

*Magee*

out before the formal integration of the college in the New University, the university authorities can obviously proceed more confidently with the development of the site when their responsibility for the future of Magee has been formally assured. It is thus desirable for the integration of the college in the university to take place as soon as is reasonably possible.

I hope and believe that this new Bill meets the wishes of all parties and I commend it to the House for a Second Reading. One last point. Hon. Members will realise that time will not permit of further stages of this Bill being taken in the present Session. Accordingly they will see from the Order Paper that if this hon. House gives the Bill a Second Reading I shall later today be seeking approval to a Resolution which will permit the carrying over of the Bill into the next Session.

4.49 p.m.

Mr. Hume: I must confess to being rather disappointed by the Minister's statement today in that I had thought that, before we put this Bill through this House, we would have had some clear indication in final and clear words about the future of Magee University College, because we did have an announcement in June last year about a new role which Magee would have in terms of the international school of languages, the institute of regional studies, et cetera. But, of course, that statement then pointed out that this was subject to the approval and support of the University Grants Committee.

The University Grants Committee has come to Northern Ireland since that statement and it has reported, and I would have thought that perhaps the Minister might have, through the Minister of Finance, arranged for that report to have been made available before we discussed this matter today, because it would be wise for the community to know exactly what finance is going to be available to Magee and whether the University Grants Committee has approved the June statement.

There are some matters in the Bill which one can only regard, to put it mildly, as peculiar. In order to clarify exactly my objections to it I should, as

the Minister himself has done, put the question in its historical context. Following the controversy over the Lockwood Report an agreement was reached between the then Minister of Education and the trustees of Magee University College. It was a very firmly-worded agreement and the key part of it stated:

"The University College to be enabled to offer complete undergraduate courses, including honours, in a reasonable range of subjects in Arts (including Economics and Geography) leading to primary degrees of the new university."

Following this agreement there was what has come to be called an arrangement between the Academic Planning Board for the New University and the trustees. It is important to note that when this arrangement was published a lot of us expressed concern at the fact that it was a woolly-worded document and that there was nothing definite about it. Indeed, some of its phrases gave rise to grave doubts as to what was intended for the future of Magee. But we were assured in a public statement by the chairman of the Academic Planning Board, Sir James Cook—and it is important to note his words—that this arrangement was a supplementary arrangement and not intended to supersede in any way the original agreement. All he was doing was telling us the meaning of the word "supplementary": that it is something that adds to.

While these public statements and assurances were being given, secret and confidential documents were circulating among the trustees and the faculty of Magee University College. It was clear from reading the documents that it was intended to supersede the agreement by the arrangement because the documents offered choice A and choice B, as they were called. It was said that choice A was the agreement reached between the Minister of Education and the trustees and faculty of Magee University College. The staff were told that if they took choice A there would be no obligation on the university to maintain numbers at the college, to channel work to the college additional to that provided for in the agreement, the university would be free to run courses parallel to courses provided by Magee to such an extent as the university thought fit and, more important, there could be inter-

[Mr. Hume] change of staff and joint use of staff by agreement between the two institutions. But there would be no obligation on the university to answer any responsibility for redundant members of the college staff.

In other words, they were told that if they accepted the agreement entered into between the Minister of Education and the trustees there would be no guarantee that the members of the staff would retain their jobs. But it was pointed out that if they took choice B, which was the arrangement, then a totally different choice would be put before the staff. It was said that there could be a natural running down of full-time undergraduate work over a period of years. In quoting I am quoting the arrangement from the Schedule to this Bill. It was said that the university would be under no obligation, if this should happen, to replace such work by other types of university work; the academic staff at the college would, of course, have the same rights and responsibilities within the university as all the other members of the academic staff, and the college professors would be given university chairs. It omitted to say that the college professors are also the faculty of Magee University College which was party to the arrangement.

So here we had a situation where the vice-chancellor of the New University was circulating a confidential document to the trustees and staff of Magee College which said, "If you accept the original agreement we cannot guarantee your jobs. If you accept the arrangement"—which is now a Schedule to this Bill—"then not only are the jobs of all members of the staff guaranteed but you men who sign this arrangement with us will be given chairs in the New University." I would regard that as pretty serious and tantamount almost to blackmail in a serious public matter such as the future of a university college. Then the arrangement was published—

Mr. Speaker: I think that is a bit strong.

Mr. Hume: Pardon.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member's charge is a bit strong.

