particularly in the political and economic spheres. In the political sphere the 'enlightened electorate' was a rare commodity

and elected representatives also lacked a positive attitude of 'responsibility'. In the economic sphere the products of the educational system were incapable of meeting any major shifts in the economic policy and were unable to withstand the economic pressures.¹²²

It is interesting to note the sea-change that had overtaken the educational system in respect of the products it was expected to bring out. In its earlier phase it was to produce a body of men with mental predilections towards British morals, attitudes and way of life. With the growth of political institutions, administrative structure and political movements the outcome expected from the educational system was an efficient administrator and loyal citizens. The educated classes in general were to be pre-disposed towards political reforms within the bureaucratic structure of the empire. Ideas proclaiming

¹²² See, Arthur Mayhew, The Education of India, (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928), Pp.109-42.

The author lists the major failings of educational system as given below.

- i) It could not develop an intelligent and articulate electorate.
- ii) Expansion of elementary education could not make much headway.
- iii) It produced an attitude for obstruction rather than a positive frame of mind.
- iv) It failed to impress upon the students that they are being trained for the political, social and economic reconstruction of India.

self-government were considered deviations and undesirable effects of the educational system.' The pressure of political movement in the country and the material change in the British position after the first world war forced the issue of political reforms. It became necessary to placate the politically educated classes by giving them representation in the reformed councils. The elective principle introduced in the provincial and central legislatures called forth for an educational response geared to meet the parliamentary needs of the political system. But to expect the educational system to create an enlightened electorate at the base and a responsible leadership at the top was to ignore the political realities of the day. There was no sanction of the mass movement behind the legislative bodies in the provinces or the centre. The main political movement was hostile to the formation of the provincial and central legislative bodies. The persons elected to the legislative bodies were the representatives of a limited section of the enfranchised population. More than the limited nature of their representation, they were swimming against the current of political movement and lost much of their momentum in the process. Conflicts arose between the elected bodies at the district, provincial and central level which could not be resolved.

Only the national movement which represented a wider population at the district, provincial and central level could resolve the conflict to some extent. But it had not accepted the political reforms. Schemes initiated at the provincial level did not have a ready support at the district level. The pressures exerted by the national movement on the educational system were in directions contrary to what was expected of the system. By drawing the intellectuals and students in the active political struggle, the national movement created a rebellious mind and undermined their faith in the establishment to deliver the goods. At the height of the movement the boycott of educational institutions and the opening of national schools created conditions hardly conducive to the growth of a conforming discipline. Even after the suspension of the non-co-operation movement and the petering away of the boycott of educational institutions, the craze for admissions into the educational institutions did not restore the confidence in the educational system to provide the leadership in various walks of national life. The more important aspect of the political movement was on channels outside the stream of the existing educational system. The decision of the national leadership to boycott the elections to the first Legislature provided an opportunity to the politicians to provide an alternative programme of national reconstruction to the masses.

Their appeal was wider than what could be provided by the leadership participating in the elections where only a limited franchise existed. The much talked of political education since the beginning of the Constitutional Reforms was being provided by the political movement though the direction of the political education was contrary to what was being advocated by the authorities. The political education advocated by the authorities was to arouse a positive attitude towards the reformed Legislatures and create a confidence for the general direction of political advancement. But the political education that masses were receiving under the impact of the political movement was an undermining of faith in the intentions of the British Government to grant real power to the Indians. Another significant impact of the political movement was to narrow the gulf between the intelligentsia and masses, between the cities and the villages which the educational system had helped to widen. It is important to grasp the significance of both these phenomena of political education and bridge-building in the context of the political movement and the constitutional reforms. The subsequent political developments and educational reforms which we will discuss presently brought both these issues into prominence.

Politics at the Cross Roads

The withdrawal of non-co-operation movement in 1922 after the Chauri-Chaura incidence and Gandhiji's arrest in the same year marked the end of this phase of mass movement. The decisive turn that had been given to the national movement in 1920 had released forces which were threatening to undermine the entire structure of the political edifice built by the British in India.

...the whole basis of ordered government seemed to be on the point of disintegration. Defiance of authority became widespread - an extraordinary development in Indian districts where the power of Government had never been questioned within living memory.¹²³

However, due to the withdrawal of the movement and the implementation of the constitutional reforms, the political situation changed. During the next decade the political developments hinged on two pegs. The one was the constitutional reforms and the formation of the first legislature in 1920. The second was the course of mass movement, outside the legislatures. It was now diverted towards constructive channels involving programmes of rural development like sanitation, khadi and educational development. But an influential section within the Congress party could not be inspired by the constructive

¹²³Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Vol.I,
(Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, 1930), p.250.

programme and under the leadership of C.R.Das and Motilal Nehru formed Swaraj party within the Congress to contest elections to the second reformed legislatures. In the 1923 elections they had a striking success in the elections for the Assembly. The Swaraj party bagged 45 seats.¹²⁴ The declared policy of the Swaraj party was to obstruct the working of the new constitution and demonstrate the futility of the reforms. However, the decision to adopt the parliamentary methods to obstruct the working of parliamentary procedure had its own limitations and constraints. Apart from the allurements offered by the opportunities within the legislatures, it inevitably led to compromises with different groups representing varying interests in the legislatures. Elections to the third Assembly took place in 1926 and the process of constitutional movement gained more weight within the Congress. Another party of 'Responsive Co-operation' was formed by a group led by Jayakar, Kelkar and Moonjee. Their main difference with the Swarajists lay in the fact that they were prepared to accept any office of responsibility offered to them. In the third Assembly the Swarajists commanded 35 members out of a total of 105 elected members. We have discussed the formation of the new legislatures as the commission to review the

¹²⁴Ibid., p.254.

educational growth in the country was only appointed after the working of the Constitutional Reforms was evaluated and another look at India's advance along constitutional lines was proposed in the Simon Commission in 1927. The appointment of the Auxiliary Committee by the Indian Statutory Commission in 1927 was an attempt to reassess the role of education in the new political set-up. This was explained by the Committee which we quote below.

...in every country where there is representative government, the education given should be such as to produce -

(1) a popular electorate capable of exercising intelligently the primary functions of citizenship: they should be able to choose their representatives with knowledge and intelligence; to understand at any rate to certain extent, the social and political programmes which are placed before them by candidates for election to legislative and local bodies; and, a subsidiary but important matter, to understand the actual machinery of voting; (2) a smaller body of persons (included in the larger) capable of furnishing representatives on legislative and local bodies, and officers of central and local administrators, who by their training and character are fitted to fulfil their functions with intelligence, judgement and rectitude.

The system of primary and higher primary schools should be so designed as to produce a competent electorate; the system of secondary and higher education, to produce competent and trustworthy representatives and officials.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Review of the Growth of Education in British India by the Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, (Delhi: Manager Government of India Press, 1929), p.3.

N.B. Hereafter this report will be referred to as Auxiliary Committee Review.

Indian Statutory Commission and the
Reappraisal of Educational Policy:

The Indian Statutory Commission was appointed in 1927 under the chairmanship of Sir John Allsebrook Simon for the purpose of inquiring into the working of the system of government, the growth of education, and the development of representative institutions in British India. It was a prelude to the widespread protest on the non-inclusion of any Indian member to the Commission.

The intervening period between the withdrawal of non-co-operation movement in 1922 and the appointment of the Simon Commission in 1927 was that of depression in Indian politics. The political movement was running in two opposite streams, the one represented in the precincts of the councils and the other outside in constructive programmes of rural upliftment. The initial enthusiasm on both sides was now on wane. The ineffectiveness of the dyarchical form of government in provinces and the muffled voice of the elected representatives in the Central Legislature could not sound an optimistic note for the transformation of the restricted form of responsible government to a genuinely representative government. On the other side of the line, the mass awakening associated with the fanning out of active political workers in rural areas had now turned into routinised programmes tending to become ceremonial and losing much of their appeal. The number

of genuinely convinced workers was on the wane and there was hardly any conscious attempt to make use of the constructive programme to raise the level of mass awakening.

