

REPORT  
of the  
COMMITTEE  
ON  
MALAY EDUCATION  
FEDERATION OF MALAYA

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why the progress of the Malay boy of 6 to 8 is slow compared to that of the non-Malay pupil of his own age in English schools. Many parents would like religious instruction to be included in the morning curriculum so as to free the pupils from dreary afternoon work and also to have religious tonets taught along proper lines such as are followed in the Government vernacular schools in Zanzibar.

#### Summary.

24. Many Malay parents have almost lost their hope in the Malay schools. But since the liberation there has been an awakening. Owing to the existence of school committees, parents have shown a little more interest than in pre-war days. This interest may be transitory and may lapse into indifference again unless something is done to improve the facilities for education. These are the views of most Malays at present. As education in the Malay schools is free, most Malay parents have had the idea that they have to be satisfied with what is laid down for the education of their children. The loss of hope in the Malay school, coupled with the belief that they have no say in the education of their children, has made Malay parents indifferent to the progress of their children in school. Teachers in their turn have lost a great deal of their keenness in their work when they see that parents pay little heed to their complaints or advice. Hence we observe the dull atmosphere in the school, the lack of activity on the part of the pupils, and the absence of enthusiasm on the part of the teachers. The lack of ambition and initiative noticeable in the Malay school pupil may be attributed to the conditions under which he is taught and these qualities are carried on into the post-primary school, with the result that only a few Malay pupils succeed in the English schools.

### CONSTRUCTIVE MOTIVES AND AIMS: THE MALAY HOME.

1. The evidence of our Malay witnesses, together with the glosses upon it which members of the Committee were able to add, furnishes fairly clear answers to two important preliminary questions. It tells us on what grounds Malay opinion holds the present educational arrangements to be inadequate; and it tells us at what points and in what directions Malay opinion would like to see changes made. That is valuable information to have provided.

2. A third preliminary question, of equal or greater importance, remains. Upon this the testimony of Malay spokesmen is, perhaps inevitably, vague and hesitant. We may frame the question thus: What constructive motives and aims underlie, or are implied in, the critical and dissatisfied Malay attitude? How strong, how solid, and how enduring would be the effort the Malay people might make in support of education authorities insisting reforms in the sense which Malay opinion desires?

3. We have seen that the prevalent attitude of the moment is one of apprehension and doubt. Malay thinking turns towards education as promising escape from the painful tensions of anxiety and disenchantment. Can such attitudes be made creative enough to support the effort needed for bringing a new school system into existence? If education is to do for the Malay people what many forward-looking Malays hope, the undernourished and fatalistic kampong-dweller will have to scrape, save, work and produce as he never has before; he will have to set aside old customs and traditions to the point of developing a largely new way of life. None of these things will he do, unless he is impelled by some very powerful motive. A component in that motive must, it seems, be a living and practising faith in education as a regenerative force, and a grasp of its meaning, its possibilities and its limitations as a determinant both of individual and of social growth.

4. To discern the working of such a motive among the Malay community at this moment is not easy. It is perhaps significant that (as the previous chapter illustrates) Malay educational demands still find their readiest expression in the passive voice. Education is thought of as something that is done to one, not as a form of self-activity. Doubtless this outlook reflects the long-continued dependence of the Malays on such pervasive social factors as the paternal protection of British administration and the commercial and other services of Chinese and Indian enterprise.

5. In point here is a just and penetrating observation of one of our witnesses. "In my experience," he says,

"school teachers, male and female, are valuable and alert members of the kampong communities, not seldom hindered by the ultra-conservatism of other leaders in the *muslim*. The greatest reason why there is dissatisfaction in the kampongs with Malay vernacular education is that there is no interest in education *per se*, no reverence for

secular, as distinct from religious, education. I have met so many Malays who approve of sending their children to school so that they can become gurus, policemen, soldiers; but I have never heard anyone say anything which could be construed by the most optimistic as a wish for education for its own sake. The normal reaction is that if a boy or girl is to work *saich*, time spent in school is a waste. One can comment that a community gets the education it deserves; the parents must improve before the teachers can."

6. The effects of schooling on a child are rarely those which educationists intend, except when the formative influences of the school are smoothly geared to the traditional value-systems of the home. If there is no harmonious connection between the two sets of influences, home and school either revolve each on its own axis independently of the other, or they pull in different directions. In the one case, the mutual support of domestic and scholastic life is missed, and then some vital spark in the educational process is never struck. In the other case, there is conflict in place of reinforcement, with resulting confusion in the child, mistrust between parents and teachers, and a tendency for the educational efforts of both to cancel out.

7. We have, therefore, given attention to the question how far the Malay child benefits from a gearing together of home and school, and how far he or she suffers from a divergence between them. Consideration of this matter is the more necessary, since the Malayan scene presents a variety of cultures, each of which embodies distinctive value-systems of its own. It is at the best of times a perplexing business for one generation to bring up and educate another, even when the process goes on within a single pattern of culture. It is much more so, when, as in Malaya, the child finds one complex of beliefs and desires approved in his own home, another recommended to him in school and yet others accepted by large numbers of fellow-citizens further afield.

