

Should university teachers dabble in party politics?

Campus Scenario

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PRIME Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's advice to the teaching community not to remain tied to strings of party politicos failed to curry favour with the university teachers. They took the Prime Minister's pronouncement on the matter with a grain of salt.

The Prime Minister's statement, coming,

as it does, following removal of Vice-Chancellors of almost all the universities of the country on purely political considera-

tions so stale, hollow and futile.

Reacting to the statement, university teachers without exception observed that under the prevailing political condition it is not possible for a 'university' teacher to achieve professional attainment or recognition if he or she owes no allegiance to a political party particularly the party-in-power. Thus unhealthy unacademic process started roughly two decades ago. The Prime Minister would have been more appropriate and relevant if she had stated academic performance and not political affiliation would be the sole yardstick in the appointment of teachers in the universities and outside.

Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, one

of the senior-most university teachers of the country, commenting on the Prime Minister's statement, said it would not be correct and legitimate to ask university teachers to stay away from politics. He, however, thought it would not be proper for university teachers to tail after a political party. Teachers may indulge in politics based on his or her ideological conviction. Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury is of the view that teachers need not go to politicians. On the contrary politicians may come to teachers for consultation, advice and guidance on matters of vital national interest. Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury is of the opinion that number of teachers directly associated with political parties is few and far between and their contact with parties in no way influences their relationship with students.

Professor Anisuzzaman, who is also Chairman of Bangla Academy, said the university teachers must have the right to hold and express political views freely. But it must be made certain that the right to hold and express political views should not cre-

ate dichotomy in teacher-student relations in the campus. Professor Anisuzzaman thought it would be the duty of university teachers to help maintain tolerance and mutual respect for each other notwithstanding their difference in political and ideological convictions.

Professor Syed Anwar Hossain expressed his disappointment at the way higher posts in the university are being doled out on the basis of political loyalty and obedience. This is undesirable, he added. He noted with concern that academics shorn of ideology and decried pre-disposition among their colleagues to tailism to political parties. Prime Minister, therefore must give a sense of direction to universities so as to enable them to get rid of the baneful effect of party politics. The ruling party must renounce politicization of the university administration by distributing higher posts among party adherents. She must discourage appointments in the university on political consideration. All appointments in the university must be made only the basis of the appointee's efficiency and academic performance.

Professor Manzurul Islam Chowdhury expressed dismay at the way teacher's politics is being vitiated by party affiliations and loyalties, which, he thought, would impede freedom of study and acquisition of knowledge. According to Professor Islam, teachers can indulge in politics based on certain ideologies as was done by late

Professor Ahamed Sharif. He described the Prime Minister's statement urging teachers to keep aloof from politics as a mere recommendation and urged upon her to place a total embargo and all appointments on political considerations.

In fine, teachers, young and old, rejected politics shorn of ideology and decried pre-disposition among their colleagues to tailism to political parties. Prime Minister, therefore must give a sense of direction to universities so as to enable them to get rid of the baneful effect of party politics. The ruling party must renounce politicization of the university administration by distributing higher posts among party adherents. She must discourage appointments in the university on political consideration. All appointments in the university must be made only the basis of the appointee's efficiency and academic performance.

According to a newspaper report, a Chhatri Dal activist studying in Dhaka College dared into the office of the nearby Teachers Training College for collection of toll from the employees working there in. The employees working at the TT College caught hold of the toll collector and beat him black and blue. After being beaten he ran back to his college and informed his colleagues of his tragic predicament. Reinforced he returned to TT college and assaulted employees there, ransacked the office and hostel. Having received the information police rushed to TT College, nabbed four attackers of Chhatri Dal and brought the situation under control. A number of Chhatri Dal hooligans are at large.

According to another newspaper report, two groups of Chhatri Dal mastans got involved in gunbattle at Tejkunipara in Tejgaon area on Friday night. Before their gun battle began they managed to lock up 16 policemen and kept them as hostages. These hooligans are learnt to be involved in drug-trafficking. Clash of business interest brought the two groups at clahers drawn to teachers.

These infamous rowdies have tarnished the image of Chhatri Dal by their unlawful activities. These elements must be thrown out of Chhatri Dal and made clean before it is too late.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has done well by disbanding the Central Committee of Chhatri Dal. Now she must initiate cleaning-up operation and weed out all criminals from Chhatri Dal. Until Chhatri Dal is purged of these anti-social elements and its new committees are formed consisting of scrupulous elements and genuine students, Chhatri Dal should not be allowed to operate.