As early as in 1925, Lala Lajpat Rai expressed his views regarding the depressing political situation.

"The political situation is anything but hopeful and encouraging. The people are sunk in depression. Everything - principles, practices, parties and politics - seem to be in a state of disintegration and dissolution."¹²⁶

This period, however, was the beginning of a new phase of mass struggles. The industrial development during and after the war years had created the objective conditions for the growth of organised political activity by the workers. This was first manifested in 1924 when many of the active leaders of the working class movement were put on trial in what is known as the Kanpur Conspiracy case.¹²⁷ The following years saw the advance of trade unionism among the workers and also organised strike movements. Whatever forms these new movements took, they inducted an ideology of their own in the Indian National Movement. This particularly affected the youth and the left sections of the Indian National Movement and widened its horizons. The emergence of a new left-wing in the

¹²⁶Quoted in, R.P.Dutt, India To-day, op.cit., p.291.

¹²⁷Ibid., p.294.

Congress reflected itself in the programme and policies adopted in the Congress Session of 1927. The Congress adopted the resolution for complete independence as the aim of the national movement. It was also decided to boycott the Simon Commission and approval was given to participate in All-Parties Conference to evolve an alternative constitutional scheme for the country.¹²⁸ The lull of the previous years was thus broken and the year following the appointment of Simon Commission in 1927 saw widespread demonstrations against it. A notable feature of these demonstrations was the greater participation of workers and the active association of youth with them.¹²⁹ The Calcutta session of the Congress in 1928 saw the unique event of workers marching to the Congress Pandal and expressing their determination to achieve complete independence for India.

The Calcutta Session will be remembered for a demonstration in which the labourers numbering over 50,000 men from neighbouring mill areas marched in an orderly fashion and saluted the National Flag hoisted in the Congress grounds, occupied the Pandal for nearly two hours, and passed their resolution deciding for Independence for India and then walked out.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Congress Presidential Addresses, Second Series (1911-1934), op.cit., p.842.

and also, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress (1885-1935), Vol.I, (Allahabad: Congress Working Committee, 1935), Pp.539-41.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.563. See also, R.P.Dutt, India To-day, op.cit. Pp.294-95

¹³⁰ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress (1885-1935), Vol.I, op.cit., p.563.

At the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1928, the Nehru Report embodying the new Constitution for India was adopted but not without opposition. The sizeable opposition to the resolution was a growing sign of the left forces within the Congress. The Nehru Report put forward Dominion Status as the political aim and was a backward step from the earlier stand, of complete independence. But as the time limit set for the acceptance of the Nehru Report lapsed, the Lahore Congress in 1929 adopted 'Purna Swaraj' or complete independence as the political creed of the Congress. On January 26, 1930 the first Independence Day was celebrated throughout India marked by widespread demonstrations in support of the demand for complete independence. Boycott, non-co-operation and talk of mass actions was again in the air. Jawaharlal Nehru from his presidential chair in the Lahore Congress in 1929 declared, "Any great movement for liberation to-day must necessarily be a mass movement and mass movements must essentially be peaceful, except in times of organised revolt."¹³¹ Another significant remark that Nehru made in the Lahore Congress was regarding the impossibility of participating in the national struggle without a complete break from the existing framework. "When the national

¹³¹Congress Presidential Addresses, Second Series (1911-1934),
op.cit., p.899.

struggle is at its height, I fail to see how it will be possible for any person engaged in it to continue in the courts or the schools".¹³²

It was against the background of these political developments that the reappraisal of educational policies was made by the Indian Statutory Commission. The educational system was evaluated on two broad issues. We quote from the report.

To what extent has education fostered, or is it tending to foster, in the peoples of British India a capacity for understanding and forming intelligent opinions on civic and political issues? ...to what extent has it provided, or is it tending to provide, a directing class capable of sane and inspiring leadership in the political field, and of initiative and efficiency in the administrative?¹³³

Both these issues were political and related to the growth and development of mass education and higher education in relation to the political progress. The issue of mass education assumed special political significance after the transfer of education to the elected representatives in the provinces. There were two important reasons for this. In the first instance, the introduction of compulsory primary education had been a long standing demand of the

¹³²Loc.cit.

¹³³Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Vol.I,
op.cit., p.378.

politically conscious section of the country. Lack of mass education had always been looked upon as a hindrance to the political progress of the country. With the transfer of education to the provincial ministries, the onus of going ahead with the introduction of compulsory primary education schemes fell on the elected representatives.

Another equally important reason was the creation of a literate electorate who could be politically enlightened and capable of understanding issues submitted to its judgement. Regarding the issue of literate electorate the report made the following observation.

We realise that education is not an indispensable requisite for an intelligent exercise of vote., literacy alone affords no guarantee of the attainment of real political capacity, but the ability to read at least increases the probability that statements and discussions of political issues and political programmes will reach the elector.¹³⁴

Discussing the magnitude of the problem, the report, then cites literacy among the adult population on the basis of 1921 census. "Taking India as a whole, 17 out of every hundred men, and 2 out of every hundred women, who are twenty years of age and over, are entered as literate."¹³⁵

Linking of literacy to enfranchisement did not reflect the reality of the situation. The electorate

¹³⁴Ibid., Pp.381-82.

¹³⁵Ibid., p.383.

was very limited and was not based on the criterion of education alone. The total number of voters registered for electing members of the Central Legislative Assembly was only 800,000 in 1924 out of which only 350,000 actually voted.¹³⁶

Table IV gives the figures for the elections of 1920, 1923 and 1926.¹³⁷

TABLE - IV
PERCENTAGE OF VOTES POLLED IN DIFFERENT PROVINCES

Province	Percentage of population <u>enfranchised</u> 1926	Percentage of votes polled <u>in the elections of</u>		
		1920	1923	1926
Madras	3.2	24.9	36.3	48.6
Bombay	3.9	16.2	38.4	39.0
Bengal	2.5	33.4	39.0	39.2
United Provinces	3.5	33.0	42.2	50.2
Punjab	3.4	32.0	49.3	52.4
Bihar & Orissa	1.1	41.0	52.0	61.0
Central Provinces	1.3	22.5	57.7	61.9
Assam	3.7	16.4	37.5	35.0
All-India	2.8	29.0	39.9	46.6

¹³⁶ Arthur Mayhew, The Education of India, op.cit., p.120.

¹³⁷ Maurice Gwyer and A. Appadorai, (eds.), Speeches and Documents on the Indian Constitution, (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1957), p.142.

Regarding the keen interest shown by the electorates the following comment by Indian Franchise Committee deserves special mention.

There is no question that India is now familiar with voting and elections. What might in 1919 have been regarded as an imported and unfamiliar institution is now an accepted commonplace of Indian political life. In the words of the Statutory Commission's Report (Vol.I, p.197), 'It is clear that electoral contests do really attract the interest of the general body of voters'. We are able to testify to the accuracy of this view in the North-West Frontier Province, where during our visit, elections were being held for the provincial Council for the first time, where 49.8 per cent of the electors polled in contested elections, and where the activity of candidates and the interest of voters were obvious to the eye.¹³⁸

Considering the stage of political developments and the constraints put forward by the nationalist movement on the working of the dyarchy, the percentage of voters participating in the elections was encouraging and demonstrated the keen desire of the electorate to participate in the elective bodies. This was so in spite of the fact that a section of the electorate was illiterate and in some cases voted in larger numbers than the literate sections. On the other hand the small percentage of enfranchised population (2.8) was not a convincing argument for considering lack of education as an obstacle to the working of the reformed councils.

¹³⁸Quoted in, Ibid., p.143.