8. Observers agree that Malays of all classes show great tenderness towards children, especially towards infants and toddlers. Small children are constantly fondled and caressed by the older members of the family, including grandparents, and by friends and acquaintances who visit the home. Parents who slap or shout at their children may come under sharp criticism from relatives and neighbours, and the misbehaviour of a child is more apt to be ascribed to its parents' failure in kindness or forbearance than to their over-indulgence. In this atmosphere children themselves learn from an early age to feel fondly for their younger brothers and sisters. The older child is encouraged to adopt a responsible attitude towards his or her *adik*, to take charge of it when the mother leaves the house, to play with it, to keep watch over it, and to help to feed and dress it and keep it clean and tidy.

9. Thus the Malay home is normally a place of much good feeling and reciprocal affection. It would seem admirably adapted to giving the growing child that fundamental emotional security, that sense of being permanently wanted and valued, which is the starting-point for healthy and balanced development of the person. Indeed, it is a typical strength of the Malay

character that its growth is not stunted or distorted by repression. It may be remarked on the other hand, that Malay ideas on bringing up children do not appear to include any view of the process known to western parents as spoiling.

10. It was put to us that, notwithstanding all the advantages of this feeling-tone in the home, the Malay child on the whole gets a less favourable start in life than the children of other communities. If this is true, the reasons are no doubt partly economic and medical. Low standards of hygiene and nutrition, expressed in a high rate of infant mortality, naturally have very damaging consequences for the children who survive infancy. There is plenty of evidence that the rate of infestation by intestinal worms is very high among Malays. Malay girls often become mothers before they have reached physical maturity. Other evidence, however, suggests that psychological factors also are at work, and that many of these can be classed as forms of "spoiling".

11. For example, the feeding of infants is said to be seldom carried out at regular intervals, and the food given (apart from mother's milk) consists largely of carbohydrates (rice, sugar, bananas, etc.). Weaning is long delayed and not methodically completed, cases occurring of children who still claim the breast at four and five years old, while at the same time they share the full diet of the family. It is said also that training in bowel and bladder control is frequently put off until the third or fourth year, and may not be methodically applied even then. "Many of the children," one witness stated, "are not disciplined in any way. They eat when they like and what they like and seldom go to bed before their parents. Physical faults which could be remedied are not attended to, because either the grandparents are prejudiced against modern medicine, or the parents are ignorant of it, or the child of only a few years "does not want it." Diseases such as malaria, which could be largely prevented by care of the surroundings or getting the children to bed at a reasonable hour under a mosquito net, and intestinal worms, which could be eradicated by attention to hygiene, are mainly ignored by the majority of Malays." Yet these two diseases alone are scourges which play havoc with the vitality, and therefore with the educability, of the Malay people.

12. In general, there is a lack of awareness in Malay parents of the importance of their active interest in the education of their children, both in the home and in the school. Frequently, too, there is a traditional attitude which distinguishes the function of the parent from that of the teacher, and the tradition is used, no doubt unconsciously, to justify parental indifference to that part of a child's life which is lived in school. This attitude, combined with the fact that the home fails to provide the regulation and discipline of a settled routine, often results in children staying away from school on trivial grounds and even leaving school altogether before completing their course.

13. We believe that the practice of early marriage, though we are informed that it is less common than it used to be, is still of significance here in more than one way. Marriage at too early an age is, of course, open to objections of a physiological kind. It may mean, also, that children are born into a home which is either controlled by grandparents or left to a mother

herself too undeveloped and inexperienced to carry the responsibility of bringing up children. Viewing the practice of early marriage from the standpoint of the prospective bride and bridegroom, we have been given instances where pupils of both sexes in English schools are put under pressure from their parents and relatives to marry while still at school. If they yield to the pressure, they are obliged to leave school; if they resist, they do so at the cost of a mental conflict almost equally prejudicial to the progress of their studies.

14. While our analysis does not pretend to be exhaustive, the factors mentioned above do give some measure of the serious handicap under which Malay children as a group enter the educational race. They go far to account for the observed fact of a widening gap between promise and fulfilment which often shows itself during their school lives. It has been remarked that the pupils coming into the Special Malay classes in English schools still seem bright, keen and active. But the comparative figures of wastage show that it is greatest for Malay pupils, and that there is a progressive decline in numbers and achievement of these pupils from Standard VI onwards in English schools. It seems probable that this is due basically to "residual incapacity" arising from defects of nutrition, hygiene and character-training in infancy and early childhood. It may well be that such incapacity is fixed by these early defects, and cannot be removed by any remedial measures applied later.

