

# SPEECH

— DELIVERED BY —

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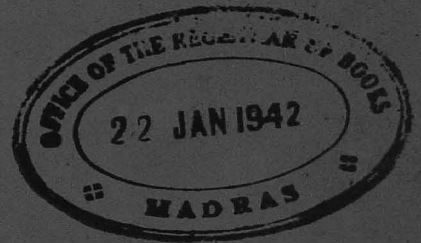
AT

AN ENLARGED MEETING OF THE  
CENTRAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR WOMEN'S  
EDUCATION

HELD AT

THE WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN COLLEGE, MADRAS

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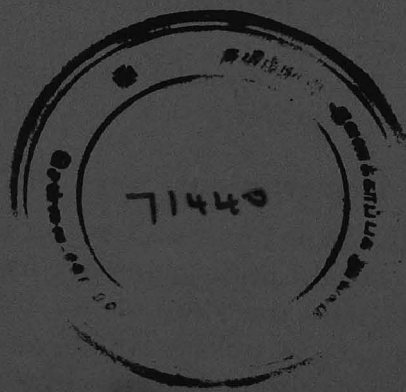
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## MISS RIVETT AND LADIES,

I must begin by saying how deeply grateful I am to the members of the Central Advisory Committee for Women's Education who have made the holding of this Conference possible. Since I became Director the Central Advisory Committee has given me, which I acknowledge with gratitude, the greatest help and it has now given us all a long-wished-for opportunity to meet in a representative gathering of women workers in the field of women's education and to discuss informally the problems which we all meet with in our day-to-day work. I am grateful to all the non-officials and officials who have come long distances to attend this Conference.

I am afraid that my talk to you this morning will be rather long but I sincerely hope that you will forgive that in view of the fact that this is probably the first time, at any rate in my memory, that we have been able to have an All Presidency Women's Conference and also in view of the fact that the more aspects of women's education which we discuss today the greater benefit will accrue to all of us. Speaking for myself, while I have had the privilege of meeting most of you, if not all of you, during my frequent touring in this Province, this meeting has given me a very special opportunity and privilege of meeting you all together, and has given me also a chance of learning and understanding your difficulties and a chance, which I have not hitherto had, of explaining the position of Government and the Department in regard to many questions concerning women's education. With your permission I am going to divide my talk roughly into three parts, (1) a statement of Government's policy, (2) a survey of what has been achieved during the last five years and (3) a review of some special problems confronting us.

### **The policy of Government**

During the last five years the policy of Government in regard to the development of education generally has been constantly stated and re-stated and I trust that most of you are already well-acquainted with those statements of policy, which, as far as I am concerned, began with a Press Communique on Elementary Education issued in December 1936 and was followed by a Press Communique on Education generally, issued in the following year, 1937. Much of the policy naturally is common to both girls and boys and I hope I shall be excused for repeating what may be already familiar to

you; but the repetition of the fundamental points of policy will, I think, assist our discussions today. If I deal with only a few points of policy, you will please understand that it does not mean that these are the only points which Government have considered or are considering. There are far too many details of policy to be all compressed into my speech this morning. It will be sufficient, I think, if I stress the four main primary objectives of Government in education generally, namely, (1) the increase, and a large and rapid increase, in the literacy of this Province, (2) the insistence that all money spent from public revenues on educational institutions and educational effort should be effectively spent, or, in other words, that there should be no waste of material or money in carrying out the policy of Government. You will all realise, I am sure, that waste of material mainly means the waste of ill-directed energy and effort by all individuals connected with education and more particularly the waste of human material by the inability of young pupils successfully to complete at least a primary course of education. (3) the bringing up to the educational level of the forward communities and forward areas the backward communities and the backward areas and (4), which is of overwhelming importance for the purpose of this conference, the belief that the education of a girl is of infinitely greater importance at the present stage of educational development than the education of a boy.

I suppose you will all agree that, perhaps curiously, educational policy is more exposed to criticism, discussion and oratorical effort than any other departmental work of Government. I do not want to be misunderstood, but one gets the impression that every one can be an expert in education and that all, with whatever background of knowledge, are entitled to express opinions on how the problem of education should be handled. Whereas I think I am correct in saying that other departments such as Medicine, public Health, Agriculture, Industries, Police, etc., only at infrequent intervals enjoy the privilege of being told exactly how they should proceed to act in their respective spheres. This is not altogether a matter for regret, but it does sometimes lead to the result that the public are inclined to think that very little is being done for the development of education and that there is no consistent policy in regard to education. On my first point of policy, for example, viz., that of making the men and women of this Province literate there has been a flood of criticism. We have been told that literacy is a