The provision of reformed councils was not a guarantee for the increasing interest in the education of the masses and their political enlightenment. The classes who found their way up in the reformed councils did not think in terms of establishing any direct political contact with the masses. They could hardly be blamed for this as there was no need for doing so. They did not feel the pressure of mass movement undermining their hold on their constituencies. Political contact with the masses was being built up by that section of the national movement which had dissociated itself from the councils. It was here that the pressure of mass movement was being felt increasingly and in greater intensity. For the developing political consciousness of the masses, education was hardly an effective instrument. What was attempted through the reformed Assemblies and Councils was an extension of the old system in more areas and places. What was needed was a recasting of the educational system. Though all the provincial legislatures took measures to pass compulsory primary education acts for selected areas, the political, communal, sectarian considerations and vested interests were hardly conducive for the success of these schemes. The procedure of elections and the political privileges conferred on the elected representatives did pretty little in reducing the influence of these forces. Rather it aggravated these tendencies. The reason

could partially be located in the control of higher education by the vested interests who now got an additional privilege of Council entry. The vested interests controlling higher education got reinforced by the political privileges.

The question of higher education was linked up with producing a directing class, capable of providing a 'sane' political leadership and efficient administrative cadre. It was argued that "... the system of higher education is not adjusted to the social and economic structure of the country and that its educated or partly-educated output is greatly in excess of the country's capacity to absorb it..."¹³⁹ So, a policy of regulation rather than expansion was recommended in the case of higher education. The close link up of secondary and university system was recognised.

... the only good foundation for a university system which will be fruitful in the social, political and intellectual life of the people, is a sound and healthy system of secondary education, and shortcomings in that system are in the long run certain to bring with them failure in the higher ranges of education.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹Report of Indian Statutory Commission , Vol.I,
op.cit., p.388.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 389.

The participation of private enterprise in enhancing the cause of higher education was recognised and appreciated. The generous contributions made by wealthy men for universities was welcomed as a very encouraging feature.

The creation of an enlightened electorate through primary education and the training of a directing class through higher education was a typical imperial reaction to the Indian situation. It recognised a sort of permanent cleavage between the 'classes' and the 'masses'. At the root of this thinking were the Constitutional Reforms introduced in 1919 which envisaged the advance of India towards responsible self-government in stages, the extent and time of the stages to be determined by the Imperial Government. The whole scheme pre-supposed a smooth working arrangement between the rulers and the ruled and completely ignored the national movement which was not satisfied with small doses of reforms. Education was stated to be ill adapted to meet the political needs of the situation and reforms were thought of in the light of adjusting educational schemes to the changing political situations. But the political movements that were not bound by the course prescribed by the rulers upset all these calculations. We have already pointed out that the linking of mass education to the creation of an enlightened electorate was not a sound logic in the context of a very limited franchise.

Similarly the creation of a directing class to assume the leadership in political and other spheres suffered from the logic of circumstances. The political movement though still under the leadership of the educated classes was not confined to them.

National goals were being determined by the political movements outside the chambers of the councils. Education for the directing classes placed too much premium on the role of these classes in affecting the course of the political developments. Providing efficient administrative personnel was a different matter altogether- this role higher education in India had been playing since its very inception. But efficient administrative leadership at different levels had a wider meaning and significance than the provision of managing the bureaucratic structure. It was enlarging the scope of higher education to different branches like technical, agricultural etc., and also to broaden the outlook of the service personnel to adjust to the existing political situations. No serious attempts in this direction were made and higher education continued to suffer from lop-sided emphasis.

Education as a Constructive Programme:

The suspension of non-cooperation movement and the negative posture taken in relation to the Legislative

Councils created a political vacuum. The decidedly non-violent direction given to the national movement prevented the growth of a revolutionary movement which could have challenged the upper and middle class elite leadership spearheading the national movement.¹⁴¹ The political vacuum created was filled in by three distinct developments. There was an outbreak of communal violence in different parts of the country dissipating the energy generated during the mass movement into destructive channels. The Swarajists shifted the battle inside the chambers of the Assemblies but the initial posture of obstruction got diluted in the intricacies of the parliamentary proceedings. The major direction given to the national movement by Gandhi was the evolution of a comprehensive programme of development mainly in rural areas. We quote below the resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee on the constructive programme in 1925.

The work in the country shall be directed to the education of the people in their political rights and training them to acquire the necessary strength and power of resistance to win those rights by carrying out the constructive programme of the Congress with special reference to popularising the spinning wheel and khaddar, promoting inter-communal unity, the removal of untouchability, ameliorating the condition of the suppressed classes and the removal of the

¹⁴¹ See, B.B.Misra, The Indian Middle Classes, Their Growth in Modern Times, op.cit., p.396.

"The non-violent non-co-operation movement which Gandhi introduced early in the 1920's reduced the importance of the revolutionary movement as a political weapon."

untouchability, ameliorating the condition of the suppressed classes and the removal of the drink and drug evil and shall include the capture of local bodies, the organization of villages and of labour, both industrial and agricultural, the adjustment of relation between the employers of labour and the workmen and between the landlords and the tenants and the general advancement of the national, economical, industrial and commercial interests of the country, both in India and overseas.¹⁴²

The significance of the constructive programme lay not in the individual items like khadi, sanitation, Harijan upliftment, education etc., but as means of keeping alive the contact with the general mass of the population, as it was called the political education of the masses. The period of constructive programme was considered to be a preparation for the future political struggles. Including education in the constructive programme was a significant step as it became an integral part of the development programme for the political regeneration of the masses.

The comprehensive nature of the programme is clear from the inclusion of items relating to agricultural and industrial development of the country. However, the policy of conciliation recommended in regulating the relations between the labour and the industrialist, between the tenants and the landlords limited the extent of political

¹⁴²The Indian National Congress 1925, (Allahabad: The Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1925), p.20.

education. Education as an integral part of the constructive programme became a permanent feature of the congress creed in the years of struggle or truce. The movement for the boycott of the educational institutions with a call to join the national institutions during active political struggle and a call for merging education in the broader stream of constructive programme during the truce period became interchangeable. Constructive programme of education was related to the wider social and economic issues. The Congress Working Committee meeting at Wardha on June 1934, passed the following resolution regarding the participation of students in the constructive programme.

"The Working Committee expects the student community to take their due share in the social, economic and educational part of the constructive programme of the Congress by devoting to it their spare hours, and particularly their vacations."¹⁴³

A unique feature of the national movement after it assumed a mass character in the twenties was to seek compensation for its failure in the political or educational programmes. This was with a definite motive. The first motive was to keep a lively interest in the problems faced

¹⁴³The Indian National Congress, 1930-34, (Allahabad: All India Congress Committee, Swaraj Bhawan, 1935), p.181.

by common people. Another motive was to channelise the yearnings of the masses into streams to prevent the drift towards revolutionary ideas and programmes. On the suspension of non-co-operation movement in 1922 and the withdrawal of civil dis-obedience movement in 1934, the policy adopted by the Congress was to involve the masses by providing an alternative programme of development. In the educational field, the failure to provide an alternative system of education and the failure to wreck the existing system, the alternative provided was to include it as one of the items of the constructive programme. The all comprehensive nature of the constructive programme placed education as one item of the overall development.¹⁴⁴ This was perhaps inevitable in the course taken by the political movement since its mass phase in the 1920's. The

¹⁴⁴ Summary of proceedings of the Working Committee, Bardoli, Dec. 23, to Dec. 30, 1941, The Indian National Congress, March 1940 to September 1946, (Allahabad General Secretary, AICC Swaraj Bhavan, 1947), p. 99.