15. In relation to the development of character, it is hardly possible to exaggerate the need for proper methods of infant feeding and for the training of children in personal hygiene. The infant naturally treats the world as existing to supply his wants, and in his early days the world's agent in this role of universal satisfier is his mother. It is entirely right that this should be so. But the process of growing up involves the discovery that the world has many matters to attend to, and is both unable and unwilling to devote its whole energy to the interests of one person, however much he may feel himself to be the hub of the universe. This discovery must always be a shocking one, but the blow can be softened if the mother is perceived as the source of deprivations and refusals as well as of satisfactions. It is easier to do without something one wants, if one has confidence that it is being denied by an agency which is fundamentally well-disposed and which, while it may withhold some good things, can at any rate be counted on to provide many others. Hence the importance of maternal discipline in the first months and years of life. Such discipline can in practice be exercised only by setting up a smooth-running routine in all matters concerning feeding and excretion, and by steadily adhering to it.

16. It is, of course, quite possible for parents to be too rigid and exacting. Much harm is probably done in western countries, for example, by associating cleanliness training with feelings of guilt. But when the balance between laxity and strictness is judiciously held, the child is well on the way to learning one of the crucial lessons of life, namely to take no for an answer without sulking or losing his temper. If one does not begin in infancy to develop this ability to tolerate frustration, one cannot, it seems, carry its development very far in later life. This is a serious matter if one wants to get things done, and intends that one's having been born should make some sort of

difference to one's world. Tolerance of frustration has been a main source of western man's achievement as explorer, inventor, and reformer; in consequence it is now a chief component in western formulae for measuring moral stature. The heroes of the west are usually people who contrive to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. Anyone who can satisfy the conditions of Kipling's "If" has a high degree of frustration-tolerance.

17. Frustration is what everybody feels when an obstacle is placed across the path to a desired goal. It can give rise to several kinds of behaviour. A man can pile on the effort, with a view to surmounting the obstacle and reaching the goal in spite of it; or he can lash out wildly in rage and disappointment, forgetting the goal; or again he can throw up the sponge, renounce the goal, and fall into apathy and resignation. Which of these courses a given person will follow depends partly on how formidable he takes the obstacle to be, and partly on the degree of his frustration-tolerance. The firmness of the foundation on which this quality rests is determined by the experiences of infancy. If the foundation is sure, a superstructure of almost any complexity can be reared upon it; and for most of us, life is a series of graded challenges in which, having passed one test, we go on to another more severe, until we finally meet our match. Thus the power of driving consistently towards a series of goals of ever-increasing difficulty, without being diverted or too long held up by intervening obstacles, is taken as an index of personal worth in individuals and of high morale in groups.

18. It does not appear that lack of perseverance and of application is popularly considered by the Malays as weakness of character; rather they feel it shows common sense in declining to waste time on unrewarding material. Nor can they be said to have exhibited high morale as a group, if the marks of that quality are a sense of converging upon an agreed objective, under leadership which enhances the cohesion of the group, requires reasonable equality of effort and sacrifice, and guarantees reasonable equality of reward. Indeed, the Malays are only now beginning to become goal-conscious, to think in terms of common policies realisable by common endeavour, to be concerned with self-improvement either as a group or as persons, and to wish to give a fair wind to the spirit of reform.

19. This spark, now for the first time glowing in their group-life, holds more promise than any other feature in their whole situation. The schools can help to fan it into flame, but only if they receive the understanding co-operation of the homes. To bring the homes to a state of understanding and willingness to assist the common enterprise is the urgent task of everyone who can bring any kind of influence to bear upon them. There are thus two complementary aspects of the problem of Malay education. One is to improve the facilities provided by the educational system. The other is to improve the educability of the Malay child—in other words, to raise his or her potentialities as a pupil in the various types of school of which the educational system is to consist. This second duty, which is in some ways the more vital, calls for a co-ordinated and concentrated attempt to develop the strong points of the average Malay home and to help parents to deal sensibly with its weak points. For the home is the source and seat of all educability.

20. The home is also the main power-station for generating the motive force and supplying the channelled social energy which is to carry educational reform to its objectives. "The parents must improve before the teachers can." The key to the door of higher productivity and better living is no doubt rural and industrial development. But the strength which alone will turn that key in, the lack of apathy and malnutrition and outworn tradition is the strength of trained women in reconstituted homes. A revolution in the home will need to go hand in hand with reform of the school system, if the educational scheme which we propose is to come to fruition.

21. Throughout our work we therefore seek to wage war on everything which impairs the power of learning and improvement in the Malay child. With that war in mind, we attach, in one part or another of our report, prime importance to housecraft and mothercraft subjects throughout the school system; to speeding up the education of girls in general and the training of women specialists in particular; to the muster of social and technical services to help school and home alike wherever they can; to raising the standards of the teaching staff; and to placing a measure of responsibility for primary schools on the shoulders of local committees.

22. The teachers in the primary school of the future have to be trained as soldiers of initiative and determination in this war—men and women who come into their jobs fired with an informed resolve to combat the harmful circumstances we have detailed. The new school ought in itself to be a social unit so related to the surrounding community that it will form a focus of interest for community activity, and at the same time be a centre radiating new ideas and enlightenment into that community. It can fulfil this purpose only if the teachers are men and women of vision, made strong by the nobility of their calling and awake to the urgency of their cause.

