

## POLITICS AND EDUCATION IN GHANA

RECENTLY, three Cabinet Ministers of Ghana—Mr. Adamafo, Minister of Information and Broadcasting; Mr. Duwuona-Hammond, Minister of Education; and Mr. Boateng, Minister of the Interior—have issued warnings to the students of Ghana's two Universities concerning their "arrogance and anti-State activities" which, so the Ministers declare, have been inherited "from a colonial past". We believe that anyone, student or otherwise, who indulges in serious anti-State activities should be warned and, if necessary, punished; but there is all the difference between anti-State activity and open opposition to the political policy of those in power—at any rate in a democracy. Moreover, to accuse the students, or anyone else, of arrogance strikes one as being somewhat naïve—even childish.

Recently, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, President of the State of Ghana, was installed as Chancellor of the University of Ghana, near Accra, and on November 29 he was also installed as Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology at Kumasi. We understand there was an obvious lack of enthusiasm among the students during both these ceremonies, which angered the President. Though one cannot conceive of such resentment being demonstrated in such countries as the United States or Great Britain, the President's annoyance can be readily understood, though to appoint one and the same man as Chancellor of the only two Universities in a country is unique and risky, and in this case the objective seems very clear; it bodes ill for any semblance of autonomy in either University.

Wearing of academic gowns has been banned, and apparently stern measures, including the dismissal of some lecturers known to be "instilling in their students an attitude of disrespect for the President", are to be taken. The first policy strikes one as being absurd, and seems to be aimed against any attempt to follow the custom of many universities in the more highly developed countries. The second decision is more serious. Students are notoriously interested in politics, and are surely old enough to think for themselves, which is the very basis of a university education. It is a student's responsibility to think; but if as a result of such thinking he threatens to be a bad citizen, then he should be dealt with accordingly by his immediate superiors, that is, the university authorities and not those outside the university who enjoy political power.

All three Ministers have threatened that any students who "misbehave would be thrown out". This warning, too, should come from the university authorities and not from the State. This appears to be an intolerable position for any university, for it seems that those responsible for the running and development of the university are to be deprived of an important part of their academic responsibility. It should

be they, and only they, who should take to task their students for breaches of university discipline (including, if necessary, expulsion) and not any outsider, not even a Minister of State.

The Minister of Information and Broadcasting in Ghana has announced that from now on the Council of the University of Science and Technology will be directed by the Government in the running of that institution so that the Government "might turn out men and women who have unflinching loyalty to the office and person of President Nkrumah". If this is to be taken literally, it savours too much of undesirable dictatorship. This alarming statement implies at least three conditions: (1) appointments to the staff must meet with the approval of the Government in power; (2) entry of students to that University will be conditional on (among other things) political grounds; (3) the University staff and their authority and the students will be subject to the whims and fancies of the Government.

There can be no autonomy in such an institution, no freedom of thought, expression and action, no development of democratic ideals. In fact, if the threats and warnings made by certain Ministers of State in Ghana are carried out, the University of Ghana, and certainly the University of Science and Technology, will not be universities at all.

On December 4, Mr. Duwuona-Hammond, the Minister of Education, addressed three hundred Ghana school teachers and told them that they must show loyalty to "the ideals of the State and of its chief architect, President Nkrumah". He proceeded to say: "Nobody resents fair comment, but systematic, spiteful and irresponsible criticism calculated to undermine the Government cannot be accepted as sincere teaching". The second statement would be acceptable to all educationists; but it will be understandable, in view of the first statement, if they suspect why it was made.

Ghana is an emergent country. It has fairly and justifiably won its independence. But it has yet much to learn, and during the past few decades the University of Ghana has been learning and developing with the help of academic men and women from the world's older universities—especially those of Great Britain. In Britain, the universities are proud of their autonomy and guard it with justifiable jealousy, though, in spite of the fact that they are increasingly dependent on State funds, they suffer no threat of State interference in the way they are conducted and the manner in which they train their students. Moreover, much to their credit, successive Governments have shown no tendency to influence the universities so far as policy is concerned. In fact, university students are encouraged to think for themselves, and, within reason, are entitled to their own political views and to express their opinions of Government and others in political power. Ghana would be wise to take note of this.