"The constructive programme adopted by the Congress and explained from time to time by Gandhiji, is of particular importance at this juncture. It is meant not only to bring about unity among various groups, to remove disabilities which keep sections of the community backward and depressed, to promote self-reliance and the co-operative spirit among the people, to increase production and have fairer distribution, but it also furnishes the best opportunity and means of contacts with the people and service to them which are necessary for winning their confidence. The Working Committee therefore, call upon Congress Committees and workers to further this programme intensively and thus exercise a steadying and strengthening influence in times of dislocation and uneasiness."

alternative programme of Basic Education as a national system of education in place of the existing system grew out of this all-comprehensive constructive programme. Its success or failure depended on the fate of the wider programme of national development. It could not function independently of the socio-economic system. Without a radical change of emphasis in the socio-economic system it was doomed to failure. We will discuss its evolution when we come to the political developments after the Government of India Act of 1935.

Civil Disobedience Movement and Politicisation of Education

The Mass Civil Disobedience Movement was launched in 1930. Before its actual launching, preparations were afoot from the time of the arrival of Simon Commission. The Commission faced widespread demonstrations which were no longer confined to the middle classes. Increasing participation of workers through their Trade Unions gave a militant posture to the national movement. In the Congress itself there were growing signs of an emergent left wing which wanted to give a concrete meaning to the demand for full independence. The Congress represented the broad national stream which often consisted of conflicting interests. It was because of these conflicting interests that it many times took mutually contradictory positions

on various issues. For instance, the Bombay Session of the All-India Congress Committee passed the following resolution on social and economic changes.

In the opinion of this Committee, the great poverty and misery of the Indian people are due, not only to foreign exploitation in India but also to the economic structure of society, which the alien rulers support so that their exploitation may continue. In order therefore to remove this poverty and misery and to ameliorate the condition of the Indian masses it is essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove the gross inequalities.¹⁴⁵

However, when the movement was in actual progress and spread to the peasants, it was thought necessary to reassure the Zamindars and seek their support.

In as much as some misapprehension has been created in the minds of the Zamindars of U.P. in particular and others in general that in discussing proposals for non-payment of rent or taxes under given circumstances the Congress was contemplating a class war, the Working Committee assures the Zamindars concerned that the non-rent proposals referred to were in no way aimed at them but they represent an economic necessity for the peasantry which is known to be half-starved and at present suffering from unprecedented economic distress. The working committee has no design upon any interest legitimately acquired and not in conflict with the national well-being. The working committee, therefore appeals to all landed or monied classes to help the Congress to the best of their ability in its fight for the freedom of the country.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ The Indian National Congress 1929, (Allahabad: All India Congress Committee, Swaraj Bhavan, 1929), p.5.

¹⁴⁶ Congress Working Committee Resolution No.9, Bombay 1931, The Indian National Congress 1930-34, op.cit., p.138.

It is difficult to reconcile the resolve to make revolutionary changes in the economic and social structure with the conciliatory attitude to the Zamindars who were the instruments of exploitation of the peasantry and were a bulwork of support to the empire. After the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1934, the conflicts and contradictions within the Congress became more pronounced. Though in minority the left groups started asserting themselves in a more determined way and pressed for defining Congress attitude towards the socio-economic issues. The growth of socialist and communist groups within the Congress was also a challenge to the creed of non-violence. The vested interests representing the capitalists and landed interests within the Congress again asserted itself and the following resolution was passed by the Working Committee on 18th June, 1934.

Whilst the Working Committee welcomes the formation of groups representing different schools of thought, it is necessary, in view of loose talk about confiscation of private property and necessity of class war, to remind Congressmen that the Karachi resolution as finally settled by the AICC at Bombay in August 1931, which lays down certain principles, neither contemplates confiscation of private property without just cause or compensation, nor advocacy of class war. The Working Committee is further of opinion that confiscation and class war are contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p.187.

The conflicting postures taken on various economic and social issues reflected on the policy and attitude of the Congress towards educational issues which we will discuss shortly. Before that we present the genesis of the Mass Civil Disobedience Movement and its effect on politicisation of education.

The Extent of the Movement:

The Mass Civil Disobedience Movement launched in 1930 was much wider in scope than the non-cooperation movement of 1920. The reasons were the maturity of the national movement, the participation by larger sections of the population and the growing disillusionment with the reforms introduced in 1919 and the recommendations of the Simon Commission. Another important factor which introduced militancy in the movement was the participation of large number of workers in labour strikes in 1928.¹⁴⁸ Citing the figures of mass participation in the movement of 1920 and 1930, the official history of the Congress reports that, "The Satyagrahis came forward in their thousands. In 1921 they were thirty thousand in number and that was considered a big number. In 1930-31, within a short interval of 10 months, ninety thousand men, women and children were convicted and sentenced."¹⁴⁹ Even the

¹⁴⁸ R.P.Dutt, India To-day, op.cit., p.294.

¹⁴⁹ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress (1885-1935), Vol.1, op.cit., p.876.

official figures recorded 60,000 civil registers sentenced in less than a year up to the Gandhi-Irwin agreement in 1931.¹⁵⁰ The most notable feature of the movement was the participation of women which gave a unique strength to it. What we are concerned with here is the effect of the movement on educational institutions and the participation of students in the movement.

Students' Participation in the Movement:

The political developments in the twenties and thirties accompanied by non-co-operation and mass civil disobedience affected the growth of education in three ways.

- i) Boycott of the existing educational institutions and emergence of an alternative system of education termed as national education.
- ii) Undermining of the existing educational system by weakening the foundations of discipline and erosion of faith in the Raj.
- iii) Growth of revolutionary groups among the students.

As pointed out earlier,¹⁵¹ the suspension of the non-co-operation movement in 1922 led to the adoption of constructive programme as the main creed of the Congress.

¹⁵⁰ R.P. Dutt, India To-day, op.cit., p.304.

¹⁵¹ Supra, p. 189.

Education was also included as one item of this programme. The items adopted in the constructive programme also affected the attitude and emphasis on the programme of national education. The Congress Working Committee Resolution on 2nd January 1924 stated thus about National Educational Institutions.

The Congress is strongly of opinion that the hope of the future of the country lies in its youth and therefore trusts that the provincial committees will keep alive all national educational institutions. But whilst the Congress is of opinion that the existing national educational institutions should be maintained and new ones opened, the Congress does not regard any such institution to be national which does not actively encourage Hindu-Muslim unity and which excludes untouchables, which does not make handspinning and carding compulsory, and in which teachers and students over the age of 12 years do not spin for at least half an hour per working day, and in which students and teachers do not habitually wear khaddar.¹⁵²

The Belgaum session of 1924 endorsed the above resolution of the Working Committee and added the adoption of some Indian language as the medium of instruction, training in physical culture and self-defence compulsory in the national institutions.¹⁵³

All these items included in the national education institutions were contained in the constructive programme launched after the suspension of non-co-operation and was

¹⁵² The Indian National Congress 1924, (Allahabad: The Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1925), p.36.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p.37.

an indicator of the trend of the political movement in the period between the non-co-operation and civil disobedience movements.

The emphasis shifted in the thirties when the Congress Working Committee meeting in Allahabad on June 27, 1930 issued the following appeal to the students.

In the opinion of this Committee the time has arrived when students of Indian Colleges should take their full share in the movement for national freedom and directs all Provincial Committees to call upon such students within their respective jurisdiction to place their services at the disposal of the Congress in such manner and to such extent including complete suspension of their studies as the exigencies of the national movement may require. The Committee trusts that all students will readily respond to such call.¹⁵⁴

Before we discuss the general impact of the call to students for boycott of educational institutions and active participation in the national movement, a few trends may be noted which differentiate this phase of the national education movement with the earlier two phases in 1904-05 and 1920-21. In the earlier phases of the national education movement, the boycott of educational institutions and formation of national schools kept its separate identity and did not merge itself in the movement for political freedom. A challenge was thrown at the existing educational structure but was withdrawn as soon as there was a political

¹⁵⁴The Indian National Congress, 1930-34, op.cit., p.31.

truce. The attempts were mainly concentrated in making adjustments in the existing system and get maximum concessions from it. In the later phase of the movement, the existing system of education was considered to be completely alien to the national cause and national education was linked with the movement for complete independence. In the Congress Working Committee held at Sabarmati in the month of February 1930, the pledge for 'Purna Swarajya' was adopted to be taken all over the country on January 26, 1930. The portion relating to education stated that, "Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings and our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us."¹⁵⁵

Adoption of complete independence as the political goal of the country was accompanied by a programme of socio-economic regeneration of the country after attaining independence. The all India Congress Committee meeting at Bombay in August 1931, included education under fundamental rights. "The State shall provide for free and compulsory primary education."¹⁵⁶ All the programmes of economic and educational developments were to be based on the political power derived from the franchise on the basis of universal adult suffrage.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p.2

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p.120

¹⁵⁷Loc.cit.