## CHAPTER IV.

## PRIMARY EDUCATION.

1. No doubt the primary school depends on the system of post-primary education, in the sense that only a well-developed post-primary system can produce primary school teachers of high quality. We fully recognise that, as the sequel will show. It is, however, also true that the importance of the primary school for Malay education as a whole is, at the present juncture, quite fundamental. For this reason we begin our consideration of items (i), (v) and (vi) of our terms of reference by examining the problems of primary schooling.

2. Our approach is governed by the belief that the primary school should be treated avowedly and with full deliberation as an instrument for building up a common Malayan nationality on the basis of those elements in the population who regard Malaya as their permanent home and as the object of their loyalty. This we regard as an essential part of the process of achieving self-government within the Commonwealth.

3. It was not long before we were led to the straightforward but rather radical conclusion that a primary school in which Malay pupils are segregated for instruction by Malay teachers (often themselves of no great scholastic attainment) cannot be of much help to a community seeking to improve its status relatively to other communities in the population, and to make itself the main vehicle of the national idea. Thus our first step is to call in question the public provision or maintenance of separate vernacular schools for any racial community, and to suggest instead a single-type primary school open to pupils of all races and staffed by teachers of any race, provided only that those teachers possess the proper qualifications and are federal citizens.

4. Apart from its inter-racial character, the main features of this new National School, as we should propose to call it, would be the following:

(a) It would provide a six-year course for pupils between the ages of six plus and 12 plus.

(b) It would not charge fees.

(c) It would produce pupils who were bilingual (i.e., effectively literate in Malay and English) by the end of the course, and the best of whom would then be fitted to proceed direct to an English-medium post-primary school.

(d) Its methods and procedures would throughout be based not on the receptiveness of pupils but on their constructive activity in class and out of it; stimulating them to think and act for themselves, to shoulder responsibility, and to take part in creating a purposeful school community.

- (e) It would develop a close and active association between teaching staff and parents, with a view to becoming, by a natural extension of its primary function, the focus of the artistic, intellectual and educational interests of the community it serves.
- (f) It would be administered and in part financed by a local educational authority having its roots in the local community.

5. Such, in bare outline, is the pattern we wish to recommend for the primary school of the future. Its merits will, we trust, become clear as our report proceeds. Meanwhile we have no illusions about the difficulty of realising it in practice. On many grounds, financial, administrative and social, realisation can only be a gradual process, and the gradations will have to apply to more than one of the features listed above. Nevertheless we venture to hope that, if the scheme here set out is accepted as sound in principle, every future development and modification of the present school system may be directed to its implementation at the quickest practicable rate.

6. This conception of primary education entails, as we say, the eventual disappearance of all Government provision and assistance of vernacular schools including the Malay schools; and the transformation of the English schools into purely post-primary institutions by the gradual elimination of their primary classes. Thus the National School would become the recognised means of entry into the English School and, indeed, into every other kind of post-primary education. In the allocation of Government resources to primary education priority should be given to the development of this new school.

#### Bilingualism.

7. We have given prolonged thought to the language question. It has been clear throughout that two languages, and only two languages, should be taught in the National Schools, and that those two must be the official languages of the country, namely, Malay and English. But what was to be the relation between them? Which was to be the medium of instruction and which the compulsory subject? As our discussions went on we found it more and more difficult to maintain the distinction between subject and medium in regard to these particular languages in the particular context of Malayan life.

8. We have come to believe that the distinction is in the Malaya of to-day inapposite and unreal. It is based on the difference between home language and foreign language. But the term foreign language is a relative one, and in Malaya neither English nor Malay is a foreign language for any citizen in the same sense in which French, for example, is a foreign language for citizens of the United Kingdom. Though there are still areas to which these influences have not yet penetrated, children of all races in Malaya increasingly see both languages in written form all round them and increasingly hear both of them spoken. We consider this a fortunate tendency, and welcome it as leading to a day when all Malayan citizens will see a home language in both.

9. We have thus learned that it is more profitable to look to the end than to the means in regard to language teaching in the primary school. We have been obliged to treat of the in the National School in our thinking as a bilingual school, rather than as a Malay-medium school or an English-medium school. Each as language will in practice be employed in any ways which are convenient in helping children to acquire facility in both. Normally, no doubt, the Malay language will be used on social occasions within the school and in the teaching of most school subjects. At all times it will be the Malay language. We do not, however, suggest that life in any school should be rigidly divided into periods when Malay must be thrust out if the spoken, and other periods when Malay must be thrust out of sight and hearing to make room for English.

10. The art of teaching is not to be strait-jacketed by arbitrary language requirements, and the day-to-day work of teachers will be better governed by the dual aim of bilingualism and of equal status for both languages than by rules laid down in advance about when recourse should be had to this language or that. Provided that this dual aim is faithfully fulfilled, there can and should be a wide measure of local option in the precise manner of its pursuit.