very narrow and limited objective. We have also been told that in aiming at literacy the cultural and social aspects of education have been neglected. Personally I am very happy to put the attainment of literacy as the primary point of Government's educational policy. The dead weight of illiteracy in this country has been responsible for many of its admitted difficulties, including economic, religious, social and political difficulties. Obviously, however, aiming at literacy for all has not excluded, and does not exclude, attention being paid to the development of a general satisfactory cultural education for all who enter our educational institutions. With regard to women's literacy I have no hesitation in saying that Government is firmly convinced, and has shaped its policy accordingly, that the making of women literate will result in, and has in many cases already resulted in, a silent and sometimes almost unrecognised revolution, the far-reaching effects of which you and I cannot yet even estimate. The modesty, unselfishness and self-sacrifice of the women of India are historic and when to those qualities the quality of an educated outlook is also added I am convinced that many of our problems in India, far outside the educational sphere, will be solved and happily solved. No country and no community in the world can safely afford to leave the educational development of its women decades, or may be even centuries, behind the education of its men. It is easy to talk of the large number of highly educated women which, fortunately, are to be found in this Province, particularly in urban areas and especially in a City like Madras; but we all know that the real problem of women's education lies in the rural areas and in the villages. Though, unfortunately, we do not all apply this knowledge in our every day educational and other work. When I became the Director of Public Instruction, women's literacy in this Province was only 2.5 per cent and the rate of progress had been such that mathematically, at a conservative estimate, it would have taken over a 1,000 years to make the women in this Province literate. The figures were staggering and may well have caused most, if not all of us, to have refused to attempt to tackle the problem, but fortunately a very great effort has since been made to increase literacy and especially the rate of progress. Even today, however, none of us need be in the least ashamed, under the circumstances, of putting literacy as our main objective.

The second main item of policy looks on the face of it to be so obvious as scarcely to need mention, namely, that all money spent

should be spent effectively. Unfortunately, however, it is a point of policy which even now is very difficult fully to implement and a point of policy, though I say it with regret, that, in the past, as far as mass education was concerned, was very much neglected. Experienced educationalists like yourselves now know that the mere enrolment of a girl in school gives neither a guarantee of her being made literate nor of her receiving a good education and not even a guarantee of the money spent on her being in any way usefully spent. For many decades even the reports of my own Department used to give figures to show the increased total enrolment of girls undergoing education and deduce therefrom that women's education was progressing satisfactorily. The same reports used also to show the mounting expenditure from public revenues on education, claiming in consequence a great increase in the importance paid to education. The fundamentally important fact, however, as to whether the boys and girls enrolled in educational institutions were actually receiving the minimum education to make them permanently literate or receiving a suitable education making them better and happier citizens of their community and of their Province and country were very rarely touched upon. The Education Budget of the Madras Province is not only the largest budget of this Province but the largest budget in India and it, therefore, became essential, even from the point of view of the ordinary tax-payers like ourselves, to examine whether the huge sums of money which were being spent every year on education were being spent in the best manner possible and in such a way as to ensure that every boy and girl received, as I have already put it the minimum amount of education at least to make them permanently literate. It must be remembered, in this connection, that the Madras Government is spending from public funds well over 2 crores per annum on elementary schools alone. Previously, no doubt, the most honest efforts had been made to spread education widely, even to bring, as some people wanted, a school to the door of every child. It was left unfortunately to the Education Sub-Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, as late as 1929, to point out to Parliament that crores of rupees had been completely wasted under the then existing system. I cannot in this Province differentiate between expenditure on institutions for girls and the expenditure on institutions for boys, because 62 per cent of the girls under instruction in this Province are enrolled in institutions mainly intended for boys. My remarks, therefore, on the previous wasteful expenditure on the education

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of girls apply to the wasteful expenditure on all classes of institutions, particularly elementary schools. It was unfortunate that in the Province of Madras, where education was actually more advanced than in most other Provinces and where relatively a much larger amount of money from public revenue was spent on education, wasteful expenditure should have, in consequence, been even larger than in other Provinces. Though our mass education system even in 1935 provided for a lower elementary course of five years, out of over 49,100 elementary schools only 7,100 schools were complete lower elementary schools with five standards. In this connection it is distressing to have to remember that there were compulsory areas even, in which there was compulsion for girls, in which there were no schools with five standards for pupils to study in. In consequence of these conditions pupils either stagnated hopelessly and helplessly in the first two standards or wasted away after even spending 4 or 5 years without proceeding beyond the second standard. A hugely inflated first standard, in which nothing much was taught or could be taught, was looked upon with comparative unconcern and a wastage between standards 1 and 2 of nearly one million pupils received, until comparatively recently, little or no criticism. Even from the point of view of parents it was not surprising that, particularly when their girls came to the age of 11 or 12 and had not yet passed out of the 2nd standard, they should consider education of comparatively little value. These are unpleasant facts, but they are none the less facts. Many of you here, particularly those of you who come from the territory north of Madras, will remember that right away down to the year 1937 it used to be a common practice, particularly in girls' elementary schools, for the 1st standard to be divided into Section A, Section B, Section C and even Sections D and E and a little girl was solemnly taught the elements of the alphabet for one year in Section A, one year in Section B, one year in Section C and sometimes for two more years in Sections D and E. All these conditions resulted in a miserable waste of effort and material, let alone a colossal waste in expenditure. It was no wonder, therefore, that the Government of Madras at the end of 1936 decided that, while they did not want to reduce the total amount of money spent on education, they must insist that the money spent should be spent on good and complete schools, properly equipped with a properly trained staff, able in consequence really to add to the literacy of the Presidency, let alone to secure for children a reasonably good form of primary education. The policy of

