

Abolition of SSEE not a solution

I APPRECIATE both G. Chan's (S.C.M. Post, March 20) and C.J. Barrett's (S.C.M. Post, March 23) letters in support of the SSEE and in the opinion that the new proposals of the Working Party should be dropped.

There have been many criticisms about the SSEE. The evil of the SSEE, it has been said, is that it imposes enormous pressures on young children. The SSEE offers only three narrow subjects of English, Chinese and Arithmetic. It leads to the unhealthy development of student education.

Besides, whether an examination of a few hours in an afternoon can fairly reveal and determine the academic standard and potentials of a student is also subject to criticism. Over 50 per cent of the students will fail to get a subsidised secondary school place and those who have failed and cannot afford to have a place in private colleges will be too young to work.

All these criticisms are justified. But so long as we do not have enough subsidised places for Form I students, and so long as we need to distribute places according to students' academic standards, an examination to decide these is essential.

Although the SSEE does have pressure on students, this is true of any exam. From my experience (I myself took the SSEE a few years ago), I feel that the merit of the SSEE is that it only offers one exam at the end of primary six and a

student usually will not feel the pressure of the exam until he is in primary five or six.

Unfortunately the new system would increase the exam's pressure on students by making students face a tense exam from primary five onwards. Then the students will have to prepare for their exam in even earlier years.

Under the new system, the students who have failed after the Form Three exam would be old enough to be allowed to work even if they cannot afford to continue their studies. But so long as there are not enough places in Forms 1-3 for primary six students, there have got to be some students who would be left out after completing primary education even under the new situation. Since the Financial Secretary has said that there would be enough places for everyone by 1978, the problem would be solved automatically and there is no necessity to abolish the SSEE which aims at distributing places.

No one would say that the SSEE is perfect. I suggest that the Working Party make some constructive reforms about the SSEE rather than abolish it. More varieties of subjects, for instance, could be offered in the exam. This may require a student to work hard but this is essential in education. In order to lessen the strain the exam has on the students, it should be spread over a few days rather than being constrained to one afternoon. Abolition of the SSEE is not the only solution.

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