11. The social setting of primary schools varies so much from place to place in Malaya that it would be unreasonable to expect the same allocation of school time and the same pattern of teaching practice to be followed in all parts of the country. Our scheme must be flexible enough to meet needs as diverse as those of Kota Bharu and Penang, of the kampongs and the re-settlement areas.

12. But we emphasize that it is no perfunctory acquisition of a smattering of either language that we have in mind. We set as our target *effective bilingualism by the age of 12 plus*. By this we intend that the great majority of children completing the primary school course should be able to read, write and carry on a conversation appropriate to their years in both Malay and English with approximately equal freedom. What is involved is attainment in Malay at least equal to that of Standard VI in the present Malay vernacular school; and attainment in English at least equal to that of Standard IV in the present English School. It is vital that this target should be reached, if the new school is to succeed.

#### The Malay Language.

13. The joint use of English and Malay in primary schools to whose pupils are of all races will, in our judgment, open up to the pupils fresh fields of interest and means of advancement. The Malay language, in thus extending its currency, will be helped to develop in vocabulary and idiom in many spheres above and beyond the primary school. We envisage it as evolving to a point where it becomes a comprehensive means of expression and communication in commerce, industry, science, technology and the humanities.

14. While the history of language shows that this process of evolution is often slow, experience in countries such as the Union of South Africa also suggests that in certain conditions it can be consciously accelerated. We should expect the new school to provide a firm foundation on which agencies professionally concerned with the growth of the Malay language might build. We have in mind here, firstly, the proposed Department of Malay Studies in the University of Malaya, and secondly, the possible establishment of a Malay Language Council, whose function would be to keep under review the whole position of Malay as used in the peninsula, and to encourage the writing of technical, historical, educational and other books, thereby creating an ever-increasing storehouse of knowledge for the Malay student and for the general reader of Malaya.

15. We should hope for a further consequence also; namely, that there might vibrate through the Malay people a renewed impulse to spontaneous authorship. In them a novel kind of group-consciousness is visibly struggling into life; so far, it has found an outlet and a form mainly in new types of social and political activity. The time is ripe for this movement to develop on the artistic as well as on the practical side, and in its search for fulfilment to bring about a creative renaissance in literature and the arts. There are already signs that a movement of this kind is beginning. Some far-seeing Malays evidently feel that, if their people are to become the masters and not merely the victims of all that is going on inside them, they will need a modern style of written Malay. The broad social effects of the new school we are proposing would favour the emergence of such a literature. Such a literature, in its turn, would be of the highest value in Malaya education. Reading material in Malay of a good modern kind is tragically short both in quantity and in variety. In particular, there are at present so very few Malays who write anything for children to read.

16. The weight of authority in educational opinion is heavily on the side of the view that a child's natural development is best promoted when his early education is in the language of his home. We are impressed with the importance and the relevance of this consideration in Malayan conditions. We have, therefore, had to ask ourselves what language arrangements in the primary schools would go furthest towards securing the advantages in question. We have also had to seek the answer within limits set by the overriding necessity, on citizenship grounds, for an all-race primary school of a single type. Once the issue is posed in this form, it can be solved, we submit in one way only, namely by the universal teaching of the Malay language. The use of Malay in all primary schools, as an equal partner in a bilingual system, offers the benefits of mother-tongue education to the largest proportion of the total population possible in the conditions stated.

#### Repercussions on Non-Malays.

17. When all this has been said, the fact remains that Chinese and Indians are being asked to give up gradually their own vernacular schools, and to send their children, not indeed to Malay schools in the present meaning of that term, but to

schools where Malay is the only original language taught. Moreover, they must do this under no kind of pressure, but because they freely decide that, from their own angle of vision and in relation to their own value-systems, the National School is the better educational instrument. Our scheme would be seriously weakened if any large proportion of the Chinese, Indian, and other non-Malay communities were to determine to provide their own primary classes independently of the public educational system.

18. We repeat here that our proposed new school is essentially a school of citizenship, a nation-building school. We do not set up bilingualism in Malay and English as its objective because we believe that all parents who regard Malaya as their permanent home and the object of their undivided loyalty will be happy to have their children educated in those languages. If any parents were not happy about this, their unhappiness would properly be taken as an indication that they did not so regard Malaya. On the other hand, all non-Malay parents who read themselves of the new facilities, and who set aside their vernacular attachments in the interests of a new social unity, have a right to be welcomed without reserve by the Malay people as fellow-builders and fellow-citizens. We find, alike in this Committee and among the witnesses we have consulted, a desire to extend such a welcome.

19. Hence our efforts throughout have been to make it as easy as possible for non-Malays to associate themselves with our project for a bilingual National School. Thus the new school will give, in point of staffing, premises and equipment, the best primary education available anywhere in Malaya. It will not charge fees. It will teach English to all from Standard I upwards, and it will form the broad highway of admission to all post-primary reaches of education.