During mass civil disobedience and during the final battle for freedom in the forties, the policies on education as enunciated by the national movement oscillated between the direct participation of students in the political movement and participation in constructive programme.

The existing system of education absorbed the shock of the national movement but in the process many of its foundations were undermined. The effect was felt in the enrolment as well as the general tone of the institutions. Those who left the institutions and plunged themselves in the national movement felt the impact directly. The larger section who remained in the institutions had varied reactions depending on the intensity of the movement, political awareness, social and cultural background. The reactions varied from a sense of guilt to indifference and opposition to the movement. However, there was a general recognition of something lacking in the educational system. What that 'something' was, was not very clear to the parties concerned. The guardians and administrators discovered a falling down of discipline in the educational institutions. The employers discovered that the educational products were becoming more and more unemployables. The politician complained that the educational system was not helping in the growth of a national spirit and was out of tune with the times. Then there was a general complaint

from all quarters that the educational system was too much literary and there were not enough channels at the secondary stage to divert the students into vocational, technical and agricultural courses. The result was a great rush in the arts colleges. The pressure of students was causing an unbearable strain on the system and was a major contributing factor for all the shortcomings of the system. It was not fair to lay the blame for many of these shortcomings to the education system. The system was operative in a particular socio-economic political setting and could not escape the effect of events taking place in these spheres. The economic setting was most depressing in the thirties. The economic depression of thirties had a shattering effect on the economies of capitalist countries. The colonial dependencies had also to bear the brunt of the crisis.

In the social sphere there was an upward movement of the lower castes to aspire for power centres so far the privilege of only the higher castes who were also economically advanced. The political reforms introduced in 1921 helped in the process of polarisation of elite groups among the lower castes. This was hardly conducive to the growth of primary education but was a great incentive to the growth of higher education. Higher education helped in acquiring a status symbol and helped the elite groups among the lower classes to move to the periphery of power centres in economic, social and political sphere.

The political developments in the thirties challenged the legislative process but left enough room for manouverings by the elite groups in arriving at compromises with the ruling power. The educational system which was under the strain of all these changes in economic, social and political spheres came almost to a breaking point when civil disobedience movement was launched. But this impact was not felt uniformly in all the provinces of British India. There were wide regional variations in the extent of the political movement and its impact on the educational system.

We will give references to a few provincial reports showing the extent of the movement and its impact on educational institutions. The report of the United Provinces recorded that,

... the world wide economic depression of the last two years, accentuated by widespread failure of crops due to drought and visitation of locusts and a subversive movement directed against all constituted authority - all these have reacted against the progress of education... Drastic retrenchment during the last two years has particularly affected the development of primary education and has prevented any further advance in the extension of compulsion in rural areas.¹⁵⁸

The report from Bengal recorded that, "The period was disturbed by communal dissensions and by political agitation, which have had their repercussions on education...., political disturbances have undermined discipline and have affected numerical strength."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸U.P. Report page 1, quoted in Progress of Education in India 1927-32, Vol.I, op.cit., p.2.

¹⁵⁹Bengal Report page 3, Ibid., P.2.

drift towards urbanisation in education. The greatest single effort was made to arrest the drift towards urbanisation at the secondary stage. The major drift of students was from the Anglo-Vernacular middle schools or English middle Schools to the high schools and then to the colleges and universities. The rapid expansion of education during 1922-27 and the political situation during the twenties and thirties brought the question of education of rural students into prominence. The political developments which were mainly confined to urban areas till the twenties were not conducive to the growth of a leadership in rural areas. We do not imply that the leadership till the twenties was all from only urban areas. But whatever may be the original composition of the leadership, once they settled in cities, they were cut off from rural areas except for occasional visits for religious or ceremonial functions. Even the establishment of local bodies in 1882, failed to create that body of rural leadership which could have any appreciable impact on the power structure at the provincial or central levels. This leadership talked of education of the masses and also of reform of education to suit the rural environment but their political chess board was spread out in the urban areas. Their main concern was to control the strings operating the power relationship in the cities and towns.

After the twenties when the political movement spread out in the rural areas, it was no longer possible to confine the power configuration to urban areas only. There was a better communication between the urban and rural population. A leadership was slowly emerging in the rural areas which was no longer satisfied with the powers and privileges of local bodies but was eager to enlarge its scope at the provincial and central level. The reforms introduced in 1921 created further grounds of expansion for this leadership. The enlarged provincial and central Assemblies gave an opportunity to this leadership to assert their numerical superiority over their urban counterparts. The urban leadership could no longer afford to overlook the rural leadership and had to make compromises and adjustments in sharing power at different levels. The emergence of rural leadership which could talk on equal terms to its urban counterpart helped in the growth of leadership at the intermediary levels also. It was primarily this section of the rural elites which was now concerned with the educational development of rural areas. The model of educational development was however, the urban one. Any attempt to evolve a new model for rural areas or even a change in the old model was resisted by the rural leadership.

Vernacular middle schools have been subjected to criticism, often from quarters least expected. For example, a chairman of a district board has urged that they should all be abolished and that 'boys who want to continue should join English Schools', he was supported in this view by the District Magistrate. ¹⁶²

The political motive of extending the vernacular middle schools is explained by the same report in respect of adapting the courses "...more and more to rural surroundings with the aim of keeping the boys in sympathy with their environment and not making them discontented, as high school education so often does."¹⁶³ The aim of the vernacular education was to build up a spirit of leadership and initiative in the countryside, and to check the continuous drain of talented men from rural to urban centres. However, due to political developments and in spite of the vernacular education a leadership had emerged in the rural areas. This leadership was interested in the development of education in the rural areas but was strongly opposed to attempts made in the direction of creating a parallel system of education for the rural areas. They were justified in their own right as in the political competition with the urban leadership they had to make use of the same instruments of power which the urban leadership was utilising in maintaining its lead.

¹⁶²U.P.Report, p.52, quoted in Progress of Education in India, 1927-32, Vol.I, op.cit., p.97.

¹⁶³U.P.Report p.52 quoted in Ibid., Pp.97-98.

As long as these two parallel streams of vernacular and English middle schools continued there existed an attitude of looking down upon the products coming from the vernacular middle schools to high schools located mainly in urban areas. There was no academic justification for this posture of superiority on the part of products from English middle schools. Students completing the middle stage in vernacular schools had to lose one academic year by continuing in the same grade in high schools due to their deficiency in English language, though in other subjects they may be equal or even ahead of their counterparts in English schools. This showed a bias in favour of English middle schools by the educational administrator in spite of the pronouncement by the authorities in favour of education suitable to rural environment. It was not very surprising that the drift of rural boys to institutions in urban areas continued unabated.

It is difficult to escape the awkward feeling that the present system of education tends to suck the best talent and initiative from the countryside into the towns; and that (what is doubly unfortunate) those village boys who have sought a literary form of education in the towns are more than reluctant to return to the villages in order to serve the countryside.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Progress of Education in India, 1927-32, Vol.I,
op.cit., pp.120-21.

