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BRITAIN AND THE POLITICS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
UNIVERSITIES IN AFRICA, 1860-1948

by

Apollos Okwuchukwu Nwauwa

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
Canada

July 1993

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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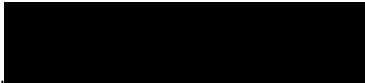
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## **DEDICATION**

**To all Men and Women of Goodwill, and Social Justice**

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## ABSTRACT

This study constitutes a history of the imperial politics surrounding the emergence of universities in British tropical African colonies between 1860 and 1948. It demonstrates why earlier African demands for the establishment of universities which began with James Horton and Edward Blyden in the 1860s failed as a result of official British opposition while the idea received imperial approval from the 1940s onward because of the British concern to avoid imperial decay. The earlier British opposition down to the late 1930s reflected the indirect rule system, limited government and financial parsimony - all of which were consolidated in the 1920s. Hinged on collaboration with the African chiefly elite, indirect rule was opposed to the educated class, and hence the idea of an African university was anathema to colonial establishments. During this period, the demands for a university emanated almost exclusively from African educated elements. The Colonial Office remained indifferent while officials on-the-spot were generally resistant.

Between 1940 and 1948 there occurred a decisive shift in London and the Colonial Office plunged into action and was not only willing to promote but to push actively for the establishment of universities in Africa, particularly during and immediately after World War II. This change took place in the midst of the war and opposition from officials on-the-spot. It occurred largely as a result of the growing imperial apprehensions that unless Britain developed the economic and social welfare of the colonial peoples, which in turn demanded political devolution, the empire might disintegrate. The "slummy" conditions of the colonies resulting partly from the depression of 1935/36, and culminating in the West Indian riots between 1935 and 1937, convinced imperial statesmen that colonial reforms were needed. Since a purposeful colonial development required the collaboration of a larger African educated elite, the question of the provision of universities became vital. Once the educated Africans observed that London had begun to switch from collaboration with the traditional class to place more reliance upon them, they quickly seized the initiative. From then on the educated elite began to determine not only the nature of progress leading to the eventual establishment of three university colleges in Africa between 1948 and 1950 but also to agitate for ultimate transfer of political power. This work argues that the university question was central to the whole process of British colonial reforms and decolonization in Africa.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Academic Council
ACCCAST	Advisory Committee on Colonial Colleges of Arts, Science and Technology
ACEC	Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies
ACNETA	Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa
CD&WA	Colonial Development and Welfare Act
CO	Colonial Office
Confid.	Confidential
Cmd.	Command Paper issued by the British Government
C.M.S.	Church Missionary Society
CSO	Colonial Secretary's Office (Territorial)
CUGAC	Colonial University Grants Advisory Committee
E.A.J.	East Africa Journal
H.M.S.O.	His (Her) Majesty's Stationary Office
IUC	Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies
IUP	Ibadan University Press
J.A.S.	Journal of African Studies
J.H.S.N.	Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria
Misc.	Miscellaneous
M.P.	Member of Parliament
NAGA	National Archives of Ghana (Accra)
NAI	National Archives of Nigeria, Ibadan

N.C.B.W.A.	National Congress of British West Africa
NUT	Nigeria Union of Teachers
NYM	Nigerian Youth Movement
PC	Privy Council
PRO	Public Record Office
SLA	Sierra Leone Archives at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone
SLC	Sierra Leone Collection, Fourah Bay Library
UCGC	University College of the Gold Coast
UCI	University College, Ibadan
UIA	University of Ibadan Archives
ULAP	University of London Archives and Palaeography

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For a study of this scope to come to fruition needless to say that several individuals and institutions played major roles. First and foremost, I am grateful to Dalhousie University which offered me a Graduate Fellowship in 1988 towards the Master's degree, and which was ultimately extended in 1989 to cover the doctoral work. I also thank the Board of Trustees of the Izaak Walton Killam Funds for awarding me a Killam doctoral scholarship for three consecutive years. Furthermore, I am thankful to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Department of History Turbay Trust Funds (African History) for providing me with the necessary research/travel grants which made the visits to England, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria not only possible, but fruitful. No doubt, without such funds this research would have suffered in scope, content and style.

Many individuals aided the successful completion of this study. I am particularly grateful to the staff of the Public Record Office, Kew Gardens, London; University of London Archives and Palaeography; National Archives of Ghana, Accra; National Archives of Nigeria, Ibadan; and Sierra Leone Archives at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, who tremendously helped me during the process of data collection. Also, I would not fail to mention the invaluable assistance of the staff of the Killam Library, especially those in the Inter-Library Loan Department who combed libraries all over North America and Europe for materials relevant to this study. Similarly, I thank the staff of Balme Library, University of Ghana, Fourah Bay College Library and Dike Memorial Library, University of Ibadan for their patience while I consulted mostly their reserve collections.

Turning now to individuals, I remain extremely indebted to my research supervisor, Professor John E. Flint who, apart from providing the inspiration for this study also took pains to guide me in the art of historical scholarship. In spite of his retirement from active teaching in mid-1992, Professor Flint was determined to see this study through. It is now on record that he closed his many years of doctoral supervision (about 30 years) with this thesis. This was remarkable. Supervising a thesis focusing on the evolution of universities in Africa seems an ideal way to end an active university career. Special thanks also go to Professor James B. Webster whose perceptive comments and suggestions resulting from his personal experience, having taught at the University of Ibadan (Nigeria) and Makerere University (Uganda) for so many years, have greatly benefitted this study. As my undergraduate teacher in Nigeria, it was Professor Webster who informed me

about both the graduate programmes and financial assistance available at Dalhousie for which I could apply. That I attained this level of study therefore owes much to Webster's advice and guidance. Also, I thank Professor Jane Parpart whose incisive comments and suggestions on the draft chapters proved useful for the final version.

I am very thankful to those who accommodated me during my research trips. While in London, the International House run by the International Students Housing Society in Woolwich, South-East London, provided me with a suitable accommodation for the research. I appreciate the support of Mr. Solo Fofana of the Department of Languages and Literature, Fourah Bay College. Not only did he act as my research guide, he equally accommodated me in Freetown, Sierra Leone. While in Accra, Ghana, Mr. Peter Nortey (Snr.), now late, was most helpful. In Nigeria, I remain grateful to Mr. A.O. Adeoye, also late, a doctoral student and colleague who harboured me at the University of Ibadan while I consulted the University and National Archives. May their souls rest in perfect peace!

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Departmental secretaries, Mary Wyman and Tina Jones for their patience and assistance in the face of the seemingly endless demands of graduate students. I sincerely thank all members of the History Department at Dalhousie who have helped me in one way or another during the duration of this study. Now, to the "Great Four" - Wilson, Tim, Julius and Apollos - who are simultaneously completing the doctoral programme in African history at Dalhousie, I say, bravo! Studying at Dalhousie would not have been as exciting and eventful as it were without these colleagues.

Lastly, but more importantly, I am indebted to my wife, Helen, who endured my irritating working habits and schedules conditioned by the nature of this research. Without her care and continuous encouragement, this work would have suffered greatly from want of stimulus. To my parents-in-law, Joe and Christina Hagan, who kept on encouraging me, I say thank you. To my mother, brothers, sisters, and relatives who had put up with my long absence from home, I deeply appreciate your sacrifice.

Dalhousie University  
Halifax, July 1993

A.Okwuchi Nwauwa

## INTRODUCTION

The British establishment of universities in tropical Africa is a recent phenomenon, occurring in 1948 soon after World War II and just before decolonization. For almost a century - 1860 to 1948 - the British had systematically ignored the demands of the African educated elements for the provision of facilities for university education. The demands by James Horton and Edward Blyden for a West African university between 1860 and 1900 were frustrated by missionary opposition strongly supported by British officials in Sierra Leone. Even though their efforts ultimately resulted in the minimal degree work in Theology and Classics at Fourah Bay College, this fell short of what the African elite desired. During the heyday of indirect rule - 1900 to 1940 - efforts of the African educated elites and "nationalists" for a university were utterly stifled by British officials on the spot. In both periods, the impetus for a university issued almost exclusively from Africans. The Colonial Office remained indifferent while colonial governors and administrators were generally positively opposed.

However, between 1940 and 1948 the Colonial Office plunged into action and was ready, even in the face of continued opposition from officials on-the-spot, to promote efforts towards the establishment of universities in tropical

Africa. This time, the initiative came almost entirely from London, and not from Africans. Why did the earlier period witness such stiff opposition while the 1940's recorded a major shift in British colonial policy in favour of African universities? Essentially, this is what this study sets out to address. Though there are a number of scholarly works devoted to the history and evolution of African universities, which will be discussed below, few of these have focused on the vitally political nature of the policy of university development in British Africa. This thesis argues that the university question is central to the understanding and analysis of colonial reform in British Africa in the 1930s and 1940s.

Concentrating on British tropical African territories of West Africa and East Africa this present work does not wish to centre merely on the story of the origins of Africa's premier universities. Such stories in the nature of chronicles do not fascinate historians any more, having been told over and over again. This is a study of the impact of British imperial politics and policies on the foundation of colonial universities. Although this work focuses on the former British West and East African colonies it is necessary to define the scope of research further for purposes of clarity. In West Africa, the territorial foci will be on Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and the Gambia; and in East Africa, the spotlight will be on Uganda which for so long held the torch

of higher education in the region. In essence, this analysis will relate British imperial policy to the emergence of the first university colleges in Ibadan, Nigeria; Legon, Gold Coast; Fourah Bay, Sierra Leone; and Makerere, Uganda. These represent the institutions founded in British colonial Africa under Colonial Office authority. The development of universities in Egypt, and the Sudan, though in some ways parallel, was carried through in different circumstances by the Foreign Office and the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, over which the Colonial Office had no oversight. Developments in South Africa, independent of Colonial Office control after 1911, were little influenced by British colonial parallels, and indeed, after 1948, diverged fundamentally from them with the introduction of apartheid and legal segregation of education there.

It is important to point out that while in theory British officials in both the colonies and London, working together, were expected to carry out the Colonial Office's guidelines on matters of high policy, in practice the onus remained with the officials on the spot as to whether or not to comply with orders from London. This was the case particularly in the pre-1940 era when each of the colonies was supposed to be financially self-supporting. British officials in the colonies could easily flout orders from London on the excuse that they had no resources to pursue instructions to their logical end. Hence in this study, it should not surprise the reader if



sometimes, particularly on issues bordering on huge costs such as the university question, the actions and attitudes of the men on the spot contradicted instructions from the Colonial Office. It was not until the coming of Malcolm MacDonald as the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the passage of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 which provided funds for development schemes in the colonies that the Colonial Office began to assert its claim to control colonial policy and the means of its implementation.

Literature on the history of tropical Africa normally indicates the flourishing of "the University of Sankore" at Timbuctu in the Kingdom of Mali by the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> However, Spencer Trimingham believes that Sankore did not actually exist as a university in the strict sense but rather was a place where Muslim clerics lived.<sup>2</sup> In any case, whether it thrived as a university or not, what remains clear is that the Sankore tradition was purely religious in orientation, where Muslim clerics taught Islamic science. As Ashby noted, Sankore's curriculum aimed at transmitting "truths" which

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<sup>1</sup> See Basil Davidson, Old Africa Rediscovered, Gollancz, London, 1961, pp.90-91; Flora Shaw, A Tropical Dependency, (first published in 1906), reprinted by Frank Cass, London, 1964, pp.202-208; and Joseph E. Harris, Africans and Their History, Mentor Books, New York, Revised Edition, 1987, pp.60-61.

<sup>2</sup>.J.Spencer Trimingham, A History of Islam in West Africa, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, p.98.

"rested on authority, and not on observation or enquiry".<sup>3</sup> Thus it was hardly a university in the modern and western sense.

In sub-Saharan Africa, indigenous education hardly went beyond the level of that conducted by the age grades and members of the extended family. Nevertheless, the educational training served adequately the needs of society. The aim of the education revolved around character-training, instruction in crafts and duties to the community. Girls were specially instructed in the duties of domestic life. In his African Survey, Lord Hailey noted that initiation ceremonies and 'regimental training' "are usually the culminating point" of indigenous education, aimed at fitting the youth to his or her place in traditional life.<sup>4</sup> But with European contacts and the advent of colonial rule in Africa, western education began to provide a new direction, and the missionaries provided the initiative. Since the African environment was transformed by foreign, particularly western, influences the need arose to fit the peoples into these new conditions, and hence western education took root. Nevertheless, whatever education the British provided at the early stage of contacts was aimed at three objectives - converting the Africans to Christianity,

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<sup>3</sup>.Eric Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966, p.147.

<sup>4</sup>. Lord Hailey, An African Survey, Oxford University Press, London, 1938, p.1207.

making them intelligible to the Europeans, and "civilizing" their ways of life. Since education served as a good tool for the conversion of Africans to Christianity, missionary societies sought to monopolize it.

However, with the establishment of colonial rule in the beginning of the twentieth century, and the British adoption, and consolidation of the indirect rule system as an ideal administrative mechanism in the 1920s, the direction and purpose of African education changed. Indirect rule depended largely upon African traditional rulers, chosen by the British for their ascribed status in "traditional" societies, often though not always illiterate in English. There was no room in that system for educated Africans, often of low "traditionally" ascribed status, whatever their Western-style "class" position won through educational attainments. Thus for the British, the question arose not only as to what should constitute the content of education offered and how far and fast the process should go but also as to the positions which the educated African would occupy in the colonial state. Under indirect rule, as Anthony Enahoro observed, "The British didn't want to rush education. They built schools with reluctance".<sup>5</sup> Using Nigeria as a case study, Uduaroh Okeke has contended that:

the British rulers did not want to educate Africans for positions which provided jobs for themselves. Many of

---

<sup>5</sup>.Anthony Enahoro, Nigerian Daily Times, 5 March 1963.

them knew that if they intensified the education of Nigerians they would hasten the end of occupation. So they rationed education cautiously, hoping that it would be many centuries before the Nigerians would be able to govern themselves. They feared that educated Africans would agitate over many things.<sup>6</sup>

Significantly Hailey noted that among the many problems of Africa "there is none that has attracted more discussion, and indeed more controversy, than that of the type of education which should be given to the African".<sup>7</sup> While Africans wanted the type of education which would make them equal to their British overlords, the British desired the kind of training which would fit Africans into subordinate positions in the colonial administrative arrangement. Hence, to the British, the type of education provided should be strictly correlated to the colonial administrative requirements in which the perpetual duty of the educated African was "to assist his imperial masters, not to supplant them".<sup>8</sup>

Since indirect rule had no place for highly educated Africans, the question of the establishment of universities in Africa naturally faced opposition from British officials. Unless the place of educated Africans under colonial rule was

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<sup>6</sup>.P.Uduaroh Okeke, "Background to the Problems of Nigerian Education", in Okechukwu Ikejiani (ed.) Nigerian Education, Longmans, Ikeja, 1964, p.4.

<sup>7</sup>.Hailey, An African Survey, p.1208.

<sup>8</sup>.Okechukwu Ikejiani, "Nigerian Universities" in Ikejiani (ed.) Nigerian Education, p.130.

ascertained, the question of education must continue to be determined by political considerations. Hailey also anticipated this problem when he stated that:

what at times has been put forward by administrations as a policy of education has in truth been only the expression of a political determination, or an effort to implement the view held of the place which the African should occupy in the social economy [of the colonial state]<sup>9</sup>

It is therefore an aspect of this study to demonstrate how the principle and practice of indirect rule constituted a stumbling block to the British establishment of universities in tropical Africa.

It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that universities emerged in tropical Africa through a well planned process laid out by Britain. By this time the British had become convinced that it was far more dangerous for Africans to continue to acquire advanced training overseas than to provide them with university facilities locally. During this period British colonial policy came under attack both in London and overseas. Indirect rule began to be seen as a system which needed modifications in order to bring the educated Africans into the mainstream of governance. The social, political and economic conditions in the colonial empire resulting in the West Indian riots had convinced imperial statesmen that reforms were needed if the empire were not to disintegrate. Once the Colonial Office had shown some

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<sup>9</sup>.Hailey, An African Survey, p.1208.

readiness to forge ahead with the university question, the African educated elite quickly seized the initiative to determine the nature of progress. It was within this climate of opinion that the British decided to establish universities in tropical Africa.

The centrality of the role of universities in the development of the social, cultural, economic, and political conditions of a society in the contemporary world can hardly be over-emphasized. To this, a host of scholars agree. Ashby has observed that "Universities have become absolutely essential to the economy and to the very survival of nations.... Under the patronage of modern governments, they are cultivated as intensive crops, heavily manured and expected to give a high yield to the nourishment of the state".<sup>10</sup> For J.F.Ade Ajayi, himself the product of overseas university education in Britain, and a pioneer historian at the Ibadan University, education constitutes "a mechanism by which society generates the knowledge necessary for its own survival and sustenance, and transmits this to future generations through processes of instruction to the youth", and the university "describes the apex of the pyramid where the most fundamental ideas about the society are explored, new knowledge and fresh insights into the old are generated, and

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<sup>10</sup>.Eric Ashby, Adapting Universities to a Technological Society, Jose-Brass, San Francisco, 1974, p.7.

the leaders and the elite are trained".<sup>11</sup> Chinweizu agrees. For him, "Universities serve as finishing schools for those who have to lead and develop the traditions of a society".<sup>12</sup> Thus to deny any society the necessary facilities for university education is to frustrate its ordered and sustained development. Why then did the British oppose the idea of an African university despite awareness of the important role universities play in the development of a society?

This study will further examine how racism, the nature of British administration, and the place Africans were expected to fill in society informed British negative attitudes towards the idea of a university. Also an attempt will be made to show how and why the establishment of universities in Africa became a matter of high policy in the Colonial Office calculations in the 1940's. Many factors influenced this shift in policy: the fear of American influence, and nationalism in the colonies; the activity of the British academic lobby in favour of colonial universities; the "anticipatory factor" generated by the West Indian crisis; World War II and the reform process initiated by Malcolm MacDonald which created the need for the expansion of the class of African educated elements; and the

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<sup>11</sup>.J.F.Ade Ajayi, "The American Factor in the Development of Higher Education in Africa", James Smoot Coleman Memorial Papers Series, African Studies Centre, University of California at Los Angeles, 1988, p.3.

<sup>12</sup>.Chinweizu, The West and the Rest of us, Random House, New York, 1974, p.322.

broadsides on British imperial policy by critics of empire within and outside Britain.

Specific literature on the origins of the various universities in tropical Africa is not entirely lacking. Much work has been done on the University College of Ibadan, Nigeria.<sup>13</sup> Margaret Macpherson's study on Makerere University College, Uganda provides some glimpses into the origins of the institution.<sup>14</sup> However, for the Gold Coast University College and Fourah Bay College, there are no existing works of any significance except when treated under a general study on education.<sup>15</sup> Most of these regional works say little on the period before 1948 when the universities were founded and, in addition, their analysis tends to concentrate on the internal

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<sup>13</sup>.See Nduka Okafor, The Development of Universities in Nigeria, Longman, London, 1971; J.F.Ade Ajayi and Tekena N.Tamuno (eds.) The University of Ibadan 1948-1973, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, 1973; K.Mellanby, The Birth of Nigeria's University, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, 1958; Pierre L.van den Berghe, Power and Privilege at an African University, Schenkman Publishing Company, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973; Chukwuemeka Ike, University Development in Africa: The Nigerian Experience, Oxford University Press, Ibadan, 1976; A.Babs Fafunwa, A History of Nigerian Higher Education, Macmillan, Yaba, 1971; and J.T.Saunders, University College, Ibadan, Cambridge University Press, London, 1960.

<sup>14</sup>.Margaret Macpherson, They Built for the Future: A Chronicle of Makerere University College, 1922-1962, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1964. There is also a profound treatment of the Makerere University College history in O.W.Furley and T.Watson, A History of Education in East Africa, Nok Publishers, New York, 1978.

<sup>15</sup>.Refer to H.O.A.McWilliam and M.A.Kwamena-Poh, The Development of Education in Ghana, Longmans, London, New Edition, 1978; R.J.Mason, British Education in Africa, Oxford University Press, London, 1959; and Colin G.Wise, A History of Education in West Africa, Longmans, London, 1956.



workings of the emergent institutions. A.M.Carr-Saunders' New Universities Overseas, and I.C.M.Maxwell's Universities in Partnership belong to this category since they focus on the activity of the Inter-University Council in the actual foundation of the colonial university colleges.<sup>16</sup> Where some of these works explore the period before 1948, they hardly attempt an explanation of why the idea of a university remained objectionable to the British for nearly a century.

Except for Eric Ashby's classic work, Universities: British, Indian, African<sup>17</sup>, no one has attempted a unified study of the establishment of universities in tropical Africa. There has been no effort to correlate the emergence of these institutions to the exigency of the British colonial policy framework emanating from London. Despite the fact that Ashby's work is too broad, encompassing the evolution of British and Indian universities, it gives a profound account of the history of universities in English-speaking tropical Africa. Viewing the emergent African universities as mere transplantations of the British model, Ashby insists that in a modern state a university "cannot remain a facsimile of some

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<sup>16</sup>.A.M.Carr-Saunders, New Universities Overseas, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1961 and I.C.M.Maxwell, Universities in Partnership: The Inter-University Council and the Growth of Higher Education in Developing Countries 1946-1970, Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1980.

<sup>17</sup>.Eric Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, op.cit.

foreign model".<sup>18</sup> It was to this question of adaptation that Ashby devoted his earlier work, African Universities and Western Tradition published in 1964.<sup>19</sup> Using Ghana and Nigeria as models Ashby illuminated the interaction between higher education and African society, arguing that as Western education changed the patterns of thought all over Africa, the forces arising from African nationalism were also changing the patterns of Western education. Nevertheless, this thesis is not about that process, adaptation, which Ashby seems to have competently addressed.

Ashby's Universities: British, Indian, African has been an important reference for this present study not only because it provides a strong historical background but also because it reproduces some important primary sources (Channon's papers on colonial universities, and the correspondence on Fourah Bay between Blyden, the Sierra Leone government and the Colonial Office). Nevertheless, Ashby's work is very weak on the political aspects of the university question. It lacks analysis of the important political considerations at the heart of the British policies in Africa between 1860 and 1939 on the one hand and between 1940 and 1948 on the other. Ashby also fails to place either the pre-1940 British negative attitudes to the idea of an African university within the

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<sup>18</sup>. Ibid., p.5.

<sup>19</sup>. Eric Ashby, African Universities and Western Tradition, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1964.

larger imperial spectrum of the exigencies of indirect rule, or the positive action of the 1940's within the ambit of the reform process, which required the creation of a large body of colonial educated elements. This is hardly surprising. Since his study was extensive in scope and content, having included British and Indian material, and not entirely devoted to tropical African universities, it was bound to be much in the nature of a survey. Ashby appears to be aware of these weaknesses when he notes: "Our task is unfinished....We hope that other scholars, particularly in Africa, will continue the work we have begun".<sup>20</sup> This present work is an attempt not only to respond to Ashby's appeal but also to try to suggest a broader and more analytical approach.

Since it is a study on British imperial policy and attitudes, this analysis relies heavily on Colonial Office (CO) materials from the Public Record Office, London (PRO). Furthermore, as the University of London played a dominant role not only in the external degree arrangements in the colonies but also in the actual foundation of colonial universities under the scheme of special relationship, it became necessary to consult the records of that University. Eureka! I discovered a large body of relevant documents preserved at the University's Archives and Palaeography (ULAP) which no scholar before me, including Ashby, seems to have consulted. These documents are valuable evidence of the

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<sup>20</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.xiii.

motives and aspirations of the London University's own faculty, who had powerful vested interests as well as some idealism and pride in their own institution, and illuminate the role of the university and the Colonial Office, in the forging of the scheme of special relationship between the University of London and the new colonial university colleges.

Any study of the origins of universities in British Africa would be incomplete without careful exploration of archives and collections in Africa itself. These are particularly important for locating the "voice" of Africans in shaping university development, and for analysis of the crucial way in which African opinion, often reflected and pushed forward by colonial government, succeeded in West Africa in revising decisions made in London. I therefore consulted the National Archives of Nigeria at Ibadan (NAI), National Archives of Ghana, Accra (NAGA), and Sierra Leone Archives at Fourah Bay College (SLA). Also, materials located on the reserve sections of the University of Ibadan Library; Africana Collection, Balme Library of the University of Ghana; and Sierra Leone Collection (SLC) of Fourah Bay College Library, Freetown; were very useful. The use of these local archives was extremely rewarding. In fact, chapter six relies almost entirely on such source materials. Sometimes, Colonial Office documents which could not be found even at the Public Record Office in London were procured from the African archives as well as the special sections of university

libraries.

Unfortunately, I was unable to visit Makerere University as a result of the civil war which was raging in Uganda in the later part of 1990. Worse still, the news from the country confirmed that both the Ugandan National Archives and the Makerere Library have been so pillaged that there was little or nothing a researcher could procure from the war-ravaged country to augment the materials from London. In any case, this predicament and the seeming imbalance in the East African sources has been compensated by the huge body of documents obtained from the PRO combined with other sources. Chapter three which deals with the establishment of Makerere as a higher college draws heavily from the extensive Colonial Office materials from London which no scholar has yet utilized. Nonetheless, since this study revolves more on the politics of the establishment of African universities correlated to British changing attitudes towards colonial development, the Colonial Office sources must be central to what is, after all, a study of the "imperialism of decolonization".

## Chapter One

### **AFRICAN INITIATIVES FOR A WEST AFRICAN UNIVERSITY AND THEIR FRUSTRATIONS, 1862-1890**

The ideas which in the twentieth century created the African universities were articulated, in their essentials, between 1865 and 1874 by Africans, and for basically the same reasons underlying the actual university foundation in the 1940's. The desire of the emerging African educated class to enter the elite ranks of the bureaucracy and participate in central political institutions and the establishment of European-style "self-governing" states remained fundamental in both the nineteenth- and twentieth-century concepts of an African university. Obviously the late-nineteenth century ideas never came to fruition, except in the minimal shape of Durham degrees in theology and classics at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone. This chapter seeks to examine why these earlier ideas of an African university were frustrated and crushed by British colonial officials and missionaries. It will be demonstrated that the causes of this early failure can illuminate the enormous contrast with the situation and policies of the initiatives feebly initiated in the 1920's but strengthened in the 1930's and which culminated in the successful foundation of universities in British tropical Africa in the 1940's.

African demand for the provision of university

facilities, which began in the second half of the nineteenth century, consistently faced formidable opposition from British colonial officials, and missionaries, particularly those of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), down to the late 1930's. Sometimes Colonial Office officials seemed sympathetic to African aspirations, and sometimes too, they turned their back entirely against such agitations. The posture of the Office usually depended upon the dispositions of the colonial officials on the spot, and missionary bodies upon whose budgets the execution of projects such as the university scheme depended. Colonial governments opposed the idea of an African university not only because of the problem of funding but also to secure the positions of British officials against African competition, missionary agencies resisted it because university proponents called for a secular institution under government control. Missionaries cherished their controlling influence over education because it had become their most successful instrument of evangelization. Thus, any interference in education, whether by the government, interest groups, or individuals, constituted an invasion of their sphere of influence. They opposed it fiercely.

In West Africa, the demand for the provision of an indigenous university was initiated by the Creoles of Sierra Leone whose contact with western civilization had imbued them

with a literary consciousness as early as the 1840's.<sup>1</sup> In the whole of tropical Africa it was the Creoles of Sierra Leone who bore the torch of transplanted Western culture in the region, having come in contact with foreign influences during their sojourn overseas as victims of the ignoble human traffic, the slave trade. In East and Central Africa, however, the "liberated Africans" only developed "freed slave" settlements from the 1870's, hence the development of similar intellectual awareness was delayed until the effective establishment of colonial rule in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Thus it is hardly surprising that the early demands for an indigenous university in Africa emanated from West Africa, and almost entirely from Sierra Leone.

From 1865, when James Africanus Horton first pleaded for the establishment of a West African University, to 1872 when Edward Wilmot Blyden reiterated it, British official hostility, and C.M.S. opposition towards such a demand were quite predictable. For one thing, this was the eve of the scramble and partition and Britain had hardly established an effective administration anywhere in its tropical African possessions except, perhaps, in Sierra Leone, where British officials had governed since its settlement in 1787. This was also the period when Victorian England was reconsidering the

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<sup>1</sup>.The term Creole was first used in the sixteenth century to refer to people of Spanish ancestry born in the West Indies. In West Africa it was used in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to refer to the descendants of freed slaves and recaptives who were resettled in Sierra Leone.



wisdom of setting up permanent administrations, and was contemplating an ultimate withdrawal from Africa. Britain believed it could hold its own under free trade, without territorial acquisition in the emergent legitimate commerce of West Africa. Thus spending British tax-payers' money in founding a West African university under these circumstances appeared imprudent, despite the Creole arguments that a university would be viable.

The first recorded appeal for a university in tropical Africa was made by Horton in 1865. He was a Creole born in Freetown, Sierra Leone in 1835. His father was a recaptive of Igbo descent.<sup>2</sup> Horton graduated from Fourah Bay College in 1855. Fourah Bay Institution was founded by the C.M.S. in 1827, but partly funded by Sierra Leone under Charles Macarthy, for the purpose of training Africans as schoolmasters, catechists and clergymen. From the onset, the Liberated Africans had been impressed with the role of western education in the material and mental development of

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<sup>2</sup>.The Igbo inhabit the southeastern part of modern Nigeria. During the era of the slave trade they were known to have been victims in the human traffic which flowed down the Atlantic coast through the Aro middlemen, with the Efik and Ijaw in control. For details on the Aro-Igbo involvement see David Northrup, Trade Without Rulers, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978; A.E. Afigbo, "The Eclipse of Aro Slaving Oligarchy of Southeastern Nigeria, 1901-21", Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, vol.6, no.1, 1971 and F. Ifeoma Ekejiuba, "The Aro System of Trade in the Nineteenth Century", part 1&2, Ikenga, vol.1, no.1&2, 1972.

Africans, and had sought good training for their children.<sup>3</sup> It was in the light of this that a school was founded at Leicester Mountain, Sierra Leone, in 1816. But increasingly the C.M.S. was finding difficulty recruiting Europeans for its work in Sierra Leone hence, two years later, the school was transformed into a seminary "designed primarily for the training of ministers and catechists".<sup>4</sup>

Shortly afterwards the school was moved to Regent, Freetown, where it remained in operation until 1823. However, it lay dormant from 1823 until the C.M.S. reopened it at Fourah Bay in 1827.<sup>5</sup> In 1828 new and larger premises were acquired out of the estate of the late Charles Turner for £320 11s 6d.<sup>6</sup> Henceforth the college, which would play a significant role in the higher education of Africans, took root. From its inception in 1827 the life of Fourah Bay College remained precarious. Ashby has suggested that the chequered history of the college was a circumstance of the

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<sup>3</sup>.John Peterson, Province of Freedom: A History of Sierra Leone, 1787-1870, Faber and Faber, London, 1969, pp.284-286.

<sup>4</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.162, and Okafor, The Development of Universities in Nigeria, p.11.

<sup>5</sup>.Peterson, Province of Freedom., pp.284-286 and Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.162. George gave the names of the first registered students in this new institution as Samuel Crowther, John Harvey, James Jones, John Pope, John Wright and William Samba in that order. See Claude George, The Rise of British West Africa, first published in 1904, and reprinted by Frank Cass, London, 1968, p.424.

<sup>6</sup>.Refer to George, ibid., p.423. Major-General Turner was the Governor of Sierra Leone between 1825 and 1826.

difficulty of finding suitable staff.<sup>7</sup> This is true. What this reflected, however, was the problem of adequate funding, which overwhelmed every other consideration.

Horton was one of the brilliant and lucky three Sierra Leoneans who were selected from Fourah Bay College in 1855 to be trained as medical officers at the University of London King's College at the insistence of the War Office,<sup>8</sup> which had decided to train some African students to replace British medical officers serving in West Africa, whose mortality and morbidity rates were high. The British had realised that the physical make-up and resilience of Africans in coping with the harsh climate and malaria, made them useful agents of interior penetration. Thus the British concern for the education of these Africans up to the university level, as noted by Wyse, reflected no real commitment to higher education, but merely an assertion of self-interest.<sup>9</sup>

Horton completed his studies at the University of Edinburgh in 1859. He left King's because the institution

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<sup>7</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.162.

<sup>8</sup>.Refer to Christopher Fyfe, Africanus Horton: West African Scientist and Patriot, Oxford University Press, New York, 1972, pp.28-31. The other two were William Davies and Samuel Campbell. While Davies graduated with Horton, Campbell unfortunately died soon afterwards in Britain.

<sup>9</sup>.Akintola Wyse, The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History, C. Hurst & Co., London, 1989, p.34.

would not award an M.D. after four years of studies.<sup>10</sup> But Edinburgh did. Since the War Office urgently needed African medical officers, Horton proceeded to Edinburgh after spending three years in London working for an M.R.C.S. (Membership of the Royal College of Surgeons). At Edinburgh, he completed the fourth year and was awarded an M.D..<sup>11</sup> While in Edinburgh Horton adopted the name "Africanus" as he began to be proud of himself as an epitome of African achievement. His doctoral thesis was later published as The Medical Typography of the West African Coast. Thereafter he returned to Sierra Leone and was appointed as assistant surgeon in the British army stationed in the Gold Coast. While in the Gold Coast, he "participated in the Ashanti Wars and played a significant, though behind the scenes, role in the Fanti political revival of the period".<sup>12</sup> Consequently, military duties took him to many parts of West Africa where he familiarized himself with the people, their institutions and their social conditions. As one of the first West Africans to earn a doctor's degree Horton fully realized the power of education if Africans were

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<sup>10</sup>.The period of study then prescribed for medical students in England varied from one institution to another. The University of London King's College insisted on six years of study before a student earned a medical doctorate. See Fyfe, Africanus Horton, pp.30-31.

<sup>11</sup>.Edinburgh recognized King's three year program for an M.R.C.S.

<sup>12</sup>.Arie J. Vanderploeg, "Africanus Horton and the Idea of a University of Western Africa", Journal of African Studies, vol.5, no.2, 1978, pp.188-89; Refer also to Fyfe, Africanus Horton, pp.91-118.

to make any meaningful advance. Hence he was determined to arouse intellectual consciousness among his people by advocating the provision of university facilities in Africa.

Horton's interest in education began in 1861 when he proposed a local preliminary medical education for British West Africans. Realizing the value of an indigenous institution, he appealed to the War Office for the establishment of a small medical school in Sierra Leone. His scheme for the school was that "certain youngmen, and not above the age of twenty, be selected ... [and] be prepared in the preliminaries of Medicine ... for a certain period, from one year and a half to two years" before proceeding to England.<sup>13</sup> He argued that an African instead of a European should be appointed to oversee the affairs of the proposed institution because "he will take a far greater interest in performing what will tend to elevate his country".<sup>14</sup> Indeed he suggested himself for the job. Apparently Horton wanted to put Africans in control of medical services since they were more likely to work in sympathetic harmony with the people than Europeans doctors.

On receipt of Horton's request, the Secretary of State for War transmitted it to the Principal Medical Officer and

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<sup>13</sup>.Horton to the Secretary of State for War, 13 July, 1861 as reproduced in Davidson Nicol (ed.) Black Nationalism in Africa: Extracts from the political, educational, scientific and medical writings of Africanus Horton, Africana Publishing Corporation, New York, 1969, pp.102-106.