Government in this regard has naturally been subjected to much criticism because it entailed at first a considerable amount of hardship to individuals and to managements who had, in a short space of time, to change the whole structure and organisation of their schools and to alter the methods which had been sanctified by the impress of ages. I am happy, however, to be able to say this morning that most of us, or all of us, think that Government's attitude was right not only from the point of view of looking after the finances of this Province, but also from the educational point of view. There was even a waste of money and material, particularly material, in the sphere of higher education in so far as our higher educational system was based on one narrow pipe line type of education through which everybody had to ascend and out of which nobody could climb. This system led to an enormous number of misfits and, in a sense, added to the problem of unemployment, even in some cases amongst women. There are those who speak in high moral tones of education being an end in itself and particularly of higher education being unrelated to employment and future conditions of citizenship. I am afraid that I have always had a serious quarrel with those who hold this view. There is nothing wrong, and there has been nothing wrong in other countries, in thinking that while education is obviously good in itself it should enable every man and woman to find some means of occupation and should contain within its objectives, for women for example, the possibility of being better citizens, better wives and mothers in the home and better workers if work, as it frequently does, become a necessity.

The third main point of educational policy, namely, the attention to be paid to backward communities and backward areas has always had my deepest sympathy and I know that it has your sympathy. The difficulty has been to translate that sympathy into action. I am afraid that there are many of us who are so situated that we scarcely realise that, while we are vitally interested in the education of our own daughters, we pay little attention to the education of the daughters of less fortunately situated persons. Over and above that we have had to combat, and have to combat even today, the comfortable theory that the 'lower orders' so-called, and particularly girls of the 'lower orders', are very happy and contented without education and their education will serve no useful purpose. Lip service for example, to the doctrine that schools assisted from public revenues should be open to all communities,



has been given for decades in this Province, but it is only this year 1941, that we have at last been able to get rid ruthlessly of all schools which can be proved not to be open to all classes of the community. As in the case of wasteful expenditure, so in this case, what appeared to be and undoubtedly was a most honest interest in the uplift of the backward communities resulted unfortunately in keeping those backward communities permanently backward. It can be stated, speaking very generally, that backward areas and backward communities used normally to have the worst school, with the worst accommodation, the least qualified teacher and the worst equipment and, what was far worse, the most incomplete school; thus, in the name of education, making the possibility of good education and permanent literacy amongst the backward communities and the peoples of backward areas far less possible than was the case for the pupils of forward communities and forward areas. It is greatly to the credit of those concerned that at any rate in the year 1937 it became the accepted policy of Government, printed and published, that as far as possible the schools for backward communities and the schools in the backward areas should be as good as or better than the schools for forward communities and the schools in forward areas.

The last main point of policy, namely, the importance to be attached to the education of a girl is obviously fundamental to the discussions of this conference. One would have thought that generations ago, if not centuries ago, the simple fact that when a woman is educated the whole family gets educated and when a man is educated very often only the man is educated would have been recognised and acted upon; but to get this simple principle adopted and accepted has been, as far as I am concerned, a very uphill task. I am aware that recently, but only recently, well-informed opinion is accepting this view, but even now the acceptance of the opinion is very different to being willing to put belief into practice. As head of the Education Department I have naturally, and perhaps rightly, been subjected to much criticism. The latest Press comment on my efforts to promote girl's education has, however, paid me an unexpected compliment. The comment was that while Mr. Statham's policy was on the whole good it had become positively fanatical in regard to the education of girls. I am speaking seriously and with sincerity when I say that if an ever increasing number of persons, whose actions and opinions carry weight, become fanatical

in regard to girls' education the happier I shall be personally and the quicker we shall show a fine record of educational progress in this Province. Most of you know that I have worked in many parts of India and nothing was more disheartening to me than the defeatist attitude in regard to girls' education, particularly the education of girls in rural areas, which used to hold the field. The Government of this Province can, at any rate, take legitimate pride in the fact that its policy in regard to girls' education is not defeatist in attitude and in fact will not admit the possibility of defeat. In the battle against illiteracy, Government is determined that, willy-nilly, girls will get and shall get education, even if for a time it means a slaking of effort in regard to the education of boys. Most of you, though not all of you, are concerned with education of boys as well as with the education of girls, but if I can go from this conference feeling that I have your unanimous and united support on this primary point of policy and feeling that the 'get the girls into school movement' will be adopted by you at least now as a battle cry I and the members of my Department will be greatly enheartened.

