

PRIVATISATION : RESOURCE CRUNCH OR POLICY SHIFT

We do not accept the proposition that there is a resource crunch, in JNU or in the higher education sector of the country as a whole. The gradual reduction in the resources being made available for higher education in the country in general, and in JNU in particular, is the result of a policy shift at the level of the Indian State. The whole corpus of arguments in the "resource crunch problematique" is basically an attempt to justify and further consolidate this overall policy shift.

We believe that this is the most important point in the present debate on privatisation and hence, let us get this straight. There are the following two facts:

- 1) Higher education in India, uptill now, is primarily financed by the state, and
- 2) Over the last decade or so, there has been a gradual but continuous reduction in this spending.

The government, and the administration in JNU, is citing the second fact as an evidence of "resource crunch". After establishing the case for "resource crunch", they are arguing for further cuts. Do you see the circularity in the arguments? The so-called "resource crunch" is an effect of the change in policy and now this is being given as a cause for a further consolidation of the same policy. There is a reversal of causality !

Hence we reject the very assumption of "resource crunch" and thereby take our discourse to the level of policy. The New Education Policy is a part of the New Economic Policy (NEP) package and to stall the move of the UGC (65% slash in JNU's funds) we have to challenge the basis of the whole NEP. And once we decide to take on the NEP, we have to take on the might of all the political formations which explicitly or implicitly support the NEP-right from the BJP, through the congress to the opportunist left (inside or outside UF). It matters little whether the UF falls and the Congress comes at top power the Center; the consensus not only continues unchallenged but gets further consolidation. We have to break the consensus which has emerged today in our Polity regarding NEP.

All political differences have been forgotten, all ideological differences have been brushed aside to drum up support for the NEP. Something similar is being proposed here in JNU: sink all ideological/political differences in this fight against privatisation. Since we reject the first, we also reject the second. NEP and privatisation eminently political issues and diluting one's ideology in the fight against them amounts to accepting the logic of the ruling classes.

The reduction in the expenditure on higher education, formulated in such unholy documents as the Punnaiya committee Report or the Ashok Mitra committee Report or the Rastogi Committee Report, is part of the larger strategy of the state to reduce overall expenditure in the social sectors. And this reduction follows from the conditionalities of the IMF-WB Combine dictated structural Adjustment Program (SAP). The comprador-bourgeoisie of this country has accepted the logic of SAP and is now trying to give all kinds of arguments to justify it's abominable surrender.

We do not accept the logic and hence reject the whole policy package that follows from it.