<sup>14</sup>.Ibid., p.105.

the Officer Commanding on the Gold Coast for comments on whether the replacement of European medical officers by Africans "is likely to be successful". Almost predictably, British officials presented "a combined and warm opposition" as they advised the War Office that Africans strongly preferred European rather than African doctors.<sup>15</sup> Hence even though Governor Pine of the Gold Coast felt strongly that the medical profession should be cleansed of its "mischievous prejudice against colour", the War Office remained apathetic.<sup>16</sup> Consequently the Secretary of State, George Lewis, acting through the Under-Secretary, rejected Horton's appeal stating that he "does not consider it necessary to enter into the scheme".<sup>17</sup> It would appear that the vested interest of European medical officers ultimately coalesced against Horton's scheme.

Nevertheless, while Horton's effort appears to have been guided by patriotism it also seems to have been tinted with some doses of self-interest. Being one of the few "pure" Africans to secure a medical doctorate and be employed by the War Office, Horton certainly desired to be accorded equal respect with his European counterparts. Having trained in the

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<sup>15</sup>.Ibid., p.106. Refer also to Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.170.

<sup>16</sup>.Ashby, ibid.

<sup>17</sup>.From Edward Lugard to Horton, 19th June, 1862 as reproduced in Nicol, ibid., p.108. General Edward Lugard was the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War, 1861-71, and the uncle of Frederick (later, Lord) Lugard.

most prestigious universities in Britain he could not tolerate subordinate positions in the medical services. Thus he craved for a medical school where he could build a reputation as well as self-employment for himself. No doubt, the difficulties he experienced in Britain prompted his proposal for a preliminary course before students proceeded to England. For him, it was absurd for African students unacquainted with anything in medicine to compete with those who generally had obtained preliminary education on some of the subjects before they entered university. Yet his insistence that "the Master of the establishment" must be an African<sup>18</sup> meant that while Horton was enamoured with European culture he vehemently pushed for Africanization of the medical profession.

Horton seems to have envisaged a private medical college controlled by Africans (with himself as the head), and funded by the British Government. He should have known better. The futility of such a proposal was predictable because the British Parliament was yet to be convinced of the economic value of colonial possessions in Africa. Worse still, the British Government remained convinced that West Africa was the "White-man's grave", particularly after the disaster of the Niger Expedition of 1841, which resulted in the withdrawal of

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<sup>18</sup>.Horton to Secretary of State for War in Nicol (ed.) Black Nationalism in Africa, pp.105-6.

all white personnel from the interior.<sup>19</sup> On a different level, it is surprising that Horton would be unaware that his demands struck at the vested interests of European medical officers. By arguing indiscreetly that his project aimed at replacing European officials "who are opposed to the African race and who would not in any way favour any plan that tend[ed] to better their condition" Horton's proposal was bound to be still-born.<sup>20</sup> He appealed to the War Office, over the heads of the local European doctors. The War Office might have found his scheme much cheaper in the long run. Although Horton's appeal for a medical school failed, his educational ideas soon began to grow more ambitious.

In the meantime, Britain was not comfortable with its presence on the west coast of Africa. British involvement in Lagos politics in 1851 and the subsequent annexation in 1861, the ferocious Ashanti-Fanti conflicts which were taking their toll in men and resources, and the high mortality and morbidity rate of British officials had compelled policy makers in London to begin to reconsider the political and economic prudence of retaining British possessions in West Africa. A withdrawal began to be contemplated. Thus in 1863 when the Ashanti army invaded the coast, demanding that

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<sup>19</sup>.See J.E. Flint, "Economic Change in West Africa in the Nineteen Century" in J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.) History of West Africa, Longman, London, 1974, pp.395-396.

<sup>20</sup>.Horton to the President and members of the Educational Committee, War Office, 13th May 1862 as reproduced in Nicol, Black Nationalism, pp.106-8.



Governor Pine surrender some refugees, Britain advised against a counter-offensive fearing that it might mean the extension of spheres of influence. Thus the Ashanti invasion coupled with other difficulties convinced staunch imperialists that "energies were better directed to colonies in Australia and New Zealand than to the 'white man's grave' of West Africa".<sup>21</sup> Such a withdrawal could have entailed the training of Africans who would have replaced European bureaucrats in the administration of the colonies on behalf of Britain.

It is, therefore, not surprising that prior to the establishment of colonial rule, the British Government and officials were more willing to create an educated African middle class which, having been educated in England, would constitute an important link between Britain and Africa should the former choose to withdraw from the political administration of its settlements.<sup>22</sup> These Africans were thought to be more resistant to the deadly malaria. They would also "civilize" their folks more easily. No doubt, the education of Horton and his colleagues was necessitated by the same considerations.

But as quinine became effective as an antidote against

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<sup>21</sup>.John E. Flint, Nigeria and Ghana, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1966, pp.124-5.

<sup>22</sup>.See Robert July, The Origins of Modern African Thought, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1967, pp.112-113. Britain looked forward to the eventual development of westernized Christian societies in order to create the nucleus of an African middle class patterned on an English prototype.

malaria, and as colonial subjugation later became inevitable, colonial officials began to feel that there was no need for the continued expansion of the educated class. The educated class of Africans was soon to be seen as undesirable. Furthermore it would seem that French activities in Senegal and the Lower Niger still remained a problem even though Britain was confident that it would commercially outstrip France under free competition and given its naval preponderance. British colonial attitudes began to waver. Sometimes policy remained uncertain, and sometimes principles contradicted themselves. Robert July succinctly depicted the situation thus:

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, British policy in West Africa was uncertain and contradictory, reflecting the diverse pressures upon it at home. Committed to a laissez-faire philosophy towards colonies in general, the English government sought to minimize its presence along the West African coast and to reduce the expenditures incurred on behalf of its settlements there.<sup>23</sup>

Horton's demand for a West African University in 1868 resulted from the recommendation of the Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed in 1865 to review whether or not the four West African settlements should be retained. Deliberating on the issue some members of Parliament "felt that the colonies were useless, [as they were] neither suppressing the slave trade nor encouraging legitimate trade

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<sup>23</sup>. Ibid., p.110.

and therefore should be abandoned"; others argued that they should be kept.<sup>24</sup> Those officials who pushed for withdrawal "accused the mission-educated colonials [Creoles] of being 'notorious rogues' and 'dishonest trouble-makers'".<sup>25</sup> Early British travellers had described the Creoles disparagingly: as "immoral prating knaves whose malign influence tended to depress the rest of West Africa".<sup>26</sup> British officials in Africa employed these narratives to dismiss missionary efforts as harmful and also useless since they seemed to have led the educated Africans to think themselves equal to Europeans.<sup>27</sup> Hence while parliament was thinking about possible withdrawal and a hand-over of administration to the African educated elite, colonial officials were arguing that the educated Africans were not worthy of such responsibility. British officials were protecting their positions. Thus the seeds of discord were sown quite early between colonial officials and the African educated elite.

In any case, it would seem that the lure of legitimate

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<sup>24</sup>. See as cited in Okafor, The Development of Universities in Nigeria, p.19.

<sup>25</sup>. Christopher Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1962, p.337.

<sup>26</sup>. R.F. Burton, Wanderings in West Africa, vol.1, pp.266-268 as cited in July, The Origins of Modern African Thought, p.118.

<sup>27</sup>. Okafor, The Development of Universities in Nigeria, p.19. Most Creoles and Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone were doing profitable business, and successfully competing with European merchants and traders.

commerce, the curiosity to explore the interior, as well as French activities in West Africa, discouraged an outright decision by the House of Commons for a withdrawal. Instead, Parliament resolved in favour of the retention, in the meantime, of its settlements without further expansion. Accordingly:

all further assumption of territory or assumption of Government, or new treaties, offering any protection to native tribes would be inexpedient; and that the object of our policy should be to encourage in the natives the exercise of those qualities which may render it possible more and more to transfer to them the administration of all the Governments, with a view to our ultimate withdrawal from all, except, probably Sierra Leone.<sup>28</sup>

Between 1865 and 1870's there was renewed official support for British traders in response to the political backing given by the French government to its traders, and the establishment of French settlements at Assine, Grand Bassam, the Popos, Porto Novo and at Libreville.<sup>29</sup> Official British actions from the 1870's ignored the resolution of the House of Commons as the acquisition of more territories became accelerated.

The decision for "ultimate withdrawal" by the British Parliament suggested to Horton that western education was necessary. But why was western education vital for self-

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<sup>28</sup>.Parliamentary Papers 1865, vol.5, p.2, Report of the Select Committee on the State of British Settlements in West Africa, House of Commons, 26 June 1865.

<sup>29</sup>.Flint, "Economic Change in West Africa in the Nineteenth Century", p.396.

government since at that time sovereign African states (such as Asante, Dahomey, Benin and the Yoruba states) were not ruled by western educated Africans? As a member of the emerging class of educated elite, Horton desired the creation of new western-style states ruled by western educated Africans and not the traditional rulers. Thus he presumed that education in western tradition and civilization was necessary to train the African political and bureaucratic elite. Horton's effort seems to reflect the early beginning of conflicts between an African educated elite and traditional authorities which climaxed in the 1920's. In a pamphlet issued in 1865<sup>30</sup> and expanded into a book in 1868,<sup>31</sup> he noted that "education would form an essential element in the [self]-government of the coast", and called for the establishment of a West African University. According to him:

We want a University for Western Africa, and the Church Missionary Society has long ago taken the initiative and built an expensive college, [Fourah Bay College] which should now be made the focus of learning for all Western Africa.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>.J.A.B. Horton, Political Economy of British Western Africa, London, 1965.

<sup>31</sup>.James Africanus B. Horton, West African Countries, British and Native. With the Requirements Necessary for Establishing that Self Government Recommended by the Committee of the House of Commons, 1865; and a Vindication of the African Race, W.J. Johnson, London, 1868 and reprinted by Kraus Reprint, Nendeln, Switzerland, 1970.

<sup>32</sup>.Ibid., pp.69 and 201. See also as reproduced in Nicol, Black Nationalism in Africa, pp.97-102.

In Horton's time Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone was the only higher educational institution of any significance in the whole of West Africa offering a diploma in theology and a few certificate courses. But most recaptives did not like the predominantly ecclesiastical education provided for their children by Fourah Bay. Thus in 1845 the C.M.S. was persuaded to establish a grammar school encompassing education of a general and secular character "open to all classes of the Public without regard to religious or other distinctions", founded in Freetown.<sup>33</sup> Fourah Bay's importance was reduced in the public's eyes as the Grammar school "was patronized by people all over West Africa who wished their children to choose careers other than the Church".<sup>34</sup> Consequently, only those who wished to become clergymen continued at Fourah Bay College. Thus it is not surprising that between 1845 and 1860 only ten students were educated at the College at a cost of nearly £800 a year to the C.M.S.<sup>35</sup> As a result, the College was closed down in 1859 but was however reopened in 1863 by

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<sup>33</sup>.C.M.S. Archives, CAI/0129(b) Papers on Education: The Grammar School Prospectus, as reproduced in Christopher Fyfe, Sierra Leone Inheritance, Oxford University Press, London, 1964, pp.150-151.

<sup>34</sup>.E.A. Ayandele, Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African Nationalism, 1836-1917, Frank Cass, London, 1970, p.71. The Grammar School was modelled on similar institutions in England with a curriculum which was largely classical and mathematical. Nevertheless, since it was founded and controlled by the C.M.S. it is only predictable that it would have a strong religious bias.

<sup>35</sup>.Ibid..

the C.M.S.

Nevertheless, the new Fourah Bay College awarded no formal qualifications. Rather it trained men almost exclusively for the ministry or as catechist-school teachers. By and large, "it functioned as a seminary and high school".<sup>36</sup> During the period almost all the students admitted to the college were born in Sierra Leone with the exception of those brought to Freetown in childhood as slaves like Samuel Crowther.<sup>37</sup> Thus, to the C.M.S., the college was serving very well its intended purpose as an institution where recaptive children could be trained in useful trades or farming, and the better ones as pastors and teachers. Nevertheless, by 1863 James Horton had returned home from Britain, and had begun to articulate his idea of a university which became elaborated in 1865. Horton wanted Fourah Bay College to serve a more practical and secular purpose for the intellectual and material advancement of the African people.

Horton conceived of education as an indispensable part of

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<sup>36</sup>.P.E. Hair, "An Analysis of the Register of Fourah Bay College, 1827-1950", Sierra Leone Studies, New Series, No.7, December 1956, p.155.

<sup>37</sup>.Samuel Adjai Crowther was a recaptive from the Yoruba ethnic group of modern Nigeria. After his recapture by the British anti-slavery squadron, he was taken to England for a few months by a missionary, and resettled in Sierra Leone where he began his missionary work after graduating from Fourah Bay in 1829. He later rose to prominence, and became the bishop of the Niger Mission in 1864. Refer to J.F.A. Ajayi Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of A New Elite, Longmans, London, 1965, p.26 and Fyfe, Sierra Leone Inheritance, p.138.

development and "the key to free Africans from the racists' prison of allegedly permanent inferiority ... [and] from the unenterprising ways that kept their countries economically stagnant".<sup>38</sup> He therefore insisted that education in general, and his proposed university should be supported by local and British Government funds rather than the limited resources provided by the C.M.S. Thus Horton seems to have anticipated the concept of "colonial development and welfare" which would dominate British colonial policy in the 1940's. He decried the refusal of the Sierra Leone Government to spend on education in the colony. He saw it as absurd that the Government should spend £400 on education while liberally committing the sum of £14,000 annually on police.<sup>39</sup> Hence Horton contended that the proposed West African University should be "endowed by the Local Government, which should guarantee its privileges, and cherish the interests of literature and science in the Colony".<sup>40</sup>

Horton seemed to have been ignorant of the very basis and nature of British enterprise in Africa. From the beginning, educational efforts in British territories had been the work of missionary, and not government agency - British or African. The British Government had thereby been relieved of any financial responsibilities for education. As missionary bodies

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<sup>38</sup>.Fyfe, Africanus Horton, p.83.

<sup>39</sup>.Horton in Nicol, Black Nationalism in Africa, p.97.

<sup>40</sup>.Horton, West African Countries and Peoples, p.202.



scampered for converts the control of education became crucial, and the C.M.S jealously guarded it. The C.M.S preponderance had been so complete that education, as George observed:

became inextricably blended with the history of that Society, so that it became impossible after this to treat of the education of the Colony without trenching on the history of the Church Missionary Society.<sup>41</sup>

Clearly Horton's call for government involvement was a bold plea which certainly would face British official as well as missionary opposition.<sup>42</sup> The British Government regarded the policy of minimal spending for maximum profit as almost inviolate. Any schemes, such as the university or the medical school idea, which implied additional expenditure were anathema. Thus when Governor Blackall of Sierra Leone suggested that more political functions should be exercised by Britain in its West African territories, officials of the Colonial Office wished it away. Such actions, as one official commented, "must be costly" hence Britain should "civilize" two or three stations on the West Coast "at which merchants could place their goods in security and ship them in larger vessels for export to Europe..., costing us no money and

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<sup>41</sup>.George, The Rise of British West Africa, p.415.

<sup>42</sup>.Vanderploeg, "Africanus Horton...", p.193.

involving us in no responsibility".<sup>43</sup> Parsimony in spending was British doctrine. As Fyfe aptly pointed out:

British colonial policy paid occasional lip-service to development. But a tradition of official parsimony restricted public expenditure to the minimum necessary to keep administration going. If export-import trade brought in enough customs revenue to balance the budget the Colonial Office was contented.<sup>44</sup>

Horton proposed a broad-based curriculum of instruction ranging from arts to science, and suggested that the educational tradition should be western in style and content. According to him:

Lectures should be given in the theory and practice of education, classics, mathematics, natural philosophy, mensuration, and book-keeping; English Language and literature; French, German, Hebrew, history in general, mineralogy, physiology, zoology, botany, chemistry, moral and political philosophy, civil and commercial law, drawing and music, besides the various subjects which might be included under the term of theology.<sup>45</sup>

Although Horton desired the social, intellectual and economic development of his people through higher education, his approach was not racist. For him, foreign influence constituted the necessary catalyst for the advance of Africa.

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<sup>43</sup>.CO 267/277 Minute by T.F. Elliott, Assistant Under-Secretary of State, on Governor Blackall's despatch No.18 of 16 February, 1863, as cited in Fyfe, Sierra Leone Inheritance, pp.189-190.

<sup>44</sup>.Fyfe, Africanus Horton, p.83.

<sup>45</sup>.Horton, West African Countries and Peoples, p.202.

Horton did not allow the racial feelings of the time to diminish his admiration for the virtues of European civilization. As a product of European culture Horton was virtually indoctrinated. For him, therefore, western standards became the unchallenged basis on which African achievement could be gauged. However, he emphasized strongly the racial equality of humans on the justification that every race was capable of civilization by imitation and emulation. For Horton, there was nothing wrong with Britain influencing, through Christianity, the "civilization" of Africa as the great Rome had inspired European civilization. Hence he contended that "the variations between human groups depended on nurture and environment ..., any race could be improved by education, and degraded by the lack of it".<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, "[i]t is impossible for a nation to civilize itself; civilization must come from abroad". He therefore enjoined Africans to respect and imitate "the good and virtuous Europeans, whilst shunning those whose actions are a disgrace to civilization".<sup>47</sup>

Horton glorified European civilization, and saw nothing wrong in the transplantation of British virtues into Africa. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that there were some Europeans

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<sup>46</sup>.Fyfe, Africanus Horton, p.70.

<sup>47</sup>.Horton, West African Countries and Peoples, pp.196, and 273-274. Horton asserted that the civilized continents of Europe and America were all involved in imitation and emulation, and hence Africa should not be an exception to that rule.

whose conception of Africans was totally objectionable. He was aware that "those [Europeans] who come out are *opposed to anything that will raise the African* and therefore it will require time for them to conform themselves with any such plans...".<sup>48</sup> Thus he insisted that the improvement of West Africa, which the government expected, "can never be properly accomplished, unless by the aid of the educated *native portion of the community*".<sup>49</sup> Horton's contention that the "Master" in the educational institution he proposed should be an African who "will take a far greater interest in performing what will tend to elevate his country" remains an expression of doubt as to the sincerity of the British "civilizing" mission in Africa. What Horton emphasized therefore was that while "civilization must come from abroad", the civilizers must be indigenous if a nation were to make a meaningful advance. He was aware that Europeans normally came for reasons not far from those impelled by self-interest.

Horton was far ahead of his time. Not surprisingly, his plea for a medical school, West African University, and government funding of education were stillborn. For one thing, the university facilities which he demanded would have elevated Africans to, or above, the level of British officials

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<sup>48</sup>.Horton to War Office, 13th May, 1862, as reproduced in Nicol, Black Nationalism in Africa, p.107. Italics are as highlighted in the original correspondence.

<sup>49</sup>.Horton, West African Countries and Peoples, p.48. Italics are Horton's.

who had begun to cherish and protect their elevated positions. Already the educational advance attained by the Creoles of Sierra Leone had placed them in direct rivalry with the British officials, traders and missionaries alike. Higher training of Africans in the fields of medicine, law, engineering and administration would mean the displacement of British officials. Hence it was not surprising that the Principal Medical Officer and the Officer Commanding on the Gold Coast recommended that the War Office turn down Horton's appeal for a medical school for the continued training of African medical officer to replace the British.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, instead of the ultimate withdrawal from its West African possessions, as the Select Committee of 1865 had envisaged, Britain began to position herself in the west coast of Africa from the 1870's to meet the threat of French aggressive expansionist and protectionist activities in West Africa.<sup>51</sup> Thus, even though traders and missionaries supported

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<sup>50</sup>.Horton to War Office, 13th May, 1862; and General Edward Lugard to Horton, 19th June, 1862 as reproduced in Nicol, Black Nationalism in Africa. European resistance against African medical doctors seems to have involved quite deep questions of racism and racist psychology. The commonest objection was that European women must not be examined by African doctors, however highly qualified, as this would break a sacred racial/sexual taboo. This eventually became the key argument for segregating the medical colonial service in the 1890's.

<sup>51</sup>.For details of French aggressive activity in West Africa which forced Britain to abandon its policy of abstention, see J.E. Flint, "Britain and the Partition of West Africa", in John E. Flint and Glyndir Williams (eds.) Perspectives of Empire, Longman, London, 1973; and "The Growth of European Influence in West Africa in the Nineteen Century"

the withdrawal because they preferred to trade and proselytize, respectively, beyond British jurisdiction where there were no officials to interfere with them, French protectionism troubled them.<sup>52</sup> However, colonial officials on-the-spot were not comfortable with the withdrawal argument because it entailed loss of jobs for them. Thus, whatever the case, the call for more British action by consuls far surpassed those of traders and missionaries.

Mainly for reasons of economics, and backed by the advice of the Colonial Office, Parliament resolved that the four British possessions be unified under one administration with a Governor-in-Chief to be resident in Sierra Leone, and paying occasional visits to the other territories.<sup>53</sup> This was effected in 1866. In each subordinate settlement - Lagos, the Gold Coast and the Gambia - administrators were to be appointed who would be responsible to the Governor-in-Chief, and corresponding with the Colonial Office through him. This arrangement was intended to save costs. Thus instead of withdrawing, as Horton had presumably hoped, Britain set up a

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in J.F. Ade Ajayi and Ian Espie (eds) A Thousand Years of West African History, IUP, Ibadan, 1965, and G.N. Uzoigwe, "European Partition and the Conquest of Africa: An Overview" in A. Adu Boahen (ed.) UNESCO General History of Africa, vol.vii, California, 1985.

<sup>52</sup>. Evidence given to the Parliamentary Select Committee of 1865 confirmed that traders and missionaries would be content to operate beyond the area of British direct rule. See Fyfe, Sierra Leone Inheritance, p.189.

<sup>53</sup>. Fyfe, Africanus Horton, pp.62 and 63.

formal administration for its West African settlements with headquarters in Sierra Leone. As a result the opposition of British colonial officials to the idea of a West African University began to harden. Although the British needed educated Africans to realise the process of Europeanization and civilization, the Sierra Leonean government was perhaps conscious of its lean budgets upon which the university project would depend and hence the idea was ignored. Granted that Horton's demand produced no tangible and favourable response from Britain, there is no doubt that he was a great African patriot of his time. Clearly his ideas on education as the chief agent of African development can hardly be written off as a mere fantasy.

From the 1870's Edward Wilmot Blyden, in a more forceful manner, took on the mantle of Horton by appealing for the establishment of a university in West Africa. Blyden was born in 1832 in the Danish West Indian island of St. Thomas. Like Horton he traced his descent to the Igbo ethnic group of modern Nigeria.<sup>54</sup> In his youth Blyden demonstrated a remarkable linguistic ability by mastering Spanish within two years. Encouraged by Reverend Knox of the Dutch Reformed Church, Blyden went to America in 1850 "in the hope that he

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<sup>54</sup>.P.O. Esedebe, "Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912): As Pan-African Theorist", Sierra Leone Studies, New Series, No.25, July 1969, p.14. He was a contemporary of Horton. Since the Igbo through the oracular devices of the Aro were the most salient victims in the Atlantic Slave Trade, it is therefore possible that Horton and Blyden's grandfathers were victims of the Aro slaving oligarchy.

might gain admission to appropriate American colleges and eventually enter the ministry".<sup>55</sup> But he was denied admission on account of his race. According to him, a

deep-seated prejudice against my race, exercised so controlling an influence in the institutions of learning, that admission to them was almost impossible. Discouraged by difficulties in my path, I proposed to return to St. Thomas and abandon the hope of an education....<sup>56</sup>

The effects of this unhappy episode on young Blyden can be imagined. But it would reshape and sharpen his future racial attitudes. Nevertheless, he ultimately accepted an offer by the American Colonization Society to relocate in Liberia in order to carry on with his education, arriving in Monrovia in January 1851.<sup>57</sup> Liberia was founded in 1822 as a haven for freed American slaves. Until 1847 when it became independent, Liberia was administered by the American Colonization Society on behalf of the United States Government. As with Sierra Leonean Creoles, literacy was high among Liberian settlers while the indigenous population remained predominantly illiterate. Thus agitation for

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<sup>55</sup>.Okafor, The Development of Universities in Nigeria, p.26. Reverend Knox was an American in charge of the Dutch Reformed Church in St. Thomas, who guided Blyden in religious instruction.

<sup>56</sup>.E.W. Blyden, Liberia's Offering, J.A. Gray, New York, 1862, a biographical sketch, pp.i-iii. Refer also to V.Y. Mudimbe, The Invention of Africa, Indiana University Press, Indiana, 1988, p.99; and Eserdebe, "Edward Wilmot Blyden...", p.14.

<sup>57</sup>.Monrovia, capital of Liberia, was named in honour of President James Monroe of the United States.



university education was higher among Liberian settlers than the autochthones.

In Liberia, Blyden was admitted into the Alexander High School where he learned Latin, Greek, geography and mathematics, and later enrolled at Princeton Theological College where he trained for the clergy.<sup>58</sup> Between 1855-56 he served as the editor of Liberia's only newspaper, the Liberian Herald. When the Principal of Alexander High School, Reverend Wilson retired in 1858, Blyden secured that position, and was ordained in the presbytery of West Africa. While retaining his post in the school, Blyden was appointed professor of Latin and classics in 1861 in the newly-established Liberia College. From then on, Blyden began to play a prominent role in the public life of his country of adoption. In a sense, his relocation in Liberia afforded him the opportunity to become the leading philosopher-statesman of Africa of his time. It is uncertain whether he would have attained such eminence had he not personally experienced open racism, and resettled in Liberia.

Blyden became a scholar, clergyman, journalist, diplomat, administrator and pan-African theorist. His burning desire to elevate Liberia to a respected independent African country compelled him to accept a government post as Secretary of

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<sup>58</sup>.Refer to Hollis R. Lynch (ed.), "Introduction", in Black Spokesman: Selected Writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden, Frank Cass, London, 1971, and Okafor, The Development of Universities in Nigeria, p.26.

State. Strong racial feelings induced Blyden's campaign for the emigration en masse of American blacks to Liberia. Ardently convinced that no race could reach its fullest self-expression under alien control, he further stressed that "no people can rise to an influential position among the nations without a distinct and efficient nationality".<sup>59</sup> On behalf of the Liberia government, he visited America in 1865 to recruit settlers, resulting in a settlement on the St. Paul's River.<sup>60</sup> Undoubtedly, Blyden's harrowing experience in the United States shaped his racial philosophy.

Indeed, he became very powerful in his position as Secretary of State. Increasingly the Liberian President, Edward Roye, developed high admiration for him. Together in 1870 they outlined a number of reforms which included a thorough financial reconstruction and the establishment of the national banking system, the general education of the masses, the introduction of railroads, and the improvement and incorporation of "native tribes" contiguous to Liberia. But the reform process was opposed by Roye's political opponents, led by the powerful mulatto group.<sup>61</sup> In the political

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<sup>59</sup>.Refer to Blyden, Liberia's Offering, pp.iii-iv, and 27.

<sup>60</sup>.See July, The Origins of Modern African Thought, p.211.

<sup>61</sup>.Lynch, "introduction", Black Spokesman, p.xiv. Roye and Blyden faced fierce political opposition because they were "pure" blacks. The mulattos hated "pure" blacks because they considered them "uncivilized", perhaps, because they had no European blood even though they controlled government. In reality, it was a struggle over power.

manoeuvres which ensued, Roye and Blyden lost control to the mulattos. Roye was deposed and ultimately murdered. To discredit Blyden as morally sick the mulatto rivals accused him of seducing Roye's wife, and thus Blyden was forced to flee to Sierra Leone in 1871.<sup>62</sup> Ultimately the effort of Blyden to transform Liberia according to his vision fell through. From then on, he no longer thought only in terms of Liberia but acted for the progress of the entire African continent. Arising out of his experience with the mulattos in Liberia, Blyden began to espouse the superiority of pure races over blood mixtures or mongrelization. His ideas were hijacked by many Europeans whose own interests in racial characteristics, race hierarchies and race superiority far surpassed Blyden's, and whose assumptions began to permeate the climate of opinion in the late-nineteenth century. Naturally, Blyden's racial theory catered to, and flattered, a wide audience among educated Africans as well.

It was while in Sierra Leone that Blyden's idea of a university of West Africa matured, and was translated into a concrete line of action. Obviously aware of the earlier plea

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<sup>62</sup>.Refer to Henry S.Wilson, Origins of West African Nationalism, Macmillan, London, 1969, p.229. Some literature on Blyden, for instance, Esedebe's "Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912): As Pan-African Theorist", left out the seduction story. This is improper. Whether the story is false or not its deliberate exclusion from these writings tends to distort Blyden's biography. However, it would appear that while European writers who seek to demonstrate that Blyden was not all that a great man flaunt this story, African scholars who seek to show that he was a distinguished patriot naturally expunge it. Either approach constitutes a distortion.

by Horton between 1860 and 1868, Blyden picked up the university question shortly after his resettlement in Freetown. In Sierra Leone, Blyden found an enthusiastic African collaborator in Reverend James Johnson with whom he edited The Negro newspaper. This newspaper, which they co-founded in 1871, was "extremely distasteful to Europeans".<sup>63</sup> Johnson was born to Yoruba recaptive parents between 1835 and 1840. He was ordained a minister in the Anglican Church in 1866 after his theological education at Fourah Bay College. As a priest of African descent, Johnson observed that there was some kind of discrimination in the state, as well as the church, targeted against Blacks. Thus he began to espouse the grievances of his countrymen against the racial policies "pursued by the British rulers in Church and State".<sup>64</sup> Not surprisingly, he was branded a *persona non grata* in the Sierra Leonean C.M.S. circle. Pointing out "the denationalizing methods of the Christian Missions in West Africa", Johnson became a staunch advocate of cultural nationalism.<sup>65</sup> Johnson's philosophy on race was therefore parallel to, if not exactly

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<sup>63</sup>.Ayandele, Holy Johnson, p.36; See also his "An Assessment of James Johnson and His Place in Nigerian History, 1878-1917", part 1, in Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, vol.2, No.4, 1963, p.498.

<sup>64</sup>.Ayandele, Holy Johnson, p.36; Refer also to James Bertin Webster, The African Churches Among the Yoruba, 1888-1922, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964. Webster regards the discrimination against African clergy as partly responsible for the formation of African churches.

<sup>65</sup>.Ayandele, The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914, Longmans, London, 1966.

similar to Blyden's. Little wonder then that both men became perfect associates in the clamour for a West African university.

Unlike Horton, Blyden's demand for a West African University was more forceful, racial, and secular. Although he was subsequently overcome by the concerted opposition of British officials, championed by the C.M.S., Blyden pressed his demand to the highest level possible. Blyden's demand in relation to the provision of higher educational facilities for Africans began with his letter to Henry Venn, the secretary-general of the parent committee of the C.M.S. in London, in April 1872 about the establishment of a Collegiate Institution in Sierra Leone. Observing that "there is no greater need in this Colony than a good Collegiate Institution both for preparing missionaries and men to act well their part in the ordinary pursuit of life" Blyden demanded that:

There should be located in Freetown, or its neighbourhood, some good Institution to which parents here and at other points of the coast, might send their children with the assurance that they would receive a training which would fit them for the practical purposes of life.<sup>66</sup>

From the onset Blyden frowned on the continued education of Africans in England where they imbibed foreign ideas and practices which disoriented them for leadership roles within

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<sup>66</sup>.Edward W, Blyden to Reverend Henry Venn dated April 17, 1872 as reproduced in Hollis R. Lynch (ed.), Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden, KTO Press, New York, 1878, pp.112-113.

Africa. He sought to preserve the essential virtues of black civilization, especially in an era when racial mythologies were disparagingly anti-black. Given his own experience in the United States, Blyden was determined to prove that the blackness of his skin had nothing to do with the sharpness of his intellect. He recognized that the continued training of Africans in England was a way of perpetuating in Africans a sense of racial inferiority. Worse still Blyden felt that alienation was a concomitant of colonial education. In England Africans were exposed to educational curriculum which centred almost exclusively on Europe. Robert July has noted how this practice resulted in a thin stream of miseducated Africans who were "untrained in self-respect, unqualified to deal with the problems of their own society, and lacking the necessary instructive, sympathetic response to the rhythmic pulse of Africa".<sup>67</sup> Obviously July was almost rehashing Blyden who had earlier stated that:

the strain which the mind of the African youth receives when he is sent to England ... often unfit him for usefulness when he returns home. He either satisfies himself to remain in his artificial and stilted position - too elevated for practical purposes - or a reaction takes place and he sinks far below those who have never been on the coast. He has acquired tastes and practices which he cannot enjoy here and he therefore wastes

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<sup>67</sup>.July, The Origins of Modern African Thought, p.228.

his time pining after "dear old England".<sup>68</sup>

When William Grant proposed in the Legislative Council the establishment of a good educational Institution in Sierra Leone, Blyden quickly sent him a powerful letter of support framed in similar argumentation as the one to Venn.<sup>69</sup> Grant's interest in the provision of a sound educational institution in Sierra Leone was understandable. As a successful Creole who had built a flourishing business in the early 1860's, and as a member of the Legislative Council, Grant desired suitable education for his children. Blyden wished to acquaint Grant with the kernel of his educational argument so that the latter could vehemently champion the cause further in the legislature. With the foundation of such an institution, Blyden told Grant:

there would be a general diffusion of that higher intelligence which originates public measures, which stimulates the people, moderates their impulses, sustains and gives weight to noble enterprise, creates and expands a healthy public sentiment, and accelerates the

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<sup>68</sup>.Blyden to Venn in Lynch (ed.) Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden, p.113. In other words, Blyden was more or less agreeing with Europeans who despised the educated Africans. In any case, he blamed the Europeans for the miseducation of Africans.

<sup>69</sup>.See Edward Blyden to William Grant, dated May 22, 1872, in Lynch, Black Spokesman, pp.223-5. Grant was the son of Igbo recaptive parents. Through personal efforts he became a famous trader in Sierra Leone as to attract the attention of British officials. Although he did not use the term "university" in the Council's debate, his plea certainly galvanized Blyden.

moral and spiritual progress of the race.<sup>70</sup>

In his response Grant assured Blyden that he had a "deep interest in the subject", and suggested that Blyden should publish his ideas on education as contained in his letter in The Negro. Candidly Grant suggested that "the subject should be thoroughly ventilated and discerned, trusting that such discussion may lead to the adoption of such measures as will promote the educational interests of our people".<sup>71</sup> With Grant on his side and Johnson as a comrade, Blyden felt more confident to put forward his grand idea for the establishment of a West African University. While Grant was to lobby government, it would appear that Johnson would push the case in missionary quarters, with Blyden as a sort of clearing house. The stage was thus set for what turned out to be one of the best articulated and promoted ideas of the period.

In December 1872 Blyden forwarded a letter calling upon Governor Pope Hennessy of Sierra Leone to establish a university in West Africa.<sup>72</sup> Stating that foreign influences, through education, had "unduly biased their [African]

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<sup>70</sup>.Blyden to Grant, p.225.

<sup>71</sup>.William Grant to Edward Blyden, May 23, 1872, The West African University, Negro Printing Office, Freetown, 1872, p.4.

<sup>72</sup>.Edward W. Blyden to Governor John Pope Hennessy, dated December 6, 1872, in The West African University: Correspondence Between Edward W. Blyden and J. Pope Hennessy, Negro Printing Office, Freetown, 1872, pp.6-8; see also as reproduced in Eric Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, pp.226-228.



development and hampered their progress", Blyden told Hennessy that able teachers of African descent could be recruited from all over the world, if necessary. These scholars, he argued, "would have great influence in exposing and correcting the fallacies upon which our foreign teachers have proceeded in their utter misapprehension and, perhaps, contempt of African character".<sup>73</sup> Blyden's statement seemed rather too harsh. Only a few white governors could tolerate such brazen criticism without reprisals. Hennessy was one of those few.