### Survey

I now turn to the survey of what has happened during the last five years. Mainly my figures will be based on a comparison between conditions in the year 1935 and conditions in the year 1940, but occasionally I shall be able to give an up-to-date figure for the year 1941. I do hope that when I give this statement of the progress made nobody will think for a moment that I am attempting to seek any departmental or personal glorification. An examination of our position from time to time is essential if we are to be able to continue to tackle our problems successfully. Moreover, if any credit is due it is due to every one who has co-operated in the recent endeavour to improve the position of girls' education. We may also legitimately put forward a statement of progress in order to encourage many of us who, having faced very special difficulties and uphill work, need encouragement and also need a reminder of what has been achieved in order to be able to go forth and achieve more. Moreover I think, and I hope I may be forgiven for saying so, that all too few workers in the field of education have the opportunity or the time or even take the trouble to study statistics so as to know the facts, be guided by the facts and I hope be encouraged by the facts.

My first figure is a figure in which we can take legitimate pride. Women's literacy in this Province, though better than most other Provinces, was abysmally low, being at the Census of 1931 only 2.5 per cent. The figure for the Census of 1941 was 6.3 per cent making an increase during the decade of 150 per cent. This increase is a provincial record and, I believe, an All India record. Women's literacy is still pitifully low, but if we can in less than a decade increase literacy by 150 per cent and keep that increase moving forward in a geometrical progress there is obviously great hope for the future. The general increase in literacy in the Province of 53.3 per cent was attributed by the Census Commissioner especially to the drive against the removal of illiteracy which has taken place during recent years. We, however, in this conference can be proud that, while in the past women lagged so far behind the men, women's literacy has increased by eight times as much as the increase in men's literacy. It is obvious that from this point of view alone our endeavours to bring the education of women in this province up to and alongside of the education of men has made a promising beginning.

The number of girl pupils under instruction in all classes of institutions is now one million one hundred and eighty thousand or an increase of 335,000 in the last five years. An increase of well over  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a million is, I think, good going. This bare statement of fact alone will not properly indicate the progress made because a number of other factors affecting these figures have to be mentioned. The total number of recognised institutions in the province has fallen from 50,393 to 41,162 representing a loss of over 9,000 institutions. I am well aware that in publicly stating this fact I am going to be hotly criticised in many quarters, because there is a type of mind which, without logic, insists on thinking that a large loss in the number of schools must necessarily mean a large reduction in the number of students. This loss, however, has not been wholly due to a deliberate reduction in the number of schools because approximately 2,500 institutions went away from the Madras Province when the new Orissa Province was formed and with those schools over 50,000 pupils. Further a large number of schools were not actually closed, but amalgamated with existing schools in the same local area. Because of the large reduction in the number of institutions, however, it is all the more to the credit of the forward movement that there should have been an increase of 235,000 girls under instruction

in a comparatively short period of time. Recognised institutions for girls fell from 5,572 to 4,626 though the total number of children under instruction in girls' schools has considerably increased, not forgetting that similarly the number of girls under instruction in boys' schools has very largely increased. As already indicated, in the old days the enrolment at the 1st standard or class was very high followed by an immediate and enormous stagnation or wastage. During the last five years there has actually been a loss of about 3,600 girls in the 1st standard which means that the total gain in the increase of girls under instruction is to be found solely in standards above the 1st. The percentage of pupils in the 5th standard to the number of pupils in the 1st standard has risen from 9 per cent in 1935 to 35 per cent in 1941. This increase in the higher classes and the distribution upwards is exactly what we have all longed for and what we have all worked for. As already indicated also, the real test of how our girls are getting on, from the point of view of adding to the permanent literacy of the women of the province, is to be found in the figures for the increase in the number of girls reading at the literacy point or above.

Although some Census Commissioners have taken children reading in the 4th standard as literate, we only consider that a child has a reasonable chance of retaining permanent literacy if she completes the 5th standard or 5th class. In 1935 we had just over 30,000 girls reading at the 5th standard or class. Today we have over 94,000 girls reading at the same standard or class. An increase of 64,000 girls at the literacy point, apart from the increase in the number of girls reading above the literacy point is, I think, a matter for great gratification. In this increase all classes of the community have shared. In my recent speech at Guntur I gave figures to show percentage increases for girls and backward communities and I was told that percentages might mean anything; that, for example, if one girl increased to two girls it would be legitimately reckoned as a 100 per cent increase. Today, therefore, I am mainly going to adhere to actual figures. Some people are, for example, still nervous that the new policy has retarded the education of backward communities, Scheduled classes and Muslims. The figures for Scheduled class girls at the literacy point have increased from 1,600 to 4,000 and the figures for Muslim girls have increased from 1,600 to 6,500. The conference might like to know that, whatever figures you take, during the past five years the figures for girls of all com-



munities have shown far larger increases than the corresponding figures for boys, which means that we are on the way towards one of our objectives, namely, the putting of girls on the same level with boys.

