

## **COMPROMISE IS INEVITABLE**

**(06-03-2002)** - Daily Graphic

THIRTY out of the 31 students of Tease St Fidelis Agricultural Secondary School are said to have been withdrawn leaving only one student

According to the Public Relations Officer of the Afram Plains District Education Office, among the reasons for the mass withdrawal of students by parents is the transfer of the former headmaster of the school, Mr Augustine Adongo.

The former headmaster is said to be a diplomate and the education office decided to replace him with a graduate who is considered to be of a higher academic qualification than Mr Adongo.

In view of the government's determination to improve educational standards in the country, no one can deny that the staffing of schools and colleges with well and better qualified teachers is a dire necessity and generally a step in the right direction.

However, in situations where schools have become virtually part of the community, there is the need to take into consideration the sensibilities of the local communities before some of these actions are taken. It is not rare to find in traditional societies such as Tease that teachers who are seen by the local people as responsible and serious with their work are taken as part of the community and therefore, accorded respect no matter the level of their academic qualification.

In situations like that the community develops confidence in such teachers and sees them as role models. This is even more so when the school does well in its examinations. When that happens the community, rightly or otherwise, equates the fortunes of the school with such teachers and therefore, any attempt to transfer them obviously evokes resentment from the community.

The GRAPHIC believes that this is what happened in the case of the St Fidelis crisis.

In this era where the communities are expected to play greater roles in the running of community-based schools, there is the need for consultation before certain important far-reaching actions are taken to avoid matters getting to a head unnecessarily.

Besides this, we are disturbed about the political interpretation being given to the replacement of the headmaster. According to reports, the community believes that the headmaster's transfer was effected allegedly on political grounds.

We do not want to believe that any headmaster or teacher would be transferred for merely exercising his or her constitutional rights, including political rights. What we however, do think is that the district education office mishandled the whole transfer process and thus offended the sensibilities of the local people.

In life, compromise is inevitable but not necessarily fatal. That is why in all actions, public officials need to consider the overall interests of the people and be flexible enough to accommodate the wishes of the people so far as that would not threaten the larger national interest.

In the particular case of the Tease school, it raises a fundamental question as to what the district education service has achieved by transferring the former headmaster which has led to the collapse of the school.

A school would have to be in place before a headmaster is appointed to run it. Therefore, if a headmaster's transfer would lead to the collapse of a school and thus deprive hundreds of children of the benefit of education, why on earth would any official want to undertake such a venture?

That is not to suggest that local communities must dictate to public officials as to how to implement government policies but it must also be noted that consultation and principled compromises are vital in achieving the goals of enhancing the common good.