EDITORIAL

The views expressed in the articles in "Scientia" are not necessarily those of the Editor.

THE AUTONOMY OF THE ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF MALTA.

In the sitting of the Council of Government held on Tuesday, January 22, 1946, the House went into Committee to consider the Education Bill, that is an Ordinance to make provision for the management and control of the Royal University and of other Government Educational Institutions in these Islands. It appears that in the draft of the Bill it was laid down that the Governor, Visitor of the Royal University of Malta, in the exercise of the powers given to him by the Educational Ordinance had also to seek the advice of the Board of Education before sanctioning any new Statute or Regulation of the University or any amendment thereto; thus placing the Royal University of Malta on the same level with the Primary and Secondary Schools. It is well known that at present the Royal University of Malta is governed by its General Council according to the Statute and the Regulations approved by the Governor, who is at the same time the Visitor of the University. The new Ordinance as first drafted would have curtailed the autonomy of the University by subjecting it to the Board of Education.

In order to safeguard the present autonomy of the Royal University of Malta, Dr. Lewis Galea (Acting Legal
Secretary) moved an amendment to the effect that the Governor or Visitor of the Royal University in the exercise of the powers given to him by the Educational Ordinance would not have to seek the advice of the Board of Education on matters concerning the University. This amendment was carried by ten votes to nine and thus the autonomy of the Royal University of Malta was saved by one vote!

The reasons brought forward against the autonomy of the Royal University of Malta were: (a) that the upkeep of the University is borne by the people of Malta, and that these same people should have a say in the control and management of the same; (b) that the amendment would further strengthen the autonomous state of the University; (c) that some time ago a delegate of the National Assembly proposed that the Royal University should continue to be autonomous; but the motion was withdrawn when the mover had seen that the majority of those present would probably vote against his motion and that, consequently, by not voting in favour of the amendment, Members would only be complying with the wish of the majority of the people whose representatives had sat in the National Assembly.

In favour of the autonomy of the Royal University of Malta in the Council of Government His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor expressed his astonishment at seeing Members, who were graduates of the same University, willing to subject the Royal University of Malta to the Board of Education (1).

The autonomy of the University is to our mind a question of the greatest importance for the nation and we would like to submit the views of some experts on the subject, being sure that their pronouncements will give enough food for thought to those who are against such an autonomy.

We begin by quoting A.D. Lindsay, Master of Balliol, who


in the Lucien Wolf Memorial Lecture for 1941 (sixth of the series), on *Toleration and Democracy*, which was delivered on Sunday, May 25, 1941, in the Debating Hall of the Oxford Union Society, under the Chairmanship of the Right Hon. Viscount Samuel, expressed himself in the following terms:

"The State recognizes that the vitality and efficiency of the Universities will do their work better if they are not controlled by the State administration. It expresses this attitude by making a large grant of money to the Universities and administering it through the Treasury Grants Committee, a body devised to exercise as little control over the Universities as is compatible with seeing that the grant is efficiently administered. The Grants Committee has, I think it would be agreed, given the lie to the proverb: 'He who pays the piper calls the tune'. It no doubt remains true that no one will go on paying a piper if he can't stand the tunes he plays. But there is all the difference in the world between the two positions. There are certain social activities whose vitality and strength are essential to the prosperity of the nation, which, at least in some of their aspects, are better accomplished by other than statutory bodies. The State therefore must be prepared to support non-statutory bodies and allow them to do the job at their discretion. The State is not responsible for the way the job is tackled; though if the job were not done, or done in a way calculated to pervert and not to strengthen the national life, the State would no doubt sit up and take notice" (2).

Similarly Sir Charles Grant Robertson, Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham University (1919-1938), in an article on *The Idea of a University*, published in *Britain To-day*, No. 108, May 1945, pp.5-10 (3), reckons

(2) A.D. LINDSAY, *Toleration and Democracy*, Oxford University Press, 1942, p.10.11. A copy of this lecture if found on the shelves of the British Institute, Valetta.