Furthermore, Blyden insisted that the time had come for the education of Africans to be adapted "to the exigencies of the country and race ... if the people are ever to become fit to be entrusted with the functions of self-government; if they are ever to become ripe for free and progressive institutions". Furthermore, to press his point home Blyden concluded that:

to give the people the opportunity and power of a free and healthy development - to bring out that individuality and originality of character which is one of the sure results of advancing civilization and culture, the university is most important.<sup>74</sup>

The issue of adaptation of education to the African

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<sup>73</sup>. Ibid..

<sup>74</sup>. Ibid., pp.6-8. Blyden attempted to flatter Hennessy by asserting that "it would be the crown and glory of all the beneficent acts" if the university which he proposed was organised under his administration.

environment was one about which Blyden felt strongly. It was an issue which would later dominate the British attempt to evolve an education policy for their African territories from the 1920's. But while Blyden's call for adaptation was informed by a desire to preserve African cultural identity while still learning western technologies, the adaptation of the inter-war years was an attempt to consolidate indirect rule as will be seen later. Thus Blyden sent a follow-up letter to Hennessy emphasizing that the university he envisaged should be "in keeping with advancing the spirit of the age and adapted to the inherent necessities of the [African] race".<sup>75</sup> Furthermore he subtly denounced the exploitative nature of British administration in Africa, which invariably ignored the mental and material development of the people. Accordingly:

a Government which is more inert in developing the intellectual and moral character of these "tribes" than in availing itself of the material resources of the country is of very questionable utility to the race.<sup>76</sup>

In his response Hennessy agreed with Blyden on the defective nature of education in British West African settlements. While recognizing the dangers of the formation of "thoughtless, idle and ignorant character", Hennessy noted

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<sup>75</sup>.Edward W. Blyden to Governor Hennessy, dated December 9, 1872 in The West African University, p.11.

<sup>76</sup>.Ibid., p.10. As a means of developing the intellectual and moral character of the people, Blyden insisted that the university was most desirable.

that Government and Missionary Societies had laboured seriously to promote education. However, he stressed that the failure of British education of Africans was "mainly owing to the idea that the Negro should be Europeanized to be educated" pointing out that a similar mistake was made in the early days of British rule in "Hindustan" with comparable results.<sup>77</sup> In any case, Hennessy contended that the foundation of a university "must be the work of the Africans themselves".

Evidently sympathetic to the issue of higher education for Africans, nevertheless, Hennessy recalled that there had been failures of so many benevolent projects in Sierra Leone that his government "would shrink from undertaking the initiative of such an Institution, though a reasonable claim for some State support might be made, when the Promoters could show that their scheme possessed the real elements of success".<sup>78</sup> Undoubtedly Hennessy was aware that Africans would not agree to bear the cost of Blyden's scheme even though they would benefit from it. In describing the attitudes of Africans towards such projects Ayandele aptly asserted that "tax or self-help in any form was their bane" and to suggest that Africans should bear the initial costs of building the university was "to touch them on their tenderest spot".<sup>79</sup> In

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<sup>77</sup>.Governor Hennessy to Edward W. Blyden, dated December 10, 1872, in The West African University, p.12.

<sup>78</sup>.Ibid., pp.12-13.

<sup>79</sup>.Ayandele, Holy Johnson, p.77.

fact only a few Africans could afford the taxes. Thus by leaving the initiative to Africans it appears that Hennessy was either appealing to traditions in Britain where universities had been privately promoted or was tactfully putting the scheme off.

Consequently Blyden quickly told the Governor that the mind of the educated African had been so enslaved as to disparage anything indigenously African. The Liberated Africans had been so miseducated that they would prefer to pay any cost to obtain their education from England rather than fund an indigenous university. In his own words: "All educated Negroes suffer from a kind of slavery in many ways far more subversive of the real welfare of the race than the ancient physical fetters". The slavery of the mind, Blyden further asserted, was far more destructive than that of the body. He regretted that those who fought to remove the shackles from the body of the "Negro" transferred them to his mind "with as little compunction as ever Hawkins or Da Souza prosecuted the slave trade". Thus to leave the work of initiating the university project to this mentally enslaved class "would be to put it off indefinitely".<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless Blyden believed strongly that the Europeans owed it as a responsibility to pay for the proper education of Africans. In other words, he considered British provision of educational facilities for

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<sup>80</sup>.Edward W. Blyden to Hennessy, dated December 11, 1872, in The West African University, p.13.

Africans as a form of reparation for the atrocities committed against the black race in the era of the Middle Passage. Affected by the obnoxious slave trade, Blyden's rage can be appreciated. Consequently:

Europeans owe us a great debt, not only for the unrequited physical labors we have performed in all parts of the world, but for the unnumbered miseries and untold demoralization they brought upon Africa by the prosecution for centuries of the horrible traffic to promote their own selfish ends; and we feel that we do not simply ask it as a favor but claim it as a right when we entreat their aid as civilized and Christian Governments in the work of unfettering and enlightening the Negro mind, and placing him in a position to act well his part among the 'productive agencies' of time.<sup>81</sup>

Apparently knowing too well that the British Government would not agree to fund such a gigantic project - a University of West Africa - and granted that Sierra Leone resources could not bear the costs alone, Governor Hennessy assured Blyden that he would transmit the correspondence, including his own minutes upon them, to British Secretary of State for the Colonies (the Earl of Kimberley) for necessary action.<sup>82</sup> It would appear that this was an attempt by Hennessy to put to an end the somewhat endless epistolary debate between himself and Blyden without provoking animosity between his government and the educated class of Africans.

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<sup>81</sup>. Ibid., pp.13-14.

<sup>82</sup>. Governor Hennessy to Edward W. Blyden, dated December 11, 1872, The West African University, p.15.

Accordingly Blyden forwarded his correspondence to the Honourable William Grant in order to familiarize him with the level the educational issue had attained since he had discussed it with him. Grant expressed satisfaction that the governor was quite prepared to accept openly the failure of British African education policy. Acknowledging that this was the first time that public attention had been directed to this important matter, Grant concluded that "the views brought out in the correspondence are of vital importance to the proper progress of the race", and he begged Blyden to publish the correspondence with the governor.<sup>83</sup>

In any case, Blyden was glad that Hennessy was willing to transmit the correspondence to London because at least that would make the "effort assume an importance and gather to itself an element of speedy success".<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, he asked Hennessy to permit him to publish the correspondence to acquaint "Negroes" all over the world about the steps being taken in Africa itself on the question of education "to counteract the degeneracy which everywhere has marked our transit from barbarism to the complex forms of European civilization".<sup>85</sup> Hennessy agreed.<sup>86</sup> Blyden did not realize

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<sup>83</sup>.William Grant to Edward Blyden, December 13, 1872, in ibid., p.6.

<sup>84</sup>.Edward W. Blyden to Hennessy, dated December 14, 1872, in The West African University, p.16.

<sup>85</sup>.Ibid., p.17.

that official and ecclesiastical opposition would soon crystallize against his scheme.

"As susceptible as ever to native pressure" according to Ashby<sup>87</sup>, Hennessy expressed his support for Blyden's university scheme. Rehashing Blyden's contention in his letter to the Secretary of State, he argued that "the system of sending the Children of the wealthier Africans to Europe has been doubly injurious" because not only did it contaminate the character of those so trained, but also frustrated the policy approved by the Parliamentary Committee of 1865 which sought to make Africans capable of self-government.<sup>88</sup> Thus Hennessy recommended that "a West African University founded on a very humble basis ought to be established ...", and that the Wesleyan Training College on King Tom's peninsula should be the suitable site.<sup>89</sup>

Blyden's proposal, now with Hennessy's approval "met a cautious but not unfavourable reception at the Colonial Office".<sup>90</sup> But before the Colonial Office considered the question the new Governor Keate had replaced Hennessy in

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<sup>86</sup>.Hennessy to Blyden, dated December 14, 1872, as reproduced in Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.456.

<sup>87</sup>.Ibid., p.163.

<sup>88</sup>.Hennessy to the Earl of Kimberley, dated December 28, 1872 as reproduced in Ashby, ibid., pp.456-458.

<sup>89</sup>.Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>.Ashby, ibid., p.164.

Sierra Leone. In his response addressed to Governor Keate, Kimberley stated that although he was not prepared to express any opinion on the issue, nevertheless, the subject deserved the Governors' careful consideration.<sup>91</sup> It is important to consider reasons why the Secretary of State was cautious about the scheme, and could not reject it outright. First, Blyden's argument in favour of the university was very powerful, and Hennessy's approval appeared to be equally disarming as he used the Indian situation to buttress the failure of missionary education. The Colonial Office, therefore, presumably felt there was a consensus in West Africa in favour of the university. Caution, therefore became necessary in order to avoid provoking troubles among the educated Africans, especially the Creoles.

Earlier, the governor and Reverend Johnson had "condemned the excessive zeal of Christian Missionaries who were Europeanizing their converts and were... robbing them of their racial virtues while making them helpless victims of European vices".<sup>92</sup> It would seem, therefore, that Hennessy's reason for supporting the university project was mainly to get at the C.M.S. whose domineering influence in the territory had increasingly become disturbing to the governor. For one thing Hennessy was a Catholic and thus may have held deep resentment

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<sup>91</sup>.C.O. 267/317, Secretary of State to Governor Keate of Sierra Leone, dated February 5, 1873 as reproduced in Ashby, *ibid.*, p.459.

<sup>92</sup>.Ayandele, "An Assessment of James Johnson....", p.500.



against the C.M.S. particularly in its absolute control of education in West Africa. However, this should not lead one to believe that Hennessy's condemnation of missionary education was entirely malicious since Johnson and Blyden, both members of the clergy, were also critical of the missionary enterprise.

The C.M.S. officials presumed that Hennessy's romance with Blyden's proposal was suspect. To them, the governor wanted to collaborate with Blyden to diminish their influence. Hence the principal of Fourah Bay (Metcalfé Sunter), himself a C.M.S. man, appealed to the new Secretary of State, Gladstone, "not [to] send out any more red hot Papists to this Colony ...." Disparaging Hennessy in strong terms, Sunter alleged that:

It has been his aim, ever since his first arrival here, to depreciate systematically, the European, especially the Protestant Missionary: and one thing is patent that whatever his intentions may have been, he has succeeded ... in doing more to excite a hostile feeling towards Englishmen in the minds of some Natives than any previous Governor....<sup>93</sup>

Clearly the C.M.S were obsessively anti-Catholic. Otherwise, there was no reason why Sunter should pour such a slanderous venom on Hennessy because the governor seemed to have sympathized with Blyden's proposal. After all, Blyden was a Protestant. The business had little to do with Hennessy's

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<sup>93</sup>.Metcalfé Sunter to E. Hutchinson (Secretary, Church Missionary Society, London), dated June 7, 1873 as reproduced in Ashby, *ibid.*, pp.465-466.

supposed Catholic bias. Rather, it demonstrated the C.M.S. determination to keep a monopoly over all levels of colonial education. Hennessy appeared to be less anti-Protestant than he was against the near monopoly held by the C.M.S. Clearly, that Society must have been absolutely infuriated by the suggestion that a Methodist institution might form the nucleus of a university.

In any case the C.M.S. was horrified by Blyden's scheme. The fact that Blyden intended the university to be funded by government meant interference in the traditional role of the C.M.S. Furthermore, given that the range of subjects to be taught in the proposed university would be secular rather than ecclesiastical and that both Muslims and Christians would be admitted on an equal basis, the opposition from the C.M.S. was almost inevitable. To the Anglican Bishop of Sierra Leone, what Blyden proposed "is to be in our estimation a Godless University", and thus should be resisted strongly. He wrote to the Secretary of the Parent Committee of the C.M.S., Henry Wright, that he would open up Fourah Bay and expand its scope so "as to cut to the ground the plea of necessity for another College [or University]".<sup>94</sup> The Society agreed with the Bishop that Fourah Bay should be made "more of a University" offering higher and wider education, and that its doors should be "thrown open to any well recommended Xtian Africans who may

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<sup>94</sup>. Henry Cheetham (Bishop of Sierra Leone) to Henry Wright (honorary Secretary of C.M.S., London), dated March 13, 1873 as reproduced in Ashby, *ibid.*, pp.463-464.

wish to enter it & are willing to pay".<sup>95</sup> Shortly afterwards Fourah Bay was reconstituted as a College offering a wider range of courses leading to the award of only diplomas and certificates.

It could be seen that while the C.M.S. was willing to frustrate Blyden's plea for a "godless" university, it was not prepared to make Fourah Bay a secular institution nor a university in all ramifications. While the Society desired to maintain its dominant influence, the question of how to fund the university scheme in an era when the Society was consecrating African clergy to save cost "both in salaries and capital outlay" was disturbing.<sup>96</sup> Faced with this problem of funding, the Principal of Fourah Bay, Metcalfe Sunter, proposed that it was necessary to begin to think about affiliation of the institution to a British University.<sup>97</sup> But what Blyden called for was a degree-granting university, and not a college which offered diplomas and certificates that were normally tinted with ecclesiasticism. Predictably, the C.M.S. efforts to open up Fourah Bay did not satisfy him.

The church and particularly the Anglicans had been instrumental in establishing universities in many colonies of

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<sup>95</sup>.Henry Wright to Henry Cheetham, March 10, 1873 as reproduced in Ashby, *ibid.*, pp.468-469.

<sup>96</sup>.On this cost-saving argument as put forward by Henry Venn, see James Bertin Webster, The African Churches Among the Yoruba, 1888-1922, pp.4-6.

<sup>97</sup>.Metcalf Sunter to E. Hutchinson, dated June 20, 1873 as reproduced in Ashby, *ibid.*, pp.466-67.

the British Empire. Even in Britain itself, the church had been significantly involved in education up to and including university. Hence there was little reason to argue that Sierra Leone should have been different. The combination of a governor and an educated African speaking for the elite had forced the C.M.S. in the direction it should have moved without such pressure.

Nevertheless as a first step the developments at Fourah Bay seemed satisfactory. As long as the colonial government remained amenable to the idea of a university, it could have supported the western-educated elite to continue pressing the mission churches to move toward more full university status. Ultimately as Hennessy argued the government would be expected to assist financially. Thus by a normal slow evolution Fourah Bay, and presumably other such institutions, would have developed and grown over the coming century. Such a natural growth would have followed the path of similar institutions in the white colonies. Such a development was thwarted because colonial governments absolutely set their face against universities of any kind for another seventy five years.

While the C.M.S. was scheming to thwart Blyden's "godless" university idea, the Government of Sierra Leone was also erecting a formidable opposition against it. Governor Keate, who had replaced Hennessy, died in March 1873 only a few weeks after assuming office and was succeeded by George Berkeley. Unlike Hennessy, Berkeley did not support Blyden's

proposal. Hence he delayed action upon the Secretary of State's letter addressed to Keate. Perhaps, he hoped that procrastination would force the matter to die quietly. Blyden would not give up so easily.

After waiting for ten months without any response from Governor Berkeley, Blyden wrote directly to Kimberley to restate his case, and to inform him that the university scheme was being opposed by those "who seem to think that such institution may conflict with their prerogatives and diminish their influence".<sup>98</sup> Apparently referring to the Bishop of Sierra Leone and the C.M.S., he alerted the Secretary of State that those resisting the plan "have, therefore, by various misrepresentations, raised a storm of persecution at Freetown against the propounders of the scheme". Accordingly, he appealed to Kimberley to back his scheme, "and thus weaken the opposition which may become so formidable as to crush out every aspiration to such facilities for progress among the Natives".<sup>99</sup>

Wishing to sound out African opinion within the C.M.S., the Colonial Office invited Reverend James Johnson to London to discuss the university project. Although Johnson was concerned about the problem of funding, he expressed support

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<sup>98</sup>.Edward W. Blyden to the Earl of Kimberley, dated October 22, 1873 as reproduced in Hollis R. Lynch (ed.) Selected Letters of Edward Wilmot Blyden, Kto Press, New York, 1978, pp.144-146.

<sup>99</sup>.Ibid., p.144.

for the university scheme as proposed by Blyden.<sup>100</sup> Consequently Kimberley reminded Berkeley of the university question and requested his opinion "upon a subject which seems to me one of much importance".<sup>101</sup> Still Berkeley did not respond until May of the following year, almost six months later. By this time he had weighed the pros and cons of the scheme, and learned of the Bishop of Sierra Leone's strong opposition to the project. Earlier in April of 1874 the bishop had advised the governor "to pause to count the probable cost, the possible entire failure, the extent of beneficial result the most sanguine of reasonable men could expect...." Furthermore, he told the governor that:

The Church Missionary Society is willing to do very much what is now at the hands of the Government. The Society can do it at very much less expense than the Government can, and on a much more reliable and less fluctuating basis, being subject, I mean, to none of the risks of external pressure and an annual vote.<sup>102</sup>

Realizing that the financial implications for government would be huge, and unwilling to take over the funding of

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<sup>100</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, Africa, p.459.

<sup>101</sup>.C.O. 267/324, Kimberley to Berkeley, dated December 16, 1873 as reproduced in ibid., p.460.

<sup>102</sup>.The Bishop of Sierra Leone to Governor Berkeley, dated April 17, 1874 as reproduced in Ashby, ibid., pp.460-461. What the Bishop had in mind was the opening up of Fourah Bay College and expanding its scope, and not necessarily establishing a university as Blyden demanded. The C.M.S dreaded Government intervention in education which would ultimately reduce its proselytizing influence in West Africa.

education in Sierra Leone, it was only to be expected that Governor Berkeley would turn his back against Blyden's demand. In London, the liberal Kimberley had been replaced by the conservative Earl of Carnarvon as Secretary of State. In Sierra Leone, Hennessy was succeeded as governor by Berkeley, and Reverend Johnson had been transferred to Lagos presumably to sever his alliance with Blyden. Thus Blyden was systematically subdued as his sympathizers were dismembered. The way now seemed clear for Berkeley, "with the bishop of Sierra Leone at his elbow", to advise the Colonial Office against Blyden's scheme.<sup>103</sup> In his despatch to the Earl of Carnarvon, therefore, Berkeley stated that the demand for a West African University had been met by the throwing open of Fourah Bay College to laymen.<sup>104</sup> In response to Berkeley, therefore, the Secretary of State declared: "I entertain ... grave doubts as to the expediency of attempting to establish a West African University", and thus concluded that he could not sanction such an undertaking "which must of necessity be costly, and for which the natives are not yet sufficiently prepared".<sup>105</sup> Thus Blyden's hope for a positive response was dashed, and his demand was stifled. It is clear that the

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<sup>103</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.459.

<sup>104</sup>.C.O. 879/8, Governor Berkeley to the Earl of Carnarvon, dated May 8, 1874 as reproduced in Ashby, ibid., p.460.

<sup>105</sup>.C.O. 879/8, The Earl of Carnarvon to Governor Berkeley, dated June 12, 1874 as reproduced in Ashby, ibid., p.462.

missionaries, led by the C.M.S., and supported by British officials, wrecked the efforts of Blyden and Johnson, Hennessy and Kimberley to establish a full-fledged university in West Africa.

But Blyden's scheme was not a total failure. It set in motion some sort of rethinking in C.M.S. circles. Determined to forestall the possibility of any future haggling on the question of a "godless university", the C.M.S. parent committee met in London in July 1875 to discuss the university matter. The committee resolved to affiliate Fourah Bay with "some English University" so that its students "might have an advantage of a competitive examination and the opportunity of obtaining degrees".<sup>106</sup> It was hoped that this decision would discourage any further agitation approximating Blyden's. The committee approved the suggestion of Sunter, the Principal of Fourah Bay, in favour of links with the University of Durham.

The choice of Durham may have been informed by two considerations. A precedent had already been set by Durham University by its recent affiliation, early in 1875, with Codrington College, Barbados. The University of Durham had a very strong theological school which would consolidate the ecclesiastical programmes offered at Fourah Bay College.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>.Minute of C.M.S. Committee Meeting of July 20, 1875 as reproduced in Ashby, p.470.

<sup>107</sup>.Ashby, ibid., p.166.



Thus even though Sunter had initially contemplated a link with the University of London, the C.M.S did not favour that choice because the institution lacked two basic attractions. Within the C.M.S. circle from the 1870's, the University of London was considered a "Godless University" because it did not demand that its staff and students be members of the Church of England (or any other church for that matter). Furthermore, it had no links yet with any colonial college. In any case, after several months of negotiations the senate of the University of Durham finally recommended the affiliation which was unanimously carried by convocation on May 16, 1876.

The terms of affiliation allowed the students of Fourah Bay College to sit the same examinations as Durham students with the papers set and marked by that University. Once matriculated the names of Fourah Bay students were placed on the Register of the University of Durham.<sup>108</sup> The university programmes designed for Fourah Bay were those of B.A. pass, and the Licence in Theology(L.Th.). While a Licence in Theology was designed for those intending ordination in the Church of England, and also a step towards the B.A. pass, the latter "stressed scriptural study and classics".<sup>109</sup> Hence although courses such as mathematics, English, history,

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<sup>108</sup>.See "The Terms of Affiliation: Durham University Regulations" as reproduced in Ashby, *ibid.*, pp.471-473.

<sup>109</sup>.Ashby, *ibid.*. Refer also to P.E.H. Hair, "An Analysis of the Register of Fourah Bay College", Sierra Leone Studies, New Series, No.7, December 1956, p.156.

geography and classics were added to Fourah Bay's curricula upon affiliation, the entire university education provided at the College remained fundamentally ecclesiastical. As Ashby aptly observed:

In its emphasis on theology and the humanities, and its disregard of African environment, the character of instruction was simply the current type of missionary elementary education writ large.<sup>110</sup>

Thus the C.M.S. successfully hijacked the university scheme to cater to its own interests at the expense of the larger intellectual concern of Africans. Although degree courses were being provided at Fourah Bay, the content of the university education offered was hardly liberal or broad-based. In fact, it made a mockery of what Horton and Blyden had envisaged and "it hovered uncertainly between a theological college and an incipient university."<sup>111</sup> It was neither adapted to the African environment nor controlled by Africans. Caught between the strong opposition of the Colonial Office, the Sierra Leone Government, and more seriously the C.M.S., Blyden despaired. Soon after, he returned to Liberia to accept an offer as the president of Liberia College. Nevertheless, although Blyden's effort failed in its immediate purpose, at least, it resulted in the establishment of the first university courses at Fourah Bay College to be provided in British West Africa.

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<sup>110</sup>.Ashby, *ibid.*, p.167.

<sup>111</sup>.Ashby, *ibid.*, p.169.

From its inception, however, Fourah Bay College suffered from financial starvation. The Colonial Office knew quite well that the British Treasury would not commit funds to the College and the Sierra Leonean Government did not wish to overstretch its lean budgets, and hence they both conveniently abstained from any serious involvement. Warily guarding its dominance, the C.M.S. had bitten off more than it could chew. Consequently the fortunes of the College faltered from lack of funds, lecturers, and even African support. Thirty years after affiliation the funding crisis became so acute that in 1908 the C.M.S considered discontinuing the university programme. But it lingered on till 1918 when the Wesleyans decided to co-operate with the C.M.S. to maintain the College. Lack of funds, the deficiency of courses provided, and perhaps its strong theological bias, limited the number of enrolments at Fourah Bay. Despite its shortcomings, "Fourah Bay enjoyed a great reputation with Africans as the only college in British West African at which degrees could be obtained...."<sup>112</sup> This was because the qualifications obtained from the College, even though mostly theological, carried the prestige of those obtained from Britain, a prestige which Liberated Africans cherished dearly.

In the nineteenth century, therefore, there was a deep rooted desire among educated Africans for a university as evidenced in the efforts of Horton and Blyden in Sierra Leone.

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<sup>112</sup>.Ashby, ibid., p.169.

Not only was the scheme ahead of its time but the initiative came almost exclusively from educated Africans with the progression, via a sympathetic governor, to the Colonial Office. This contrasts with the university campaigns of the 1930's and 1940's as will be shown later. The period between 1865 and 1890, was the era of the scramble and partition when the talk of "self-government", as mooted by parliament in 1865, was evaporating and there was no longer any need for the creation of a well educated African elite bureaucracy and politicians. Thus Horton's idea, which suggested the question of transferring power in the colonies to educated Africans, could hardly get off the ground. Similarly, even though Blyden made the scheme much more elaborate and sophisticated, and enlisted the sympathetic attention of Hennessy, the Colonial Office failed to be persuaded.

Perhaps, the Colonial Office might have been interested had the plan for "self-government" not dissipated before the 1870's. But by then at the London end the scheme became impossible because it demanded British treasury funds and ran totally counter to orthodox colonial financial policy. Furthermore, the C.M.S. constituted a very powerful hostile lobby, determined to retain its monopoly in British African territories. Since the C.M.S. in Sierra Leone provided what few social services (clinics and schools) there were, government was almost entirely dependent on them. This explains the final, very limited, positive effect of the

Horton-Blyden initiative upon the Sierra Leone Government. Finally the C.M.S. settled for linkages with Durham University to retain its monopoly, but this only led to a small degree granting institution, Fourah Bay College, which graduated laymen with B.A. in Classics as well as clergy in Theology. However, African desire for a fully-fledged university persisted. But history began to move backward. The highly educated elite began to shrink in numbers, became less educated, with leaders of less vision than Horton, Blyden, Grant and Johnson. European arrogance grew and the western-educated Africans emerged as "Black Englishmen" while the era of the "Noble Savage" was about to be ushered in by Lugard and his host of disciples. Consequently the idea of a university which received some attention in the nineteenth century was frowned upon by British colonial officials for almost fifty years.

## Chapter Two

### INDIRECT RULE, EDUCATION FOR INTERMEDIARIES, AND THE IMPACT OF CRITICISM: THE BEGINNINGS OF A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION, 1900-1934

Between 1876 and 1900 there were virtually no serious demands for an African university comparable to those made earlier by Horton and Blyden. Although Blyden attempted in the early 1890's to instigate some agitation with Reverend James Johnson for the establishment of a university in Lagos, his efforts failed to yield positive results.<sup>1</sup> Like Hennessey of Sierra Leone, Governor Carter of Lagos pointed out that "unless Africans took the initiative of founding such an institution, no aid could be expected from government".<sup>2</sup> Similarly, like their Sierra Leone counterparts, educated Lagosians expected colonial government to bear the costs of the higher education of Africans. Blyden's effort to raise an initial sum of £2000 from wealthy Lagosians in 1891 and 1896 failed woefully.<sup>3</sup> From then to 1920 no further realistic

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<sup>1</sup>.See E.A. Ayandele, "An Assessment of James Johnson and his Place in Nigerian History, 1874-1917 - Part 11, 1890-1917" in Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, vol.3, no.1, 1964, p.90, and Ade Fajana, "Colonial Control and Education: The Development of Higher Education in Nigeria, 1900-1950", in Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, vol.6, no.3, 1972, pp.326-327. Blyden left Liberia for Lagos in 1890 to take up a civil service appointment.

<sup>2</sup>.Fajana, ibid., p.327.

<sup>3</sup>.The Lagos Times, January 31, 1891 as cited in ibid., p.326.

effort was made by Africans for a university, and the idea remained somewhat wishful thinking among educated Africans. Blyden was worn out, having failed to achieve his life-time university ambition in either Sierra Leone or Nigeria, as African colonial governments stiffened their opposition to such schemes.

However, by 1900 the scramble and partition of Africa was virtually over even though some interior polities would not be brought under colonial administration until the late 1920's. The various colonial powers began to settle down to the business of governing their newly appropriated territories. For Britain, there were no more pretences. The era of informal influence had come to a close, and Britain had to assume real political responsibilities of governing her African territories. Dragged into territorial acquisition largely by the aggressive inroads of the French and their protectionist tariff policies in Africa, Britain faced difficult administrative choices, even though the new imperial scheme would definitely require huge spending. Because of the Treasury's reluctance to spend, other than local funds, in the colonies, British colonial officials focused on how to maintain minimal government which entailed least spending. Consequently, indirect rule was designed fundamentally to cater to this financial parsimony.

First experimented with by Britain in India and Malaya, indirect rule was a system of administering the colonial

peoples through their traditional political institutions. In Africa, Lord Lugard, who first introduced the system in the well-organised Buganda kingdom of Uganda, had no hesitation in extending it to Northern Nigeria in early 1900s, and later, supporting it in other British territories. Frederick Cooper, however, suggests that the British adopted this administrative system following the failure of the earlier "interventionist imperial policy" in "remaking rural African society" in the name of "economic progress and social justice".<sup>4</sup> One of the major features of the system was its reliance on African chiefs which was predicated upon the false assumption that "all Africans were ruled by chiefs if not kings".<sup>5</sup> Predictably, this assumption marred the success of the system in areas like South-Eastern Nigeria and Eastern Uganda where the British, still applying the Lugardian theory, ended up "inventing" chiefs for societies whose political traditions

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<sup>4</sup>.Frederick Cooper, "From Free Labor to Family Allowances: Labor and African Society in Colonial Discourse", American Ethnologist, vol.16, no.4, 1989, p.760.

<sup>5</sup>.Elizabeth Isichei, A History of the Igbo Peoples, Macmillan, London, 1976, p.143. The Igbo peoples of Nigeria were acephalous, that is, they did not evolve a centralized political system revolving around a chief, king or emir. Rather they were gerontocratic. Hence the British could not find anyone with "chiefly" power who could be installed as their indirect ruler. Therefore, they ended up "inventing" chiefs which distorted the entire foundation of the traditional system. It unleashed violent protests in South-Eastern Nigeria.



were opposed to chiefly autocracy.<sup>6</sup>

Despite its shortcomings indirect rule met British objectives. It ensured minimum spending and "met the need to rule broad areas with millions of subjects of diverse races and levels of development with the least possible outlay and a minimum of British personnel".<sup>7</sup> Indirect rule was meant to prevent political conflicts between the British and African chiefs, and between officials and the African masses. In other words, it ensured followership, and diminished the frequency of civil disobedience since Africans had the wrong impression that orders from the Native Administration issued from their chiefs. Ostensibly the chiefs served as a buffer between the aggrieved masses and British colonial officials; this gave many Africans the false impression that since they were governed by their traditional rulers the old system (paramountcy of chiefs, kings, emperors and gerontocrats) continued with the British acting only as mere overseers. So

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<sup>6</sup>.See A.E. Afigbo, The Warrant Chiefs; Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929, Longman, London, 1972 and "The Warrant Chief System in Eastern Nigeria: Direct or Indirect Rule?" in Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, vol.3, no.4, 1967; Obaro Ikime, "Reconsidering Indirect Rule: The Nigerian Example" in JHSN, vol.4, no.3, 1968 and "Chief Dogho: The Lugardian System in Warri 1917-1932" in JHSN, vol.3, no.2, 1965; and also see Philip Igbafe, "British Rule in Benin 1897-1920: Direct or Indirect?" in JHSN, vol.3, no.4, 1967.

<sup>7</sup>.Rudolf von Albertini, European Colonial Rule 1880-1940, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1982, p.309. It was cheaper to pay African chiefs and clerks than to pay British officials whose wage package included paid annual leave in London and other costs.

powerful was this myth that during decolonization in the 1960s the Baganda insisted that they were not subjects of the British but partners and allies.

Above the numerous Native Administrations of the chiefs and their resident supervisors, the central government of the colonial administration functioned under the governor with a senior service of all white officers (high salaries, regular paid home leave, housing, paid education for children in Britain, clothing and other allowances, attractive pensions) and a junior service of Africans with none of the above. The vast majority of Europeans were thus clustered in the capital city of any colony living together in garden-like suburbs often known as G.R.A. (Government Reserved Areas), and segregated from the African population usually by the military and police barracks. These pampered civil servants lived in housing and enjoyed a palatial life-style which no chief or even well-to-do African merchant could ever hope to emulate. Providing senior service amenities became the first and one of the heaviest charges upon the finance of the new colonies. This burden must always be kept in mind as the colonial cry of lack of finance continued to echo from one decade to another. At the very time when there was no money for a university, an all-white hospital with housing for its white directors and nurses might be under construction to provide free medical services to the Europeans. From an African perspective finance always seemed to flow effortlessly.

African personnel who spoke English began to be used, albeit in subordinate positions and at lower salaries, in order to save costs as well as to maintain stability. Africans were required to serve in junior and subordinate positions as clerks, and assistants in government departments, and more were required following the depletion of the regular staff of the colonial service during World War One. Highly educated Africans remained an aberration to the system. They would either seek to compete with Europeans for higher posts in the colonial service or destabilize the Native Administration system dominated by chiefs. Hence the idea of establishing universities in Africa, which would expand the class of the African educated elite, was vehemently opposed by colonial officials. African chiefs who benefitted under the system naturally remained indifferent, if not sometimes hostile to the aspirations of the educated class. Thus alienated and relegated, predictably, African educated elements began to oppose - or more often seek to reform - British rule culminating in the emergence of "nationalist" movements from the 1920's onward.

However, the nature of indirect rule in East Africa, particularly in Uganda, presented a sharp contrast with West Africa. The dominant Kingdom of Buganda, with its chiefly and royal elite, had negotiated its way into the British Empire on privileged terms as consolidated in the Buganda Agreement of

1900.<sup>8</sup> This agreement recognized the Baganda chiefs as British political agents, transformed them into a landed oligarchy, and granted them legislative powers and access to state-related employment. It further guaranteed that the Kabaka (King) and his chiefs "would be the principal class mediating between the colonial power and the common people".<sup>9</sup> Before the establishment of colonial rule, the Baganda had been very receptive to alien ideas. As Sir Harry Johnston observed, there was a constant desire by the chiefs to bring their country into harmony with European ideas and development.<sup>10</sup> Unlike most African ruling groups, the dominant elements of the Baganda chiefly and royal classes had embraced Christianity, and its Protestant elements laid special stress

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<sup>8</sup>.For detail of this Agreement, see D. Anthony Low and R. Cranford Pratt, Buganda and British Overrule, 1900-1955, Oxford University Press, London, 1960; E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo, "Politics and Nationalism in East Africa, 1919-35" in A. Adu Boahen (ed.) UNESCO General History of Africa, vol.vii, Heinemann, California, 1985, pp.648-673; Andrew Roberts, "East Africa" in A.D. Roberts (ed.) The Cambridge History of Africa, vol.7, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, pp.647-689, and D.A. Low, Buganda in Modern History, University of California, Berkeley, 1971.

<sup>9</sup>.Marcia Wright, "East Africa, 1870-1905" in Roland Oliver and G.N. Sanderson (eds.), The Cambridge History of Africa, vol.6, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, p.580.

<sup>10</sup>.Sir Harry Johnston, as cited in D.A. Low, "Uganda: The Establishment of the Protectorate, 1894-1919", Vincent Harlow and E.M. Chilver (ed.) History of East Africa, vol.11, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965, p.119. Johnston was the British Commissioner for the Ugandan Protectorate who negotiated and signed the Buganda Agreement in 1900.

on literacy in the period before colonial rule.<sup>11</sup>

Significantly, missionaries in Uganda, unlike their counterparts in West Africa, worked from the upper segment of society downwards. They had little choice because neither the common people nor the chiefly elite would tolerate any other method. Thus by 1920 the Baganda traditional elite had become the educated economically secure, upper class who dominated the protectorate. Hence while indirect rule sought to stifle the expansion of the class of educated elite in West Africa, it desired to cater to that group in Uganda. There was little distinction in Uganda between the traditional chiefly and Protestant elite. They were one and the same. In any case, the education provided for the East African chiefly elite did not go beyond primary and secondary training because university education still remained an anomaly to colonial officials.