20. It may be, nevertheless, that some Chinese and Indians will at first look askance at these advantages as mere promises. Their spokesmen may prudently insist on seeing the National School in action before they commit themselves to its support. We feel sanguine, however, that the school, as it gets into its stride, will outdistance all competitors, and that parents of all races, perceiving this and profiting by the object-lesson, will set up an increasing demand for the facilities and amenities it has to offer. Reorganisation of the primary schooling of Malaya on the lines described will be a lengthy task. It will start, we presume, in areas where it can be carried through with least difficulty and most promptitude, the rest of the country being scheduled for reorganisation area by area, as qualified teachers become available and as local conditions favour the change. By the time the areas of least difficulty have shown what they can do on the new basis, other areas, we hope, will have been convinced by the school's sheer merits of the wisdom of following suit.

#### The Teaching of English.

21. We are aware that misgivings may be felt in some quarters about the effect on the English schools, and indeed on higher education in general, of a common bilingual primary

school such as we propose. Our suggestion is that direct admission to English education proper, as the term is understood to-day, should gradually be superseded, and that all pupils proceeding to English education should eventually do so only at the post-primary stage, after having passed through the bilingual primary school. As advocates of this suggestion, it is incumbent upon us to satisfy our potential critics that such a change of organization would not be likely to entail a lowering of standards in English at any point in the school system, and at some points might even entail an improvement of them.

22. It would clearly be a disaster if the attainment of School Certificate standard and University entrance standard were delayed because the English language was being inadequately taught in the primary school. Such a result would be especially unfortunate at a time when the University authorities are not altogether happy about the attainments in English of present candidates for admission, and when they are consequently pressing for a higher standard in English, together with a lowering of the age at which it is reached.

23. In order to set the issue in perspective, we should explain that, according to an assumption we have thought it reasonable to make, some twenty per cent. of the primary school population may perhaps be fitted by capacity and interest to profit by secondary education of the academic type; a further twenty per cent. or so at the lower end of the scale of intelligence will need no schooling beyond the six primary years; for the remainder, a central block of some sixty per cent., the appropriate provision would be post-primary education of some non-academic type, having a bias towards agriculture, or a trade or craft, or clerical work, as the case might be.

24. For children in the lower group and in the main central block the prospect of reaching useful attainments in English is much improved under our proposals. At present such children normally learn no English in Malay Schools. To be sure, declared policy now is to make English a compulsory subject in the higher primary standards, as and when teachers can be found; but our recommendation goes a considerable step further in setting a target of effective bilingualism by the age of 12, and in urging, as a means to this end, that English should be taught to all pupils in the National School from the age of 6. This lengthening of the radius within which a knowledge of English is to be diffused will have important and convenient consequences for the business world and indeed for employers of all kinds, including Government.

25. Admittedly, however, these advantages will not directly touch the University and other institutions of higher education, which are concerned primarily with the twenty per cent. of primary school children destined for the academic stream. It will no doubt be pointed out, and we agree, that in the present context the crux of the matter is how our proposals are likely to affect this group of children at the top of the intelligence range.

26. At present Malays who enter English Schools do so mainly through the Special Malay classes. The procedure, as we saw in Chapter I, is that selected Malay children leave the

vernacular school on passing Standard IV (or sometimes Standard III) and enter Special Malay I in the English School at the age of 10 plus. If all goes well, they are promoted to Special Malay II at 11 plus, and join Standard IV in the English School system at 12 plus. In the following year they begin this five-year course which leads to School Certificate. Under this scheme they do not start learning English until their eleventh year. They then undergo two years' intensive training in that language, until by their thirteenth year they are deemed ready to receive all their education, and that at the secondary level, in the English medium.

27. These arrangements afford an ingenious solution of that problem of transfer from vernacular school to English School which has been hitherto inescapable, if any considerable number of Malay children were to carry their education beyond the primary stage at all. There is no doubt that for this reason they have been of great service to the Malay community. At the same time, they are open to several objections of educational principle.

28. No educationist would switch children from one language medium to another half-way through their primary course, if he could help it. Nor would he feel able to say with much confidence which children of a group aged 9 plus were suitable for the academic stream and which were not; he would probably insist that the question could not fairly be answered until some years later in their careers. In the third place, he might urge that a child's effort to reach the requisite level of attainment in English in the brief space of two years between the ages of 10 and 12 must for that time virtually bring his or her general education to a standstill. And indeed it does appear that children in their two years in the Special Malay classes do little but work over in English the same subject-matter which during the two previous years they had worked over in Malay. This can be very tedious for the pupil, and may well have a retarding effect not merely on his achievement in school subjects other than English, but also on his general intellectual development.

29. The National School offers what we consider a preferable alternative to the Special Malay classes—an alternative which, among other things, avoids a change of school and of language during the primary course, and therewith the psychological and educational disturbance which such changes involve.

30. Attainment in any school subject, and in English along with the rest, is mainly determined by four factors: first, the capacity of the pupil, second, the amount of time (within certain limits) allotted to the subject, third, the skill of the teacher, and fourth the suitability of the general social environment provided by the school.

