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Good Evening,

It is essential in any democratic society that persons possessing expert knowledge on a subject of public importance should be expected and encouraged to air that knowledge and to offer criticisms of the policies and activities of government.

The members of the University Staff are a case in point. It is a rule of Adelaide University that members of the staff do not make public statements as members of the University staff unless it is on a subject in which they are expertly qualified and on which they are engaged in their University work except on specifically staff matters. (They may, of course, as private citizens say what they like just as any other citizen may do, but they do not then involve the University).

From time to time statements either in praise of, or critical of, Government have emanated from members of the University staff. It is not to be expected that Government will accept criticisms, uncritically, whatever it may do about praise and Ministers of the Government have every opportunity to reply to specific criticism on the occasion of its being made. This, too, is perfectly proper. It is essential, moreover, that members of an academic body should feel perfectly free to state their informed opinions without fear of a threat to their remuneration or conditions or a threat to the finances of the institution which employs them.

Many of these principles which should be axiomatic, were shown to be not acceptable to the Minister of Education last week when he used High School Speech Days as a platform to deliver a general attack on them last week.

The Minister said that "outstanding educational attainment often bred intellectual arrogance and scholastic snobbery." He added that a minority of professors and lecturers adopted an attitude of airs and graces to unlearned people and addressed studiously condescending and offensive remarks to the public. He said he based his opinion on statements by them in newspapers

in replies to correspondence and in reports they had issued. He declined to name the faculties of any of the professors and lecturers.

He said more. He said that these University staff members should remember that they were paid from the public purse and that they enjoyed conditions and generous provision of leave not give to other persons in the community. Now there are several things wrong with all this. Why did the Minister decline to name the intellectually arrogant persons of whom he was talking or give a single instance of what he condemned. The effect, he must have known, was to bring all academies into disrepute and seriously harm the respect for tertiary education which we should build and encourage, not destroy.

One might wonder whether in fact there are any legitimate cases for such criticism by the Minister if he is reluctant to specify them and let the public judge.

Secondly, the implied threat to freedom of criticism involved in his suggesting that the critics should remember whence their pay comes was disgraceful. It is not the first time this sort of thing has occurred. Dr. Van Abbe, who used to broadcast as a private citizen on this station with commentaries on public affairs, on one occasion criticised the Premier's attitude to education. The Premier replied to this not by a public refutation of the criticism, which would have been proper, but by a letter of protest to the University authorities protesting that a man who was employed by the University, which received public funds should criticise him.

Apparently the establishment has no ideas of academic freedom at all, any more than it believes in democracy.

But what did provoke the ill-tempered outburst on this occasion. Can the fact that Mr. Hugh Hudson, the Senior lecturer in economics at the University, is a candidate for Labor party pre-selection to contest the Minister's own seat of Glenelg at the next election have produced a political attack on academics. Has the Minister, perhaps, a wary eye to his own future?

Goodnight.