"autonomy" among the four characteristics which a University should have and writes as follows:

"Secondly, no British University has been created, endowed, or maintained by the State, and until 1920 the State did not contribute either to capital or income expenditure. Every British university is an independent, autonomous corporation, owing its existence and its maintenance largely to collective individual benefactions, amounting in the centuries to at least a hundred million pounds — an astonishing example of the deep-rooted individualism of the British character, and capacity for voluntary and organized effort. The autonomy of each university has been most jealously guarded, with the result that these self-governing corporations have been able to develop, freed from central governmental control, the fetters of ecclesiastical domination, the manipulation of the Crown, and the tuning of teaching by the political party in power; and if to-day the State is now contributing substantially to university funds, it is through a special body, the University Grants Committee, composed of men and women, themselves the product and guardians of academic freedom. The independence in fact of the universities has come to be an accepted axiom of British political and social life, and any attempt to impair that independence would be strenuously resisted by the universities, with the full support of public opinion. In short, the British mind is convinced that a university can only achieve its purpose by working in a free air, with an unqualified right to learn, teach, and find truth, as best it may" (p.6-7).

More than individuals, however great their authority may be, the State itself is the greatest upholder of the autonomy of Universities. In view especially of the great services that the Universities have rendered during the war, the British Government, through the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced its intention of increasing the annual grant distributed by the University Grants Com-

mittee to the British Universities from two and a quarter million pounds to five and three quarter million pounds. The British Universities which won the war, must now take their place and value in the post war reconstruction of the national life as a whole; and this they must do in as much as they are Universities, free from all external fetters, and capable of attaining their scope in their own way.

The interest of the British Government is not limited to the British Universities only, but it extends also to the Universities in the British Colonies, the oldest of which is the Royal University of Malta. In fact, in August 1943, a Commission was appointed to conduct an enquiry and make recommendations under the following terms of reference:

"To consider the principles which should guide the promotion of higher education, learning and research and the development of universities in the Colonies; and to explore means whereby universities and other appropriate bodies in the United Kingdom may be able to co-operate with institutions of higher education in the Colonies in order to give effect to these principles" (4).

This Commission consists of The Honourable Mr. Justice Asquith, as Chairman, sixteen other Members and a Secretary, all of whom bear the best qualifications for the purpose entrusted to them. The result was the Asquith Report, presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, dated June 1945.

This report consists of four parts and an Appendix, the fourth part being a Summary of the recommendations contained in the first three parts. A careful reading of this Report will show what a great part autonomy plays in the life of a university. It is not possible to give details but we content ourselves with some extracts:

(4) Report of the Commission on Higher Education (Cmd. 6647) p.3.
Part IV. Chap. VIII. Sect. I.: “Colonial universities should be autonomous in the same sense as universities in this country” (5).

Sections 2 and 3: “Following the precedent of most of the newer universities in this country, a Colonial university should have a Senate, which would have authority in purely academic matters, and a Council, which would be the supreme governing body and the trustee of the property of the institution. There should be a Chancellor appointed by the Crown, and a Vice-Chancellor appointed by the Council” (6).

These recommendations are fully explained in Part I, where we read:

“In our view it is essential that Colonial universities should be autonomous in the sense in which the universities of Great Britain are autonomous. This does not mean that they should not be under certain obligations. They should be required, for example, to publish an annual report accompanied by a financial statement, and wherever grants are sought either from the United Kingdom or from Colonial funds it is reasonable that periodical visitations should take place by a properly constituted authority. We have in mind the analogous visitations of the University Grants Committee in this country. The Colonial universities should, in effect, have full freedom to manage their own affairs, though placed under the obligation to present an account of their stewardship. Only if autonomy so understood is allowed, can that degree of freedom of teaching and research be secured which is fundamental to a university; only in these conditions can the highly expert task of maintaining proper academic standards be carried out” (7).