The policy of having complete elementary schools everywhere, with the exception of a limited number of recognised feeder schools, has been mainly responsible for the good results obtained and I believe that in consequence we are all now committed to the policy of gradually expanding the length of the primary school course. I have already given you the figures in regard to incomplete and complete schools for the year 1935. Today out of a total of 34,888 boys' schools we have 31,741 schools complete with five standards or more and 1,343 feeder schools leaving only 1,804 schools to be developed into complete schools, many of which have not yet had time to become complete. Out of 4,324 girls' elementary schools we have today 3,749 complete schools with five standards or more and 32 feeder schools leaving only 543 schools to be developed into complete schools, thus out of a total of 39,212 schools as many as 36,865 have now satisfied Government's policy in this regard. Since we were not able even to begin the development of complete schools until the year 1937 and in view of the fact that though the financial provision for education has increased it has been restricted by retrenchment and by War conditions, such a result in such a short time should give all of us great encouragement.

During the period we are reviewing, girls reading at the Middle school stage have increased by over 23,000 and girls reading at the High school stage have increased by nearly 4,000. At the University stage the number of girls reading has almost doubled, increasing from 790 to 1,560. Scheduled class girls reading at the Middle school stage have almost doubled in numbers, being now over 2,400 and Muslim girls reading at the Middle school stage have almost trebled in numbers being now 1,550. At the High school stage we now have approximately 130 Scheduled class girls and 190 Muslim girls. In 1935 we only had 8 Scheduled class girls reading at the Universities, by 1940 this number had increased to 42. The corresponding figures for Muslim girls were 34 and 72, including one Muslim undergoing post-graduate study. It is interesting also to note that last year there were two Scheduled class girls reading in the Medical College and 10 Muslim girls. There

is one fact about the higher education of women in Madras which is perhaps outstanding and that is that we now have three ladies undergoing the Bachelor of Engineering course in the Engineering College, Guindy. It is also interesting to note that as distinct from a *nil* return in 1935, eight women last year completed their Nursery School Certificates and 10 women passed the Teachers' Examination in Indian Music. The number of girls reading at the 8th standard has almost doubled from 6,300 to over 12,000 and the number of girls reading at the VI Form has increased from just over a 1,000 to nearly 2,000. In consequence of these increases, the number of women candidates for the S.S.L.C. Examination has increased from 885 to 1,800. The figures for increases in higher education are particularly important in the case of girls, because, obviously, while there is no longer a dearth of what one might call 'leaders' amongst educated men, except in the case of a few backward communities, there is still a great need for 'leaders' amongst women. It is, therefore, gratifying to note the increases in higher education amongst the women of all communities. Earlier in my speech I have explained how the real problem of the education of women lies in the rural areas and villages. It is therefore of special interest to note that the number of girls from rural areas under instruction has increased by over 175,000 from 515,000 to 690,000. It might also interest the conference to know, in relation to the social customs which have been so frequently put forward as an excuse for the lack of education amongst girls, that last year there were approximately 8,200 married women under instruction in all our institutions.

In the recent report of the Special Committee for the education of Muslim girls appointed by the Women's Central Advisory Committee, it was suggested that while I had paid greater attention to Muslim girls' education in Malabar much more had to be done for Muslim girls' education in the other districts of the Presidency. I agree that much more has to be done generally for the advancement of Muslim girls' education, but there seems to be some misunderstanding in regard to the position of Muslim girls' education. While it has been difficult to obtain a large number of Muslim girls for higher education the Muslim community has steadily increased the number of its girls under instruction generally. The figures for 1940 show that 6.8 per cent of the Muslim women's population were under instruction as against 4.6 per cent for the

women of all communities and as against only 3.9 per cent for the whole non-Brahmin community of this province. The increases in the number of Muslim girls under instruction at the various stages have by no means been confined to Malabar only.

The number of girls reading in secondary schools for Indians has increased to approximately 43,000 or by over 16,500. This remarkable increase has largely been made possible by the fact that during the last five years 27 new High schools for girls have been opened and the total number of secondary schools for girls, High and Middle, has increased by 23. These figures alone, I think, amply vindicate Government's policy in regard to girls' education. A rise in the number of High schools from 48 to 75 in a comparatively short period may well be regarded as exceptional. It is also important to note that every district in the Presidency has now been provided with at least one secondary school for girls. Nor has Government slackened in its efforts to provide more facilities for the higher education of girls as proposals are now in front of Government for opening next year of eight more Government secondary schools for girls, including one High school for Muslim girls and four Middle schools for Muslim girls, later to be developed into High schools. If permission is given to open all these schools I shall be happy to think that, apart from other considerations, whereas in 1935 we had only one secondary school for Muslim girls in the whole Province we shall have next year 3 High schools for Muslim girls and altogether seven secondary schools for Muslim girls. As an indication of the progress of higher education amongst Muslim women, the conference might like to know that I now have 11 Muslim lady graduate L.T.'s working in my department, including one Moplah Sub-Assistant Inspectress and one East Coast Muslim Sub-Assistant Inspectress.