Again, in contrast to West Africa, it became more prestigious to work for the Kabaka's government - a Native Administration according to West African terminology - than for the British colonial regime. An ambitious Muganda could rise higher, be paid more, work primarily in the vernacular, deal with a greater range of modern problems and find more dignity in the Kabaka's than in the colonial administration. While the demand for a university in West Africa was spearheaded by the excluded educated elite, such agitation in Uganda was led by the Baganda privileged chiefs from the

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<sup>11</sup>.Roberts, ibid., p.649.

1920's. Nevertheless, in both West Africa and East Africa the vested interest of the colonial officials remained the preservation of their tenure by keeping the educated African out of higher posts in the service.

The period between 1920 and 1930 marked a watershed in the history of the development of higher educational institutions in Africa. It witnessed the emergence of the National Congress of British West Africa (N.C.B.W.A.), which turned itself increasingly into a political force with which West African colonial governments and the Colonial Office had to reckon. It was during the period that the American Education Commission on Africa, under the auspices of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, visited Africa to survey the education of the African peoples generally. This was followed by the appointment of an Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa by the British Government, and the issuance of a white paper marking the first education policy to be outlined by Britain on the education of its African subjects. The period also witnessed the foundation of Achimota and Makerere Colleges in the Gold Coast and Uganda respectively as it saw the preliminary arrangement to establish the Yaba Higher College in Nigeria.

From 1911, J.E. Casely Hayford revived the university question. For the first time "the torch of higher education in British West Africa" passed from Blyden to Casely Hayford and

other West African politicians.<sup>12</sup> Casely Hayford was born on September 3, 1866 in the Anona clan in the Gold Coast, and was the fourth son of Reverend Joseph de Graft Hayford. He attended the Wesleyan Boy's High School at Cape Coast, and later proceeded to Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone where he secured his teacher's certificate. After teaching for a while at Cape Coast, Casely Hayford left for London for a legal education. On November 17, 1896 he was called to the bar and, soon after, returned to the Gold Coast to begin his remarkable career as a barrister, journalist and nationalist.

Hayford's plea for a West African University was first enunciated in his book, Ethiopia Unbound, published in 1911.<sup>13</sup> Arguing that "you cannot educate a people unless you have a suitable training ground" Casely Hayford made a case for a West African University to be located in Kumasi, Gold Coast.<sup>14</sup> Conscious that Western educational methods had denationalized and enslaved Africans to foreign thought and ways of life, Casely Hayford envisioned the university of his dream "to be the means of revising erroneous current ideas regarding the African, of raising him in self-respect; and of making him an

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<sup>12</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African., p.177.

<sup>13</sup>.J.E. Casely Hayford, Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation, first published in 1911, and reprinted by Frank Cass, London, 1969.

<sup>14</sup>.Ibid., p.194. He conceived the institution as "Mfantshipim National University" which would serve the Fanti and the Ashanti.

efficient co-worker in the uplifting of man to nobler effort".<sup>15</sup> Casely Hayford thus wished to preserve African identity and national consciousness while opening up the minds of Africans to western education. He proposed that the teachers in his envisaged institution must be drawn from the ranks of locally trained university men. It was also in an effort to preserve what was uniquely African that he proposed a chair in history which should emphasize "the part Ethiopia had played in the affairs of the world". In addition, he envisaged separate chairs for the study of Fanti, Hausa and Yoruba languages as "the safest and most natural way of national conservancy and evolution". Deeply concerned about the corrupting influences of the European presence on the coastal peoples, Casely Hayford preferred to site the university in the interior of the Gold Coast. Accordingly:

As a precautionary measure, I would take care to place the educational seminary in a region far beyond the reach of the influence of the coast.... It is not the spoilt educated African that may be expected to help in the regenerative work of the world. The unspoilt son of the tropics, nursed in the tropical atmosphere, favourable to the growth of national life, he it is who may show us the way.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly Casely Hayford's argumentation for the West African University, and the nature of African education which would preserve their cultural identity and race instincts,

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<sup>15</sup>. Ibid., p.195.

<sup>16</sup>. Ibid., pp.194-197.



seems to mirror Blyden's ideas. Ashby noted this when he concluded that "it was Blyden's argument over again".<sup>17</sup> This is not surprising because having attended Fourah Bay College after its affiliation to the University of Durham, Casely Hayford was undoubtedly aware of the controversy surrounding the institution of degree programmes there. Hence when Hayford suggested locating the West African University in the interior he was re-echoing Blyden who had contended that he preferred his proposed West African University to be situated away from the foreign influences of the seaboard and within the stimulus of the interior.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, a world of difference existed between Blyden and Hayford. While Blyden was interested in arousing and consolidating African race consciousness especially among blacks in the diaspora, Hayford sought to develop an African national pride, and reclaim African political rights. But unlike Horton or Blyden, Hayford's case for a West African University remained in the realm of fantasy, reserved for the pages of his book. He could not call for immediate action from the colonial government or the Colonial Office. It was not until the 1920's that he pushed the university idea through the platform of the National Congress of British West Africa (N.C.B.W.A.) which he helped to found, composed exclusively of

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<sup>17</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African., p.177.

<sup>18</sup>.See E.W. Blyden, The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education, Cambridge, Massachussets, 1882.

West African educated elements. This sets Hayford apart; he made the university question a political issue encompassing all the British West African territories and not merely a local affair of one colony.

It was not mere accident that some educational advance was made during the 1920's. The period immediately following the First World War had stimulated the political and social consciousness of the colonial peoples. British colonial rule had by now been firmly established, and British determination to consolidate indirect rule, calm nationalist agitations, and convince the international community under the League of Nations that the welfare of the colonial peoples mattered in their considerations meant that something had to be done. It was equally a realization on the part of the British that if they did not face the question of the provision of higher educational facilities for Africans then the Americans might be eager to interfere. The consequence of such intrusion was weighed against the background of the rise of nationalists, which together might constitute a political danger to British rule in Africa.

It was under this seeming favourable circumstance that Casely Hayford acted in 1920 when he convened the meeting of the leaders of the West African educated elite in Accra to form the N.C.B.W.A. Seeking the expansion of its class, but continuing the tradition of the age-old agitation for higher training for Africans, the Congress resolved that "the time

has come to found a British West African University on such lines as would preserve in the student a sense of African Nationality".<sup>19</sup> Obviously this resolution reflected Casely Hayford's belief in the importance of preserving African cultural identity in the educational process. It was an epoch-making conference because it was the first time such a meeting of the African educated elite, attracting delegates from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the Gambia and the Gold Coast, had met to discuss the university question and other related issues.<sup>20</sup> Casely Hayford, therefore, ignited the flame of widespread nationalist agitation for the establishment of a West African University among this group, an issue which had hitherto been individualized. His contribution to the question of an African university lies in his ability to make the demand a pan-West African question. Furthermore, if finance was the Britain problem then surely sharing the burden among the four colonies was the logical path to follow.

Later that same year the N.C.B.W.A. sent a delegation to

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<sup>19</sup>.Resolutions of the National Congress of British West Africa at its Conference held in Accra, Gold Coast from 11th-29th March 1920, as reproduced in Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African., pp.474-475 and Okafor, The Development of Universities in Nigeria., p.41.

<sup>20</sup>.Other resolutions passed by the Congress include African veto over taxation, appointment and deposition of chiefs by their own people, and that each Legislative Council should introduce a few elected members with a property and educational franchise. See J. S. Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1958, pp.191-192.

London to present its resolutions to King George V through the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The delegation failed to achieve its purpose; the Secretary of State refused to grant them audience and West African governments, and chiefs led by "the important and influential" Gold Coast chief, Nana Ofori Atta, were opposed to the Congress.<sup>21</sup> Since some African chiefs sought to protect their own interests and hence vilified this group, colonial governments were quick to denigrate them as unrepresentative of the people. Despite the silence of chiefs in Nigeria, Governor Hugh Clifford, for instance, dismissed them as "a self-selected and self-appointed congregation of educated African gentlemen...."<sup>22</sup> Thus the university question was not entertained by London. Yet the Colonial Office and colonial governments had been reminded that the issues of reforms and the provision of university facilities could not be written off completely in British imperial considerations.

It is not surprising that some African chiefs and colonial governments presented such opposition to the Congress. The workings of British indirect rule policy dictated such a response. Under that system, the chiefs revelled in their elevated positions to the exasperation and

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<sup>21</sup>.See von Albertini, European Colonial Rule, 1880-1940, p.331; Okafor, The Development of Universities in Nigeria, p.40 and Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, Africa, p.179.

<sup>22</sup>.Hugh Clifford, Address to the Nigerian Council, December 29, 1920, Macaulay Papers as cited in Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, p.309.

frustration of the African educated class. Indirect rule "created a basic antagonism between the traditionalists and the emergent educated minority".<sup>23</sup> As there were no roles assigned to African educated elites under the indirect rule system it was only to be expected that the British would seek to suppress them. Likewise, since the educated elite (or more accurately its spokesmen in the N.C.B.W.A.) were calling for the abolition of the Native Administration system, and the introduction of an embryonic parliamentary structure built upon the legislative councils, it was quite certain that a clash between the educated elites and the chiefs was unavoidable because indirect rule offered no opportunities to the former.<sup>24</sup> Thus the opposition of African chiefs and colonial governments to the delegation of N.C.B.W.A. to London was quite fundamental. Likewise colonial governments continued to work to stifle proposals for the establishment of an African university, which was seen as an engine for expanding the educated elite class who would neither be accommodated under the Native Administration system nor employed in higher positions in the colonial service.

The Congress demonstrated considerable perception in

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<sup>23</sup>.Philip Foster, Education and Social Change in Ghana, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1965, p.94.

<sup>24</sup>.The educated elite pressed for the expansion of the colonial service in order to secure positions for themselves. This was exactly what they meant when they pushed for Africanisation and legislative reforms. For details see Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, pp.113-196 and Okafor, The Development of Universities in Nigeria, p.39.

seeing that a university and indirect rule were absolutely incompatible. However the 1920's formed a decade when indirect rule would reach the height of its popularity among the British. Lugard would publish his Dual Mandate and colonies which had never experimented with chiefly rule would be encouraged to establish it even where it appeared almost ridiculous, where Africans had lost their lands and where they were being herded into migrant labour networks. Under the spell of indirect rule, British administrators lost their proud tradition of pragmatism and turned to a theory which they seemed determined to impose despite local circumstances. Thus any institution such as a university which could be shown as contrary to the theory had little hope of success. Little wonder the governors spoke so hotly against the idea. Rather British opinion had begun to swing against the academic bias of education which the missions had been providing, toying with ideas of vernacular education, proposing to turn secondary schools towards crafts and manual training and creating a new educated class which would feed into the chiefly administrations. Leaders of the Congress became voices crying in a wilderness of hostility.

Meanwhile between 1920 and 1924 the Phelps-Stokes Foundation of the United States sent out a Commission to survey the nature and quality of education in Africa. The Commission visited West, South, and Equatorial Africa in 1920-21, and East Africa in 1923. Primarily concerned with "Negro"

education in the United States, the Phelps-Stokes Foundation had been persuaded by the Foreign Mission Conference of North America to sponsor the African enterprise.<sup>25</sup> The Commission, which was headed by Thomas Jesse Jones, had an African member - J.E.K. Aggrey of the Gold Coast.<sup>26</sup> Aggrey's membership in this commission, no doubt, provided an inspiration to many Africans who listened to him. As the first African to be so elevated, Aggrey's status not only demonstrated that the British were suppressing African aspirations but also served as "an embodiment of African accomplishments".<sup>27</sup> However, the reports of the Commission<sup>28</sup> "found much to criticise in the British possessions" in Africa.<sup>29</sup> The Commission observed that education in Africa had been largely a transplantation of the British system with no visible adaptation to the reality of the African environment. Furthermore,

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<sup>25</sup>.The Phelps-Stokes Fund was established in 1911 by Miss Caroline Phelps-Stokes for the education of "Negroes" both in Africa and the United States. This, therefore, was its first attempt to extend its educational work to Africa according to the wishes of its benefactor.

<sup>26</sup>.Jesse Jones was the educational director of the Phelps-Stokes Foundation. Aggrey was a Fanti from Anomabu in the Gold Coast who was teaching at Livingstone College, Salisbury, North Carolina, having studied and taught in the United States for over twenty years.

<sup>27</sup>.See Thomas C. Howard, "West Africa and the American South: Notes on James E.K. Aggrey and the Idea of a University of West Africa", in Journal of African Studies, vol.2, no.4, 1976/76, p.448.

<sup>28</sup>.Education in Africa, New York, 1922 and; Education in East Africa, New York, 1924.

<sup>29</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.161.

It seems clear that the educational policies of the governments and the missions have hitherto been inadequate and to a considerable extent unreal so far as the vital needs of Africa are concerned.<sup>30</sup>

On the question of higher education, the Commission observed that there were only two institutions in the colonies visited - Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone and the South African Native College at Fort Hare - which offered a few courses of university character. However, they criticised the subjects taught in these colleges as strongly classical and ecclesiastical to the abject neglect of social science, agriculture, physical science, and even history. The Commission further regretted that while the educational goal of the missionaries was proselytization, that of the colonial governments was the production of clerical help for the administration.<sup>31</sup> The educational motives of missionaries and government were suspect. Pointing out that a number of Africans had distinguished themselves in the universities of Europe and America in the fields of medicine, law, theology and engineering, the Commission asserted that "Africa should have its own colleges" if the development of Native leadership were to be achieved.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>. Phelps-Stokes, Report on Education in Africa, abridged with an introduction by L.J. Lewis, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, p.20.

<sup>31</sup>. Ibid., p.43-44.

<sup>32</sup>. Ibid., pp.122-123 and 167-168.



Clearly the report of the Phelps-Stokes Commission marked a turning point in British education in Africa. Ashby stressed that the report of the Commission constituted "a first introduction to the education-hunger of the African people and it had a profound effect on both sides of the Atlantic".<sup>33</sup> C.K. Graham agrees, adding that it "helped to give a fillip to educational expansion ... in Africa".<sup>34</sup> Shortly before and after the publication of the report of the Commission in 1922, Britain began somewhat feverish moves in search of a consistent educational policy for its African subjects. Britain disliked any criticism suggesting official neglect of the welfare of the colonial peoples.

Before the Commission's visits, the governments of Uganda and the Gold Coast had initiated some slow but progressive moves towards the higher training of Africans for colonial service. These efforts were accelerated in the 1920's with the visit and consequent reports of Phelps-Stokes. Depleted by the drafting of many colonial officials into the army, and given the economic recession after 1922 most African governments began to look to Africans to fill the intermediate positions in the colonial service. In describing the East African situation, as exemplified by Uganda, John Cameron notes that:

Just before World War I and especially  
just after it, government interest in

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<sup>33</sup>.Eric Ashby, African Universities and Western Tradition, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1964, p.16.

<sup>34</sup>.Graham, The History of Education in Ghana, p.156.

education increased not so much because it had become more benign but because of its own needs for more educated and trained men and women - supervisors, clerks, storemen, hospital orderlies, nurses, dispensers, telegraphists, drivers, and artisans of many kinds.<sup>35</sup>

With the development of colonial economies and growing complexities of government, a need arose for what might be termed a middle civil service between the highly-salaried senior Europeans and the miserably-paid African clerks, messengers and interpreters. This middle level required a type of training which the mission schools had not been offering and generally were not interested in providing.

Since most of the intermediate posts required some education beyond secondary level, it became necessary to train Africans for them. In September 1919, the Governor of Uganda, Robert Coryndon, set up an Education Committee to "discuss without delay the part Government should play in education".<sup>36</sup> In September 1920 the Governor obtained the approval of the Secretary of State, Winston Churchill, to commence a 'Native' technical school in Kampala. A Board was appointed to find a suitable site. Out of the two sites considered - Bombo and Makerere - the latter was selected because of its nearness to Kampala, the centre of the dominant Baganda culture.

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<sup>35</sup>.John Cameron, The Development of Education in East Africa, Teachers College Press, New York, 1970, p.28.

<sup>36</sup>.Margaret Macpherson, They Built for the Future: A Chronicle of Makerere University College, 1922-1962, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1964, p.2.

Construction work began in March 1921, and in January 1922 classes started in the school with fourteen day boys who enrolled in carpentry, building and mechanics.

In August 1922, the name of the school was changed to Makerere College since, according to the principal, H.O. Saville, "the term technical was not broad enough to include all the vocational training it is designed to give".<sup>37</sup> The principal did not act of his own volition. Initially the institution was to be of higher learning. But by the time colonial officials had mulled it over, it had become a technical college. The chiefly elite became outraged that its children were to be trained as "technicians". Thus Saville introduced the vague concept of vocational education which tended to mean one thing to the chiefs and quite another to the colonial officials. Thereafter, medical training was commenced under Dr. H.B. Owen who grounded students in physics, chemistry, biology and pre-clinical subjects for two years before transferring them to Mulago hospital for clinical work.<sup>38</sup> Soon, courses in survey, engineering and agriculture were added. The Ugandan Government was aware of the Phelps-Stokes' criticism of West African administrations over the

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<sup>37</sup>.Makerere College, Annual Report, 1922 (typescript) as cited in Macpherson, ibid., p.5. Mr Saville was from the Ugandan Public Works Department.

<sup>38</sup>.Macpherson, ibid., pp.7-8. Owen, who retired from the medical service in Uganda, was recalled to be the first medical tutor of the college. The demand for medical assistants was acute at the Mulago hospital in Kampala, and the C.M.S. hospital at Mengo immediately after the war.

narrow educational philosophy of the missions, which de-emphasized technical and vocational in favour of literary education.

Similarly, in March 1920, Governor Gordon Guggisberg of the Gold Coast appointed an Educationists' Committee.<sup>39</sup> This coincided with the visit to West Africa of the Phelps-Stokes Commission. Accordingly the Committee was mandated to investigate past educational efforts, and the methods, principles and policy which should govern the progress of education in the colony.<sup>40</sup> The committee recommended the establishment of a Secondary Boarding School at Achimota, near Accra. This signalled the beginning of an attempt to provide Africans with sound secondary education in the Gold Coast. Fired by the new concept in African education of the report of Phelps-Stokes, which was published in 1922, Guggisberg appointed a new committee in May of that same year. With an African majority, this new committee was charged to report on

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<sup>39</sup>.Guggisberg succeeded Hugh Clifford as the Governor of the Gold Coast in 1919. Guggisberg was a Jewish Canadian whose father died in 1873 while he was four years old. His mother remarried an Englishman hence they found themselves in England where he completed his education, and joined the Royal Navy. His links with the Gold Coast began when he was seconded in 1902 by the Royal Engineers to special employment under the Colonial Office to survey the Gold Coast and Ashanti. See R.E. Wraith, Guggisberg, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1967 for a biography.

<sup>40</sup>.See C.K. Graham, The History of Education in Ghana, Frank Cass, London, 1971, p.156.

how to bring the Achimota plan into reality.<sup>41</sup> Promptly, the new committee reported in August 1923. Predictably, the new Gold Coast Educationists' Committee recommended the immediate development of higher educational facilities in Achimota, which was the governor's desire.<sup>42</sup>

Clearly government interest in higher education in both Uganda and the Gold Coast during this period was driven by the fundamental objective to supply the various government departments with intermediate African staff in order to save costs. The hiring of Europeans had become difficult as well as expensive to colonial governments.<sup>43</sup> For the Gold Coast, educated Africans were required to fill intermediate posts because the government "could not afford to fill the increasing number of these posts with Europeans" considering the cost of their maintenance.<sup>44</sup> In contrast to Nigeria, indirect rule was not implemented conservatively in the Gold

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<sup>41</sup>.Refer to Wraith, Guggisberg, p.134. African members of the committee were four: Nana Ofori Atta, Hutton-Mills, Dr. Papafio and Spio Garbrah while the Europeans were the Director of Education, and two missionaries - Wilkie and Fisher.

<sup>42</sup>.Additionally, the new Committee inquired into how general secondary teacher training, and technical education might be combined in the proposed Achimota under a co-educational system. This question of co-education was a radical innovation by Guggisberg. Hitherto, missionary education had disallowed the system of co-education.

<sup>43</sup>.O.W. Furley and T. Watson, A History of Education in East Africa, Nok Publishers, New York, 1978, p.188.

<sup>44</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.188.

Coast during Guggisberg's time.<sup>45</sup> The Gold Coast operated a different system of chieftaincy, particularly among the Ga and Fante, whereby the chiefs were literate, elected and, could be de-stooled by electors. Hence conflicts between the chiefs and educated elite were more "enlightened" and differed from the Nigerian situation. The foundation of Achimota resulted from a combination of Guggisberg - a type of governor Nigeria had not yet had - and a more vociferous educated element.

In Uganda, similarly, Africans with technical training were required in the government departments to "replace the more highly paid Asian artisans".<sup>46</sup> Uganda had a well developed system of indirect rule with an expanded Native Authority, Native Courts, and Native Treasuries. But unlike the Gold Coast and Nigeria the educated Africans in Uganda did not develop as a separate class from the chiefly aristocracy, dominated by the Baganda. Since the chiefs constituted the larger proportion of the educated class, there was less fear about the disruptive influence of western education and civilization. If anything, educated chiefs were seen as an added advantage to the Native Administration system and, normally, were preferred to the illiterate ones. In other words, education "did not lead to the growth of an uprooted minority in an open hostility to the whole native

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<sup>45</sup>.See Wraith, Guggisberg, p.90.

<sup>46</sup>.Furley and Watson, A History of Education in East Africa., p.188.

administration system" as in West Africa.<sup>47</sup> It is against this background that the Ugandan government's growing interest in education in the period contrasted with that of West African colonial regimes.

The real demand for educated men in Uganda was felt in the Native Administration of the Kabaka which held under its control a whole host of modern functions which in West Africa were the exclusive preserve of the colonial administration. Most graduates of Makerere were likely to find jobs with the mission societies or within the Kabaka's government. Rarely did officials see their own jobs threatened by them. Rarely did the most educated Baganda wish to work for the colonial administration which they felt was alien, uncomfortable and detached from their society. This attitude persisted even after decolonization had begun. By that time it was the other ethnic groups of Uganda, and not the Baganda, who began to stock the colonial civil service in the process of Africanization. Buganda became the example *par excellence* of indirect rule and the closest approximation to fulfilling the theory as Lugard had conceived of it with all the tragic consequences which were to follow. Be that as it may, it is against this background that the Ugandan government's growing

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<sup>47</sup>R.C. Pratt, "Administration and Politics in Uganda, 1919-1945" in Vincent Harlow and E.M. Chilver (eds.), History of East Africa, vol.11, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965, p.519. Most educated Ugandans thus had close and intimate connexions with the ruling hierarchy. Hence ambitious, educated men, rather than reacting in full hostility to the whole government system, tended instead to aspire to it.

interest in education in the period, even if defective in scope and content, contrasted with that of West African colonial regimes.

However the exigency of the indirect rule system, the increasing need for a middle-level man-power, and the somewhat obsessive determination of colonial officials to guard their esteemed positions from African competitors should not becloud our judgement about the genuine intentions of some officials. Guggisberg, for instance, has often been portrayed as the most progressive of all the West African governors on educational matters.<sup>48</sup> Sammy Tenkorang would disagree. To him, Guggisberg's Achimota scheme was primarily undertaken "in order not to turn moderate chiefs and other nationalists into extremists" over the university question as advocated by the N.C.B.W.A.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, Guggisberg's adoration by imperial and African commentators remained strong even though his Achimota plan was designed to inspire the elite to accept indirect rule. Hence Arthur Mayhew asserted that in Guggisberg, "the Gold Coast found the right man, a man of vision, at the right time when there was a large revenue surplus".<sup>50</sup> In Nigeria, conversely, despite an increasing need

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<sup>48</sup>.Refer to Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African; Wraith, Guggisberg; and Graham, The History of Education in Ghana, passim.

<sup>49</sup>.Sammy Tenkorang, "The Gold Coast Aborigines Rights' Protection Society, 1897-1935", Bound Typescript, 1975, p.302.

<sup>50</sup>.Arthur Mayhew, Education in the Colonial Empire, Longmans, London, 1938, p.162.



for trained personnel in government services from the 1920's, colonial officials were not prepared to establish an institution of higher learning. For them, higher education "was clearly a means of enabling Africans to compete for senior posts in the civil [colonial] service".<sup>51</sup> But in the Gold Coast, Governor Guggisberg was, at least, parading the Achimota idea "as a stepping stone to a University" irrespective of the hostility of other European officials who had "a subconscious fear about their own declining influence and authority, even to the loss of jobs, if Achimota were... to fulfil the governor's hopes".<sup>52</sup>

Guggisberg did not allow the question of the possible frictions between the African traditional and educated elite to affect his educational vision. Although as a personal friend of Aggrey, he regarded the well-educated African as a "crucial bridge" between European colonial rule and the African masses, he was not as exceptionally liberal-minded as he has normally been depicted.<sup>53</sup> Although he was aware of the

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<sup>51</sup>.Fajana, "Colonial Control and Education", p.327. Very often Nigerian Government dismissed agitation for the establishment of institutions of university college standards "on the ground that it would be difficult to find sufficient numbers to feed the institution", *ibid.*, p.328.

<sup>52</sup>.See Wraith, *Guggisberg*, p.142. It was further feared that "higher education would result in Africans becoming politically conscious".

<sup>53</sup>.See Tenkorang, *op.cit.*, pp.307-308. Guggisberg was an indirect ruler. He "bolstered the power of the chiefs and refused to extend elected representatives to the intelligentsia". Tenkorang further observed that Governors Clifford of Nigeria and Wilkinson of Sierra Leone introduced

political effects on British rule of an unregulated African education he was pre-occupied with how to fill the increasing openings in the intermediate cadres of the colonial service.

The same was true of Governor Coryndon of Uganda. Coryndon was a firm believer in practical as opposed to literary education. Likewise his Makerere scheme, according to Christopher Youé, was partly "a response to the shortage of skilled artisans" as well as "an attempt to accommodate growing African demands for education".<sup>54</sup> In the case of Nigeria, the vested interests of the colonial officials, and their commitment to shield the chiefs (their indirect rulers) from the hostility of the educated elite obliged them to oppose the idea of higher education vehemently. The Northern emirs were particularly not attracted to western education even though the Southern chiefs remained indifferent. For the Nigerian Government, therefore,

it was enlightened self-interest to prevent the emergence of a politically restive class that might result from the establishment of a University College. That would negate the very basis of colonial subordination, it would help to create a class of competitors to colonial authorities instead of producing political stewards.<sup>55</sup>

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reforms "with less reluctance" than Guggisberg.

<sup>54</sup>. Christopher Youé, "The African Career of Robert Thorne Coryndon: Personality and Policy in British Colonial Rule", Ph.D. Thesis, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 1978, pp.280-281.

<sup>55</sup>. F.O. Ogunlade, "Education and Politics in Colonial Nigeria: The Case of King's College, Lagos (1906-1911)" in Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, vol.vii, no.2,

With the American involvement, the consequent critical reports of the Phelps-Stokes Commission and the unguided educational efforts in the various colonies, the Secretary of State for the Colonies set up an Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa (ACNETA) in November 1923, under the chairmanship of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, W.G.A. Ormsby Gore. Other members were Frederick Lugard, who devised the system of indirect rule in Northern Nigeria; James Currie, who had been a director of education in the Sudan; Hans Vischer who designed a school system in Northern Nigeria; J.H. Oldham, who brought to the committee a lifetime's experience from the mission; Michael Sadler, C. Strachey and A.J. Church of the Colonial Office and, Bishop M. Bidwell as well as the Bishop of Liverpool.<sup>56</sup> Given its composition, therefore, the ACNETA would naturally defend the principles of the indirect rule system as well as preserve missionary interests. The terms of reference of the committee were:

To advise the Secretary of State on any matters of Native Education in the British Colonies and Protectorates in Tropical Africa which he may from time to time refer to them; and to assist him in advancing the progress of education in

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1974, p.340.

<sup>56</sup>. See Ashby, African Universities and Western Tradition, pp.16-17.

those Colonies and Protectorates.<sup>57</sup>

Although the British response was quite unusual it was almost predictable. Hitherto the education of Africans had been left to the discretion of the missionaries and colonial governments whose efforts depended on their respective group interest, both real and imagined. Many years of persistent African demands for government participation in the mission-dominated education, as demonstrated in the efforts of Horton, Blyden and Hayford, had consistently yielded no positive British response. This was largely predicated on the typical British Government's insistence that colonial governments must be self-supporting. Abstention from educational matters, therefore, was preferred by the perception that much involvement would ultimately imply financial commitment.<sup>58</sup> Thus it was convenient for Britain to leave the entire enterprise to voluntary agencies dominated by the missions, which bore the financial responsibility. But from the 1920's other considerations began to impinge on British educational arrangements in the colonies. These emergent elements,

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<sup>57</sup>.CO 987/17 Advisory Committee on Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies, November 24, 1923. Major Hans Vischer was the secretary. Other members were Major Church, Sir James Currie, Bishop M. Bidwell, Sir Frederick Lugard, the Bishop of Liverpool, J.H. Oldham, Sir Michael Sadler and C. Strachey.

<sup>58</sup>.Hitherto the Colonial Office had consulted the British Board of Education in relation to education in the colonies. Undoubtedly this Board had a limited knowledge of the varying local conditions in the colonial territories, hence was not very effective.

seemingly more political, consequently made abstention from direct involvement not only undesirable but also harmful to Britain's imperial image.

By the end of the World War I, with its massive carnage and destruction, the colonizing powers of Europe were exhausted, and their confidence in the perfection of their civilization was greatly shaken. New concepts of national self-determination "forced government to reconsider their colonial policies" resulting in the principle of trusteeship which was intended to be more humane.<sup>59</sup> Consequently a more critical attitude came to be adopted towards the quantitative and qualitative aspects of colonial education. To be accused of economic exploitation of the colonies in utter neglect of the social and economic well being of the people was abhorred by the colonizing powers in the stimulating aftermath of the war. The Phelps-Stokes Commission visited Africa against this background. In reaction to the changing climate of opinion, Britain began to take more direct steps in the education of its African colonial subjects.

Although initiated by a missionary body it would appear that the Colonial Office was hardly comfortable with the American involvement under the auspices of the Phelps-Stokes Foundation. The naked criticism that the Commission levelled against British education in Africa represented a direct indictment of British colonial rule. It was partly to present

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<sup>59</sup>.Phelps-Stokes report, p.1.

British colonial policy as rather humane as well as to avoid further American intervention that the Colonial Office quickly appointed the ACNETA which began to advise the British Government on the best approach to education in Africa.<sup>60</sup> Even if one agrees with Ashby that the appointment of the ACNETA was nothing more than a British "conventional response",<sup>61</sup> there is no question that it was unprecedented in relation to education in Africa, which, hitherto, had been sort of a "no go" area for the Colonial Office in London. It was the first such British body geared exclusively towards African education.

Meanwhile, as a result of the recommendations of the Phelps-Stokes Commission, the demands of the colonial service, and the consequent appointment of the ACNETA by the Secretary of State, African colonial governments began realistically to give attention to the question of higher education for Africans. In the Gold Coast, for instance, Guggisberg addressed the Legislative Council on his Achimota scheme in March 1924. This address was very significant because it was the first time that the governor outlined his vision for Achimota, and his intentions to develop the institution into the university of the Gold Coast. The idea was a landmark. Although he was apparently referring to the remote future,

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<sup>60</sup>.Refer to Kenneth James King, Pan-Africanism and Education, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971, pp.95-104.

<sup>61</sup>.Ashby, African Universities and Western Tradition, p.16.

Guggisberg's speech represented the first such pronouncement in favour of the establishment of a university during the period by any governor in the British tropical African dependencies. Accordingly:

As I see it, Achimota will be more of the nature of a university than a secondary school.... In planning the administration I have therefore thought it advisable to consider the prospect of the College eventually becoming a University.<sup>62</sup>

As a demonstration of the sense of urgency and vigour with which he hoped to pursue the Achimota objective, Guggisberg set aside a capital endowment of half a million pounds and an annual endowment of £60,000 for the institution which he intended as "an educational model and power-house for West Africa".<sup>63</sup> Later in 1924 he laid the foundation of the college. Consequently A.G. Frazer and J.E.K. Aggrey were appointed principal and vice principal, respectively, of the proposed college. With the appointment of these two experienced men, it was clear that Guggisberg was committed to the Achimota project.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>.Governor Guggisberg's Speech to the Gold Coast Legislative Council, March 6, 1924 as cited in Wraith, Guggisberg, p.147. See also Guggisberg's The Keystone, London, 1924, p.31.

<sup>63</sup>.Mayhew, Education in the Colonial Empire, pp.162-163.

<sup>64</sup>.While Frazer had been for many years the Principal of Trinity College, Kandy, Ceylon, Aggrey had taught for several years in the United States where he earned the reputation for establishing interracial understanding. See Colin G. Wise, A History of Education in British West Africa, Longmans, London, 1956, pp.104-105. Frazer also shunned racism. His insistence that Aggrey must be allowed to reside in the European

In Uganda in 1924, Governor Archer who succeeded Coryndon quickly invited E.R.J. Hussey, an inspector of schools in the Sudan, to report on the educational needs of the protectorate and to make recommendations.<sup>65</sup> It had become clear to the governor that among the Baganda chiefly class "there is a growing demand for a higher standard of education than that obtainable locally".<sup>66</sup> The chiefs were already asking for a comfortable arrangement to send their children to England for higher training. Hence the governor began to formulate plans to build Makerere into a "respectable" college for the education of those who would be capable of filling all the minor posts and the crafts and trade. Furthermore, the Phelps-Stokes Commission was visiting Uganda in the same year, and the commission's disapproval of educational efforts in West Africa, convinced the Ugandan governor of the need for re-organization in Uganda. As a result the acting principal of Makerere College, Douglas Tomblings, suggested that the technical unit should be removed in order to concentrate on vocational training. But the chiefly elite had no intention of

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Reservation in Accra instead of African quarters before he (Frazer) could disembark from the ship to assume his office demonstrated amply his racial tolerance; Wise, ibid..

<sup>65</sup>.See Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.192 and Macpherson, They Built For the Future, p.9. Hussey was seconded at the request of the Advisory Committee on native Education in Tropical Africa.

<sup>66</sup>.Ashby, ibid.; Mayhew, Education in the Colonial Empire, p.169. This "certain class of natives" that Governor Archer was referring to were obviously the Baganda.



turning their children into "technicians" and the commoners had not yet aspired to higher education.

While agreeing with the governor that government should play a more active part in education, after his survey, Hussey emphasized the need for expansion "geared to the needs of the colonial and native administration".<sup>67</sup> It would appear that Hussey's proposals were designed to counteract and preempt Phelps-Stokes. He proposed a scheme which would raise the level of the intermediate schools up to London University Matriculation by using Makerere as a model. For Makerere, he recommended the establishment of a department for the provision of preparatory courses in medicine, agriculture, surveying and veterinary science "with an advanced course for sons of chiefs, school masters, and high grade clerks". The Ugandan Advisory Committee on Education deeply favoured Hussey's recommendations. They, however, added that the university department of the College "may be the germ out of which in future a university college can grow".<sup>68</sup> Lastly these recommendations were forwarded to the Colonial Office which, in turn, referred them to the ACNETA. Although, as Ashby noted, some members of the ACNETA viewed the Hussey proposal as too ambitious and costly, the acting committee finally gave

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<sup>67</sup>.Furley and Watson, A History of Education in East Africa, p.187.