With the expansion of education, high schools were established in the rural areas also. The privileged classes in rural areas who could not send their children to urban institutions dominated the rural high schools. Thus in the rural areas themselves, vernacular middle schools were considered to be giving a sort of inferior education fit only for the inferior classes. This was an unfortunate development in Indian education as educational issues were not judged and evaluated on academic grounds but on extraneous considerations. Table V indicates the growth of middle English schools and middle vernacular schools and shows the trend of enrolment during 1921-37.¹⁶⁵

TABLE - V

GROWTH OF MIDDLE ENGLISH AND MIDDLE VERNACULAR SCHOOLS AND ENROLMENT DURING 1921 - 1937.

Year	Middle English Schools		Middle Vernacular Schools	
	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils
1921-22	2864	264,158	3249	315,072
1926-27	3201	349,233	4728	621,984
1931-32	3875	413,770	5394	805,918
1936-37	4123	460,717	5609	738,570
Increase between 1922-27	337	85,075	1479	306,912
Increase between 1927-32	674	64,537	1166	183,934
Increase between 1932-37	248	46,947	-285	-67,348

¹⁶⁵ Data taken from Table XXXV, Ibid, p.90 and Table XXXII Progress of Education in India, 1932-37, Vol.I, (Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1940)p.77.

The following trends are observed from the foregoing table.

- i) There was a consistent increase in middle English schools and rise in their enrolment during the period 1921-22 and 1936-37. Though the greatest increase in middle English schools was between 1927-32, the increase in enrolment was more between 1922-27. The increase in enrolment showed a decreasing trend during this period.
- ii) There was an increase in the number of middle vernacular schools and enrolment in them during the period 1921-22 and 1931-32; during the subsequent years (1931-32 - 1936-37) the decline was both in the number of institutions and enrolment.
- iii) There was a decreasing trend in the rate of advance of both institutions and enrolment in middle vernacular schools. The actual fall in institutions and enrolment was between 1932-37.

The quinquennial review of 1927-32 recorded that, "Economic distress, far exceeding in magnitude and intensity even that experienced in the post-war years, has intervened; expenditure has been cut down in all directions; the pace of expansion has been retarded; political life has been disturbed; communal bitterness has been accentuated."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Progress of Education in India, 1927-32, Vol.I, op.cit.,
p.1.

The subsequent review of 1932-37 reported about the main features of the period. "Although the situation during the quinquennium under review was not so gloomy as that depicted in the last review, serious causes for anxiety still remain."¹⁶⁷

Quoting provincial reports from Bengal, Bombay and Madras the main cause for the set-back in the growth of enrolment and institutions, was recorded as financial stringency due to the economic depression of 1930. The need for a reorganisation of the educational system was felt acutely during this period.

A further outcome of these years of depression has been the emergence of a widely spread dissatisfaction with the present system of education.... Secondary education in particular is regarded as too academic and as suffering from a lack of variety. Probably at no period in India's history has there been a livelier interest in and concern for the future of education than at the present moment.¹⁶⁸

It is noticeable that the cumulative effect of economic depression and political instability was on the growth of middle vernacular schools. The impact was felt least on the middle English schools. In spite of the felt need for reorganisation in secondary education and the criticism that education was too literary and not in

¹⁶⁷ Progress of Education in India, 1932-37, Vol.I, op.cit.,
p.1.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., Pp.2-3.

accordance with the environment, the increase was comparatively more in English middle schools. The comparative growth and decline in English middle and middle vernacular schools showed that the schemes of educational reforms were in the main ineffective to change the general direction of education. The political reforms introduced by the British and the compromises and adjustments made in the political movement helped in the consolidation of the existing system of education in spite of the occasional shocks received by it.

The most important constitutional development in India before the final act of independence was the Government of India Act of 1935. It was the culmination of the interaction of cross currents generated by the constitutional processes initiated by Montford Reforms and the political struggles symbolised by Mass Civil Disobedience Movement.

The Government of India Act, 1935, was based on the White Paper and Joint Parliamentary Report of 1934. We give below the main features of the Act, especially those with respect to the enfranchisement of a larger section of population in rural areas as it bore a definite relationship with changes contemplated in the reform of education. The attitude of major political parties to the Act and their stand on major educational policies was interlinked.

The Act was in two parts; All India Federation, known as federal scheme and provincial autonomy. India was to become a federation of the British Indian provinces and the Indian states. There were to be two chambers at the Centre, the Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. The princes were allotted a third of the seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and two fifths in the Council of State. The other members of the Central Legislative Assembly were to be elected by the provincial legislatures and those of the Council of State. Legislative power was vested in the Governor General who was still to be appointed by the British Crown and responsible only to the British Parliament, and to the two chambers, the Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. In effect, however, the Governor General was vested with real power in matters such as foreign relations, right of British subjects, right of minorities, finance etc., were still with the Governor General. The federation scheme, however, could never be put into operation due to the opposition by feudal princes who feared that even this limited association with British India would encourage democratic movements in the States.

The second part of the Act which came into actual operation and had a direct effect on the growth of education was with regard to the provincial autonomy. The provincial

legislatures were enlarged with a 12 per cent enfranchisement of the population.¹⁶⁹ Dyarchy was abolished in the provinces and the provincial legislative assemblies were to form the ministries. Ministers were to be responsible to the assemblies. However, all this devolution of power was operative under the overriding power of the Governor. The powers of provincial Governors more or less coincided with that of the Governor General in relation to the Central Legislatures. The Government of India Act also provided for the establishment of upper chambers in the large provinces. The electorate for these upper houses was much restricted compared to that in the legislative assemblies.

The devolution of powers in the provinces and the extension of electorate in the rural areas was a calculated risk taken by the government. The electorate was yet confined to propertied classes and covered mainly the landlord and rich peasants in rural areas. In the urban areas it consisted in the main the business interest and the service classes. They were mainly drawn from the educated classes. The emphasis on the creation of a directing class and an enlightened electorate through better provision of higher education and extended facilities of mass education was closely linked with the broadening of the electorate. It was hoped that the political support

¹⁶⁹ V.V. Balabushevich and A.M. Dyakov (eds.), A Contemporary History of India, op.cit., p.301.

from the landlords in the rural areas combined with the spread of education among the peasant masses would be able to gain a sizeable support for the policies of the government in the legislatures. But this support was misplaced on two counts. In the first place, the political changes envisaged by the Government of India Act of 1935 were rejected by the Indian National Congress which represented the national movement. Secondly the national movement which had reached a higher stage of development with the proclamation of complete independence as its political aim could not achieve it by the mere protestations and limited actions of the educated classes. For creating an enlightened electorate, education was not that potent instrument as the participation of masses in the national struggle. Higher education did meet the requirement of personnel at different levels to man the administrative apparatus. But it could not produce a directing class in the political sense of the term. The leadership in both urban and rural areas emerged through the thick and thin of the political movement and through constructive programmes launched at intervals. It is true that the political leadership emerged from among the university students also. But higher education was not the cause of emergence of political leadership among the

students. It emerged because of the active participation of students in the political movements of the day. Higher education was only incidental to the emergence of leadership at different levels.