I have spoken of the need for leaders. This obviously includes the need for women teachers. One of the outstanding reasons for the advancement of women's education in this Province has been the large number of women teachers employed in all types of schools. In 1935 we had 15,441 women teachers of whom 13,042 were trained. By 1940 we had 20,421 women teachers of whom 18,614 were trained and this in spite of retrenchment and the abolition of a large number of schools. With the rapid increase in enrolment of girls in boys' schools Government, as part of its present policy,

issued directions to all boys' schools to increase the number of women teachers particularly to look after the interests of girls and also to handle the lower classes both for boys and girls, with the result that by 1940, including teachers in secondary schools for boys, there were as many as 5,868 women teachers working in boys' schools. Conversely, Government for obvious reasons has attempted to reduce the number of men teachers employed in girls' schools and the number of such teachers has fallen from 4,800 in 1935 to 3,300 in 1940. One of the problems which I know you want to discuss today is the position of women teachers, particularly in rural areas. I am not going to dilate on the problem, except to quote the old proverb that 'there is safety in numbers' and we in this province are now peculiarly fortunately placed in having such a large body of women teachers at work. Moreover in boys' schools under local bodies Government have ordered that where women teachers are available for employment at least two must be employed. A comparison with the position in other Provinces might be encouraging. From the latest figures available I find that in Bengal there are only 7,130 women teachers, 1,802 being trained. In the United Provinces 6,312 women teachers, 2,644 being trained. Both these Provinces are larger than Madras. Even in the advanced Province of Bombay there are only 8,495 women teachers, 4,063 being trained. In Bihar there are 2,413 women teachers, 909 being trained and in the Central Provinces 2,220 women teachers, 1,409 being trained.

One good feature, which must be mentioned, of the advancement of girls' education in recent years is that that advancement has not been confined only to forward districts. If one examines the percentage of girls under instruction and the increase in that percentage in recent years, one finds that, while large increases have been recorded in forward areas like Madras City, Malabar and South Kanara, large increases have also been recorded in what were, from the point of view of girls' education, backward districts, like Vizagapatam, Bellary, Chittoor, Tanjore, Coimbatore and Salem.

It may not be out of place, before I pass on to 'special problems', to mention one or two reforms of a general nature which have affected girls' education. The syllabuses for all elementary schools, both higher elementary and lower elementary, have been revised, particularly, to give them a more practical bent. Consequently also the syllabuses for all secondary grade and higher ele-



mentary grade Training Schools have been revised. The revision of all these syllabuses has made it possible to introduce in all higher elementary schools pre-vocational and practical work and to insist on some form of craft work in all lower elementary schools. Physical Education has not been neglected and, as you know, a Physical Education record now has to be maintained in all S.S.L.C. registers and for all students under training. The course conducted for training Women Physical Training Instructresses by Mrs. Buck at Saidapet has developed and improved and has, I hope, become practically an annual course; with the result that we are getting more and more qualified Women Physical Training Inspectresses in our girls' schools and it has now been proposed that we should have Women Physical Training Instructresses even in boys' High schools in which there are a large number of girls under instruction. The strength and number of the inspectorate has been increased, including a small increase in the Women's Branch. District Educational Councils have been abolished and I do not think that there are many who grieve over this change, mainly because while they were in existence Government found it impossible properly to direct and control policy, when the two primary powers of recognition and grant-in-aid were outside the hands of Government. Managements also, I have reason to believe, prefer in matters of grant-in-aid and recognition to deal directly with the Education Department. District Secondary Education Boards have been abolished and although we had hoped, when they were established, to obtain sound advice and co-operation, in practice unfortunately references to these Boards not infrequently meant a delay in the granting of recognition and the opening of higher forms in secondary schools. Lower elementary training has been completely abolished with the result that the general standard of teaching staff qualification has been largely raised. This also, I think, has been widely welcomed by those who are directly responsible for the maintenance of schools. Recently strong action has been taken to improve local board administration, particularly in regard to the balancing of local board elementary education budgets. In this connection some retrenchment has had to be effected and has caused hardship, but on the whole the main result of what has been done has been to ensure the men and women teachers working under local bodies more regular pay, the pay due to them under Government orders, the payment of increments and the removal of cuts in pay. These improvements must surely be welcomed by all educationalists.