<sup>68</sup>.CO 847/6/12 Memorandum by the Ugandan Advisory Committee on Education, 1924.

its approval.<sup>69</sup>

The appointment of the ACNETA marked the beginning of the evolution of British policy on education in Africa. In less than two years the Committee produced a memorandum which constituted "a brief and definitive statement of British policy"<sup>70</sup>, and which was published as a White Paper in 1925.<sup>71</sup> In the ACNETA's view "the time is opportune for some public statement of principles and policy which would prove a useful guide to all those engaged, directly or indirectly in the advancement of native education in Africa". It was believed that African colonial governments had generated enough revenues to enable them to take on larger educational tasks. Hence members of ACNETA reasoned that "a policy which aims at the improvement of the condition of the people must therefore be a primary concern of Government and one of the first charges on its revenues". It is significant that such a "colonial welfare" idea which would dominate the 1940's, should be expressed so early even though the funding must be charged on colonial revenues, rather than British. Nevertheless, it was consistent with the principle of indirect rule and minimal government since the "educational tasks"

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<sup>69</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.192-3

<sup>70</sup>.Ibid..

<sup>71</sup>.CO 987/13 Education Policy in British Tropical Africa: Memorandum by the Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical African Dependencies, Command Paper No. 2374 of 1925.

ACNETA envisaged never went beyond the training of intermediaries for government departments.

Furthermore, from the 1920's and with the Mandates to control the exercise of power in the territories taken from Germany in 1919, the British began to use League of Nations ideas about Mandates as a "yardstick" for judging their own colonial possessions. In other words, Britain began to re-align her imperial policy to the principle that "the Controlling Power is responsible as trustee for the moral advancement of the native population".<sup>72</sup> Although the British were under no obligation to adopt the League of Nations' ideas on trusteeship, it remained the most effective way to prove to the international community that their imperial role was nothing but that of a trustee. Lugard was obviously a major influence, and he was also the British representative on the League of Nations' Mandate Commission. In his Dual Mandate, he tried to establish that the British system of government in tropical Africa was a prototype for the League of Nations' Mandate idea.<sup>73</sup> This, of course, was useful propaganda to demonstrate that British colonial rule in Africa and elsewhere was humane, concerned and fatherly.

The educational philosophy outlined by the ACNETA in its

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<sup>72</sup>.CO 987/13 Note by the Chairman of the Committee, Ormsby-Gore, to the Secretary of State, dated March 13, 1925.

<sup>73</sup>.Lord Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa, first published in 1922, Fifth Edition, Frank Cass, London, 1956.

memorandum was in full realization that the results of education in Africa had not been altogether satisfactory either to Africans, or colonial administrations. To British officials, colonial education dominated by the Missions had failed to create the type of Africans who could be reconciled with the indirect rule system. Thus the memorandum emphasized the need for adaptation and character-training. As it stated:

Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupation and traditions of the various peoples conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life; adapting them where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution....Education thus defined will narrow the hiatus between the educated class and the rest of the community whether chiefs or peasantry.<sup>74</sup>

Colonial administrations recognized the disruptive effects of Western influence and education under indirect rule. According to the memorandum, the types of Western education imparted to Africans "tend to weaken tribal authority and the sanctions of existing beliefs...".<sup>75</sup> Thus character-training as emphasized by the Committee was meant to be a necessary safeguard against the "disruptive influence antagonistic to constituted secular authority". The aim of education was hence redefined to fit the principle and

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<sup>74</sup>.CO 987/13 Education Policy in British Tropical Africa: Memorandum by the Advisory Committee on Native Education.

<sup>75</sup>.Ibid.

practice of the indirect rule system. Thus the training of those who were required to fill junior positions in the colonial service, as well as chiefs who would be used as indirect rulers, became imperative. Anything more than these objectives seemed undesirable. Thus:

The first task of education is to raise the standard alike of character and efficiency of the bulk of the people, but provision must be made for the training of those who are required to fill posts in the administrative and technical services, as well as of those who as chiefs will occupy positions of exceptional trust and responsibility.<sup>76</sup>

The question of adaptation was brought by the British into harmony with the educational requirement of the policy of indirect rule.<sup>77</sup> Since the African educated elites, especially in West Africa, saw themselves as socially lifted over and above their illiterate brethren - both chiefs and commoners - they felt slighted under indirect rule, which subordinated and assigned them no roles under the colonial dispensation. They became increasingly disillusioned. Worse still, when employed at all, colonial officials would not offer the educated Africans positions commensurate with their educational qualifications. Consequently they became antagonistic to both the African traditional rulers and British officials, and as a class, began to constitute a formidable destabilizing force against the colonial

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<sup>76</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>. Foster, Education and Social Change in Ghana, p.164.

establishment. It was to make the educated Africans politically less troublesome that the whole question of adaptation and character-training as an ideal educational policy was stressed in the ACNETA's memorandum. It is noteworthy that Blyden, the N.C.B.W.A. and other Africans had called for an education adapted to the African environment and culture. British adaptation was primarily targeted at middle-level positions which colonialism might permit Africans to hold. Quickly the African elite began to categorize British adaptation as a justification of African inferiority.

Furthermore, the stress on adaptation appears to have been a convenient way of convincing the Americans, to keep them off, that Britain was formulating a policy in response to the findings of the Phelps-Stokes Report. Hence Ajayi asserts that "for all the continued rhetoric about the need for adaptation, the need to keep control of higher education in specifically British hands was the priority".<sup>78</sup> That done, the education so offered was to lead to middle-level employment so as to never threaten the upper-level European managers. It became anathema to colonial officials that any situation might arise where an African assistant held higher "paper" qualifications than his European boss. If such a situation threatened it meant that one whole tier of the civil service would have to be Africanized because it was unthinkable that

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<sup>78</sup>.Ajayi, "The American Factor in the Development of Higher Education in Africa", p.10.

any Europeans would occupy the same civil service level, far less ever work under Africans. Consequently the entire European civil service felt compelled to unite against even one competent and qualified African.

In any case, whatever policy the ACNETA envisaged on adaptation was woven around the consolidation of indirect rule, and the fact that Lugard was a member, made the contrary almost impossible.<sup>79</sup> Those who sought to benefit from western education must, of necessity, learn to respect the traditional authorities represented by chiefs since that presupposed compliance with colonialism. The demand of indirect rule implied that only Africans required to fill intermediate positions, and chiefs, needed to run the Native Administrations, should be trained. Western and highly educated Africans were not required under the system which relied upon traditional authorities, and a few European officials. Under this framework the higher education of Africans was, if possible, to be avoided to forestall the expansion of the highly educated class who would clamour for higher posts in the colonial service, or become a burden to the chiefly rulers. Uganda presented a contrast to this mindset because there the educated class was not separate from

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<sup>79</sup>.Lugard's "Education in Tropical Africa" in CO 847/9/9 rehashed the content of the ACNETA's memorandum in relation to the disruptive influence of unadapted Western education. Lugard insisted that African education must have roots in African traditions, beliefs and environment, which was the meat in the Committee's memorandum.

the educated elite. They were one and the same. But in order not to close that avenue completely and possibly mollify chiefly opinion in Buganda, the ACNETA recommended that:

As resources permit, the door of advancement, through higher education, in Africa must be increasingly opened for those who by character, ability and temperament show themselves fitted to profit by such education.<sup>80</sup>

However, the emphasis which both the Phelps-Stokes Commission and the ACNETA's memorandum placed on agricultural education, and a secondary stress upon technical, literary and vocational training was fraught with problems. To the Africans, adapting education to their "mentality and aptitudes" was suggestive of racial inferiority. It is difficult to imagine how the aptitudes of Africans were decided without implying racial stereotypes. To the colonial officials, occupational adaptation to the aptitude of Africans meant that agricultural education would be emphasized. While seemingly progressive when compared with missionary education, such a proposal, as Foster had observed, "combined inferior economic opportunities with the notion of tying the bulk of educated Africans to the land". Certainly, although colonial governments wanted intermediate professionals for government departments they seemed very comfortable with the emphasis on agriculture because it would serve to divert Africans from politics, nationalism, and bitter struggles with the chiefs.

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<sup>80</sup>.CO 987/13 Education Policy in British Tropical Africa: Memorandum, op.cit.



The Baganda chiefs might be persuaded to tolerate agricultural education for commoners but they could not imagine their own children as farmers. This kind of education was frowned upon by the West African educated elites who saw it as a policy which:

would have deprived all but a tiny minority of Africans of the opportunity for effective social advancement in the colonial milieu and the opportunity to achieve social and political parity with the colonial elite.<sup>81</sup>

Meanwhile things were maturing rapidly in both Uganda and the Gold Coast. In 1925 Hussey was appointed the first Director of Education in Uganda presumably "to put into effect his own recommendations and those of the Phelps-Stokes Commission".<sup>82</sup> Cognizant of the educational standards envisaged for Makerere and the progress made by 1925, the Education Department described the institution as "destined to become the University College of the Protectorate".<sup>83</sup> When the Prince of Wales visited the Gold Coast in April 1925, the Governor, who believed strongly in the future development of Achimota into a university college, persuaded him to authorize the use of his name for the College. This granted, the institution became known as the Prince of Wales College,

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<sup>81</sup>. Ibid., p.162.

<sup>82</sup>. Furley and Watson, A History of Education in East Africa, p.189.

<sup>83</sup>. Uganda Education Department, Annual Report, 1925 as cited in Macpherson, They Built For the Future, p.9.

Achimota.<sup>84</sup> Consequently both Achimota and Makerere began the long and arduous march towards their envisioned destiny under the guidance of colonial governments. Whatever success each institution was to achieve largely depended on the dispositions of their respective governors, the nature and dictates of indirect rule, and the role that they intended to assign the educated Africans under colonial rule.

However, when Achimota College opened for classes on the 28th of January 1927 it "started life as a more capacious compendium of education than even Guggisberg had supposed".<sup>85</sup> The final instructional arrangement comprised the Prince of Wales School and the Prince of Wales College. While the former was composed of a kindergarten, a lower primary school for boys and girls, and an upper primary school for girls, the latter housed an upper primary school for boys, a secondary school, and a university department. The university department was intended to offer courses leading to inter-mediate degrees work. This plan was almost entirely the work of the principal, A.G. Frazer. From the time of his assumption of office earlier that year Guggisberg had allowed Frazer and Aggrey a free hand to determine how the initial beginnings were to proceed. Thus, believing that the school had to begin from the bottom, Frazer

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<sup>84</sup>.However, this change of name did not make any difference to most West Africans who continued to refer to the institution as Achimota College. The new name only had relevance among officials in the Colonial Office.

<sup>85</sup>.Wraith, Guggisberg, p.153.

introduced the kindergarten idea and incorporated the Accra Training College into the Achimota scheme.<sup>86</sup> Achimota was therefore designed to remove children at the age of six from their cultural environment and keep them away from it until their late teens or early twenties. It was not surprising that Achimota produced a stream of "black Englishmen" unparalleled by any other institution in West or East Africa before 1948. Consequently, what ultimately emerged in Achimota was neither the West African University which Casely Hayford and the N.C.B.W.A. had demanded nor the future university college which Guggisberg envisioned. It was therefore to produce a moderately-trained class of Africans whose qualifications would fit them into the increasing numbers of openings in the intermediate cadres of the colonial service.

Given the centuries-long exposure of coastal communities in the Gold Coast to Europeans and eighty years of colonial experience - compared to twenty years in Nigeria - the educated elite more closely approached the ideal of the "Black Englishman" than any other community in West Africa, with the possible exception of a few Creoles in Freetown. Designing Achimota to surround and immerse Africans from kindergarten to university within an English cultural environment was intended and expected to perpetuate this tradition. No other institution in colonial Africa had been so perfectly designed to denationalize its students, divorce them from their society

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<sup>86</sup>. Ibid..

and their environment culturally and physically. It was paradoxical that an institution designed to be a university began with organizing a kindergarten and probably more ironic that the Gold Coast elite rarely complained about the concept of total cultural immersion. Not surprisingly Achimota graduates were not very outstanding among the nationalists.

In 1929, the Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa (ACNETA) was reconstituted under a new name, the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies (ACEC).<sup>87</sup> Its functions were expanded to serve all the British colonies rather than tropical Africa alone. The membership of the committee also was enlarged to include renowned British academics such as Professor Reginald Coupland, Dr. Franklin Sibly, Dr. W.H. Maclean, Dr. Sara Burstall, Dr. W.W. Vaughan, and Professor Julian Huxley, with Ormsby-Gore as the chairman, and Hanns Vischer and Arthur Mayhew as joint-secretaries.<sup>88</sup> Although missionary bodies were still represented, they were in the minority, hence could no longer wield much influence.

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<sup>87</sup>.CO 987/17 Historical Notes on the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, (undated).

<sup>88</sup>.Coupland was a Beit Professor of History of the British Empire at Oxford University; Sibly was a well-known Geologist, and Principal of the University of London; Maclean was a lecturer in Economics and a specialist in colonial economic planning in the University of London; Burstall was the President, Association of Headmistresses, a member of the Institute of Education Delegacy, University of London, and a famous public speaker on educational issues; Vaughan was the Headmaster of Rugby College and President of the Incorporated Association of Headmasters; and Huxley, also of the University of London, was the world famous biologist.

Despite the fact that Lugard was still a member of the reconstituted body his influence soon diminished as indirect rule could no longer take precedence over educational policies. The academic members of the Committee were ready to push educational matters, as the 1930's would show. In fact, the reorganization of the committee marked an important milestone in the history of university development in Africa because immediately after its inauguration, it "took an interest in higher education".<sup>89</sup>

Meanwhile, at Makerere, the first Kenyan student enrolled in 1927 and, the Governor of Uganda noted that the college would soon become a territorial higher educational institution serving the whole of East Africa, especially in the field of medical training. Courses of instruction had been expanded so appreciably that when Julian Huxley, the famous biologist and a member of the ACEC visited Makerere in 1929 he was so impressed by the progress, especially in medical training, that he noted:

In due time, I think there can be no shadow of doubt, Makerere will become a true university of East Africa. It is difficult to prophesy; but I would put this time about forty or fifty years hence, after two more generations of education.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>.CO 987/17 Historical Notes on the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies.

<sup>90</sup>.J. Huxley, African View, London, 1933, pp.279-80 as quoted in Furley and Watson, A History of Education in East Africa, p.194.

Although his timing seemed over-stretched because of the pervading notion in those days that colonial change was going to be a very slow process, Huxley appeared more progressive than most African colonial officials. At least, unlike those who usually telescoped the remote future, he suggested a time frame when the university dream might come true. Clearly Huxley represented a new outlook among members of the reconstituted ACEC.

Unlike Achimota, Makerere had no university department providing courses. Despite the declaration of all the East African Directors of Education in Dar-es-Salaam in 1929 that "higher education for the whole of East Africa should be centred at Makerere" the standard of education it provided hardly went beyond the school certificate level. Those who enrolled for the professional courses were awarded certificates which were only recognized within Uganda. Hence whatever qualifications they obtained, they were expected to fill subordinate posts in the colonial service and, as members of the chiefly and elite class, be employed in the Native Administrations. However members of the aristocracy continued to go to Europe for studies. Efforts at higher education, therefore, were determined by the demands of government departments, and not necessarily by the needs or desires of Africans.

In Nigeria, efforts at higher education up to 1929 did not go beyond what was provided at King's College, Lagos,

which had been opened since 1909 and prepared students for the Cambridge School Certificate.<sup>91</sup> But in 1929 E.R.J. Hussey was transferred from Uganda to Nigeria as Director of Education. It would appear that this appointment was intended to evolve for Nigeria a definite and proper education policy in line with the Colonial Office White Paper of 1925. Hussey's appointment "presented another opportunity for discussing the whole question of higher education".<sup>92</sup> Soon after his assumption of office Hussey proposed a scheme for the establishment of a higher college at Yaba along the lines of Makerere College in Uganda. Like similar institutions in the other British territories, the aim of Yaba as outlined by Hussey during the Legislative Council debate was "to provide well-trained assistants for various departments of government and private enterprise". The standard of courses provided, he further stressed, would gradually rise although "it may take a long time before it reaches the standard which must be its ultimate aim, that of a British University".<sup>93</sup> Instruction at the proposed Higher College, which would be of "university or professional character", was to commence in five vocational fields of medicine, civil engineering, agriculture, surveying

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<sup>91</sup>.For the history of the King's College see Ogunlade, "Education and Politics in Colonial Nigeria: The Case of King's College, Lagos (1906-1911)".

<sup>92</sup>.Fajana, "Colonial Control and Education", p.328.

<sup>93</sup>.Speech by E.R.J. Hussey, Legislative Council Debates, 8th Session, 27 September, 1930, Government Printer, Lagos, pp. 29-32.

and teacher-training.

By 1930 Hussey had persuaded the Nigerian Government to start the Higher College "as a special medical school at King's College". In 1932, the medical school became a distinct institution housed in a temporary hut while the permanent buildings were being erected. Soon, other courses such as engineering, agriculture, surveying and teacher-training were added. However, as to whether Hussey's enthusiasm and determination alone would have ensured the achievement of his scheme in the face of the financial crisis which began in 1929, Fajana expresses some doubts. For him, the fruition of the Yaba efforts demonstrated nothing but "a reflection of a general change of attitude in British official quarters towards African education".<sup>94</sup> The ACEC had begun to push for educational progress in the colonies. In Uganda, official opinion had been shifting in favour of some sort of higher education for Africans, and the East African Directors of Education were even considering a scheme of London matriculation as the standard of admission into Makerere College. Likewise, in the Gold Coast the government had gone a step ahead by elevating the engineering programme at Achimota to the B.Sc. degree level of the University of London in 1931. Nigeria simply could not isolate itself from these new trends. Thus even in the face of the depression the Nigerian Government began to show some signs of commitment to

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<sup>94</sup>.Fajana, "Colonial Control and Education", p.328.



forge ahead with the Yaba scheme.

Colonial officials in Nigeria had long had reservations about the future of highly educated Africans under indirect rule. Consistently, "preference for the uneducated over the educated native" had been exhibited in the Native Administrative system,<sup>95</sup> because "[l]east inclined to be blindly obedient, [the educated African] was even likely to be critical of his foreign ruler".<sup>96</sup> The Nigerian Government took extra care not only to avoid the over-production of a highly educated class which would clamour for higher posts in the colonial service but also "for fear of creating a politically troublesome class".<sup>97</sup> Above all, colonial officials did not wish to disrupt the system of indirect rule which was working very "well", hence the educated elite should be shut off, and its expansion forestalled. The official thinking about the well-educated African remained that:

by virtue of his high level of education, he was apt to imbibe such notions of representative government, the party system, constitutionalism, self-government and the like - notions that struck at the basis of colonial rule itself.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>.Hailey, An African Survey, p.259.

<sup>96</sup>.O. Adewoye, "The Antecedents" in J.F. Ade Ajayi and Tekena N. Tamuno (eds.) The University of Ibadan, 1948-73, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, 1973, p.10.

<sup>97</sup>.See F.O. Ogunlade, "Yaba Higher College and the Formation of an Intellectual Elite", (M.A. Thesis, University of Ibadan), 1970, p.352.

<sup>98</sup>.Adewoye, "Antecedents", p.10-11.

Rarely did Ugandan colonial officials adopt this line because the educated elite supported the official position of the Baganda government that colonialism did not mean subordination but rather an alliance between Buganda and Britain. It seemed as unnatural for the British as it would be for the Kabaka's government to hire Englishmen or be advised by them. Advice might be given but by the rules of the agreement the Baganda did not believe it had to be taken and frequently was it not, to the chagrin of the governor. Nationalism, therefore, such a potential threat in West Africa, took the form in Buganda of defending the powers and sovereignty of the Kabaka according to their treaty of "alliance" with the British. In fact, so serious did the Baganda elite take their position as partners of the British and chiefly agents of colonialism among the other ethnic groups of Uganda, that A.D.Roberts has referred to them as sub-imperialists rather than nationalists.<sup>99</sup> In the 1920's and 30's Baganda nationalism took the form of protest against the efforts of the British to remove them as chiefs over the other ethnic groups of the protectorate. To the Baganda such policies were distinctly hostile to the imperial partnership. However, this role of the Baganda had not been guaranteed by the agreement of 1900 which halted any major intrusion of the British into the internal affairs of Buganda itself.

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<sup>99</sup>.A.D.Roberts, "The Sub-Imperialism of the Baganda", Journal of African History, vol.III, no.3, 1962, pp.435-450.

Meanwhile the Nigerian colonial administration continued to drag its feet. When the government ultimately decided to establish the higher College at Yaba it was largely cushioned to emphasize vocational and technical courses, rather than literary education at diploma and certificate levels. This was hardly surprising. Okafor believes that the decision to establish Yaba was largely a result of "man-power needs coupled with reasons of economy".<sup>100</sup> Hussey seemed to have hinted at this when he reasoned that with the establishment of such a vocational higher college "a considerable reduction in European personnel is possible..., with a consequent savings of large sums of money on European salaries".<sup>101</sup> This made sense in the face of the economic depression which had struck colonial territories in the inter-war years. No matter how highly educated, it was logical that Africans working in the colonial service were cheaper to maintain than their European counterparts. They were paid lower salaries, and normally received no annually paid leaves and passages to London. Thus although colonial governments normally preferred to work with European officials, the fiscal conditions of the colonies required serious cutbacks in expenditure if they were to find

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<sup>100</sup>.Okafor, The Development of Universities in Nigeria, p.70.

<sup>101</sup>.Sessional Paper, No.31 of 1930, Government Printer, Lagos as cited in Okafor, ibid.. He equally realized that sound education would enable the masses of the people to harness the immense economic possibilities, hence a demand for an increasing number of well-educated natives was a natural corollary of economic progress.

the money for "essential" government services. Equally, and although belated, there is no doubt that the Yaba scheme was a response to the Phelps-Stokes commission's recommendations as well as the Colonial Office White Paper on education in Africa. Furthermore the posture of the ACEC, of which Hussey was a member, towards the provision of higher education for Africans, was gradually becoming accepted.

The Yaba Higher College officially opened in January 1934. Instead of the expression of gratitude to the colonial government for ultimately finding its way to establish an institution of higher learning, the establishment of Yaba was "greeted with a heavy barrage of public criticism" by Nigerians.<sup>102</sup> The first volley came four days after the opening ceremony in the editorial of The Nigerian Daily Times, the then leading newspaper in the country. The paper viewed the Higher College as "a grand idea, and imposing structure, resting on rather weak foundations...." It flayed the low standards of the Middle Schools which would be feeders to the Higher College, and concluded that:

As far as Nigeria is concerned nothing but the best is good enough for Nigeria. If we must have higher education we wish to declare emphatically that this country will not be satisfied with an inferior brand such as the present scheme seems to

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<sup>102</sup>.Adewoye, "The Antecedents", p.13. He contends that the Yaba scheme "was the most controversial issue in the nationalist movement in Nigeria in the 1930s", see ibid.; also refer to Obafemi Awolowo, Awo: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Cambridge University Press, London, 1960, pp.115-116; and Ogunlade, "Yaba Higher College.

threaten.<sup>103</sup>

The views of the Nigerian Daily Times would have been heartily applauded by the Baganda elite in any similar reference to Makerere. Only full university status would satisfy.

Efforts by Hussey to pacify public opinion, arguing that the standards at Yaba would not be inferior, did not produce satisfactory results.<sup>104</sup> Instead the issue shifted to the Legislative Council where Henry Carr, who was also an African member of the Nigerian Board of Education, led the attacks.<sup>105</sup> Evidently enraged, the Lagos intelligentsia convened a public rally at Glover Memorial Hall on March 17, 1934 to protest against the Yaba scheme. The prominent Lagosians who attended the rally included Mojola Agbebi, O. Alakija, Kofo Abayomi, Ernest Ikoli, S.A. Adesanya and others who, ironically, later formed the pivot of modern Nigerian nationalists. The rally, in fact, turned out to be "the first meeting of what became first the Lagos Youth Movement and later the Nigerian Youth Movement".<sup>106</sup> Stating that their opposition was not against the establishment of higher education, the Lagos

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<sup>103</sup>.Editorial, "The Yaba Higher College", Nigerian Daily Times, January 23, 1934; Awolowo, Awo: The Autobiography, pp.115-116.

<sup>104</sup>.Nigerian Daily Times, 25 January, 1934.

<sup>105</sup>.See Nigerian Legislative Council Debate, 12th Session, 1934, pp.39-44.

<sup>106</sup>.Ogunlade, "Education and Politics in Colonial Nigeria", p.325; Okafor, The Development of Universities in Nigeria, p.75; see also von Albertini, European Colonial Rule, p.334.

intelligentsia contended that the Yaba scheme would entail "the isolation of Nigerian youths from the outside world and set up a false standard of values in the country". Furthermore,

While it may be expedient and desirable that opportunity should be provided locally..., it is considered inimical to the highest interest of Nigeria to flood the country with a class of mass-produced men whose standard of qualification must necessarily be deficient owing to the limited facilities available locally both as regards material and staff.<sup>107</sup>

Given its stature as the most populous of British colonies in Africa (double that of the Gold Coast and Uganda combined) Nigeria possessed the smallest and weakest educated class which was far more concentrated in one city than elsewhere. In Lagos it could be a nuisance to the colonial officials but beyond in the vast hinterland the influence of the educated elite was virtually nil. Its leaders were primarily Creole for despite the Nigerian sound of protesters names listed above, the majority had adopted Yoruba names. Small as the group was, it had lost many activists to the unusual proliferation of independent churches in Nigeria whose major aim was to convert the people to Christianity and who largely ignored political protests. Agbebi became something of an exception. Nevertheless, they had little fundamental to say about education. Their vision appeared very restrictive. What

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<sup>107</sup>.Resolutions passed at a Public Rally held at the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos on March 17, 1934, and published in Nigerian Daily Times, March 19, 1934.

they hankered for was an overseas education for their children. In Lagos the elite were riven by factional fights. As the heartland of indirect rule, Nigeria - both officials and chiefs - could ignore the small number of Lagos agitators who questionably paraded themselves as nationalists. Besides hankering for British degrees, they appeared to fear as much as colonial officials, flooding the colony with a class of "mass-produced men" whose qualifications were of "less" quality than their own. The people of Lagos, far less Nigeria, hardly could have been impressed. Their "leaders" were not the calibre of Horton or Blyden, James Johnson or Casely Hayford.

Fundamentally, what seems to have separated colonial officials and the Nigerian educated elite in the entire debate was the objectives of higher education. While the Nigerian Government was more interested in the production of middle level human resources for government departments, and favoured the slow development of Yaba to university college standard, the nationalists demanded "a full-fledged university or overseas training" ...[as] the only means of producing men of good quality who would become leaders of their people".<sup>108</sup> Colonial officials objected to both ideas. A full-fledged university under indirect rule would result in the over-production of highly educated Africans who would be "a potential opposition to which no place could be given in the

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<sup>108</sup>.Fajana, "Colonial Control and Education", p.330.

ruling system".<sup>109</sup> Overseas training, especially in America, had begun to be seen as politically and socially dangerous. Thus while Hussey was prepared to consider a scholarship scheme which would open opportunities for more students at Yaba and possibly overseas, the Governor firmly rejected the idea.<sup>110</sup>

Clearly while African colonial governments were now prepared to establish institutions of higher learning for the purpose of training subordinate staff for the colonial service, they still consistently opposed the idea of the establishment of any full-fledged university. To them, a university would be a burden on their already ailing economies, and more important, it would enlarge the class of educated Africans who would be a destabilizing factor to colonial *status quo* hinged on indirect rule. It is against this background that the extremely slow pace of progress was recorded in the advance toward university standards both in East and West Africa between 1920 and 1934. In Sierra Leone, the growth of Fourah Bay College had been stultified by its ecclesiastical bias, while its affiliation to Durham

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<sup>109</sup>.John Flint, "British Colonial Policy and the Development of African Universities, 1872-1943", seminar paper presented at the Centre for African Studies, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, February 15, 1979, p.3.

<sup>110</sup>.See Fajana, "Colonial Control and Education", p.330. For colonial officials, the most disturbing aspect of nationalist demands was that Nigerians were not going to be contented merely with competing for jobs with the British officials but they were determined also to lead their people to self-government.



University gave it the facade of a university college. Achimota ended up as a "capacious compendium of education" with a university department which, although it offered courses up to B.Sc in engineering of the University of London, ended up as a higher school. Makerere on the other hand could not proceed beyond the status of a territorial college offering courses of higher school standards. Nowhere in tropical Africa was anything approximating a fully-fledged university established before 1935 as the vested interests of British colonial officials consolidated in defence of the principle and practice of the indirect rule system. The ACEC whose membership consisted mostly of renowned British academics from 1930 onwards became increasingly less sympathetic to the indirect rule policy, and began to take charge of educational planning. Since universities would have to await the disintegration of indirect rule as a guiding philosophy of British colonialism, the opposition of the African colonial governments to the university idea remained strong until the eve of the Second World War.

### Chapter Three

#### THE ICE BEGINS TO MELT: INITIATIVES FROM LONDON AND THE PLAN FOR AN EAST AFRICAN UNIVERSITY, 1932-1939

The period between 1932 and 1938 witnessed not only an unprecedented drive to formulate a consistent policy on the question of university education for Africans but also marked the first attempt by the British Government to use the "sacred" taxpayers' money to fund a scheme of higher education in Africa. This time the campaign emanated from the ACEC and the Colonial Office, and not directly from the Africans as in the pre-1930 demands. The change of attitude occurred as a result of several considerations. By 1932 the academic members of the ACEC had constituted themselves into a strong lobby group to press for the provision of university facilities in the colonies. Dexterously, they correlated their ambitions for the academic profession in general with the larger imperial goal, arguing that it was far more dangerous to British imperial prestige, politically and socially, to deny Africans access to university education than to satisfy that urge. Gradually the Colonial Office became persuaded by the ACEC argument. Furthermore, the unstable social, economic and political climate in the various colonies, as exemplified by the West Indian crisis, coupled with domestic and international criticisms of British colonial policies from the mid-1930's, became unsettling to the Colonial Office and

imperial thinkers alike. By 1938, therefore, the Colonial Office had become convinced that British colonial policy should be overhauled to harmonize with imperial long-term objectives. In this circumstance, serious discussion of African higher education began.

After its reconstitution in 1929, the ACEC, which had seven British academics and three educationists out of its nineteen members (with the rest representing various interest groups), began to adopt a different attitude towards African education, particularly university education. As for the university representatives, it was only natural for them to seek to cater to their profession (education) in the imperial policy-making process. They were convinced that no people could attain any meaningful advance without proper and uninhibited education at all levels. Thus they were not prepared to allow purely political considerations to override academic reasoning. Hence they constituted themselves into a formidable lobby group to persuade the Colonial Office and imperial statesmen about the need for, and the larger benefits of, a well-informed colonial population. The resolutions of the conference of East African Directors of Education in 1932 to raise the standards of Makerere College provided the academic lobby with a launching pad. The appointment of the De La Warr Commission for Makerere College in 1936 also constituted a response by the Colonial Office to the academic pressure from the ACEC.

From then on, using weighty political argumentation which were manifestly unharmed to British imperial rule, the academic lobby began to make one recommendation after another in favour of the establishment of universities in tropical Africa. To this end they highlighted the social and political consequences of Africans going to America for advanced studies. Although the Colonial Office favoured most of the ACEC's views on the necessity for universities in Africa, the Office remained like a "toothless bulldog" because it had no budget for that purpose. Since the Treasury would not release money, the Colonial Office was left at the mercy of the budgets of colonial governments whose opposition to university schemes often remained formidable. The Treasury grant of £100,000 for the endowment of the Makerere Higher College in 1938 constituted a turning point, and may be considered, at least in part, a triumph of the academic lobby.

Serious British discussions about the question of the establishment of universities in Africa began in 1932. They were provoked by an aspect of the report of the conference of the East African Directors of Education held in Zanzibar in 1932, dealing with Makerere College. The section of this report, known as "Paragraph 19", agitated colonial officials in both Britain and Africa. According to the paragraph:

The Directors noted with satisfaction that it is intended to start at Makerere in January 1933 a course leading to Matriculation by means of the University of London's School Examination. It was suggested that a syllabus should be drawn

up covering the last five years of this matriculation course, and that the first two years of this syllabus should be undertaken in Secondary Schools, and the last three years at Makerere. As soon as a sufficient number of students have reached the stage of entering for the intermediate Arts Examination of London University, the Secondary Schools should undertake the whole matriculation course, and matriculation should become the standard for entry to Makerere.<sup>1</sup>

Although the directors meant that Makerere College should begin to offer courses of a university type, though not necessarily entire degree programs, their declaration triggered chain reactions in the Colonial Office and the ACEC. Even within East Africa, many British officials were quite apprehensive of the effects of the declaration because of the danger of turning out youths with purely academic qualifications who might find great difficulty obtaining employment.<sup>2</sup> Among British officials generally, education "beyond that which was needed to provide subordinate staff was suspect", and worse still, there was "no appreciation of the worth of an highly educated African elite".<sup>3</sup>

Thus, on receipt of the Directors' Report, the Colonial Office was disturbed about the implications of the paragraph

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<sup>1</sup>.CO 847/5/7 Report of the Conference of the East African Directors of Education held in Zanzibar in 1932.

<sup>2</sup>.Uganda Education Department, Annual Report, 1932, Chapter VI, p.11 as cited in Macpherson, They Built for the Future: A Chronicle of Makerere University College, 1922-1962, p.18.

<sup>3</sup>.R.C. Pratt, "Administration and Politics in Uganda, 1919-1945", p.526.

for general education policy in Africa. Consequently, the Secretary of State, P. Cunliffe-Lister, quickly referred it to the ACEC for consideration. In turn the ACEC appointed a sub-Committee in January 1933 under the chairmanship of James Currie, who was formerly the principal of Gordon College in Khartoum and Director of Education in the Sudan and whose impressive educational work in the colonies commended him as the best choice for the task.<sup>4</sup> Other members of the sub-Committee were F.O. Mann, Dr. W.W. Vaughan, Dr. Philippa Esdaile, Dr. W.H. Maclean, Major A.G. Church, Hans Vischer and A.I. Mayhew.<sup>5</sup> This sub-Committee was mandated by the ACEC to "consider the educational policy underlying the views expressed by the conference on the question of standard of admissions to Makerere College, and submit recommendation".<sup>6</sup> Dominated by British academics and advocates of a realistic colonial educational policy rather than political officers, it was clear that this sub-committee would favour a more radical approach to the question of higher education in Africa.

The appointment of the Currie sub-committee clearly

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<sup>4</sup>. See Ashby, African Universities and Western Traditions, pp.16-17. James Currie had been a pioneer member of the Advisory Committee since 1923.

<sup>5</sup>. Apart from Vischer and Mayhew who were officials of the Colonial Office, and Mann who was an M.P., the rest of the members of the Currie Committee were drawn from British academics. Even then, with his experience as a Director of Education in Northern Nigeria, Vischer had been a keen advocate of a realistic educational policy in the colonies.