The first part of the Act of 1935 i.e., of the Federal scheme remained inoperative due to the absence of an agreement between the principal parties concerned. Hence the government proceeded with the second part and elections to the provincial legislatures were held in the beginning of 1937. The Congress had rejected the new constitution proposed in the Act and had put forward the demand for a Constituent Assembly elected through universal adult franchise which alone was competent to draw any new constitution for the country. But it decided to participate in the elections for the provincial legislatures and made the issue of Constituent Assembly as its election plank. The purpose of getting into the legislatures was to wreck the constitution from within and force the issue of Constituent Assembly. The election campaign was an excellent opportunity for the political education of the masses. The election manifesto issued by the Congress on 23 August 1936 contained three main demands, complete independence, rejection of the 1935 Act and convocation of the Constituent Assembly. Its appeal was directed to enlist the support of widest section of the people and contained concrete

programmes of agrarian and industrial reform.¹⁷⁰ The Congress won 711 of the total of 1585 seats in the provincial legislatures with clear majorities in 5 provinces - Madras, U.P., C.P., Bihar and Orissa. It emerged as the biggest single party in Bombay, Bengal, Assam and North Western Frontier Province. Only in Sind and Punjab the Congress was in a comparatively small minority.¹⁷¹

The Congress policies had now to be coordinated on two fronts, legislative and non-legislative, i.e. programmes and policies outside the legislatures. A convention of newly elected members of Legislatures was held on March 19 and 20 and detailed programme of work inside and outside the legislatures was adopted. It said, "... the awakening of the masses during the election campaign and their interest in Congress work must be activized so as to make them function with a constant and continuous interest in national uplift."¹⁷²

The assumption of office by the Congress brought the issue of education and constructive programme in a clear perspective. The constructive programme was intended to change the outlook of the people and regenerate the spirit of the people in economic and social directions. "This outlook must be cultivated by the educational institutions

¹⁷⁰ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, (1935-1947), Vol.II, (Bombay: Padma Publications Ltd., 1947), p.42.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp.38-39.

¹⁷² Ibid., p.41.

of the land, but must first be fostered by a demand for it from the elders of society and the heads of the families."¹⁷³

To what extent the educational system was geared to meet the national needs depended on the evolution of a national system of education.

What was the state of affairs in Indian education in 1937 when popular ministries were formed in various provinces and took charge of education? This is how the quinquennial review of 1932-37 described the general situation.

Report after report has also referred to the unfortunate tendency of secondary education to accentuate the drift of unsuitable pupils towards higher literary education; to the wastage in primary schools which retards progress towards the attainment of literacy; to the lack of control by provincial governments over the educational activities of local bodies; to the absence of coordination in educational activities; and to shortcomings in the existing system. All these are deeply rooted in the past and cannot be eradicated at once. But it is satisfactory to observe that India generally is becoming alive to these defects and is seriously considering the question of educational reconstruction.¹⁷⁴

A number of committees appointed by the provincial governments during this period emphasized the need for a reorganisation of the education system. Mention may

¹⁷³Ibid., p.61.

¹⁷⁴Progress of Education in India, 1932-37, Vol.I,
op.cit., p.3.

be made of the Punjab University Committee, Resolution on the reorganization of secondary education published by the Government of the United Provinces, Scheme of educational reconstruction published by the Bengal Government and the Third Conference of Indian Universities. All the above mentioned reports stress the need for a radical readjustment of secondary education in such a way that a large number of pupils at the close of the secondary stage are diverted to either occupations or to vocational institutions. The resolution on the reorganisation of secondary education published by U.P. Government emphasized that,

...the value of university education is impaired by the presence in universities of a large number of students who are unfit for higher literary or scientific education; that these students cannot hope to obtain employment which would justify the expense of their education and that the only feasible remedy is to direct them to practical pursuits in the pre-university stage.¹⁷⁵

Another notable event in this period was the revival of Central Advisory Board of Education in 1935 which started functioning as the coordinating body between the Centre and the Provinces. The Central Advisory Board of

¹⁷⁵Quoted in Ibid., p.3.

Education considered the question of educational reconstruction of India in 1935. The Board realised the need for developing a practical type of education especially for those who did not have a literary bent and the advisability of developing a system of rural education which would develop an interest in the work of rural reconstruction. The Board recommended that education should be adjusted to rural requirements and emphasized the need for providing some form of compulsory manual training.¹⁷⁶

It may be noted that emphasis on practical work and manual training was always placed whenever any scheme of rural education was considered. This created a suspicion, not altogether unfounded, that the urban biased educational policies relegated the development of education in rural areas to an inferior status. Over emphasis on manual education in rural areas where a majority of the population was engaged in agriculture and other manual pursuits was certainly a cause of suspicion. On the recommendations of the Central Advisory Board of Education, Government of India appointed A. Abbott and S.H. Wood to advise on the problems of educational reorganisation and vocational education. Its report was published in 1937. The main recommendations of Abbott-Wood report were as follows.

¹⁷⁶Progress of Education in India, 1932-37, Vol.I, op.cit.,
p.107.

In the first part which dealt with general education and administration, problems of pre-primary, primary and middle education were dealt. The educational provision for girls and women was considered necessary for a proper development of pre-primary education. The importance of activity centred education for primary children and environment based curriculum for rural middle schools was emphasized. Mother tongue as medium of instruction at the secondary stage was recommended but English as a compulsory language at the secondary stage was to continue. Teaching of Fine Arts and pre-service training for primary and middle school teachers was recommended to be organised on a more systematic basis.

The recommendations on vocational education by the Wood-Abbott report are an important document in the sense that it was the first systematic study of the place of vocational education in the general scheme of education in India. The important points made out in the report were on the following lines.

- i) Vocational education should be closely related to the industrial development of the country. It should not greatly outstrip the development of industry.
- ii) General and vocational education are the earlier and later phases of a continuous process.

- iii) The cooperation of industry and commerce is necessary for the proper development of vocational education.
- iv) The general pattern of vocational education should be junior vocational schools at the end of the higher secondary stage.
- v) Part-time schools should be provided for the further education of men already in employment.
- vi) A limited number of Higher Secondary Schools should have an agricultural bias and should be a continuation of the Rural Middle School.¹⁷⁷

The need for a reorganisation of the educational system in India was felt long ago and especially during the twenties when Calcutta University Commission recommended a thorough reorganisation of the education at the secondary and university level. The question of education in rural areas in tune with the environment and diversification of education at the middle and secondary stage were also discussed from time to time in educational committees, reports of provincial governments and educational conferences. The significance of the renewed attempts to

¹⁷⁷ Report on Vocational Education in India, (Delhi: Manager, Government of India Press, Simla, 1937), Pp.110-18.

reorganise the educational system lay in the political changes introduced by the new constitution of 1935 and the consequent formation of popular ministries in the provinces in 1937. Other political developments that were taking place outside the legislature were of even more significance in influencing the reorganisation of educational policies. These political developments were signified by organised labour movements, resurgence among the rural population due to organisation of peasant movements and the constructive programmes which had become an integral part of the Congress policies since the twenties.¹⁷⁸

Towards a National System of Education

With the assumption of power in most of the provinces (8 out of 11) in British India under the new constitution of 1935, it had become necessary to define the attitude of the Congress towards the education of the country. The issue of a national system of education independent of government control had been on cards since the anti-partition movement in the early decade of the century. Ever since the political movement came in conflict with the rulers, the existing system of education was condemned

¹⁷⁸ See, R.P. Dutt, India To-day, op.cit., p.348.

"Alongside the National Congress election victories and the formation of the Congress Provincial Ministries, there was a new upsurge of trade union activity resulting in the big strike wave of 1937-38..."

as unsuitable to meet the national needs and even harmful to the growth of a national spirit. The Congress resolution passed on National Education at the Haripura Congress in 1938 condemned the existing system of education in these words.

The existing system of education in India is admitted to have failed. Its objectives have been anti-national and anti-social, its methods have been antiquated, and it has been confined to a small number of people and has left the vast majority of our people illiterate. It is essential therefore to build up national education on a new foundation and on a nation-wide scale...¹⁷⁹

The first attempt to evolve a national system of education was linked with the boycott movement in the wake of anti-partition struggle. But it was mainly confined to one province and had an urban slant. A number of national schools came into existence. These in the main catered to the students who had either left the government or aided institutions voluntarily or had been expelled due to their involvement in the political movement. The curriculum developed in these institutions was not materially different from what was followed in the government controlled institutions except for introduction of national history as interpreted by the political leadership. Their main objective was to arouse among the students

¹⁷⁹The Indian National Congress, Feb. 1938 to Jan. 1939,
(Allahabad: General Secretary, All India Congress
Committee, 1939), p.8.

a national consciousness and a dedication to free the country from the foreign yoke. With the petering off of the political movement they lost their momentum and gradually disappeared from the scene. However, in the political context in which they grew they fulfilled the historic task of raising the national consciousness to new heights and drew in the younger generation to the cause of national liberation. In the second phase of the national movement of twenties, two broad characteristics differentiated the growth of national institutions from the earlier phase. The first was their all India character and the second was the participation of a larger section of the population in the movement. But even then, the national education movement was only an off shoot of the political movement. It grew and fell in accordance with the success and failure of the political movement. We quote below from the History of the Congress regarding the second phase of the national education movement.