Mr. Hume: I have just made the charge that we had a situation whereby people who were party to the arrangement, as the faculty of Magee College was, were guaranteed chairs in the New University. A document circulated at the time offered them a choice between the agreement entered into publicly between the Minister of Education and the faculty and trustees—

Mr. Speaker: I still think the hon. Member should substitute another word.

Mr. Hume: For which word?

Mr. Speaker: "Blackmail."

Mr. Hume: I would point out that the same word was used by me in a debate on Magee on 19th March last. But I bow to your Ruling, Mr. Speaker. I would say that undue pressure was exerted by the vice-chancellor in this situation.

Following this and following the publication of the arrangement and the assurances that this would provide a continuing, lasting and expanding role for Magee in the university, we had the resignation of a college president, Professor Guthrie, who in a statement deplored the lack of any capital development in the college by the Government, the transfer of staff and courses to Coleraine, the prospective diminution of undergraduate numbers and the lack of a positive academic policy for the college. Quite an amount of controversy has arisen during the past year over the future of Magee. But it was somewhat silenced by a statement which appeared in June of last year and which laid out a possible role for the college: a school of international studies, plus a centre for advanced studies, including an institute of community studies, an institute of regional studies and an institute of North American studies.

I was pleased to hear the present president of Magee talking last week about the possibilities of this institute of North American studies. I would have been more pleased if he had told us where the finance was coming from because the June statement said that this proposal would probably have to depend primarily on privately-raised finance. The June statement, as I have already

pointed out, has been subject to the approval and support of the University Grants Committee whose report, I understand, is somewhere in the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Education. So we come to the publication of the first Magee University College, Londonderry Bill which was unacceptable and which has been replaced by the one which is before us today.

I come now to the key point in my argument. The first Bill has a Schedule which contains both the agreement and the supplementary arrangement. In other words, it is quite a logical thing. The supplementary arrangement was supplementary to the agreement and without the agreement the supplementary arrangement does not mean anything because it is supplementary. As Sir James Cook said, it does not supersede the agreement or replace it; it adds to it. We find in the first Bill, which proved unacceptable, both the agreement and the arrangement, as one would expect, and the arrangement is described as a supplementary arrangement. But when the Minister of Education produces his Bill we find that the agreement has been dropped.

The arrangement is no longer called a supplementary arrangement but is now described as the terms of an arrangement agreed at a meeting between the Academic Planning Board of the New University of Ulster and the trustees and faculty of Magee University College. I think I am entitled to ask and to be told very clearly why this has happened. It confirms the arguments which I have put forward previously in this House and which have been put forward publicly about this matter; that the whole arrangement and the circulation of confidential documents explaining the arrangement and the choices open to the staff and trustees were aimed at wiping out the original agreement which at least gave a basis of undergraduate study for Magee. I should like the Minister to explain very clearly to us why this agreement has been left out.

There are a few other points which I have to raise on the Bill. The Minister has already told us that he does not think very much use will be made of Clause 6. It gives the Minister power to

compensate any member of the Magee staff who may lose as a result of the change over. I would point out to the Minister that this is in direct contradiction to paragraph 6 of our celebrated arrangement which shows that the university has already accepted full responsibility for all the members of staff and that there is no possibility of any redundancy whatsoever. Here we have this contradiction where Clause 6 gives the Minister power to deal with compensation and where paragraph 6 says that compensation is not necessary because the staff are all being taken over by the New University. Can the Minister give us his reasons for including this matter in the Bill?

May I sum up by saying that my confidence in the future of university education in Derry has been somewhat shaken by the production of this Bill? The Minister will recall that the June statement was welcomed by myself and other Members on this side of the House as providing some sort of a basis for negotiation. This came after a period when we expressed very strong doubts about the intentions behind the agreements, the arrangements and the documents which were circulating in relation to Magee. I am afraid that unless the answer as to why this agreement has been dropped from the Bill is very clear and satisfactory my doubts will be intensified.

5.03 p.m.

**Mrs. Dickson:** I should like to welcome the fact that there will be continuing and changing university facilities for the city of Londonderry. I am delighted that these facilities will be going to that part of Ulster. Very briefly I should also like to say how much I regret the fact that of all the hon. Members who represent this area only the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) is present this afternoon to welcome such an important Bill. I am afraid that this is something which I must deplore and which the people of that area will deplore because this is something which is vital to the young people of Ulster.

It is only by having educational facilities of the very highest standard available that the young people can go out and take their places not only in Ulster