<sup>6</sup>. CO 847/3/2 Minutes of the ACEC Meeting, January 1933.

marked the dawn of a new era - the era of positive thinking - on higher education in Africa. Earlier in 1925, the Achimota plan for developing into a future university did not get really serious consideration by the then ACNETA as the committee insisted that the question of a full university degrees in Africa "would not arise for some time to come".<sup>7</sup> But ACNETA was mistaken. Barely eight years later the Makerere question arose and could not be shelved, and signalled the advent of a new epoch. ACNETA had now become ACEC, and it was no longer prepared to permit sheer political reasoning predicated upon the consolidation of the principle and practice of indirect rule, and the maintenance of the selfish interest of the local colonial officials to dictate, solely, imperial educational policies. The appointment of the ACEC's sub-committee under Currie, therefore provided a ray of hope. It marked the beginning of a concrete effort by the ACEC to consider the age-old issue of African aspirations and yearnings for the provision of university facilities. The Currie sub-Committee reported in 1933, and its recommendations agitated British colonial thinking as they obliged a reconsideration of educational policy in the colonies. Ashby aptly described the report as "bold and imaginative".<sup>8</sup>

The Currie report decisively shifted from the ultra-conservative approach of ACNETA to the question of higher

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<sup>7</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>. Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.193.

education for Africans.<sup>9</sup> Like the 1925 white paper issued by ACNETA which stressed the importance of the adaptation of African education to the "mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions" of the peoples, the Currie report was also persuaded by a similar concept. However, the kind of adaptation advocated by the sub-committee differed from that of the ACNETA whose emphasis had been solely on how the colonial education policy should consolidate the indirect rule system. The Currie report acknowledged that the education given to Africans, certified by external tests, was out of touch with the local needs of Africans. Thus African secondary schools administered courses "which have been designed primarily with reference not to African, but to English conditions". To the Sub-Committee, therefore, Paragraph 19 of the report of the conference of East African Directors of Education was "illuminating; it shows in the most striking way how local schemes of education may be abandoned at the lure of an extraneous course leading to a degree".<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, the report commenced with the observation that:

the education provided must be of such a character as to encourage the development of the natural aptitudes of the peoples concerned to the fullest possible extent, having regard to the specific background

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<sup>9</sup>.CO 3/2 Report of the ACEC Sub-Committee appointed to consider the policy underlying Paragraph 19 of the Report of the Conference of East African Directors of Education, 1933.

<sup>10</sup>.Ibid., p.2-3.



and needs of the African environment."<sup>11</sup>

Acknowledging that the number of African secondary schools had increased and that the standards of their attainment had improved, the Currie report also observed that most of these pupils were "not only desirous but actually capable of continuing their studies up to a final university standard".<sup>12</sup> It noted that "there is a grave danger, as we see it, of the Africans' zeal for education being neglected and ignored by the government to whom they ought to be able to look for its reasonable satisfaction". Furthermore, it indicated that "there appears no prospect - nor is it in any event a prospect that can in the least be wished or desired - that the present vehement demand for higher education will slacken off". Accordingly:

It follows then, that, if that demand is not adequately met by a natural development in Africa itself under the wise control, which only British Government and experience can afford, it will spend itself in all sorts of individual and group educational enterprises, which can hardly fail to be eccentric, often self-defeating and sterile, and attended by social and political phenomena harmful alike to the prestige of this country and the true well-being of the Africans.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently the Currie sub-Committee concluded that:

the only right policy for the Government

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<sup>11</sup>.CO 847/3/2 Report of the ACEC Sub-Committee, p.1.

<sup>12</sup>.Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>.Ibid., p.5.

[British Government] is to think out ahead a scheme of developing selected institutions in Africa up to a real university standard, and that this policy, as soon as decided upon, should be publicly announced as officially adopted.<sup>14</sup>

Significantly the Currie group noted that "the claims of African women to University education ought to receive equal attention with those of men". This was the first such emphatic and authoritative statement in London on the question. The sub-committee pointed out that women's education in Africa "is retarded by the understandable reluctance of women to proceed overseas". It therefore concluded that "Until there is in Africa provision for University Education in some form or other, it will only be very rarely that a woman will proceed beyond the Secondary stage". To the sub-committee, women's reluctance was "understandable" because of "considerable though varying local difficulty". This difficulty may have varied from religious norms (particularly among Moslems) to cultural beliefs that travelling overseas unaccompanied would make a woman "loose", and hence a misfit in her community when she returned. Although often involved in productive work, African women themselves cherished their traditional role as "housewives" and were therefore averse to losing their respectable status because they travelled overseas for higher

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<sup>14</sup>. Ibid., p.5. The report noted that at present that "while the Colleges at Achimota, Makerere, Yaba and Khatourm do not yet as a whole approach a real university standard, inevitably and at their own momentum they tend towards this final point", p.3.

education. In any case, the reluctance of African men to allow their wives to proceed overseas for higher education presumably remained overriding in women's considerations. Thus the Currie Sub-Committee cautioned that "in dealing with this particular phase of the problem [university education for women], it is of the highest possible importance that no action be taken except with the closest possible co-operation and advice of the African communities concerned".<sup>15</sup>

Strongly committed to push for the educational advance of British colonial Africa, there is no question that the Currie sub-committee put forward social, political and economic arguments to reinforce its plea. The American factor was one of these, aimed at the very basis of Britain's imperial ego. The report observed that Africans from the West Coast were increasingly leaving their own countries for advanced education in America, and pointed out the social and intellectual undesirability of this procedure. Asserting that "the African thirst for higher education remains unabated", the report warned that "if this is not satisfied at home it can only lead to an increasing efflux of African students towards the Universities of Europe and America".<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore:

It seems indefensible, for example, that the Gordon College should, at all events till very recently, have had to rely

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<sup>15</sup>. Ibid., pp.2 and 8.

<sup>16</sup>. Ibid., p.3.

substantially upon the American University at Beirut (sic) for the advanced training of natives needed for its own staffing. From another, and slightly different point of view it appears equally indefensible that intelligent Africans from the Gold Coast should most easily obtain further training of university type by taking advantage of American bounty and American institutions. On the political difficulties and the economic disabilities inherent in such a position continuing, it is not necessary to enlarge.<sup>17</sup>

Whether the fear of the American influence was real or imaginary, the Currie sub-committee apparently highlighted it to whip up sentiment among imperial thinkers, as well as African colonial officials, in favour of the establishment of universities in Africa. Even though African colonial governments were aware of the American factor, they did not seem to have foreseen the magnitude of the social and political consequences as highlighted by the Currie sub-committee. Earlier in the mid-1920's Dr. J.K. Aggrey of the Gold Coast, who had obtained his training in America, was already showing some signs of frustration with British rule in Africa. As a member of the Phelps-Stokes Commission which visited Africa between 1920 and 1924 he made several public appearances and speeches to his people, debunking the racial theories based on the alleged supremacy of the white man and the inferiority of the black. In fact, the Gold Coast Government became worried about Aggrey when it was claimed

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<sup>17</sup>. Ibid., p.4-5.

that he had sympathy with the Marcus Garvey extremist faction.<sup>18</sup> Worse still, the personality of Aggrey provided inspiration to Africans such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Eyo Ita and others to set sail for the United States.<sup>19</sup> To British officials and the ACEC therefore, this tendency was unhealthy to imperial interests.

Since its war of independence with Britain in 1776, the United States had adopted a type of anti-imperial and anti-British stance. Britain knew this. If there had been any reasonable relations between the two countries within the period, it had largely been a "marriage of convenience". Thus the close association between America and Africans was something hardly to be desired by Britain. British fear remained that:

the African student might encounter political movements considerably more militant than in his own country, and he might realize that educational standards in his own country were very low by comparison.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, it was appreciated that the American influence would reveal open racism and create nationalism of a kind

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<sup>18</sup>.See William Macartney, Dr. Aggrey: A Biography, London, 1949 as footnoted in Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, p.455.

<sup>19</sup>.Refer to Nnamdi Azikiwe, My Odyssey: An Autobiography, C. Hurst and Company, London, 1970, pp.36-40. Aggrey's remark which tremendously influenced Azikiwe was his insistence that "Nothing but the best is good enough for Africa", p.36.

<sup>20</sup>.Furley and Watson, A History of Education in East Africa, p.297.

which would be harmful to British rule in Africa. Africans could draw great inspiration from the spirit of the American revolution in their struggle for social, economic, educational and political freedom from Britain. As Okeke remarked, British officials were aware that the American system "is pregnant with ideas that have, more often than not, become valuable tools in the hands of colonials struggling to obtain their freedom from alien rule".<sup>21</sup> Unquestionably, the Currie sub-committee was intelligent, "bold and imaginative" when it brandished the American argument. The stress on the American factor, clearly, was to convince the defenders of empire of the larger imperial benefits of providing Africans with facilities for higher education at home.

Only by expanding the focus from Makerere to all of Africa could the Currie sub-committee employ their most potent weapon, fear of American influence. The tendency for Africans to look to America was most prevalent in West Africa and to a lesser degree in the Sudan. Many West Africans had gained experience of America of which Blyden and Aggrey were only outstanding examples. The potential catchment area for Makerere had been almost untouched by the American "virus". It was also significant that the demand for a university during the period had arisen in East Africa. The attachment to indirect rule by the colonial officials in West Africa and

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<sup>21</sup>.Uduaroh Okeke, "Educational Reconstruction in an Independent Nigeria", Ph.D. Thesis, University of New York, New York, 1955, (in Microfilm), p.69.

especially Nigeria had long been more emotional and proprietary than among those in the East. Ugandans had found a way of marrying the educated elite to an indirect rule system which maintained a high degree of integrity and "popular" support. In Kenya no real indirect rule had ever been established. Kenyan officials had more or less gone along with the Lugardian fad which had swept over the colonial establishment. Indirect rule had little integrity, chiefs being viewed by the people and colonial officials as mere labour recruiting agents. Consequently the demand for university training ran into less opposition from those not emotionally and psychologically welded to indirect rule. But from the academic viewpoint in Britain, the looming problems for imperialism lay in West Africa with its volatile elite infused with American ideas.

It should be noted that the terms of reference given to the ACEC by the Secretary of State was specifically to "consider the educational policy underlying Paragraph 19" in relation to Makerere College. But the Currie report, as fully endorsed by the ACEC, turned the problem from a local Makerere and East African problem into a pan-African question. The report recommended that the African colleges - Achimota, Yaba, and possibly Gordon College - should be turned into university colleges. "From the first beginnings", the report stressed, "the problem of university education in West Africa should be envisaged as a whole" and "the Secretary of State should

examine carefully all proposals for the extension of existing institutions".<sup>22</sup> Clearly, by examining the West African university question, which was not covered by the terms of reference, the ACEC was, more or less, imposing its own agenda upon the Colonial Office. Given the strength of its argumentation for an urgent attention to the question of university education for Africans generally, the Colonial Office could hardly reject the report.

Be that as it may, some officials of the Colonial Office received the Currie report with mixed feelings. This was natural since, for a long time, most officials of the Colonial Office had catered to the indirect rule policy as the cheapest and the most efficient system of colonial administration. J.E.W. Flood, for instance, viewed the report as provocative, woolly and too generalized.<sup>23</sup> To Flood, "what, at present time is wanted is not anybody highly trained, but an ordinary individual with some training, ... to be unable to take part in local life and local habits of thought". As he further described it:

We do not want the Divisional Commander nor even the Platoon Leader. What is wanted is not even the Sergeant but something - which we are more likely to get - on the level of the Lance Corporal, i.e. men just a little removed from the common ruck who will be able to spread a bit of the leaven among the unresponsive

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<sup>22</sup>.CO 847/3/2 Report of the ACEC Sub-Committee, 1933.

<sup>23</sup>.CO 847/3/2 J.E.W. Flood to Hans Vischer, Colonial Office Notes, 2 October 1933.



lump.<sup>24</sup>

If ever the historian required a simple, crude yet effective and pithy statement of the core of the philosophy of indirect rule, Flood provided it in the quotation above. Lugard's idea of allowing Africans to develop at their own speed and by their own norms, had been criticized because the "common ruck" appeared to be an "unresponsive lump". For Lugard the colonial officials should constantly urge the chiefs and "unresponsive lump" in directions toward "progress" and "modernization", terms not employed then but nevertheless conveying the idea of pushing the evolution. But colonial officials had been a reluctant "leaven". Consequently the feeling was growing that possibly they required help from a few Africans skilled but just a little bit educated in English norms who would mix with the "lump", "leaven" it and create the beginnings of an evolution in chiefly government. They would become willing and obedient "lance corporals" at the behest of their British sergeants, platoon leaders and divisional commanders. To be avoided at all costs would be a university-educated class which would segregate itself in lifestyle and norms of thought from the "lump", therefore leaving it "unresponsive" and develop ambitions to become "sergeants" or the unthinkable "divisional commanders". For Flood it might be up to three or four generations before "the highly trained leader [real sergeant] might find scope". In

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<sup>24</sup>. Ibid.

his conclusion:

In my view education among most, at any rate, of the East African tribes, will have to be a slow growing plant, and it will have to grow in the open and not in a hot-house if it is to do any good to the country.<sup>25</sup>

Flood was evidently a great champion of the indirect rule system. Like African colonial governors, he did not support the expansion of the class of African educated elite who would constitute a problem for the efficient working of the system. Thus he argued that the highly educated African would occupy positions which "would put them inevitably very high up in the local organization and might easily lead to friction and trouble with Chiefs and Leaders".<sup>26</sup>

However, there were other officials of the Colonial Office who, even though they did not wish to see the collapse of indirect rule, felt that the report of the Currie sub-committee was quite progressive. In response to Flood's note, for instance, Hans Vischer insisted that the report contained "a good deal of meat".<sup>27</sup> The divergence of opinion was obvious. Despite the fact that opinion within the Colonial Office was crystallizing in favour of the Currie report, one major concern of officials generally was the possible effect

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<sup>25</sup>. Ibid. Flood insisted that university education for Africans would be a mistake "of trying to run before we are even able to crawl and I do not want to see it".

<sup>26</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>. CO 847/3/15 Hans Vischer to J.E.W. Flood, 12 October 1933.

of the sub-committee's proposal on the "Native administration" system in Africa.<sup>28</sup> By accepting the pan-African nature of the report, nonetheless, the university question now became a matter of high policy for the Colonial Office. What remained uncertain was whether colonial governments in Africa would support this "radical report" since it aimed at the expansion of an African educated class; a phenomenon colonial governments strove to avoid. It was against this background that the Secretary of State, P. Cunliffe-Lister, decided to sound out the views of African governors by transmitting copies of the report to the governments of the East and Central African Dependencies in August 1934. Since the university projects were to be funded by the various African governments, it was essential that the Secretary of State have the views of the governors.

In September 1934 similar despatches were sent to the governments of British West Africa informing them that their Directors of Education, while in London, had agreed to lay before the authorities of the University of London certain conclusions of the ACEC sub-committee (Currie's Committee) in respect of external examination and assistance which might be obtained from British universities. Furthermore the Secretary of State stressed the importance he attached to a common policy in the matter being followed by the West African

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<sup>28</sup>. CO 847/3/15 Charles Bottomley to Flood, 12 October 1933.

governments. The Makerere problem had become a larger African question. Clearly the Colonial Office had begun to accept the views of the academic lobby of the social and political danger implicit in the continued neglect of the provision of facilities for university education in British African territories.

On receipt of the report, the East African governors forwarded copies to their respective Directors of Education who reconvened in Nairobi in January 1935 to discuss it. Despite considerable delay before they met, however, the conclusions of the directors were disappointing not only to the ACEC but also the Colonial Office. The Directors were quick to point out that the Currie report in reaction to their "Paragraph 19" went too far. However, the Directors' response was hardly surprising. Actually, what the East African Directors of Education intended in the now famous paragraph 19 was for Makerere to begin to prepare students for the intermediate degree programs (Inter-B.A. or Inter-B.Sc.). These were not full degree courses. Rather they were in the nature of Higher School Certificates (H.S.C.) which enabled the recipients to be admitted into full degree courses in British universities without doing a preliminary or an entry qualifying year. Thus what the directors envisaged in paragraph 19 was an arrangement whereby brighter students who passed out of Makerere could be selected to proceed to the University of London or other British institutions to pursue

their programs. In any case, the need for African junior staff for government departments far surpassed any other considerations in the directors' calculations when they proclaimed "paragraph 19". Makerere could be reorganized to train middle-level manpower for the various East African governments. Furthermore, the Ugandan government may have felt that the elevation of Makerere to a higher college standards providing first year university entry courses could assuage the demand among the Baganda for higher education. Clearly what the East African Directors of Education envisioned in paragraph 19 was not fully-fledged university education at Makerere.

Thus it is not surprising that while agreeing that the type of education provided must be adapted to encourage the development of the natural aptitudes of the peoples concerned, having regard to the specific background and needs of the African environment, the directors disagreed with the Currie Report's conclusion that there was a vehement demand for higher education in East Africa. They insisted that it would be "unwise to accelerate such a demand".<sup>29</sup> Generally, the directors presumed that the merit of the Currie report lay more in "bringing this matter to the notice of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to assist in the formulation of a common policy" than in its argument in favour of the provision

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<sup>29</sup>.CO 847/5/7 Recommendations of the East African Directors of Education on Currie's Sub-Committee's Report, at their conference held in Nairobi, January 1935.

of full university courses in Africa.<sup>30</sup> It is evident that the East African Directors of Education were now alarmed that the ACEC had seized upon their paragraph 19 to push for a major shift in colonial policy directed towards a general scheme for unprecedented and large scale development of African universities. The ACEC, however, dismissed the directors response as rather reactionary, and opted to wait for the opinions of the governors after their conference scheduled for late 1935.<sup>31</sup>

In West Africa, an education conference was held in Lagos in May 1935 with the Directors of Education of Nigeria and the Gold Coast, the Vice-Principal of Achimota, the principals of Yaba and King's Colleges, Lagos, in attendance. The governments of the Gambia and Sierra Leone were not represented. As for the Gambia, the government felt that the small size of the colony could support neither a higher nor university college, for lack of resources or the supply of students, and hence there was no plan to establish any higher institution. For Sierra Leone, it would appear that Fourah Bay College, which was the only West African institution offering full degree programs (in theology and classics) satisfied the colony's higher educational needs. Neither the Gambia nor Sierra Leone was involved in the "cold war" between Yaba and Achimota over the question of co-ordination of medical and

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<sup>30</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>. CO 847/5/7 Minutes of the ACEC Meeting, March 1935.

engineering courses.

The Lagos conference failed to achieve any meaningful progress in territorial co-ordination and cooperation. The participants concluded that "the time had not yet come for any definite steps to be taken, but in the meantime both Yaba and Achimota would welcome individual students from other West African Colonies".<sup>32</sup> In relation to the Currie report, the various West African governments chose to respond on an individual basis. In its response, and considering the costs involved in the establishment of universities, the government of the Gambia asserted that "Gambians will have to look either to England or to institutions in other West African territories for higher studies".<sup>33</sup> As for the Sierra Leonean response, acknowledging that the provision of higher education should be regarded as a West African problem, the government noted that while the idea that Sierra Leonean students should look towards Yaba and Achimota "seemed commendable in theory", it "required further examination as to ways and means".<sup>34</sup> It stressed that although Fourah Bay College primarily awarded degree programs of the University of Durham in theology and classics, it did other useful work relating to teacher

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<sup>32</sup>.CO 847/5/7 Minutes of the Meeting of the West African Education Conference held in Lagos, 25-31 May 1935.

<sup>33</sup>.CO 847/5/7 From the Government of the Gambia to the Secretary of States for the Colonies, October 1935.

<sup>34</sup>.CO 847/5/7 Colonial Office Notes on Responses from East, Central and West African Governments on the ACEC Sub-Committee's Report, 1935.

training.

Although the Sierra Leone government admitted that it lacked the resources to continue the training of students overseas, or to extend the scope of Fourah Bay College, it claimed that "local sentiments would be offended if the suggestion were made that such facilities [provided by the College] should be withdrawn".<sup>35</sup> Here lies the early signs of territorial nationalism ironically propounded by expatriate officials which, as will be seen later, would subsequently dominate the university question. Even when it was clear that territorial cooperation would benefit Sierra Leone because the colony acutely lacked the resources to build a new college or expand Fourah Bay, the government was somewhat reluctant to send students to the Gold Coast or Nigeria.

However, the views of the governments of Nigeria and the Gold Coast represented the clearest indication of the trend of resistance against the idea of African universities during the period. To both governments, the overproduction of African graduates, who would clamour for higher posts in the colonial service, was to be avoided. In an agricultural country, according to the government of the Gold Coast, "there are only limited opportunities for remunerative type of employment or occupation which a Gold Coast graduate desires".<sup>36</sup> Thus in

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<sup>35</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>. CO 847/5/7 From the Acting Governor of the Gold Coast to the Secretary of State, Malcolm MacDonald, 12 October 1935.



response to the Currie report on the danger inherent in alienating African public opinion and creating political and social confusion by neglecting to provide university facilities, the Gold Coast government maintained that:

While on the one hand, failure to respond to the demand would undoubtedly have these unhappy results, yet the creation of machinery which would probably lead to overproduction, would on the other hand, result in much disappointment and unrest.<sup>37</sup>

Assenting to the Gold Coast point of view, the Nigerian government<sup>38</sup> noted that the West African educated elite were often disappointed that the qualifications they acquired did not lead to lucrative jobs, "for they take these courses as a means to an end rather than with a view to self education".<sup>39</sup> In response, Hussey, the Nigerian Director of Education, proposed a cautious three-stage scheme. In Stage A West African colleges would produce students who would be fitted to hold positions of responsibility in government or private sectors, presumably at the "lance corporal" level. At this stage, he insisted that "it is of prime importance that the pace should not be hurried".<sup>40</sup> Possibly he would have agreed

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<sup>37</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>. CO 847/5/7 From the Officer Administering the Government of Nigeria to the Secretary of State, 25 October 1935.

<sup>39</sup>. CO 847/5/7 Response by the Nigerian Government on the Currie Sub-Committee's Report, October 1935.

<sup>40</sup>. CO 847/5/7 Note by E.R.J. Hussey on the Report of the Currie's Sub-Committee of ACEC, October 1935.

with the three or four generations proposed by Flood. Stage B was that at which the standards reached at the first stage "warrants affiliation with an English University for the purpose of external degrees, preferably at the University of London" while the final stage, Stage C, was that at which a college "may become itself a local university". In Hussey's stress on the need for a slow pace in the transition from one stage to another, he was very ardent about safeguarding standards. As he declared: "We must at all cost avoid giving what we proclaim to be a University degree, unless we can safeguard the standard".<sup>41</sup>

Under the indirect rule system, there was virtually no place for university-educated Africans. Hussey knew this, and therefore his gradual stage-by-stage plan made sense. His scheme did not attempt to rock the very basis of the principle of Native Administration which relied heavily upon the African chiefs, and hence the Nigerian government endorsed it. It was an effective way of regulating the number of those who would obtain university qualifications. It is not surprising that Hussey further recommended that the initial intention was to "replace by Africans the type of Europeans usually called 'junior staff' by men who had passed stage A who will be better qualified technically than the men they replace".<sup>42</sup> Although Hussey did not favour the continued training of

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<sup>41</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>. Ibid.

Africans overseas at government expense, he maintained that there should be no undue haste to establish a fully-fledged West African university outright as the Currie report seemed to portend. Clearly the expansion of the educated class remained an anathema. Accordingly:

If we train at once the fully-fledged professional, it will be a matter of extreme difficulty to regulate the position as between him and the British foreman, or what corresponds to him in other professions, especially if we partially fail in our efforts to produce the type, because we have hastened unduly.<sup>43</sup>

As always when civil service matters arose as they inevitably did when education was being discussed, officials such as Hussey came up against an ingrained racism in the colonial senior service. A British "foreman" would not work with an African on any basis of collegiality. It always had to be "man" and "boy" or, better still, a British superior and an African subordinate. Being placed in a situation where African advice or expertise might be consulted or even worse acted upon, became an intolerable nightmare for many Europeans in the colonial service. A generation would have to die, or ultimately be pensioned out, compensated out or otherwise pushed out before this could occur. Whatever the sophisticated arguments surrounding and against the issue of university education for Africans, the inability of whites to work with, rather than command blacks in the civil service lay close to

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<sup>43</sup>. Ibid.

the surface of debate.

One other concern raised by the Gold Coast government against the establishment of a university was the fear that the educated Africans would feel that second-rate standards were being foisted on them. The government contended that any university scheme on a West African basis, "at this stage", would be opposed by Gold Coast public opinion and especially by the educated class. It observed that the latter was "acutely suspicious of any step that may have the appearance of an attempt to meet African demands for education with a second-rate article", and hence they preferred to obtain their degrees overseas.<sup>44</sup> Given the Yaba imbroglio of 1934, the Nigerian government agreed with the Gold Coast emphasizing that there was no need for local degrees unless the standard could be preserved, and unless African enlightened opinion approved of the awarding institutions.<sup>45</sup>

Generally Africans were suspicious of the motives behind colonial education. Yaba was particularly notorious among the Nigerian proto-nationalists and the educated class. The number of failures recorded in the College from its inception, the non-recognition of its graduates in England and even beyond

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<sup>44</sup>.CO 847/5/7 From the Acting Governor of the Gold Coast to the Secretary of State, 12 October 1935.

<sup>45</sup>.For the Yaba story, see F.O. Ogunlade, "Yaba Higher College and the Formation of an Intellectual Elite", M.A. Thesis, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 1970, and O. Adewoye, "The Antecedents", in J.F.Ade Ajayi and Tekena Tamuno (eds) The University of Ibadan, 1948-1973.

the Nigerian borders, and employment discrimination suffered by recipients of the local qualifications fanned the embers of hatred for the College. Similarly, the effort of the Gold Coast government to "Africanize" the Achimota curriculum by focusing upon local languages and customs infuriated the African members of the Legislative Council as well as the intelligentsia. The general suspicion was that "special courses for Africans constituted an attempt to keep them in a subordinate intellectual and social position indefinitely".<sup>46</sup> Nana Ofori Attah, for instance, asserted that "it would be an unwise move to restrict studies to the African scene". Casely Hayford also viewed as a "'dangerous policy' any attempt to lay down that one class and type of education was necessary for the African as against any other type".<sup>47</sup> In Uganda, also, articulate African opinion pressed for changes which would increase rather than lessen the western character of African education. Thus the government suggestion that "school curricula should be revised to increase their African or their practical content invariably met with strong African opposition".<sup>48</sup> Caught between the fear of a second-rate article and over-deification of British standards, the ideas of the African nationalist elites at this time ostensibly

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<sup>46</sup>. Foster, Education and Social Change in Ghana, p.167.

<sup>47</sup>. See Gold Coast Government, Legislative Council Debates, 1928-1929, p.286 as cited in Foster, ibid..

<sup>48</sup>. Pratt, "Administration and Politics in Uganda, 1919-1945", p.524.

catered to "imperialism".

It therefore became logical for both the Nigerian and the Gold Coast governments to employ the argument of African elite opposition to local standards so as to demonstrate to the ACEC and the Colonial Office why any scheme of university development should not be pushed. It was a shrewd position. Consequently both governments informed the Secretary of State that the only wise policy for the present was to concentrate on strengthening the intermediate courses while arranging for selected students to complete these courses in "carefully chosen universities in Great Britain or elsewhere".<sup>49</sup> The import of arranging for "selected students" to study in "carefully chosen universities" seems quite clear. It meant that colonial governments were contemplating scholarships for Africans to study in Britain or "elsewhere" so as to control the number of graduates and monitor the kind of courses students studied. In any case, there was hardly any acceptable way to keep Africans who had their own funds from studying wherever they could gain admission.

The question of Africans' preference for overseas training and qualifications has often been misunderstood. It seems ironical for Africans to be demanding the provision of higher education locally and at the same time preferring to obtain their education in England. The contradiction lies in

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<sup>49</sup>.CO 847/5/7 From the Acting Governor of the Gold Coast to the Secretary of State, 12 October 1935.

the nature of colonial rule and its "divide and rule" tactic. It was the attitudes of British colonial officials toward locally-obtained qualifications which engendered the African predilection for English training. Colonial officials deliberately debased local diplomas and certificates to keep Africans perpetually in inferior positions in the service, and to ensure that they never equated their qualifications to those held by their British "superiors". When employed for the same duty Africans found that they were paid lower wages than their British counterparts who possessed the same diplomas or certificates obtained from England. This was racism, pure and simple.

Ashby gave a clear example of the discrimination in employment and wages between locally-trained Africans and their British-trained counterparts. According to him a Yaba trained doctor was a "medical assistant on salary scale of £120 rising to £400 after fifteen years' service whereas a doctor trained in the United Kingdom was a 'medical officer' on a salary scale of £400-£720, though both might be performing similar duties".<sup>50</sup> The only open explanation usually paraded by colonial officials was that the standards of British education were higher than the local ones. Africans therefore preferred to go to England for higher education which could place them at par with their British colleagues in the colonial service. Thus British education became the

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<sup>50</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.196.

hallmark of academic qualification. Under this framework, it is hardly shocking that the African educated elite would view with suspicion any British officials' attempt to establish half-baked institutions which were almost always intended to supply the various government departments with underpaid and undervalued African middle-level manpower.

Another fundamental reason for the African elite's drive for "British standards" was connected with their resistance to racialist ideas of the time predicated upon social Darwinism and scientific racism. Africans were considered racially inferior to Europeans. Such a stereotype was firmly embedded in the American system and ideology of education. It also constituted a guiding principle of European imperial rule in Africa. As Philip Curtin noted, "virtually every European concerned with imperial theory or imperial administration believed that physical racial appearance was an outward sign of inborn propensities, inclinations and abilities".<sup>51</sup> The reasoning was that if Africans were by race inferior to Europeans, then it was imprudent to educate them as one would Europeans. African education should therefore be suited to African "racial characteristics". Naturally the African educated elite resented such ideas. To disprove them it became necessary to demonstrate that Africans could compete with

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<sup>51</sup>.Philip D. Curtin, "The 'Scientific' Roots: Nineteenth Century Racism" in Curtin (ed.) Imperialism, Walker and Company, New York, 1971, p.1. See also Christopher Fyfe, "Race, Empire and the Historian", Race and Class, vol.33, no.4, April-June 1992, p.19.



Europeans in educational attainment. This could only be established by objective and irrefutable evidence that Africans could achieve the same or better grades, marks and classes of degree in British universities in competition with white students. Only in this way could the elite prove that Africans were in no way intellectually inferior to the white "race". Significantly, this explains why Africans clamoured for British standards, British qualifications and British universities, and viewed African colleges almost with disdain.

Basically the British opposition to universities went beyond the concern for the so-called suspicion of African opinion about "second-rate" standards. It transcended the question of standards because it was mostly British academics who would constitute the bulk of the teaching staff of the proposed African university. Rather the real reasons for the resistance put forward by African colonial governments against the university idea as proposed by the Currie sub-committee were to keep at a minimum the number of Africans who would clamour for lucrative jobs in the colonial service, to preserve the Native Administration system from the onslaught of the educated class of Africans who would seek prominent roles in the colonial dispensation, and to maintain stability, least spending and minimal government. If African qualifications were any lower in standards as compared to the British they were deliberately kept so by the colonial officials who, naturally racist, used that same fact to

subject the educated Africans to subordinate positions.

Furthermore usually the issue of higher education adapted to the African environment, even if not racially motivated, was linked to preparing individuals as "leaven" within the indirect rule system. It was designed to divert Africans from seeking or being qualified for, a civil service largely operating on English principles. Since the Nigerian elite in particular had been implacably and habitually opposed to that form of government, it was triggered into hostility by any code words which expressed the idea of educational adaptation. Moreover it would seem that the longer colonialism persisted, the more the collective mind of the western educated elite became "Whitened". By the 1930's a generation had come to maturity which had known no other form of administration than colonialism, living their lives totally outside of the local government system of indirect rule. They worked in schools, hospitals or other institutions under the colonial, not chiefly governments. They took their judicial cases to Magistrate not Native Administration Courts. When seeking government permission for any activity they might wish to engage in, they normally dealt with an arrogant British official or his equally arrogant African "boy". This generation experienced racism and lived in an environment which had become totally different to that of its predecessor with its Blydens, Johnsons and Hortons who had given serious thought to the Africanization of education.

However, the reactions of African colonial governments did not appeal to the Colonial Office and the ACEC. While the Colonial Office viewed their reactions as backward-looking, the ACEC barely concealed its contempt. The matter would not be left to expire in that manner. Consequently the Director of Education of Uganda was invited to London in November 1935 to meet with the Currie sub-committee in order to explain what guided the negative attitude of East African directors to the university question. In his response, he told the sub-committee that the East African directors "are neither apathetic nor opposed to the development of university education for Africans".<sup>52</sup> Their main concern, he contended, was that "a vicious circle might result - Makerere waiting on secondary schools and secondary schools waiting on Makerere".<sup>53</sup> By choosing to listen to a Ugandan official, London had selected the most likely candidate to support its views. As noted previously the chasm between indirect rule and the colonial civil service was far less deep because in Uganda the demand for a university arose within the personnel of the indirect system. Primarily the Baganda chiefs desired personnel for the Buganda government seeking the "leaven" which in theory the British appeared to desire. Ugandan colonial officials therefore felt less threatened than their

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<sup>52</sup>.CO 847/5/7 Colonial Office Notes on Responses from East, Central and West African Governments, November 1935.

<sup>53</sup>.Ibid.

compatriots elsewhere. Furthermore middle level positions whether in government or commerce, hospital or schools were frequently filled by Asians. British sympathy for Africans sometimes, at least, arose from anti-Asian sentiments. In any case the British were less threatened in Uganda than elsewhere. Separating a Uganda official from his Kenyan and Tanzanian counterparts, who thought first in terms of settler interests, was an example of skilful British diplomacy.

It was partly as a result of this discussion that the ACEC, at its 63rd meeting, recommended to the Secretary of State the appointment of a commission on the development of Makerere College in Uganda. Promptly the Secretary of State endorsed this recommendation and quickly referred it to the governor of Uganda for his consent. The approval of Uganda was important in many ways. It was in Uganda, especially among the Baganda, that the demand for higher education was most prominent, and Makerere College was located in the territory. Furthermore, Uganda was the richest of all the British East African possessions with a budget surplus of about £1.5 millions.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, it would appear that the Colonial Office had noticed that Philip Mitchell, who became the governor of Uganda in October 1935, was particularly enthusiastic about the immediate development of higher education in Uganda. He did not share pervading apprehensions

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<sup>54</sup>.CO 822/83/1 Minute by J.E.W. Flood (Colonial Office), 23 December 1937.

among British colonial officials about "how educated Africans would be employed or how they might behave politically".<sup>55</sup> Thus after assuming office, he threw his weight behind the Currie Report and the Colonial Office scheme of developing Makerere into a higher college. Interestingly, Mitchell was not persuaded by the idea common among colonial officials that primary and secondary institutions must necessarily precede universities.

The university, Mitchell insisted, could grow concurrently with the lower strata of educational institutions, and any country which created the latter without the former, "will long have to expiate this fault by their intellectual mediocrity, their vulgarity of manners, their superficial spirit, their lack of general intelligence".<sup>56</sup> There seems to be little doubt that a university by its admission standards alone would act as a major spur to the mission schools. Constantly aware of public opinion since their schools relied upon fees paid by parents, missionaries would mightily strive to raise standards to prepare graduates for university entrance. Any school which did not was likely to find its enrolment falling. In Uganda such endeavour would be fuelled by the fiercest competition anywhere in British

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<sup>55</sup>.Furley and Watson, A History of Education in East Africa, p.20 and Pratt, "Administration and Politics in Uganda, 1919-1945", p.533.

<sup>56</sup>.Sir Philip Mitchell, African Afterthoughts, Hutchinson and Co., London, 1954, p.180-181.