Government have recently ordered that women clerks should be recruited, when new recruitment is made, to all the offices in the Women's Branch of my Department. One result of this has been, and I think a very good result, that more women are coming forward to pass clerical and technical examinations and qualify themselves for these new clerical openings. The proposals for the re-organisation of secondary education have, as you know, long been under discussion and these proposals lay particular stress on the need for bifurcated courses in girls' high schools offering mainly secretarial work, Domestic and Home Science, preparation for nursing services, the Fine Arts, including Music and Painting, Needlework, etc., for girls who do not intend or who have no need to proceed to collegiate courses of study. There have also been developments at the collegiate stage. Courses for our Training Colleges have been revised by the Madras University and Music and Geography are now taught to the degree standard in the Queen Mary's College, Madras. It is also an open secret that the Queen Mary's College and the Women's Christian College have applied to the Madras University for affiliation, as from next year, in a joint B.Sc. Home Science course. This course, if introduced, will, to put it briefly, meet a long-felt want. Mention must also be made of the fact that we now have an appreciable number of Nursery Schools, Kindergarten and Montessori schools. Where educational concessions to girls had recently been withdrawn they have now been restored and similarly the educational concessions to Scheduled class converts have also been restored. We were handicapped for a long time in being unable to grant women from the backward communities and Muslim women stipends for secondary grade training. Government have now permitted the award of such stipends in Government Secondary Training Schools. The number of scholarships available for women at various stages of education have generally been increased, but in particular, scholarships for Muslim girls have been increased. Government have also recently sanctioned a scholarship of Rupee One per mensem in Standards 4 and 5 for all girls of the Hill-Tribes in the Nilgiris. These steps are further indications of Government's anxiety to improve the education of backward communities. One final point may perhaps be mentioned, which ought to have pleased many of you, and that is that religious instruction of all kinds is now permitted within school hours in all elementary schools.

## Special problems ✓

I will now deal briefly with a few of the special problems in which I know you are all vitally interested. Increased grant-in-aid and the removal of pro-rata cuts in elementary schools have very naturally been important requests from aided managements. I can only say that we are all happy that for the moment pro-rata cuts seem to have vanished and also say that we must all realise that, in spite of retrenchment, the amount of teaching grant-in-aid alone, payable to aided elementary schools has increased even between 1935 and 1941 by Rs. 28.07 lakhs from Rs. 51.82 lakhs to Rs. 79.89 lakhs. This is, to put it mildly, appreciable. We all want more money. I am always pressing for more money, but I do think that we should on an occasion like this pause and remember that in the matter of grant-in-aid the Governments of this Province have been liberal, rather than niggardly. The original grant-in-aid system pre-supposed a 50 per cent contribution from managements and a 50 per cent contribution from Government, fees of course, if any, being included in the management's contribution. In so far as elementary schools are concerned the grant-in-aid system has admittedly broken down and Government is now bearing from public revenues 90 per cent of the cost of the maintenance of all elementary schools. Even in regard to secondary schools, a very considerable number of schools are working at a profit (approximately 100) and yet receiving full fee compensation for loss of fees under Rule 92 of the Madras Educational Rules. It might interest you to know that, from Government funds alone, the Madras Government is spending nearly one crore and 13 lakhs on grant-in-aid, excluding grants on buildings, equipment, scholarships, etc., whereas in the larger Provinces of Bengal and the United Provinces only 63 lakhs and 28.1 lakhs respectively are spent on grant-in-aid from Government funds. In the United Provinces there are much fewer aided institutions, but in Bengal there are over 20,000 more than in Madras. It is perhaps good to remind ourselves that there are provinces in which a far smaller contribution to aided institutions is made from Government funds and that there are provinces in which aided managements have to rely much more largely on fees and other sources for the maintenance of their schools. In spite of retrenchment and obvious difficulties, the rate of grant-in-aid for higher elementary and secondary trained teachers has twice been raised by Government since 1936. The aided school teacher's pay,

I fully realise, is still low, but with these increases in pay and with the introduction of Teachers' Service Registers and also the introduction of a quarterly grant payment system nobody, I think, can deny that things have improved during the last four years.

For many years it has been a constant complaint from managers of aided schools that so much is spent on local body elementary schools for example and so little on aided elementary schools. Nobody ever pretended that quasi-Government schools, entirely financed from public funds, could possibly cost the State as low a figure as aided schools managed by independent aided managements. It scarcely seems just or necessary to continue perpetually to lay stress on the obvious fact that quasi-Government schools must necessarily cost more than State aided schools, unless it is solemnly proposed that the pay of quasi-Government servants should be largely reduced in order to bring it down to the level of the pay of teachers employed by independent aided managements. In this connection I should like to say that, while we are struggling year by year to improve the pay and conditions of service of aided school teachers, it would be a disastrous thing for the future of the teaching profession if, out of what, in a sense, is a kind of jealousy we reduced the pay of those teachers who are employed under local bodies, rather than continued to attempt to raise the pay, by whatever means, of teachers employed in aided schools. It appears to me that the method of approach to this problem has been wrong. We should be glad that teachers employed under local bodies are getting, at any rate in some cases, fairly reasonable salaries, while at the same time we should continue to press for better conditions in aided institutions:

It has been a source of complaint that the special concessions, other than the financial concessions, which used to be allowed to women and to backward communities generally have been removed. I have already in my speech referred to the fact that such concessions, taking the form of the exemptions for unqualified teachers, the continuance of lower elementary training, the continuance of incomplete schools and the less good provision of schools for backward communities, have resulted in positively retarding the progress instead of assisting the progress of the education of backward communities. Schools for Muslim women and schools for the Scheduled classes including Government Labour schools, are doing infinitely better work now that they have been made complete schools and



have been staffed by higher trained teachers. I find it impossible to agree with any proposal to put the clock back and, under the guise of pity for backward communities, place them in a relatively disadvantageous position compared with the forward communities. I am convinced, and I do sincerely hope that I am right, that such concessions definitely retard progress rather than assist it. In so far as women generally are concerned I am sure that this Women's Conference will endorse the belief that women do not require any concessions which are not given to men. In fact I have been encouraged in my opinions by the repeated resolutions passed by prominent Women's Associations to the effect, for example, that compulsion must be introduced for all girls, including Muslim girls, a recommendation which has had the full support of Government. As already explained on the other hand fee concessions and scholarships have been extended and I hope will continue to be extended.

The new rule that in boys' schools in areas where there are no girls' schools 25 per cent of the girls of school age in the local area must be in attendance at school has caused, I know, in some quarters considerable apprehension. If, however, we are sincere in our belief that girls' education is at present of far greater importance than the education of boys, I do not understand how we can oppose the rule or even a further extension of the rule. The only genuine excuse offered for the non-attendance of girls at school is the economic one and this excuse applies equally to the non-attendance of boys. Steps can be taken to get over the economic difficulties by opening the purse strings of local associations, individuals, local bodies and of all persons really interested in girls' education so that clothes, books, slates and mid-day meals can be provided for the very poor. That girls have to be used for agricultural work and for domestic work in preference to boys I cannot possibly accept. What a young girl of school age can do in the fields and at home can equally well be done by a boy and if, though I still doubt it after a very long experience, it is really true that children are required continually for agricultural and domestic work, that work should, in future, be done by the boys, while the girls attend school. Government feel very strongly on this point and the recent speeches of the Educational Adviser to His Excellency the Governor have made it quite clear that the Government are going to continue to press for a much larger attendance of girls in school than we have had hitherto.

The raising of the number of working days in elementary schools from 180 to 220 has caused somewhat of a commotion, but I have promised that at the end of this school year the position will be reviewed and if there are real hardships in particular cases those hardships will be taken into account. Managements, however, forget that there is even now a provision in the rules for a relaxation of the number of working days by the Inspectresses and the District Educational Officers. They further forget that, even before the number of days was fixed at 220, a very large number of schools worked for more than 220 days. They even, in some cases, conveniently forget that the Wardha Scheme, which so many praised, insisted on 288 working days. The hours of work and the number of days of work for elementary schools in Madras are the same as for elementary schools in England, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and many other countries and it cannot be said generally that climatic conditions are so much worse in South India as to make it impossible to follow a similar system of working days. Actually the hours of work in the countries I have mentioned are longer than they are in our schools in South India, because physical education and outdoor work, such as gardening, are not included in the ordinary school hours.

I have dealt only with a few special problems but I will gladly, in the course of our coming discussions, deal with any other problems which come up. I should like to say, however, that we in the Education Department have a special problem of our own. Propaganda has been largely responsible for the results so far achieved and propaganda, coupled with financial assistance to the really backward and poor, has done a great deal to help the enrolment of poor girls at school. As a Department, however, we are still badly in need of greater help in this work of propaganda and of giving financial assistance in the shape of clothes, books, slates and mid-day meals to poor pupils. I made an appeal over two years ago in a speech at Coimbatore to all the Women's Associations in South India and to the educated well-to-do women in South India to come forward and help us in this matter. I am sorry to say, on an occasion like this, that the response has not been very large. Many conferences have been held and many resolutions have been passed, but the number of non-official ladies who are willing to go into the villages, talk to the parents about the importance of education for girls and provide small financial assistance for the really poor

is very small. We had hoped that the women members of our Taluk Advisory Committees, upon whom these duties were specially enjoined, would do much in this matter but unfortunately very little has been done. I have known, and I still know personally, many educated and comparatively wealthy ladies who have not even yet visited a single elementary school or done any house-to-house propaganda work in rural areas where it is so much needed. We now have women on our legislatures, on our local bodies and on the committees of so many public institutions. I do most earnestly appeal to them to assist us more actively and more fruitfully in achieving the aim, which should be the heart's desire of every woman in South India, that no girl of whatever community or however backward or poor should be robbed of her birthright, namely, the minimum of a primary education course. A little sustained propaganda and a very little outlay of money can produce wonderful results, but these tasks cannot be left only to the members of my Department, which include, if I may say so, all those who are working directly and officially in the field of education. School teachers of all grades and professional educationalists of most grades are less well financially and otherwise situated than many educated non-official ladies. We still are greatly in need of help and with all the earnestness that I can command I do request that that help should be forthcoming in ever-increasing measure.

I had intended to say something of the future, but I have spoken too long already and I think the future and its problems may well be left to our ensuing discussions. I am deeply grateful to you all for hearing me so patiently and at such length and once again I express the sincere hope that the discussions of this Conference may prove of lasting benefit to the advancement of Women's Education in South India.