“In order to secure the required degree of autonomy it is not enough to have these officers and these organs of government. Two further conditions are indispensable. The Senate must possess full authority in purely academic matters; otherwise, however independent the university may be, academic issues, which should be the sole responsibility of the academic staff, will be subject to determination by the Council, a body in which the representatives of the academic staff will be in a minority. In other words, a proper measure of autonomy for the academic staff within the university is necessary. It is of equal importance that the members of the Council nominated or elected by any one outside organisation or institution shall not be in a majority; otherwise the university may become a mere creature of that organisation. The composition of the Council should therefore be well balanced; moreover, the method whereby outside organisations appoint members to the Council should be such as to secure as far as possible that these members are not so much representatives of outside interests as persons well qualified for the task of forwarding the true aims of a university” (8).

We have chosen these quotations out of many others, because we think that they are the most appropriate answer to the reasons brought forward by some elected Members of the Council of Government and also because we think that the people of Malta were misrepresented in the Council of Government when they were referred to as opposed to the autonomy of their greatest historical institution, the Royal University of Malta. We conclude with the following words of Sir Charles Grant Robertson:

“In a modern and civilized State the need for highly trained, specialized professional men and women increases in a raising ratio to the needs of a developing social life. Universities, therefore, are not merely indispensable but their efficiency and range of training are a criterion of the civilization whose needs they supply. In this respect, Great Britain need not fear the critical eye

(7) Ibidem, p.34.
(8) Ibidem, p.35.
of an impartial investigator. The British Universities to-day are second to none in the range and quality of their studies, equipment, and teaching. And their contribution to the “war effort” is the conclusive proof of their value. The recent and increasing emphasis on “research” reinforces this conclusion. The demand for strengthening and extending every form of research comes, primarily, from the universities and not from public opinion, because their staffs know what can and ought to be done and enlighten the community by doing so” (9).

The British universities have set the example. It is our duty and in our interest to follow it in as much and in so far as it is possible and convenient to us!

THE HOSPITALS OF THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN IN MALTA.

Some time ago (see “Scientia”, XI. (1945), p. 98-99) we welcomed back from the United Kingdom Paul Cassar, B.Sc., M.D., D.P.M., and we promised to publish a lecture which he had delivered in July, 1944, to the Medical Staff of the Mill Hill Emergency Hospital in London. Our intention was to print that lecture in the first number of the current year; but we were prevented from doing so, because an important celebration had meanwhile taken place. On October 9, 1945, occurred the first centenary year of Cardinal Newman’s conversion to the Catholic Faith and the outstanding event was very successfully commemorated in the Royal University of Malta. We, therefore, deemed it worthy of the occasion to offer to the University Students’ Catholic Guild the first number of “Scientia” of the current year to record in full that successful commemoration; and as the offer has been accepted, we were compelled to leave the material of the first number to the next. We must apologize both to Dr. Cassar and to the readers of “Scientia” for this unavoidable delay, and though the lecture is now nearly two years old, we are sure, it has lost nothing of its importance.


THE HOSPITAL OF THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN IN MALTA.

by Paul Cassar B.Sc., M.D., D.P.M.

THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM.

The order of St. John of Jerusalem is mainly known to history as the military and naval organisation that for centuries held the command of the Mediterranean. This is quite understandable, for during hundreds of years the order was the guardian of European civilisation in that sea and the bulwark of Christendom. But it must be borne in mind that militarism was not its original purpose.

The reason for this militarist development is due to the barbarous times in which the Order was founded when some sort of armed protection was rendered necessary and inevitable if the order was to survive and fulfill the ideal of its founders — the care of the sick and wounded and the relief of the poor, whence the name of Hospitalers.

This sequence of development, first Hospitalers and then soldiers, is interesting because it distinguishes the Order of St. John from others set up more or less at the same time exclusively for military purposes, amongst which the best known being the Order of the Temple or Knights Templars who were soldiers first and then Hospitalers (1128 A.D.). It is of interest to note that this change in the institution of the Templars is entirely due to the influence of the Order of St. John, to whom incidentally their possessions were transferred when the Order of the Temple was abolished in 1312 by Pope Clement V.

The Order of St. John arose out of a body of religious men, who in the 11th century founded a hospital in Jerusalem some time before the first crusade (1096-1099) for the nursing of the sick and wounded and for affording shelter and help to the Christian Pilgrims who flocked to