Africa between Protestants and Catholics. By supporting the idea of a university, Mitchell knew what he was doing. Not surprisingly, he accepted the proposal for the appointment of the Makerere Commission after consulting with the governors of the other East African territories.

Mitchell informed the Secretary of State that although "the demand for higher education in Uganda is probably limited to a small minority,...it is a minority which includes almost every influential African, especially in the Kingdom of Buganda".<sup>57</sup> The Ugandan colonial situation had been unique. Although strongly an indirect rule enclave, the chiefly class dominated by the Baganda had been very keen on education and western "civilization" since the protectorate negotiated its way into colonial rule after the Buganda Agreement of 1900. Ugandan Indians were also enthusiastic and probably better placed financially to take advantage of a university than were the Africans with the exception of the sons of the Baganda chiefs who owned landed estates. However the government was most concerned with the Baganda chiefly aristocrats who were British agents of indirect rule and Native Administration. Thus Mitchell admitted that:

There can be no doubt, therefore, concerning the political importance of the question, and little that early action is necessary to prevent the formation of suspicions which, once

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<sup>57</sup>.CO 847/6/12 Minute by the Government of Uganda on Makerere College in relation to Higher Education for Africans in East Africa, 10 February 1936.

formed, it might be difficult to allay.<sup>58</sup>

The political implications of the question led Mitchell to declare Uganda could bear the entire costs of the development of Makerere if other East African governments were unwilling to cooperate. Accordingly "the matter is so important, and for Uganda so urgent, that the Protectorate Government is willing to bear the whole expense".<sup>59</sup> Persuaded by the strength of Mitchell's reasoning, and the views of the governments of Kenya, Tanganyika and Zanzibar that "in time and method to be decided, Makerere College should be developed to a university standard"<sup>60</sup>, the Secretary of State appointed a commission late in 1936 under the chairmanship of Earl De La Warr, who was the parliamentary under-secretary of State as well as *ex officio* chairman of the ACEC. This was a landmark, indicating the first time that such an authoritative commission would look into the question of higher education in British African dependencies.

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<sup>58</sup>. Ibid. On the educational reason for the commission Mitchell stressed that the anomalous intermediate position of Makerere at the time had caused an impression to gain ground, certainly among Africans and perhaps among others that standards had already been achieved, which were in fact barely in sight, and the most certain and powerful corrective which could be applied would be the report of the proposed commission. Furthermore, he pointed out that Africans in particular could hardly be induced to accept a statement of the facts by any means other than the commission.

<sup>59</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>. See the views of the various East African governments as cited in CO 847/6/12 Minute by the Government of Uganda on Makerere College, 10 February 1936.

The constitution of membership of the De La Warr Commission was informative. De La Warr, himself, was well connected within the academic lobby. Furthermore, three members of the commission - Hans Vischer, Dr. Philippa Esdaile and Dr. W. Maclean - had served on the Currie sub-Committee which produced the far-reaching report which initiated a realistic academic approach to the issue of university education for Africans. Thus it would not have been surprising if the recommendations of the De La Warr Commission constituted a re-hashing of the proposals of the Currie report. Furthermore, the fact that Lugard or other colonial political officers who religiously defended the indirect rule policy were excluded from the membership of the commission signalled that radical conclusions similar to those of the Currie group could not be avoided; as it turned out when the De La Warr Commission reported in September 1937.<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile in West Africa, what persistently worried the Colonial Office and the ACEC was how to get a definite common policy working in all the four territories - Sierra Leone, Nigeria, the Gold Coast, and the Gambia. The Nigerian Director of Education, Hussey, who visited London in March 1936, was invited to the ACEC meeting to throw some light on his three-stage scheme as well as the lack of co-operation among West African territories. As to the last question, Hussey told the

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<sup>61</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in East Africa, 1937.



Committee that little progress was possible "on account of inter-territorial jealousy".<sup>62</sup> Given this lack of co-operation, Hussey therefore advised that caution should be exercised "in the matter of combining colleges, situated in different Colonies, into one University".<sup>63</sup> Hussey's advice was ignored and the result, as will be seen later, actually embarrassed the Colonial Office when territorial nationalism ultimately became a potent factor in shaping the post-war effort for the establishment of a university college in West Africa.

Hans Vischer, who strongly believed that "only a will to co-operate and co-ordinate is lacking" among colonial administrations,<sup>64</sup> visited West Africa to lobby influential persons in favour of regional co-operation in educational matters. No substantial success was recorded. From the establishment of colonial rule, however, British officials had fostered and maintained the idea of separate development among the various colonies. Even within territories, as the case of Northern and Southern Nigeria demonstrated, the British had isolated groups from their neighbours to sustain what was considered stable and efficient administrations under indirect

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<sup>62</sup>.CO 847/6/12 Minutes of the Sixty-Seventh Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, 26 March 1936.

<sup>63</sup>.Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>.CO 847/5/7 Colonial Office Minute by Hans Vischer, March 1936.

rule.<sup>65</sup> Each of the regions had been made conscious of its separateness from, rather than its sameness to, the others. As a result, inter-territorial jealousy, rivalry and particularism were engendered and then ingrained in the developmental philosophy of these colonies as they began to view themselves as disparate entities.

However, when it is wondered why the Colonial Office now desired territorial co-operation it becomes clear how rigid financial parsimony dictated the exigency of colonial policies. The British feared the possible cost of establishing higher educational institutions in each of their colonies. Hence it became imperative to co-ordinate and lump colonies together under a unitary arrangement as the British hoped would be the case in East Africa if Makerere College could be developed as the sole university institution. While in West Africa there could be competing claims between Fourah Bay, Achimota and Yaba, no competition to Makerere existed in East Africa. While educators in Kenya and Tanganyika were not greatly enamoured of university education, they could tolerate it in Uganda especially if that colony bore the main financial burden. Given the white-dominated economies of Kenya and

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<sup>65</sup>. See Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, pp.45-47 and G.O. Olusanya, "Political Awakening in the North: A Re-Interpretation" in Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, vol. iv, no.1, 1967, pp.130-131. Separate development as pursued by the indirect rulers fostered inter- and intra-group disunity. The disunity resulting from the Lugardian system which developed the Hausa/Fulani peoples as separate from the Southerners has continued to constitute the crux of the problem of disunity in Nigeria today.

Tanganyika, few Africans could afford Makerere unless on government scholarships. Consequently these colonial governments could control who became educated and what disciplines or professions they followed. Makerere therefore met most conceivable objections in East Africa.

West African governments were not prepared to accept the necessity of a large-scale university education for Africans. They considered the idea of facilities for university education as evidently impracticable and inadvisable. Thus the pressure from the ACEC and the Colonial Office in favour of the university scheme yielded no positive results. Colonial governments, particularly those of West Africa, were resolutely conscious that the burden of financing the university project would weigh upon them granted that no funds were envisaged from the British Treasury. Hence at a time when a Commission was being set up for Makerere College in Uganda, Hussey was still insisting that "the time for a University of West Africa was not on the horizon".<sup>66</sup> It is difficult to assess how much territorial particularism was really the issue or whether it was a mask to prevent any further development of the university idea in West Africa. At best, what the Lagos education conference achieved was its recommendation that the University of London should adapt the matriculation regulations to West African needs, which was readily endorsed

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<sup>66</sup>.CO 847/6/12 Minutes of the Sixty-Seventh Meeting of the ACEC, 26 March 1936.

by the Colonial Office. In the absence of a West African governors conference which made it difficult to secure unanimity on the question of the development of higher education, the Colonial Office began to consider the option of dealing with Fourah Bay, Yaba and Achimota colleges independently.

Evidently, although the Colonial Office and the ACEC were eager to push policies upon the colonial governments, they still remained at the mercy of the colonial officials on-the-spot, who dictated how their various local budgets should be disbursed. It is surprising to note that neither the ACEC nor the Colonial Office thought through the financial implications of founding new universities as proposed. "In making this Report", as the Currie sub-Committee asserted, "we have abstained from any considerations of the financial issues involved".<sup>67</sup> This was strange. If the proposed African universities were to be serious institutions, it was quite beyond the financial capacities of these colonies to find the capital to build them, or even the revenue to run them - especially in the middle of a world depression in 1935/36. Both the ACEC and the Colonial Office knew this. The Ugandan situation was very different. The protectorate was exporting cotton on a wide scale to the newly emerging textile industries of Japan and India; this was an export trade on a scale almost completely lacking in the other British colonies.

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<sup>67</sup>.CO 847/3/2 Report of the ACEC Sub-Committee

When it reported in 1937 the De La Warr group, like the Currie Sub-Committee, advanced a "radical" proposal for the provision of university facilities in East Africa. Although the commission recognized the risks involved in the enterprise they were strongly convinced that such hazards could be brooked for the interest of East Africans. According to them:

We are proposing the establishment of a University College in the near future, and of a University at no distant date. We are aware of the present flimsy foundations of primary and secondary education upon which such institutions will need to be based, and realize the possible risks of too rapid advance and of a top-heavy structure. Nevertheless we are convinced that the material needs of the country and the intellectual needs of its people require that such risks as there may be, should be taken.<sup>68</sup>

Thus for a start, the commission proposed that Makerere College "should be known at first as the Higher College of East Africa", doing post-secondary work in Arts, Science, Agriculture, Medicine, Education, Veterinary Medicine and engineering and, that as soon as the name was appropriate should be called "the University College of East Africa". The ultimate aim of Makerere Higher College, the commission concluded "will be to secure from the Privy Council a charter empowering the College to confer its own degrees".<sup>69</sup> Hence for the first time a British-sponsored authoritative commission

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<sup>68</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in East Africa, 1937, pp.118-119.

<sup>69</sup>.Ibid. pp.79 and 87.

recommended the necessity of the provision of a university for Africans.

Furthermore, the commission advised that, as a stepping stone, candidates should be entered for the external degree of the University of London, Durham University or the University of South Africa. In other words, the report was the first authoritative document to suggest the need for a special relationship scheme, which dominated the post-war planning of universities in Africa. Obviously, although first suggested by the Currie sub-Committee, the De La Warr report was the first British official body to recommend that steps should be taken to build an African educational institution - Makerere - into a University College. Significantly, the De La Warr report called for endowment funds for Makerere College to which not only Uganda and other East African governments were expected to contribute but also the British Government; a particularly bold plea in view of the British Treasury's financial parsimony. Such an argument which sought to commit the British Treasury to the funding of colonial colleges would have been derided had it been made a few years earlier; when the ACNETA strongly catered to the indirect rule philosophy as compared to the ACEC and when domestic and international criticism of British colonial policy was hardly felt.

The De La Warr report constituted a landmark not only in the history of the development of Makerere as a Higher College of East Africa, and later, as a University College, but also

in providing the impetus for the foundation of university colleges in other parts of Africa in the post-war period. It blazed a trail, and formed a precursor to the two war-time British commissions on higher education in the colonial empire. Also, it signalled the first major triumph of the academic lobby in its influence on British colonial policy on education. Since the Currie report, which predated De La Warr's, was never published, the latter, therefore, became "a seminal document" because "it is the first published exposition of British policy for university education in tropical Africa".<sup>70</sup>

When the ACEC met in November 1937 to consider the report of the De La Warr Commission, as referred to it by the Secretary of State, the Committee wasted no time in resolving that "the recommendation be put into force without delay". Now, however, the ACEC introduced an idea which represented a fundamental departure in British colonial financial policy. Despite Mitchell's assertion that Uganda might foot the bill if other East African colonies refused to come on board, the ACEC members for the first time appear to have understood that local colonial financing for university development might be inadequate. To make sure that a university would emerge at Makerere, the ACEC endorsed the De La Warr proposal and asked the Colonial Office to seek "financial assistance for the

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<sup>70</sup>.Eric Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.197.

endowment of the Higher College ... from the Imperial Government and other sources outside East Africa which it may be decided to approach".<sup>71</sup>

The recommendation for imperial funding was a watershed in the history of higher education in Africa. The Colonial Office gave full support to the ACEC's request, and quickly set in motion efforts toward its implementation. This is very significant because the change of attitude occurred before Malcolm MacDonald came to the Colonial Office and developed the idea of British funds for colonial development and welfare. Furthermore, it demonstrates that by 1937 the academic lobby had succeeded in enlisting the backing of the Colonial Office. From then on, the opposition of the local officials began to be undermined as the Colonial Office slowly sought to centralize and control colonial policies hitherto left to the discretion of the men on-the-spot.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies, Ormsby-Gore, moved in November 1937 with an official request to the Treasury for £100,000 towards the Makerere endowment funds.<sup>72</sup> The Colonial Office employed every conceivable argument to persuade the Treasury that financial assistance was essential. The Office knew fully well that it was almost asking for the

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<sup>71</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Extract from the Draft Minutes of the ACEC's discussion on the Report of the De La Warr Commission, November 1937.

<sup>72</sup>.CO 822/83/11 J.E.W. Flood (Colonial Office) to E. Hale (Treasury), November 1937.



impossible. Given the poor finances of the East African territories, especially Tanganyika and Kenya, the Colonial Office argued that "quite apart from the sum contributed", a British financial subsidy would be "invaluable from a propaganda point of view, and would provide a striking answer to the charge of neglect, a charge made not only by native races themselves but by foreign observers". Furthermore,

It is continually urged that the British Government fails to show sufficient interest in the education of the native populations entrusted to its care, and it cannot be denied that where educational facilities are available they are mainly of an elementary nature and contain no provision for higher education for the professions. It may fairly be contended if the claim that Imperial policy is based upon the Principle of Trusteeship for native races that there is a definite obligation upon the British Government to contribute, wherever possible, towards the education of the native races of Africa.<sup>73</sup>

The Colonial Office's argument is very illuminating. Although it was conveniently employed to convince the Treasury of the need for a financial contribution, the latter's response still exhibited the traditional hostility toward any suggestion of committing British taxpayers' money in the colonies. "If we contribute to this service", the Treasury responded, "where will it lead us?". The Treasury saw the

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<sup>73</sup>. Ibid. Additionally, it was stressed that a contribution "would have an outstanding value, quite apart from the sum contributed, as a definite indication that Parliament is not unmindful of its responsibility towards the backward races of the Empire".

Colonial Office request as "alarmingly indefinite, and one that might lead to almost unlimited commitments".<sup>74</sup> It disagreed with the Colonial Office definition of the workings of the principle of trusteeship, and insisted that colonies must be financially self-supporting. Accordingly,

You appeal to the analogy of trustee; but in private life the trustee does not have to supplement from his own pocket the funds he administers, and if our position were really comparable with that of the trustee we should have to do no more than the best we could with the Colonial revenues available.<sup>75</sup>

The Treasury was not convinced about the prudence of making such a contribution and felt that it was "being launched upon an almost uncharted sea".<sup>76</sup> Moreover, Britain's overall budgetary position was "one of exceptional difficulty as long as armament expenditure continues at the present level". The Treasury maintained that "strong justification would be required if we were to ask the taxpayer to find a capital sum for a purpose which could be met equally well by voting annually the equivalent income".<sup>77</sup> Further discussion was suggested to clarify the Makerere scheme. The Colonial Office was disappointed that the Treasury assessed its request parochially. The Office's despondency was aptly depicted in a

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<sup>74</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Hale to Flood, 18 December 1937.

<sup>75</sup>.Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>.Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>.Ibid.

minute by Flood on 23 December:

Surely an Imperial nation which is busy spending £1,500,000,000 on armaments and spends about £350,000,000 a year on "social services" in this country, could afford to make a grant of £100,000 as a sign of interest in its childish wards in East Africa.<sup>78</sup>

Hence another letter was despatched to Treasury to drive the points home further. It was emphasized that the East African territories, apart from Uganda whose finances were fairly satisfactory, were generally too poor to embark upon any serious project of higher education compared to British West African possessions. The Colonial Office contended that it was wrong to view trusteeship from the "purely financial point of view, which is altogether too narrow in this connection" and that "when the phrase about trusteeship was first used in regard to our relation to the native population of Africa, finance was the last thing that was in the minds of those who used it".<sup>79</sup> As guardian to a ward or an adopted child, which the "backward" peoples of the colonies represented, "it is the duty of the guardian (especially when he has taken on the duty on his own account) to provide him the necessary means to face the battle of life".<sup>80</sup> Racism

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<sup>78</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Minute by Flood, Colonial Office, 23 December 1937. It is most interesting that Flood who in 1933 had written about a university, "I do not want to see it" had come around by 1937 to complaining about the parsimony of the Treasury in financing a college.

<sup>79</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Flood to Hale, 27 December 1937.

<sup>80</sup>.Ibid.

remained. "Childish wards" or "ward or an adopted child" and "backward peoples" still permeated the official memos. However by 1937 it had become paternal racism which presumably was some kind of improvement.

There was almost a deadlock. Nevertheless, while the Colonial Office was seriously concerned about getting the Makerere project off the ground, the Treasury made it clear that it was open to further persuasion and was eager to see stronger reasons why the grant should be made, and why its long-standing tradition should be set aside. The Colonial Office could not simply give up on a matter of such high policy. On December 27, 1937 a meeting was quickly arranged by the Colonial Office between Sir Charles Bottomley (Colonial Office) and Sir E. Hale (Treasury) in which the modalities of the endowment and, the amount to be contributed by the various British East African territories, were discussed. Tentatively the amounts were fixed at Uganda (£250,000), Kenya (£50,000) and Tanganyika (£100,000), subject to the Treasury agreeing to give the requested sum of £100,000.<sup>81</sup>

However, the question transcended that of Makerere Higher College. In reality it constituted a high British imperial political question. Thus when the request was considered by the Lords Commissioners of Treasury, it was agreed that Treasury should contribute the sum of £100,000 for the

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<sup>81</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Bottomley's Discussion with Hale, 27 December 1937.

Makerere College endowment "as a wholly exceptional measure".<sup>82</sup> Stressing that "the financial obligation of the British Government have not been extended beyond affording assistance, commonly by loan, in cases where a territory cannot produce sufficient revenue to meet the necessary expenses of Administration", the Lords Commissioners insisted that the grant should not set a precedent. Finally, the Commissioners told the Colonial Office that they concurred with its request on the understanding that "the capital of the Endowment Fund will be maintained intact, and will not be drawn upon for expenditure, at any rate without Their prior concurrence".<sup>83</sup>

Why Treasury should take this "wholly exceptional measure" was not outlined by the Lords Commissioners. However, it would appear that the decision was informed by the volatile situations in the colonies, and the increasing complaints from within and without Britain about the worsening social conditions in the empire. Within Britain, critics of empire such as Leonard Barnes, insisted that the actual British system of imperial rule, particularly the indirect rule system, was evil and hence should be reformed with the purpose

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<sup>82</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Treasury's response to the Colonial Office request through the Under-Secretary of State, 5 January 1938.

<sup>83</sup>.Ibid.

of training colonial populations for eventual self-government.<sup>84</sup> The desired change would include social, economic and educational reforms designed to create populations who had enough economic independence as individuals to operate a democratic system. Some M.P.'s such as Lloyd George and Aneurin Bevan also had begun to feel that Britain was running a "slummy" empire in Africa and the Caribbean. These critics constituted a powerful influence on imperial statesmen. As a result, British colonial complacency was greatly shaken.

Throughout British colonial territories, there were constant problems of unemployment and low wages largely as a result of the economic depression of the 1930's resulting in complaints from governors about "the debilitating effects of declining trade".<sup>85</sup> In the Colonial Office, the fear had begun to grow that unless something was done urgently, the West Indian riots might be replicated in Africa where there were already signs of unrest in West Africa and among government workers in East Africa. To the Colonial Office, therefore, the West Indian revolts "presented a timely warning of what might happen elsewhere", and hence efforts became focused upon how

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<sup>84</sup>.Refer to R.D. Pearce, The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy, 1938-1949, Frank Cass, London, 1982, pp.12-16. To these critics, the preparation for eventual self-government constituted the only possible justification for one country ruling over another.

<sup>85</sup>.J.M.Lee and Martin Petter, The Colonial Office, War, and Development Policy, Maurice Temple Smith, London, 1982, p.29.

to re-order colonial rule "before social unrest provoked greater violence".<sup>86</sup>

Outside Britain, the United States was becoming increasingly concerned about the British West Indian situation. Although no major dispute occurred between Britain and the U.S.A. on the colonial question until the outbreak of the Second World War, the British certainly had become uneasy with their imperial policies. Germany's increasing influence in Europe by 1935, and its imperial interests became an inevitable concern to Britain. By 1937, Hitler had begun to demand the return of former German colonies in Africa, including Tanganyika. If Britain accused Germany of racism and therefore of unworthiness to rule over subject peoples, the Germans retorted by indicting Britain of naked exploitation of her colonies. Thus the propaganda argument brandished by the Colonial Office revolved around the basis of the British Empire, and the Office felt strongly that it would sway the Treasury. It ultimately did. Significantly, the Colonial Office request came exactly at the moment when the West Indies riots, over the worsening social, economic and political conditions under British rule, were destroying the old

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<sup>86</sup>.Lee and Petter, p.30; Charles Peter Emudong, "The Evolution of a New British Colonial Policy in the Gold Coast, 1938-1948: Origins of 'Planned Decolonization' Or of 'Neo-Colonialism'", Ph.D. Thesis, Department of History, Dalhousie University, 1981, p.37 and W.M. Macmillan, Warnings from the West Indies, Faber and Faber, London, 1936. Macmillan's book, which argued that without major reforms Africa would witness the same violence, became a reference work for the Colonial Office.

complacency. Although seemingly a coincidence, the timing of the request was excellent from a political point of view.

Treasury's approval marked a departure from its parsimonious tradition, and constituted a real breakthrough in Colonial Office policy, signalling a turning point. Notably this occurred even before Malcolm MacDonald came to office and before the Colonial Development and Welfare Act had been even contemplated. The Treasury had no system of matching funds. In other words, the Colonial Office request was quite extraordinary. A few years before 1938 it would have been dismissed outright. The idea of such a large sum going to a single educational institution out of the sacred British taxpayers' pocket was something which hitherto constituted an absolute anathema to the Treasury. But times had changed. Political events in the colonies had begun to influence British imperial actions, even among Treasury officials. "Internationally", as Pearce observed, "world opinion put the imperialist on the defensive and exploitative imperialism became the hate-word of world struggle against Anglo-Saxon domination".<sup>87</sup> In the face of this international and imperial political climate, therefore, Treasury's fixed attitude was breached. Treasury's departure from convention, no doubt, was a kind of secondary spin-off from the bigger West Indian crisis, in order to show that Britain was becoming interested in investing money in "social development and welfare" in the

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<sup>87</sup>. Pearce, The Turning Point in Africa, p.12.



colonies. Clearly, the Colonial Office won on high political grounds.

Meanwhile, the East African governments, especially Uganda were ecstatic about the contribution to be made by the British Government towards the Makerere endowment. What now worried Governor Mitchell of Uganda was the question of name and the site of the proposed Higher College, as well as whether the secondary school should co-exist with the Higher College. The De La Warr Commission had recommended that the site should be moved from Makerere to the area between Mulago and Kololo because "the present site is not suitable to the Makerere of to-day and will be even less suited to the University of to-morrow".<sup>88</sup> Mitchell disagreed with the Commission. He insisted that the name, Makerere, and the site at Kampala should be retained.<sup>89</sup> Mitchell knew that a new site and a change of name could provoke the opposition of the Buganda elite and delay his effort to ensure that the new higher college got off the ground at once. As he put it:

If we have to wait until we can build a complete new College it will probably be three years before we could do anything, whereas ... in the meantime utilizing what we have got, we can make a start almost at once, as soon as points of

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<sup>88</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in East Africa, 1937, p.85. Twice in later years, proposals put forward to change the name of Makerere was abandoned following the unanimous outcry of the Baganda and alumni.

<sup>89</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Governor Philip Mitchell to Sir Bottomley of the Colonial Office, 12 January 1938.

principle have been settled.<sup>90</sup>

However, the Colonial Office seemed to favour the recommendation of the De La Warr report for a new name and site as well as the separation of the secondary classes from the higher college because the commission's view represented expert opinion. Nevertheless Mitchell's view ultimately prevailed, since the success of the higher college scheme depended largely upon his personal guidance, avowed interest, and Uganda's financial commitment in an era when colonial governments still determined policy initiative and implementation.<sup>91</sup> Thus the Colonial Office could not push Mitchell too far, granted that the other East African governments were interested only nominally in the Makerere College plan. But given the complex nature of the issues, both the Colonial Office and Mitchell were united about sounding out the views of all the participating East African governments to avoid possible trouble.

Consequently the Secretary of State asked Mitchell to convene an inter-territorial conference of East African governors in Kampala, on a convenient date, to consider the recommendations of the De La Warr report, its financial implications, and the Secretary of State's proposals regarding

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<sup>90</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>. Refer to Pearce, The Turning Point in Africa, p.6.

the steps which should be taken to implement them."<sup>92</sup> Although like Yaba Higher College in Nigeria, Makerere had hitherto been an object of local criticism since it was established,<sup>93</sup> East African opinion had swung round to value how much the college had contributed as soon as an outside commission suggested that it be superseded by a higher college, and then a university. The rumour that the British Government had agreed to contribute financially certainly rallied stronger support for the college. Seizing the opportunity presented by the renewed interest, Mitchell thus convened a governors conference in Kampala in May 1938.

In his inaugural remarks at the conference, Mitchell expressed the desire that the higher college should be "a centre of learning and culture enjoying the security, the liberty of thought and teaching which are essential and indeed implied in the word university".<sup>94</sup> Mitchell's demeanour

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<sup>92</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Colonial Office Notes on the proposed Makerere Higher College, February 1938. Refer also to CO 822/90/1 Memorandum for Circulation in Connection with the Kampala Conference..., undated.

<sup>93</sup>.See Pratt, "Administration and Politics in Uganda, 1919-1945", pp.523-525. Ugandan missionaries led the criticism of curriculum which was backed by strong African support. While the Ugandan Government insisted that the courses provided in Makerere should be technical and vocational because it needed the recipients of such education for its departments, Africans and missionaries clamoured for academic education because they desired graduates of such a system to be equal to their European counterparts.

<sup>94</sup>.Opening Speech of the Governor of Uganda at the Inter-Territorial Conference held in Kampala, May 1938 as cited in Margaret Macpherson, They Built for the Future: A Chronicle of Makerere College, p.26.

represented a departure among African colonial governors of his time. Although his drive for the provision of a university for Africans was obviously a response to the pressure exerted by the Baganda, there is little doubt that he was genuinely devoted to the higher educational question. Uppermost on the agenda of the conference was the question of funding of the new college. Taking the lead, the Ugandan Government agreed to contribute towards the endowment the sum of £250,000. Additionally, Mitchell announced that his government would provide the sum of £170,000 to meet the building needs. Also, the Ugandan local governments gave the sum of £7,550 while the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation provided £10,000 for a biological laboratory. The Makerere endowment thus appeared to be a Ugandan affair.

Encouraged by the generous grants by Uganda which totalled £437,550, Tanganyika and Kenya agreed to contribute their share of £100,000 and £50,000 respectively. Kenya's contribution was particularly small because while Uganda had a surplus of £1.5 millions, "Kenya had no money at all".<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, it would appear that Kenya's settler-dominated administration was not particularly keen about the technical and vocational courses offered by Makerere College. Presuming that the proposed higher college at Makerere could hardly achieve the standards of British colleges, Kenyan settlers preferred to go overseas for their studies. No question had

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<sup>95</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Flood to Hale, November 1937.

arisen in Kenya about Africans occupying intermediate posts in government. African participation in the Kenyan civil service barely reached beyond messengers. However, with the sum of £100,000 forthcoming from the British Treasury, the De La Warr targeted figure of £500,000 for the endowment had been realized.<sup>96</sup>

On the issue of site, the conference recommended that the site and name of the college should be retained, and that "powers should be taken without delay to secure possession of any building which may prevent future development and to obtain any additional land which may be necessary". It also accepted the commission's proposal for a university structure for the higher college namely, the institution of the Assembly, Council, Principal, and Academic Boards of Studies. Furthermore the conference stressed the need for Council to have complete autonomy from the beginning. Resolving that both the Council and Assembly should be as broadly representative of the interests of all territories as possible, nevertheless, it was conceded that there should be a measure of external control to be exercised on behalf of the East African governments by the governor of Uganda "until such time as the

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<sup>96</sup>.Macpherson, They Built for the Future, p.26. It was hoped that the endowment funds would yield about £16,000 annually which would be applied to the recurrent expenditure of the proposed Higher College, CO 822/83/11 Colonial Office Notes on Hale's Letter, December 1937. Interest rates at that time were about 2.5 to 3 percent on British and colonial government securities and bonds.

college attains university status".<sup>97</sup> Thus, this proposal gave the Governor of Uganda wide powers over the affairs of Makerere Higher College. It could not have been otherwise given the huge amount of money Uganda had committed towards the proposed development of the college. Additionally, the College was located in Kampala and the majority of the students would naturally be drawn from the Baganda.

Concurrently with this conference, there was a cabinet reshuffle in London in May 1938. Malcolm MacDonald replaced Ormsby-Gore as the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Although in 1935 MacDonald had briefly served as the Secretary of State for the Colonies<sup>98</sup>, by 1938 when he came back to head the Colonial Office things were no longer at ease. Given his liberal and reformist perspective, MacDonald appeared to be more predisposed to the Makerere Higher College project, and the question of the provision of university facilities in the colonies. The Colonial Office's traditional policy of abstention from colonial schemes pursued by the different territories entered a period of revision. It began to position itself for the centralization and control of colonial

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<sup>97</sup>.Report of the Inter-Territorial Conference of East African Governments to examine the practical steps necessary to implement the recommendations of the De La Warr Commission on Higher Education in East Africa in relation to the establishment of Makerere Higher College, May 1938, as cited in Macpherson, p.26.

<sup>98</sup>.See A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, A Biographical Dictionary of the British Colonial Service, 1939-1966, Hans Zell Publishers, London, 1991, p.231.

policies.<sup>99</sup> African administrations would now either re-align their policies to the changing posture of the Colonial Office or be compelled to do so. In November, 1938 the first sod of the higher college was cut by the Duke of Gloucester, and in January 1939 Malcolm MacDonald appointed George Turner and Dr. W.H. Kauntze principal and chairman of Council respectively.<sup>100</sup> With the full financial support of the British government, Turner and Kauntze "began the task of turning Makerere College into something more nearly approximating to a University College".<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, what finally emerged in Makerere College was neither a university nor a university college as envisaged by either the Currie sub-Committee or the De La Warr Commission. Rather, it was a higher college which awarded diplomas and certificates, and satisfied government's need for the supply of African middle-level manpower. Neither the demands of the Baganda traditional elite nor the desire of the academic lobby was realized. Africans wanted fully-fledged university institutions. Anything less remained unsatisfactory. It took several years, as will be seen later, before Makerere Higher College ultimately attained a

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<sup>99</sup>.See Lee and Petter, Colonial Office, War, and Development Policy, passim.

<sup>100</sup>.While Turner was a notable Master of Marlborough College, Kauntze was the Head of Ugandan Medical Services Department.

<sup>101</sup>.Macpherson, They Built for the Future, p.33.

university college status awarding external degrees of the University of London. However, what makes the history of Makerere College between 1932 and 1939 uniquely significant was the way in which the ACEC seized the opportunity provided by "paragraph 19" of the recommendation of the conference of East African Directors of Education to spur the Colonial Office's interest in the provision of university facilities for Africans generally. The Treasury grant of £100,000 towards the Makerere Higher College endowment constituted a breach of its traditional financial parsimony. It illuminates the gradual shifting of initiatives from African demands to an impetus emanating from the Colonial Office to break the opposition from governors and their European civil services.



## Chapter Four

### **KEEPING THE FLAME ALIVE AND SEIZING THE INITIATIVE: THE ACADEMIC LOBBY AND THE PLANNING OF POST-WAR UNIVERSITIES, 1939-1943**

As late as 1939 when the ACEC, the Colonial Office and the East African governments had begun to move solidly in favour of schemes for the establishment of universities in Africa, West African governors continued to oppose the idea. A meeting of the governors to consider Currie's report, and the problem of co-ordination and co-operation among the various West African colleges - Yaba, Achimota and Fourah Bay - as directed by the Colonial Office, stood postponed until 1939. Even when they finally met, their views remained reactionary to those emanating from London. From Malcolm MacDonald's arrival as Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1938, with his initiatives to make policy, pay for it, and impose it upon colonial regimes, opposition from the West African colonial governments to the university idea began to be undermined. The outbreak of World War II in September 1939 frustrated progress particularly between May 1940 and November 1942 when the fortunes of war turned against Britain and colonial reform was put aside. However, this chapter will also demonstrate that when Allied victory became clear from late November 1942, colonial development and welfare programmes were revived along with the university question. The training

of colonial leaders for the post-war social, economic and political transformation once more came to the forefront and two authoritative commissions on higher education came to fruition in mid-1943.

From 1933, when Currie's sub-committee reported, to 1937 when De La Warr's proposals were published, the importance of a conference of West African governors on the question of higher education had been stressed by the Colonial Office. Yet, locally this was not considered urgent. While the East African governments were laying a strong foundation for a University College of East Africa at Makerere, West African administrations remained uninterested. The nature of indirect rule in West Africa which in effect set the educated and traditional elites into bipolar and antagonistic classes continued to determine the attitudes of officials towards the university idea.

During that period of deliberate delays, the Colonial Office could not make the governors comply. Colonial policies issued from the men on the spot (governors) rather than from the Colonial Office, and the funds for their implementation were also provided by the various colonial governments. In this circumstance, the Colonial Office was more or less a "toothless bulldog". MacDonald's stress on colonial reforms following the West Indian revolts had begun to make sense to the governors. Also, it was clear that what Emudong referred to as "the anticipatory factor" to forestall similar riots in

West Africa made an impression upon colonial administrations.<sup>1</sup> After many years of feet-dragging the West African governors finally decided to convene in Lagos in August 1939 to discuss the higher education problem.

Before they convened, however, the internal memoranda which the governors circulated among themselves did not make any decisive shift from their age-old opposition. Hence, even though they agreed that a West African university was an ideal to be aimed at, the governors still believed this would happen only in the remote future.<sup>2</sup> The Nigerian Government particularly did "not consider that West Africa is yet ready for the forward policy recommended by the Makerere Commission".<sup>3</sup> While the governors seemed ready to provide courses leading to the award of diplomas, which would prepare African graduates for the intermediate and subordinate government posts, they could not foresee the possibility of, or even the need for, fully-fledged degree programmes.

One factor which encouraged the governors' "remote

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<sup>1</sup>.Emudong, "The Evolution of a New British Colonial Policy in the Gold Coast, 1938-1948", p.37.

<sup>2</sup>.Sierra Leone Archives (SLA), Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO), Open Files On Education, Memoranda on Higher Education by the Governments of Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast for the governors' conference scheduled for August 1939.

<sup>3</sup>.SLA, CSO Open Files on Education, Memorandum by the Nigerian Government, 1939. The forward policy recommended by the Makerere Commission was that immediate steps should be taken to establish universities in British African territories.

future" posture towards the university idea was the attitudes of Africans themselves. Ashby has noted that by 1939 "some of the enthusiasm for an indigenous African university had evaporated since the days of Casely Hayford and the West African Congress of 1920".<sup>4</sup> This seems true. However Ashby did not explain the reasons for this attitude. The question of employment discrimination lay at the heart of the matter. This was an era when scientific racism, under the cloak of indirect rule and colonialism, questioned both the intellectual, cultural and political propensities of Africans. Many colonial officials believed that Blacks were intellectually inferior and hence should do selective jobs. Africans sought to repudiate this claim by competing with Europeans in their own universities and countries. In this circumstance, any attempt at establishing an exclusively African university with peculiarly "adapted" syllabi became suspect to ambitious Africans.