31. Our scheme makes reckoning of all these factors. We are proposing that after the end of the third year in the primary school, special work in English should be arranged for those who comprise the upper twenty per cent. of the intelligence range. The object of the special work will be to ensure that the pupils concerned should develop enough competence in English to undertake post-primary schooling in that language from their



thirteenth year. The selection of pupils for this work can, if one likes, be regarded as a kind of informal pre-selection of candidates for the academic post-primary school. Those who choose to regard it in this light may feel that it is open to the same objection as we have just urged against selection for the Special Malay classes at the same point, or even a slightly later one, in the primary course.

32. To a comment of this kind we would make the rejoinder that the criterion of selection we are suggesting at this stage is not suitability for the academic stream, but simply level of intelligence. The distinction is of some importance. Intelligence can be accurately assessed at 9 plus, while personal suitability for a particular type of post-primary course is much harder to identify at any time, and probably cannot be identified at all until some years later than 9 plus. No doubt, intelligence is one condition of suitability for academic education; it is a necessary, though not a sufficient condition; so that, while one can say that everybody below the top twenty per cent. of the intelligence scale will not be suitable, one cannot say that everybody within it will be. The special work in English which we propose is simply a way of insuring that no pupil with the intellectual capacity for academic education will miss the opportunity for it by reason of inadequate attainment in English at the age of 12 plus. True, the suggestion also entails that the special work will be done by a minority of pupils who will not in fact enter the academic stream at the post-primary stage, as well as by all who do enter it. We cannot see any harm in this.

33. Thus our informal screening of the brightest fifth of the primary school population at 9 plus is not to be confused with the formal process, which will take place at least two years later, of selecting for admission to the post-primary English school. This formal process will not be a matter for the primary school authorities at all, but will, we suggest, comprise two kinds of external test. One kind will be brief and simple "objective" tests of attainment in Malay, English and arithmetic. The attainment tests will be supplemented by a non-verbal test of mental ability, as soon as one suited to Malayan conditions can be devised. The work of Dr. G. E. D. Lewis affords a promising point of departure here, and calls, in our opinion, for careful and systematic following up.

34. We foresee the two types of test as being conducted independently, the attainment tests by the English Schools themselves, and the mental ability test by the Educational Psychologist, a new Federal Officer whose appointment we hereby recommend. Both types are necessary, as each is complementary to the other. Attainment tests cannot be dispensed with, because English Schools must know, before they offer an applicant a place, how far he has progressed in the essential school subjects. The results of such tests, however, while furnishing that vital information, will also reflect other features in children's individual experience which may or may not have a bearing on their suitability for academic education. These other features might include differences in teaching ability of teachers in different primary schools, favourable or unfavourable factors in children's home backgrounds, smoothness or otherwise of their emotional development, and a number of other personal

variables. The non-verbal performance test will by-pass possible irrelevances of this kind, and will give an index of children's educability and their capacity for relational thinking, in approximate isolation from accidents of their personal history. By putting the results of both types of test together, it will be possible to grade applicants in an order of merit, or at least to draw a qualifying line through them, with a reasonable degree of reliability.

35. We take the view that, in addition to finding extra time for English for the "brightest fifth" after Standard III, it will also be necessary to begin teaching English to all pupils in the first year. This second requirement can be met if the general work in the Malay language is done in the romanised script only, the Jawi script being taught to Muslim pupils (but not non-Muslims) as part of the religious instruction which we shall discuss in a moment. The time saved by the disappearance of Jawi from the common curriculum would be available for English.

36. We appreciate, further, that if the pupils' command of English is to be adequate at the end of the primary course, the teaching of the subject must be, in the hands of teachers of high quality. We explain in a later chapter what formal qualifications and professional training we should like teachers to acquire and undergo. Here it is enough to mention that, if our proposals come into effect, teachers in the National School will, on the average, be quite as good as the present staffs of primary departments in English schools. They will, we hope, have learned in their Training Colleges that people who merely "know English" are not necessarily good teachers of it. The Colleges and the University will all be increasingly occupied with the kind of linguistic inquiry on which alone the foundations of successful teaching can rest. Teachers trained in any of these institutions will leave them with a firm grasp of the principle that learning English is less a matter of acquiring a vocabulary than of fixing a structural framework; and that when a pattern of idiomatic thought forms has been clearly printed on the mind by practice with a limited number of words, a vocabulary (or a series of vocabularies) can readily be added as required, without any proportionate increase in the difficulty of manipulation.

37. Furthermore, their training will have made it second nature for such teachers to plan every phase of the school day by reference to the two poles of security and adventure—to the child's need, that is to say, to explore the unknown on the one hand, and to feel safe and valued on the other. Their own practice as teachers will proceed from the knowledge that the primary school child must have things to do, to handle, to use, to make, to talk about, and to ask questions about freely; that he must be given time for his explorations and experiments; and that, though his heart is doubtless fair game for the tempter and open to all wickedness, he is also capable of any constructive endeavour which for him has dignity and meaning.