...so early as in 1920 when the programme of Triple boycott was embarked upon, the boycott of schools and colleges recognised by government or affiliated to the University attained a certain measure of popularity. And the National schools that came into existence in the hurry of controversial and pugnacious politics were not brought together nor systematized on any well studied principles. They were allowed to drift for themselves and with the lifting of the Triple boycott, the emphasis on this aspect of the Constructive Programme became

weakened. While Khaddar was organised with a capital of about six lacks of rupees in 1925 (September)...., while the removal of untouchability received a great impetus...., while later in 1934, (October) still another auxiliary body was formed under the name of All-India Village Industries' Association, the subject of National Education alone remained apparently neglected. But Gandhi had always been saying when his attention was called to the matter that he did not feel that the time had come for the nation to take up the subject...¹⁸⁰

The question of national education again came into prominence during the civil disobedience movement of the thirties. There was the usual call by the political leadership to the students to plunge themselves into the national movement. The reference to pursue their studies in alternative system of national education was not as prominent as in the earlier two phases. The call given was direct participation in political movement as signified by such expressions as 'throw themselves into the final struggle for freedom', 'complete suspension of their studies as the exigencies of the national movement may require'.¹⁸¹

The unique features of this period which influenced the change of emphasis on educational policies were the participation of masses in the national movement and the

¹⁸⁰ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, (1935-1947) Vol.II, op.cit., p.85.

¹⁸¹ The Indian National Congress, 1930-34, op.cit., pp.6-31.

political reforms introduced by the rulers first by introducing dyarchy in the provinces and later by the Government of India Act of 1935. Both these developments brought in the issues of mass education and rural education into the forefront. Any reorganisation of the education system could not neglect the problem of compulsory primary education. Inclusion of education in the constructive programme of Congress during and after the suspension of civil disobedience movement gave it a broader perspective. It essentially gave a rural slant to the reorganization of the educational system. The formation of Congress Ministries in 1937 brought the problem of national education again into the forefront. An alternative system of education had to be presented before the country as the existing system had been denounced as 'anti-national' and 'anti-social'. The alternative provided was basic education, evolved by Gandhi to meet the needs of education particularly of rural India. The basic principles enunciated by Gandhi were not unknown to the educational world. The activity-centred education had been long before recognized by the western educationists particularly for the younger age group. What was new was the element of productive and useful work in education which could meet part of the expenses of education. Essentially basic education as

propounded by Gandhi was an integral part of the rural reconstruction programme and could be successfully operative only in the economic and socio-political set-up envisaged by Gandhi. As basic changes in the economic and socio political set up could not be brought about, basic education lost its spirit in its implementation and could not provide an alternative system of education.

The issue of national education was discussed in an All-India National Educational Conference held at Wardha in 1937, under the presidentship of Gandhi. The conference passed the following resolutions.

- i) Free and compulsory education should be provided to all children in the age group 7-14.
- ii) Medium of instruction should be the mother tongue.
- iii) Education throughout this period should centre around some form of manual and productive work. All other abilities should be integrally related to the central craft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child.
- iv) This system of education should be able to cover the remuneration of teachers.¹⁸²

¹⁸² S.N. Mukerji, History of Education in India, Modern Period (Baroda: Acharya Book Depot, 1966), pp. 218-19.

The problem of national education was further discussed by a committee headed by Dr. Zakir Hussain. The scheme known as the Wardha Scheme was accepted in the Haripura Congress of 1938, on national education.

The Congress attaches the utmost importance to a proper organization of mass education and holds that all national progress ultimately depends on the method and content and objective of the education that is provided for the people. ... It is essential... to build up national education on a new foundation and on a nation-wide scale... The Congress is of opinion that for the primary and secondary stages a basic education should be imparted in accordance with the following principles:

- i) Free and compulsory education should be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale.
- ii) The medium of instruction must be the mother tongue.
- iii) Throughout this period education should centre round some form of manual and productive work, and all other activities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child.¹⁸³

¹⁸³Indian National Congress, February 1938 to January 1939, op.cit., pp. 8-9.

The Congress recommended the appointment of All India Education Board to work out in a consolidated manner a programme of basic national education and to recommend it for acceptance to those who were in control of state or private education. The intervention of war and the resignation of Congress Ministries did not allow the schemes of educational reconstruction to be pursued with full vigour. However, the efforts to evolve a national system of education for India continued during the post-war years which we have discussed in Chapter VII.

This chapter deals with the major changes in educational policies in British India during the period 1904-1937. The formulation of educational policies have been discussed in relation to the national movement mainly represented by the Indian National Congress. Till 1920 or so the national movement was dominated by the politics of liberalism. But after the twenties, the mass movement launched by Gandhi included both the liberal and radical strain of the Indian political movement. As the influence of radical politics on education has been discussed separately, here we have confined our analysis mainly to the influences of liberal politics on the evolution of educational policies.

The period in the beginning of the present century manifested the contradictions that had emerged between

the rulers and the national movement. The conflicts in the educational policies between the liberal leadership of the political movement and the government were a reflection of the differences on major political issues. The educational policies followed by Curzon were a challenge to the premise that higher education was a stabilising force of the British rule in India. The political leadership took up this challenge and the repercussions on education were the growth of a national spirit exemplified in the demand for a national system of education. But the compromising policies adopted by the liberal leadership prevented the growth of national education movement. Alarm was expressed by both the rulers and the liberals towards the danger of the influence of radicalism permeating the educational institutions and the youth. The political compromise during the viceroyalty of Minto and in the subsequent period necessitated a fresh look at the educational policies which finally resulted in the Government of India Resolution on education in 1913. A significant feature of the educational policies till the first world war was the accent on the emphasis that the spread of education should create a feeling of loyalty towards the empire. Even after the first world war when major constitutional changes were contemplated, the educational policies were tagged to,

- i) the extent to which they helped in strengthening the forces of constitutionalism;
- ii) the extent to which they helped in preventing the growth of radicalism; and
- iii) the extent to which they helped in providing a leadership needed to maintain the existing equilibrium and stability.

It was only after the constitutional reforms introduced in 1919 and the launching of the mass movement in 1920 that the earlier premises on education lost much of their validity. The political aim of mass education shifted emphasis from the creation of a feeling of loyalty to that of creation of an enlightened electorate. Education, however could hardly perform that role in the colonial situation. Devised and institutionalised as it was, it could hardly be an instrument of arousing political consciousness among the masses. The phase of mass movement was marked by the growth of a national spirit in education. The challenge to the existing system of education was thrown in the form of an alternative system of national education. But the policy of the containment of mass movement corroded the national education movement from within. One significant outcome of the mass movement was in creating conditions for a wider participation of larger sections of population in the political

movement. The consequent growth of political consciousness created conditions for the rapid growth of educational awareness.

The appraisal of educational policies in 1928 along with the working of dyarchy emphasized on the creation of a directing class and an enlightened electorate. But the national movement affected the educational system in a different way. It generated a feeling of revolt against the existing system and weakened the faith in the institutional structure. The impact was perceptible in the restiveness shown by the youth. The emphasis after the mass civil disobedience movement shifted again. Education was included as one item of the overall plan of national reconstruction. The importance given to the constructive programme by Gandhi was a part of his strategy to maintain living contact with the masses. The emergence of basic education was an outgrowth of the rural reconstruction programmes.