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EDITORIAL

CERTAIN DAMAGING FLAWS IN THE WEST BENGAL HOMŒOPATHIC SYSTEM OF MEDICINE ACT, 1963.

In our last issue we cordially hailed the Homœopathic System of Medicine Act recently passed by the West Bengal Legislature. We did that quite rightly and justly in view of its intrinsic merit as the epoch-maker in the History of Homœopathy of the State, providing it unlimited scope for progress and growth. But this jubilation should not blind us to certain damaging flaws in the Act, nor should the latter engender any pessimism in us. We should consciously try to take a balanced view about the flaws, while constantly endeavouring to minimise their damaging effects and ultimately to eradicate them altogether through amendments in the Legislature.

Let us now consider some of these deleterious points in the Act:—

1. *Cast system among Registered Homœopaths Exhanced and Legalised:*

This, in our opinion, is the most damaging feature of the Act. The division of Registered Homœopaths into Part A and Part B (Sections 5 and 21) will keep the Homœopathic profession, for pretty long time, divided into two casts—one higher and one lower, with mutual ill-feeling and suspicion. The division has been further deepened and weighted by allow-

ing certain privileges (Government Service etc.) to the higher cast while denying the same to the lower one. (Section 38). A considerable section of the Homœopathic profession acceded to the division into Part A and Part B on the ground of Election interests, but almost all were against making any statutory distinction on the question of privileges in service etc. The proficiency and suitability in any branch of service could easily be decided by fair and open competition at the time of recruitment to actual posts. Hence, maximum pressure was exerted from various quarters and most organisedly from the West Bengal State Homœopathic Federation through legislators to eliminate this privilege clause (section 38), but no result could be achieved atleast for the time being. But we should not loose heart on this account, as there is enough scope in the Act, of gradually obviating the division by turning Part B doctors into Part A, by steadily elevating the standard of the former, as also by trying to push amendments in the future sittings of the Legislature to eliminate this clause altogether.

2. *Restricting the number of Registered Homœopaths by damping enthusiasm for Registration:*

Two measures in the Act will discourage the eagerness of many a Homœopathic practitioner for registration, and thus artificially limit the number of Registered Homœopaths, viz., (i) the provision of Examination for Registration (Provision paragraph of sub-section 2 of Section 21), and (ii) Renewal Fee (Section 25). We ardently hoped that this Act will, for the last time, throw the door wide open for all the practising Homœopaths up-to-date, giving them full scope to get registered, and thus to come under official as well as unofficial control and supervision. But these two hurdles on the path of registration has much frustrated our expectation.

(i) Regarding the Examination clause: The W. B. S. H. Federation as well as some individuals tried their level best to eliminate this amendment of the Select Committee, but failed to convince the Government, and a large section of Legislators. Unfortunately, a considerable number of Homœopaths too had some active or tacit support in favour of this provision. All these people had a pious and apparently logical purpose of

sieving out the Homœopathic profession from unworthy elements by means of legislation. But impelled by their inordinate eagerness for their noble object, these gentlemen forgot two facts, viz., (a) that the best and natural way and ground of eliminating unworthy elements is fair and open competition in the field of practice, and cultural and educational development and (b) that along with the many (according to them) unworthy elements and veterans will be likely to be pushed outside the society of registered Homœopaths due to sheer shyness and botheration of appearing as an examination candidate.

But after all these, it is a good thing that the State Health Minister on behalf of the Government gave an open declaration on the floor of the Assembly, that the Examination will be a nominal one, and only on Homœopathic subjects, only to assess whether the candidate for registration was actually a practising Homœopath. Now it devolves upon us, the conscious members of the Homœopathic Society, to counteract the shyness and hesitation of deserving candidates, and to see that not a single practising Homœopath remains unregistered.

(ii) Regarding the Renewal Fee clause: The whole Homœopathic Society as well as a large number legislators opposed this clause (Section 25). But the Government firmly stuck to it, mainly on financial ground, citing the examples of other States and other professions who have agreed to such measures.

After all, we should remember that the State is ours. We pay various taxes to the State in order to serve our various social and national purposes and needs. So we should not, and justly cannot grudge to pay some tax directly in the interest of our own profession. So it is not mainly the tax (Fee) that the Homœopathic Society and their sympathisers in the Legislature objected to; it is on the score of prestige, transforming the dignity of Registration to License, that most serious objection was raised. But now, atleast for the present, we have got to submit to the precedent examples of other States and professions.

In any case, these hurdles should not and must not obstruct our endeavour to get all the practising Homœopaths

our Journal basically depends the upliftment and progress of registered; because on that, as discussed in the last issue of the Homœopathic Profession as a whole.

3. *Silence about the Right of Employment :*

Homœopaths (Section 37) the only rights sanctioned are to

In the Section granting certain privileges to registered issue death certificates and medical certificates and to give evidence at law courts—but no mention is made (perhaps deliberately) about service privileges. When questioned by the members in the Legislative Assembly on this point, the State Health Minister replied that, there would be no bar against Homœopaths in the field of service, but whether they will actually be employed will depend upon the choice of the Employers. But this seems to be an evasive answer. We should try by all means to add a sub-clause (d) to the Section 37—"to enjoy all the privileges as enjoyed by the practitioners of the Allopathic system of Medicine".

While striving for this amendment, we should constantly go on putting pressure on various employers, both in the State and Public Sector, for the employment of deserving and suitable Homœopaths, in their respective medical departments (Dispensaries, Hospitals, State Insurance, Life Insurance, Health Departments etc.) standing on the ground that there is no official bar against such employments.

Certain remarks made by Dr. P. K. Guha, the State Health Minister, in the Legislative Council on 7.8.63, as plea for denying these privileges to Homœopathic practitioners, have been adequately refuted by the W. B. S. H. Federation through a Memorandum sent to all the Ministers and Members of the Legislative House (gist of which was published in the last issue of our Journal). So he has not mentioned them in the debate in the Lower House. Another remark made in this connection by Dr. P. K. Guha in the Legislative Council, to the effect that, henceforth none but the Allopaths and Doctorates in any faculty will be entitled to use the prefix Doctor or Dr. before their name, on being ventilated through daily press created great consternation in the public. This remark also has been duly rebutted by the same memorandum of the W. B. S. H.