38. We turn, finally, to the need for building up the National School into a particular kind of social unit. If children are to learn readily and retainively, their school must provide for them a mental and social atmosphere adapted to the purpose. The primary school should be a place and a society in which the

pupils feel at home--feel that they belong to it and that it belongs to them with something of the intimacy with which their real home focuses the sense of attachment. In such a school, children are upstayed by a disciplined community life at the same time as they enjoy free play for their individual interests. They are encouraged to look after themselves and to stand on their own feet, while knowing that the support of older and stronger persons is on tap, should any real call for it arise. The omnipresent expectation is that they will play an active part in their own education and in maintaining and improving the daily routines of the school.

39. In conformity with our conception of the National School as a social unit of this kind, the "brightest fifth" will continue in the primary school until the end of the six-year course, following a syllabus modified to suit their special gifts; and they will not be moved at a mid-way point to other schools for segregation in Special Malay classes. In this way, the corporate life of the school will escape impoverishment by a skimming off of the intellectual cream from the upper Standards, and, to change the metaphor, the brighter wits themselves will not suffer the set-back which an enforced transplanting after Standard III must almost invariably cause. Such, we trust, will be the general practice. We recognise, however, that for geographical, economic or administrative reasons it may be necessary in some areas to establish central schools (with hostel accommodation) which may provide for a part only of the six-year primary course; but this measure would be adopted only where the conditions made it impracticable to do otherwise. (See also p. 70.)

#### Religious Instruction.

40. In the evidence we received, two related points were repeatedly made. The first, already mentioned in Chapter II, was that Malay children often fail to reap the full advantage from their school experience because too little is done for them in the way of character training. The second was that, relatively to children of other communities, Malay children are handicapped educationally by being sent for some hours daily during the afternoon to the Koran school. We consider that there is force in both these arguments, and feel in particular that afternoon attendance at the Koran school in many cases imposes too heavy a learning load on young Malays, and really retards their educational progress.

41. From the Islamic point of view it is obligatory on Muslim parents to see that their children receive religious instruction. At present, only in a few States is religious instruction provided during normal school hours. In some others provision is made for religious instruction in the afternoons, while in the remainder parents have to employ private teachers. In most cases the instruction is given in the afternoon. This often means that a Malay child between the ages of six and ten is made to study about seven hours daily.

42. Again, we have had our attention drawn to the controversy regarding the teaching of both the Jawi script and the romanised script in Malay schools. We have noted the existence of a strong body of opinion that favours the exclusion of one of these from the primary school curriculum. As to

which should be excluded, opinion appears to be fairly equally divided; though it should be mentioned that the views of practising teachers show a clear preference for retaining Rumi, and dropping Jawi. We have further taken into account the probable feelings of the non-Malay parent who may send his children to a National School. However anxious he may be for his children to attain a certain proficiency in the Malay language, he might well think it unreasonable that they should be required to master two different ways of writing it.

43. It occurs to us that all the points mentioned in the above three paragraphs may be conveniently dealt with in one motion. We therefore propose that a half-hour period in each school day should be set aside for the instruction of Muslim pupils in the principles of Islam, in the Koran, in the Arabic characters, and hence gradually in the Jawi script also; this instruction would be given by specialist religious teachers trained for the purpose. We recommend that there should be careful professional revision of the methods of teaching these things, particularly of teaching the Koran; and we recall here the suggestion made in Chapter II that the practice of the Government vernacular schools in Zanzibar might repay study from the Malay standpoint.

44. By allotting time in this way for religious instruction throughout the whole duration of the primary course, four simultaneous advantages would be reaped. We should meet the point raised by that large body of Malay opinion which holds that more systematic attempts at the building of character should be made, and that character is best built on a foundation of religious faith. By confining all studies, secular and religious, to the normal school hours, we should gain a more effective response from the pupils. We should provide those children who need to learn the Jawi script with an appropriate opportunity of doing so, while at the same time they would acquire facility in the romanised script, not as another "subject", but in the most natural way in the course of their normal school work. In the fourth place, we should enable non-Malay pupils to learn the Malay language without waste of effort, and without the obligation to read, write and spell in a script which for their immediate purpose is superfluous.

45. On balance, the teaching of Jawi to Malays only and only in the period of their religious instruction would, we should judge, greatly facilitate the studies of all pupils in National schools. Some witnesses whom we consulted raised the objection, however, that the use of Rumi in learning Malay would cause confusion in the learning of English, owing to the fact that vowels which take the same written form in the two languages are given different values in speech. Others again discounted the weight of authority leans to the latter view, and we therefore feel justified in proposing that the whole secular curriculum of the National School should be followed in the romanised script.

#### Text-books and Reading Material.

46. Rather a high proportion of our witnesses had representations to make about text-books and other kinds of reading material in primary schools. As already mentioned in Chapter II, the complaint is that there are not enough copies of school books