Furthermore, on the issue of employment, it had become increasingly clear to Africans that locally obtained certificates and diploma such as those from Yaba and Achimota received little respect from colonial officials in Africa and London. This accounted for the attacks on Yaba by the Nigerian intelligentsia from 1934. Since qualifications obtained from Britain were given more recognition than the local ones in employment and salary scales, it is little wonder that

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<sup>4</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.202.

overseas education became the hallmark of academic achievement for African elites.

Clearly the question of employment and the destabilizing influence of a highly educated class of Africans continued to trouble West African governments. Given the nature of indirect rule, which promoted the training of middle-level human resources as against university-educated graduates, the latter had virtually no place in the colonial administration. Given the hierarchical nature of the senior civil service, along with the racial sensitivities of its exclusively English office holders, injecting Africans into it became almost impossible. Apparently the unwillingness of European civil servants to serve under Africans or even in an equal capacity with them meant that each colonial governor faced an almost intractable problem should African graduates become available. Colonial governments were almost always short of staff, but qualified Africans could not be used because of this underlying but rarely spoken racism. Little wonder then that the Gold Coast government, for instance, insisted in carefully coded language that:

As far as this Colony is concerned, the time is by no means ripe for the provision of facilities for higher education on anything but a carefully limited scale,...the institution of an ambitious series of degree courses would merely lead to the creation of a class of university graduates who would clamour for lucrative posts in the Government Service and would become discontented and disaffected if this material reward for their labours were not, in each and every

case, automatically forthcoming.<sup>5</sup>

Until the employment problem was clarified it would appear that any scheme of university education in the colonies would continue to be opposed by the men on the spot. Since discrimination in, or lack of, employment would naturally breed discontent, West African governments conveniently avoided higher education projects. Lord Hailey characterised the situation exactly when he observed:

The considerations which decide the character of higher education are largely political, for the type of instruction given depends on the view held of the place in society which the educated African may be expected to fill.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the stance of the governors, as evidenced in their recommendations, was hardly surprising. Following an earlier report on Achimota College<sup>7</sup> very closely, the West African governors accepted the ideal of a university, but "it would be some time before this ideal could be achieved".<sup>8</sup> Dr. A.W.Pickard-Cambridge's committee was appointed by the

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<sup>5</sup>.SLA, CSO Open Files on Education, Memorandum by the Gold Coast Government, 1939.

<sup>6</sup>.Hailey, An African Survey, p.1288. These "considerations" could also be characterized as "racial" merely coded in "political" language.

<sup>7</sup>.Report of the Committee Appointed by the Governor of the Gold Coast Colony to Inspect the Prince of Wales' College, Achimota, Accra, 1939. Other members of the inspection team were Hans Vischer and the Director of Education for the Gold Coast.

<sup>8</sup>.CO 847/18/9 Recommendations of the West African Governors' Conference, August 1939.

governor of the Gold Coast in 1938 to inspect the Achimota College. It considered proposals for developing the university work of the college particularly the introduction of courses for the B.A. Pass degree. In its report, the inspection team advised the administration against the idea on the ground of insufficient supply of students from the secondary schools and the lack of demand for "native" graduates in government and industry.<sup>9</sup> This counsel coincided with the reactionary views of the West African governments and hence was re-echoed at the governors' conference.

But the governors ultimately acceded to the ACEC and the Colonial Office view that there was an urgent need for co-operation and co-ordination among the three existing West African institutions - Yaba, Fourah Bay and Achimota. This was with the object of "avoiding wasteful duplication and establishing the various courses of study upon a common basis". While they saw no problem with the duplication of courses up to the Intermediate Arts and Science stages, "duplication of higher or degree work should be avoided at all cost".<sup>10</sup> With regard to the Yaba engineering programme, the governors recommended that the courses should be retained but not extended and that provision for training in electrical engineering should be confined to Achimota. Similarly, while

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<sup>9</sup>.Refer to the Report of the Committee Appointed by the Governor of the Gold Coast Colony, p.140; see also Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, pp.201-2.

<sup>10</sup>.Ibid.

theological training was left to Fourah Bay College which, traditionally, had performed that role, courses in medicine (including veterinary studies), and agriculture were left to Yaba. In addition, it was agreed that other governments "should consider the acceptance of the Yaba Medical Diploma as valid for practice in any of the territories".<sup>11</sup>

As for courses in Law, the governors unanimously agreed that "the creation of a Law School in West Africa was undesirable". Although they could not elaborate, this decision seems to have been informed by the fear that legal education might aggravate African nationalism and consciousness of individual and collective rights. Thus, following Hussey's "gradual stages" closely, the governors stressed the need for a slow pyramidal growth of the colonial educational structure. This entailed a gradual building up, layer upon layer, of the various stages of education from the bush schools, through primary and secondary schools, to the university. Finally, however, the governors recommended that a local commission, headed by Hans Vischer and consisting of the Directors of Education of the four British West African territories, should be constituted to consider some of their suggestions and to examine the details of a co-ordinated scheme of higher

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<sup>11</sup>. Ibid. Apart from Yaba Diploma in Medicine, other certificates were only valid in territories where they were awarded. They were not recognized in London which was the root of the hatred for Yaba of the emergent "nationalists", and the consequent yearning by West Africans for "respectable" and recognizable London University qualifications.



educational development in West Africa.<sup>12</sup>

Before the views of West African governors reached the Colonial Office, the Second World War broke out in September 1939. However, driven by the burning desire for reforms in British colonial policy, the Secretary of State, MacDonald, quickly referred the matter to the ACEC for consideration. In the meantime the ACEC had become largely reconstituted by the beginning of 1940. Currie was dead; Sadler, Lugard, Vischer and Mayhew had all retired from the Committee, and a system of rotation of members with a three-year limit was introduced.<sup>13</sup> This brought in a wave of new members such as B. Mouat Jones, G. Anderson, H.J. Channon, H.M. Grace, W.M. Macmillan, Margery Perham, and Christopher Cox.<sup>14</sup> Shortly Christopher Cox was appointed as the educational adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and his position in the ACEC was filled by

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<sup>12</sup>.It should be recalled that Hans Vischer had earlier visited West Africa, though unofficially, on behalf of the Colonial Office to lobby for co-operation and co-ordination among the three main educational institutions. As an influential member of the ACEC, and the Colonial Office "expert" on education, the governors chose Vischer as the possible chair of the proposed local commission to show that they were being "reasonable" and "willing" to cooperate. It was a shrewd move.

<sup>13</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.204. This three-year term limit was followed by ineligibility for re-election for a year.

<sup>14</sup>.Channon was a professor of Biochemistry at Liverpool University and Fellow of University of College, London; Anderson was formerly a Professor of History at Elphinstone College, Bombay, India; Macmillan and Perham were both imperial historians at the Universities of London and Oxford respectively; and Cox was a fellow of Oxford University and former Director of Education in the Sudan.

R.A. M. Davidson<sup>15</sup> from the Colonial Office. Cox however remained in the ACEC in a different capacity as an adviser and *ex-officio* member.

These changes in membership and the dislocations caused by the war meant that issues relating to higher education, which the ACEC had almost elevated to high policy from 1933, had to be considered all over again since they were unfamiliar to the new members.<sup>16</sup> Since members of the newly reconstituted ACEC needed some time to familiarize themselves with the task thrust upon them, they could not act promptly on the recommendations of the West African governors. Furthermore, between December 1939 and February 1940, Malcolm MacDonald was preoccupied with the Colonial Development and Welfare Bill, which he intended to introduce in parliament. Since the bill aimed at asking parliament to approve funds for programmes of social and economic development, including higher education, in the colonies, it would appear that the ACEC awaited the outcome.

This Colonial Development and Welfare Bill, was presented to parliament for its first reading in February 1940. It proposed a maximum expenditure of £5 million a year for ten years on schemes of development and welfare; as well as

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<sup>15</sup>.Davidson was formerly a Director of Education in Tanganyika and later became the Assistant Education Adviser to the Secretary of State in 1941.

<sup>16</sup>.See Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.204.

£500,000 a year for promoting research and enquiry in the colonies subject to review from time to time.<sup>17</sup> Introducing the Bill for its Second Reading in May 1940, MacDonald stressed the contribution of the colonial peoples towards the Allied war effort "by gifts of treasure, by production of essential foodstuffs and raw materials, and by the eager raising of Colonial military units far in excess of anything that they did at a similar period in the last war". However, the Secretary of State further added that the proposals for assistance towards colonial development "are not a bribe or reward for the colonies' support in this supreme crisis" since "they were conceived long before the war" and "are part of the normal peace-time development of our colonial policy".<sup>18</sup>

While it is true that the main lines of colonial reform policy had been laid down just before the war, there was no doubt that the crisis in the West Indies, and the outbreak of the European War pushed matters further forward than the

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<sup>17</sup>.Refer to Statement of Policy on Colonial Development and Welfare Act, February 1940, Cmd.6175 as cited in R.D.Pearce, The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy 1938-48, Frank Cass, London, 1982, pp.19-20; Stephen Constantine, The Making of British Colonial Development Policy, 1914-1940, London, 1984; J.M.Lee and M.Petter, The Colonial Office, War and Development Policy: Organisation and Planning of a Metropolitan Initiative, 1939-1945, London, 1982; and D.J.Morgan, The Official History of Colonial Development, vol.1, London, 1980.

<sup>18</sup>.Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), vol.361, col.42, 21 May 1940. MacDonald stressed that the new bill "breaks new grounds" as compared to the Colonial Development Act of 1929. While the Act of 1929 was devised "to solve our own unemployment problem" the proposed bill was expected "to help colonial development for its own sake".

British policy-makers would have allowed in peace-time. Supporting the bill in the Commons, for instance, Jocelyn Lucas (Portsmouth South) affirmed: "it gives us another opportunity of refuting the accusations of our enemies that we won the Empire by rape and that we play the part of the dog-in-the-manger".<sup>19</sup> Thus Padmore insisted that the Bill was "a sop to the colored races of the Empire, whose support was essential to Britain's war effort".<sup>20</sup> Naanen has also argued that the bill was "a political and propaganda initiative designed to mollify rising political tempers in the colonies".<sup>21</sup> Certainly the pre-war socio-economic conditions in the colonies coupled with the exigencies of the war allowed the CD&WA an easy passage in parliament.

The Act empowered and galvanized the Secretary of State to take the plunge into colonial affairs and to undertake such schemes to support social and economic development. The passage of the bill marked a turning point because soon after the Colonial Office began to intervene in and then to rule its

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<sup>19</sup>.Parliamentary Debates, (House of Commons), col. 42, 21 May, 1940. Also Robert Shenton in The Development of Capitalism in Northern Nigeria, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1986, p.113 has further observed that the bill was an attempt to demonstrate to the international community that Britain was still a trustworthy and humane colonial power.

<sup>20</sup>.G. Padmore, Africa: Britain's Third Empire, Ennis Dobson Ltd., London, 1949, p.158.

<sup>21</sup>.Benedict B. Naanen, "Economy and Society in Eastern Nigeria, 1900-1966: A Study of Problems of Development and Social Change", Ph.D. Thesis, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 1988, p.230.

African colonies, which had hitherto suffered from neglect by the policy of indirect rule and colonial self-sufficiency."<sup>22</sup> For the first time, Britain agreed to spend large sums on the social and economic development of her colonies. From then on the Colonial Office had no difficulty in forcing colonial governors to support the university idea since London would pay for it with funds from the CD&WA.

Before the Act even became law, MacDonald began to set in motion the necessary steps to implement it. The question of the provision of university facilities to Africans was vigorously renewed. Since the Colonial Development and Welfare Act (CD&WA) had provided the much-needed funds for social development and research, the ACEC and the Colonial Office were now offered the necessary financial instruments to pursue the higher education scheme. The Colonial Office swiftly began to abandon its traditional policy of informal influence in favour of formal control of the social, political and economic affairs of the colonies. From then on, directives as regards educational policy in the colonies would emanate from London and not from the colonies. African colonial governments were merely expected to execute projects approved by the Colonial Office. The ACEC now became a powerful body whose

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<sup>22</sup>.Refer to Patrick Kakembo, "Colonial Office Policy and the Origins of Decolonization in Uganda, 1940-1956", Ph.D. Thesis, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 1990, pp.16-17, and Allister Hinds, "British Imperial Policy and the Development of the Nigeria Economy, 1939-1951", Ph.D. Thesis, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 1985, pp.1-30.

recommendations would not only be readily approved by the Colonial Office but also could be speedily executed in the colonies with the funds from the CD&WA. Thus, shortly after the passage of the bill in May 1940, the ACEC set up a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Mouat Jones to review the recommendations of the West African Governors' Conference held in August 1939.<sup>23</sup>

Just as the Colonial Development and Welfare Act passed through parliament, and as the Mouat Jones sub-committee began its work, the war tilted dramatically against Britain, as the German blitzkrieg swept through the Low Countries and France collapsed in May-June 1940. For the next twelve months Britain, almost alone in Europe except for imperial support from the dominions, India and the colonies, faced the real danger of invasion and defeat in the British Isles. In these crisis conditions, the fortunes of war dampened the colonial reform initiative. Although the ACEC continued to work on the university question, the turn of the war began to stifle efforts towards colonial reforms begun under MacDonald. In fact, before the CD&WA became law, the Treasury had by May 1940 begun to push the Colonial Office for its suspension and for concentration on matters more nearly relating to the conduct of the war.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>.Other members of the sub-committee were G. Anderson, E. Burney, H.J. Channon, H.M. Grace, C.M.W. Cox, E.R.J. Hussey and W.M. Macmillan.

<sup>24</sup>.The Act became Law on July 17 1940.

But Lord Lloyd, who had replaced MacDonald as Secretary of State, resisted the idea of complete suspension arguing that "it might be construed in the Colonies as a gesture of despair".<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, he reasoned that on political ground an outright suspension would invite fierce criticism at home and in the colonies. But the Treasury would not easily agree. Thus as a compromise Lloyd assured Treasury that he would make it clear during the third reading in parliament that the war crisis would make progress much slower than MacDonald had earlier suggested. It is against this background that Flint's conclusion makes much sense that the period "from May 1940 to the end of 1942 must be seen as one of retreat... from the reform policies set in motion by Malcolm MacDonald...."<sup>26</sup>

The exigencies of war, especially the threat of defeat from May 1940, put the reform process on a back burner. Discussions on higher education foundered as well. The Colonial Office was now expected to mobilize colonial economies, manpower and production in the service of the British war economy rather than the schemes for social development. Colonial governors were informed that the war crisis demanded "not only the postponement of progress but

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<sup>25</sup>.Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons) col.725, 2 July 1940. For the correspondence, see Morgan, The Official History of Colonial Development, vol.I, pp.87-8.

<sup>26</sup>.John E.Flint, "On the Defensive: Retreat from Reforms, 1940-42", Manuscript, 1992, p.2.

some curtailment of existing social and other services".<sup>27</sup> It was under this circumstance that projects began in the colonies, such as the Makerere Higher College scheme, slowed down as others became almost stagnant. From 1938 when the higher college opened to students, until 1940, the only "progress" Makerere recorded was the link it established with Oxford University. With the help of personal faculty friends such as Reginald Coupland and Margery Perham, Governor Mitchell lobbied Oxford for association.<sup>28</sup> This external link, as envisaged by the De La Warr commission, was an important step toward the attainment of the ultimate goal of a university college. However, nothing of any real importance resulted from the Makerere-Oxford connection.<sup>29</sup> Ashby aptly blamed it on the war.<sup>30</sup> Shortage of staff, poor library facilities, narrow sources of students intake, accommodation and other related difficulties continued to plague Makerere

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<sup>27</sup>.CO 323/1755/7450/2 f.82, Circular Telegram of 5 June 1940 as cited in ibid., p.6.

<sup>28</sup>.This association arrangement begun in early December 1939 was completed in January 1940. It allowed for the establishment of a Makerere Council at Oxford charged with rendering any assistance which the College might ask for, and specify visitation for the purpose of inspecting and advising on academic matters. See CO 822/105/16 Reginald Coupland to Governor Mitchell, 8 December 1939.

<sup>29</sup>.Refer to A.M.Carr-Saunders, New Universities Overseas, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1961, p.244. The only noticeable result of the association was the placing of the coat of arms of Oxford University over the main entrance to the College where it is still to be seen.

<sup>30</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, India, African, p.210.



during the war.

But the ACEC continued to deliberate on the university question even though the vagaries of the war hampered serious efforts at implementation. The Colonial Office preferred that higher education issues should be kept alive even when Britain faced the danger of defeat. The fear of African post-war reactions and the need to maintain peace in the colonies during the war began to occupy an important position in British official thinking. For one thing, the war brought the colonial peoples face-to-face with the powers of Europe, and battlefield experiences had begun to demonstrate the mortality of the latter. Shortly the doctrine of "white" superiority came under serious question. The war shattered the myth of "British imperial invincibility" since for the first time the British "appealed for the loyalty of their subjects rather than assumed it as a matter of right".<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore since the war the British asked Africans to fight, was supposedly a fight against racial discrimination, injustice, oppression and Nazism, Africans believed that the ideals of racial equality and social justice would be extended to them as soon as the war ended. Indirectly, therefore, the war tended to question the whole concept of colonization as it equally legitimized nationalist movements. The ACEC knew this

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<sup>31</sup>.Michael Crowder, "The 1939-45 War and West Africa" in J.F.Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.) History of West Africa, vol.2, Longman, London, 1974, p.612, and refer also to Chinweizu, The West and the Rest of Us, Random House, New York, 1975, pp.101-115.

and the Colonial Office was conscious of it. Hence Bishop Grace, a member of the Mouat Jones' sub-committee of the ACEC, was merely stating the obvious when he reminded the Colonial Office that:

Our African friends will be loyal in the war, even though on the lowest level it will be from the fear of Hitler; but we must not hide our eyes to the fact that there are many grievances that the Africans still feel against us, and much will spring to the fore immediately the strain of war is over.<sup>32</sup>

Among the grievances Bishop Grace highlighted was the neglect of education. Since the success of the colonial development envisaged by MacDonald depended on the leadership of a well-educated class, a class which was pitifully small, it became clear that the university question remained imperative in the reform process.

The significance of Grace's communication with the Colonial Office was that even though the war tide had turned against Britain, the ACEC remained steadfast in its support for colonial education. Although the frequency of their meetings was seriously affected, members continued to relate ideas to the possible post-war circumstance in the colonies. In December 1940, the Mouat Jones' sub-committee on the recommendation of West African governors submitted its report to the ACEC. The Jones' report was as radical as Currie's

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<sup>32</sup>.CO 847/20/1 Bishop H.M. Grace to the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 July 1940. Grace was a member of the ACEC, and he was raising this important issue in an unofficial capacity.

proposal of 1933. Its views diametrically opposed those of the West African governors. The sub-committee disagreed with the pessimism of the governors, noting that "we are more optimistic than the Conference appeared to be". The report rejected the opinion of the governors that a West African university idea belonged to the remote future. Instead, they pointed out that "progress will be embarrassed unless essential preliminary steps towards the creation of a university are taken in the immediate future".<sup>33</sup>

As for the pyramidal growth in the colonial educational structure advocated by the governors, the Jones' sub-committee rejected that view as "historically ill-grounded and practically not feasible" since "the lower layers can be neither well-founded nor brought to completion without the simultaneous erection of the top storeys". Significantly, the sub-committee's report employed the analogy of a volcano, to argue for the interdependence between all strata of educational institutions. A volcano "built up its cone in all stages at once".<sup>34</sup> In other words, university development should advance simultaneously with both primary and secondary education.

It is important to note that the pyramidal educational development theory had long been a fixed doctrine of African

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<sup>33</sup>.CO 847/18/9 Report of the ACEC Sub-Committee on the Recommendation of West African Governors' Conference, December 1940.

<sup>34</sup>.Ibid.

colonial governors. It served as a good defence for their opposition to the idea of a university, since in most territories, primary and secondary education were quantitatively inadequate and qualitatively defective. The Jones' group, however, disagreed with the governors' argument that secondary education, which should feed the proposed university, was in a low state of development. They felt that the number of secondary schools in West Africa "is sufficient for the present needs and, if adequately and competently staffed throughout, forms a broad enough basis for further development of university work".<sup>35</sup>

As observed in the Makerere Higher College scheme, this "pyramidal imagery" of educational development theory so favoured by the West African governments, had been repudiated by Governor Mitchell of Uganda.<sup>36</sup> In one of his Makerere addresses Mitchell insisted that the university should be seen "as the roots and trunk of the educational tree, the pursuit of true knowledge the sap, and the schools the branches, the foliage and flowers".<sup>37</sup> Mitchell was quick to acknowledge that progress in one stage depended on progress in other stages. Thus, though Mitchell used the milder evolutionary analogy of the tree, he nevertheless argued for the interdependence of

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<sup>35</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>. See CO 822/99/20 "A Governor's Views On Education in East Africa: Thinks University Should Come First", Extract from the East African Standard, dated 18/8/1939.

<sup>37</sup>. Ibid.

all levels of education as represented in the more dramatic "volcano" analogy from the ACEC.

Based on the evidence available to them, the Jones sub-committee maintained that "the time has probably come for the development of general post-secondary courses in Arts, and perhaps also in Science, at Achimota".<sup>38</sup> Before the outbreak of the war the Prince of Wales College, popularly known as Achimota, had almost completed arrangements for affiliation with the University of London in relation to its engineering programme, which was relatively well staffed and equipped.<sup>39</sup> The ACEC did not want the process to be arrested by the governors' reactionary attitudes. Furthermore the sub-committee was uncomfortable with the governors' opposition to the inauguration or foundation of a law school in the region. It believed that provision for some study of law should be made "to meet the needs of those who enter the Civil Service, or serve Native Administrations, in an administrative capacity".<sup>40</sup>

However one major recommendation of the governors which apparently appealed to the Jones' sub-committee was their suggestion that a local commission be appointed to examine the

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<sup>38</sup>.CO 847/18/9 Report of the ACEC Sub-Committee on the Recommendations of the West African Governors' Conference.

<sup>39</sup>.Refer to Wise, A History of Education in West Africa, pp.113-114.

<sup>40</sup>.CO 847/18/9 Report of the ACEC Sub-Committee on West African Governor's Conference, December 1940.

details of a co-ordinated scheme of higher educational development in West Africa. The complex nature of educational development in West Africa demanded investigation. Thus the governors' proposal for a commission presented an opportunity to look into the particular situation and problem. Even though the Jones' group favoured immediate university development, they felt strongly that there were several problems which should be examined before further action should be taken.<sup>41</sup> Contending that the higher education of Africans should not be halted at the diploma and certificate level, the Jones report affirmed that:

While we are not convinced of the validity of the objections, we believe that further investigation of the question from more than one angle should be undertaken before such courses are brought into being.<sup>42</sup>

While agreeing to make recommendations for a commission along the lines suggested by the governors, the Jones' report, however, added that the new commission should not be "local" or official in composition. Rather it should be an authoritative body since "we are satisfied that the inquiry

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<sup>41</sup>.Such problems involved employment - how far colonial governments were ready to admit African graduates to higher posts; and the types of qualifications and courses these proposed universities would offer.

<sup>42</sup>.CO 847/18/9, Ibid. The objection was because of the risk that graduates on the strength of their qualification would expect employment of a kind which would not be available to them. By "more than one angle", the Jones' committee was obviously referring to the ACEC's viewpoint which ran counter to those of the governors.

itself will need to be of greater scope, and that more fundamental questions are involved than could reasonably be imposed upon a local commission". It is significant that the ACEC picked up the governors' suggestion for a local commission, presumably staffed by territorial education department heads and the like, and transformed it into a much broader imperial question beyond the locals. By insisting on an "authoritative" commission, the sub-committee knew that its membership would be dominated by experts in the establishment and running of universities, the academic lobby itself. The ACEC was thus proposing to transfer the issue from the periphery to the metropole. This was a matter of veritable importance revolving around what the whole business of colonial reform was all about - seizing control for the centre to make and execute policy, and circumventing the resistance of local colonial service people to reform initiatives.

Consequently the Jones' sub-committee recommended to the ACEC the appointment of a commission "at the earliest opportunity" since "the findings of such a commission would open the way for a definite line of advance in which all the governments of the four territories could co-operate wholeheartedly with definite aim and clear purpose".<sup>43</sup> At its meeting in December 1940 the ACEC endorsed the recommendations of the Jones' sub-committee, and in turn, asked the Secretary of State to appoint the commission "at once, in order to

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<sup>43</sup>. Ibid.

review matters of urgency in this country and to submit on these an interim report, and proceed to West Africa as soon thereafter as might be practicable".<sup>44</sup>

However, the critical stage of the war made it impossible for the Secretary of State to appoint the commission accordingly. Apart from the difficulty of securing qualified and capable personnel for the proposed commission, the Colonial Office had been directed to concentrate only on "matters more nearly relating to the conduct of the war". In fact, after the disaster in France in May/June 1940 and during the Battle of Britain virtually all the reform programmes advocated by MacDonald were suspended, and plans for research and inquiry scrapped while the Colonial Office was told that the war crisis prevented any further progress on colonial reforms. Despite the effect of the war in preventing the appointment of the West African commission in 1939/40, eventually it was this proposal which came to fruition later.

MacDonald's departure from the Colonial Office to the Ministry of Health dealt another heavy blow to the reform movement by removing its most important driving force. Those who succeeded him, with the exception of Lord Cranborne, had little political influence with the Cabinet.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, whatever influence each Secretary of State had on the Cabinet

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<sup>44</sup>.CO 847/18/9 Extract from the Draft Minutes of the ACEC Meeting, 12 December 1940.

<sup>45</sup>.Lords Lloyd and Moyne had consecutively presided before Cranborne took over.



was overshadowed by the exigencies of the war following the fall of France. As Flint puts it:

Whoever had been in command of the Colonial Office in the summer of 1940 could, at best, have fought only a rear-guard action in defence of colonial reform as the magnitude of the disaster in France made itself apparent.<sup>46</sup>

In the meantime, in February 1941, Professor Channon, who had served in the Jones' sub-committee, submitted a memorandum on higher education in the colonies to the ACEC.<sup>47</sup> Channon's visit to South-East Asia in 1938 as a member of an education commission to Malaya had deeply influenced his interest in higher education in the British colonies. Written in 1940 "as a postscript to the official report" after his return from Malaya, Channon had submitted the memorandum to the ACEC unofficially as "his personal views on the problem involved".<sup>48</sup> The document reached the ACEC at the most inauspicious time when the tide of war had turned against Britain, and when the Jones's sub-committee had just been appointed. Consequently the memorandum was not considered then. However the ACEC's ultimate endorsement of the somewhat radical Jones' report presumably convinced Channon of the expediency of his own ideas. Furthermore, after making

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<sup>46</sup>.Flint, "On the Defensive: Retreat from Reform 1940-1942", pp.2 and 4.

<sup>47</sup>.H.J. Channon, "Some Observations on the Development of Higher Education in the Colonies", 1940 as reproduced in Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, pp.481-492.

<sup>48</sup>.Ashby, p.206.

considerable changes to the document, Christopher Cox now felt that the Channon memorandum should be brought forward for discussion by the Committee.<sup>49</sup> As a result, the memorandum was considered by the ACEC and the contents were far-reaching.

Channon's memorandum made a bold plea for an entirely new approach to the question of higher education in the colonies. Introducing the memorandum, Channon explained that three principles had guided him to write it. Firstly, the colonial peoples with all their diversities of background could only be brought into intimate relationship with each other and with the empire as a whole through the medium of English as a universal language. Accordingly, "Universities everywhere had common ideals and a common purpose, and advantage should be taken of this fact to help the colonial peoples to maturity and to make them members of an imperial family". Secondly, the imperial resources of Britain should be drawn upon for promoting the policy of imperial trusteeship. Presumably, Channon meant financial as well as intellectual resources. Finally, immediately following the successful conclusion of the war, there would be a unity in the empire such as had never hitherto existed; every constituent part would be glad that it belonged to the whole. Predictably, this:

feeling of gratitude and thankfulness  
that spread through the peoples would

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<sup>49</sup>.CO 947/1 "ACEC Discussions on the Channon's Memorandum", February 1941. Cox had perused the document and offered some suggestions to Channon after which the former now introduced the final draft to the ACEC.

rapidly be replaced however by a desire for further progress, and the peoples could rightly expect that plans for their future development should be disclosed to them.<sup>50</sup>

Here lies one of the best, exact and precise examples of what colonial reform was all about - strengthening the empire by reforms and liberalization. Evidently Channon was an imperial statesman. He believed in the expansion and survival of the British Empire. For him the economic, social and political development of the colonial peoples should therefore be a necessary corollary in the process. "The real progress of the peoples and their ability to stand on their own feet", Channon contended, "will only be ensured by early and active help and encouragement in the development of the top of the educational structure, in order that an educated section of the community may emerge as soon as possible".<sup>51</sup> Thus university development, seen as the key to colonial economic and social reform, was put forward as a fundamental method of strengthening the empire and creating the educated elite which would carry through the reform process.

Channon knew that one of the dilemmas which would

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<sup>50</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>. Channon, "Some Observations of the Development of Higher Education in the Colonies", as in Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.485. For the colonial peoples to "stand on their own feet", Channon was obviously not referring to complete independence as occurred in the 1960's. Rather, he was thinking along the line of Dominion status which would make the colonies viable components of the British Commonwealth.

confront Britain in the post-war era was how to make the colonies viable parts of the "imperial family". He noted that the colonial problems of the past arose out of the failure to realize certain misconceptions about the fundamental principles underlying the conception of university education.<sup>52</sup> A university, he further explained, should not dangerously be misconstrued as a mass production machine through which students of different mental calibre were passed. Instead, it should be seen as a place where carefully chosen students of adequate mental attainments were not only fitted to "take their places in the different professions", but also "given the outlook necessary for them to play their part as citizens in the much wider sense". Consequently, Channon pointed out that:

Failure to appreciate this elementary principle inevitably gives rise to political fears, and institutions of university type are then established only when it is imperative to produce men vocationally trained for some particular type of government post.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the fact that Channon acknowledged that although there was a genuine fear of the political and economic consequences of the production of a highly educated class among colonial populations, he regarded these apprehensions as "largely groundless, for they are based on a misconception". For him therefore the provision of universities in the

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<sup>52</sup>.Channon in Ibid., p.481.

<sup>53</sup>.Ibid., pp.481-2.

colonies would rather play a wider and more beneficial role in the British Empire than the concern about the self interests of the colonial officials on-the-spot. Insisting that universities would certainly strengthen the empire and not help to liquidate it, Channon asserted that:

The widely varying conditions of the Colonies and Protectorates - the different stages of development of the peoples, the variations in their economic, social and religious backgrounds, the diversities of climate - provide so many vivid contrasts, that it is extremely difficult to see how each may become a member of a family working for a common end rather than the adopted child of a somewhat unenthusiastic foster parent.<sup>54</sup>

Channon's memorandum fully supported the idea of colonial universities, as did the Currie's report of 1933, De La Warr's Commission of 1937 and the Jones's Sub-Committee of 1940. However, the difference lay in Channon's argument that universities would consolidate rather than liquidate the British Empire.

The memorandum further reviewed the problem of finding staff for the proposed universities as well as the question of the supply of students. Suitably qualified staff or professors often refused appointments in the colonial colleges while those who accepted were often regarded as substandard academics who could not find such jobs in Britain. Channon also highlighted the issue of the employment of products of

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<sup>54</sup>.Ibid., p.490.

the proposed colonial universities. According to him, "education tends, in some cases, to be regarded as a wayward and difficult child in colonial government circles"<sup>55</sup> because it often produced undesirable political and social results. Furthermore

The attitude of mind often found in government and commercial circles regarding university development in the colonies appears to be a somewhat reluctant recognition that universities must ultimately be created; but this is usually combined with a hope that the day of achievement may be postponed for as long as possible.<sup>56</sup>

The question of standards also featured throughout the memorandum. Thus he noted that "some of the [colonial] peoples possess a quite remarkable facility for memorizing facts, without appreciation of their significance of application; they have much information but little understanding". For Channon, the London external degree system as used in the colonies was fraught with this danger because its curriculum had not been modified to suit imperial needs.<sup>57</sup> Hence he suggested that university institutions, empowered at this stage to award pass degrees only, should be developed in the colonies instead. The development of such institutions "would

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<sup>55</sup>. Ibid., p.485.

<sup>56</sup>. Ibid., p.481.

<sup>57</sup>. Channon insisted that "it is of the greatest importance that the curriculum should govern the examination, rather than the examination should determine the curriculum...", ibid., p.488.

materially assist the most desirable object of creating nationalist pride in the institution and would lay the foundations of intellectual equality among the native populations...". Ostensibly, Channon believed that the stimulation of nationalism in the colonies was essential as a force for imperial consolidation, and that by removing racial discrimination (by proving the intellectual capability of Africans in universities) a "better" nationalism would be nourished for the empire.

Channon insisted that before full university status would be conferred upon colonial institutions it must be agreed by both government and other employers that "the colonial degree is equivalent to the English, so that adequate opportunity of employment of graduates becomes available". For this to be fully realized, he suggested that universities at home should accept the colonial degrees as exempting students from equivalent courses in Britain.<sup>58</sup> This view remains one of the first thoughtful comments on this question of the lack of recognition of African qualifications. Hitherto, the impression had been created that Africans would prefer British degrees to those which the proposed colonial universities would confer, because of the tradition of the non-recognition of local qualifications. Finally, Channon emphasized the need for colonial universities to be brought into close association with British universities as a whole, and to benefit from the

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<sup>58</sup>.Channon in Ashby, Ibid., p.486-7.

accumulated experience of all rather than that of a single university, a point which the De La Warr and Currie reports had previously underscored.

However, Channon was not comfortable with the somewhat domineering influence in the colonies of the University of London through its matriculation and external degree system. This is hardly surprising since he came from the University of Liverpool. He wanted to see other universities participate in the higher education of colonial peoples. Thus he applauded the recent association which the University of Oxford had established with Makerere Higher College, whereby Oxford would give advice regarding curriculum when invited to do, and would send visiting lecturers to the college if and when occasion permitted. While recognizing the psychological stimulation this type of connection would offer the students of Makerere, Channon decried an extended method (often used by the University of London) whereby "a particular university becomes [so] enthusiastic in its work for a given college,...that it has the possessive rights of a foster parent in controlling the welfare of its adopted child". In such a circumstance, some difficulties might arise whereby

the college may tend to follow the practices of its foster parent instead of moulding itself to suit local conditions; I can well picture also the possibility of difficult positions arising in a conflict of interests of the parent universities at home regarding the



development of their adopted colleges.<sup>59</sup>

Generally Channon aroused a new consciousness of the problem of university development in the colonies, and his idea of an imperial university system was warmly welcomed by members of the ACEC. Channon's call for a broader view of the problems of higher education in the colonies, which should be followed by direct policy, was something which appealed to most members of the ACEC. His warning: "We should endeavour to control future events rather than wait until the pressure of events makes it necessary to take action"<sup>60</sup> highlighted the danger of neglect in the face of potential post-war reactions by colonial peoples to British colonial reforms and development policies.

Channon's memorandum now led the ACEC to suggest the appointment of an additional commission, much wider than the one for West Africa, which would undertake the study of a plan to involve the universities of Great Britain in an overall scheme for university development in the colonial empire. The work of this second commission, it was expected, would be in relation to the general problem and the means whereby universities in Great Britain could assist in the development of colonial universities.<sup>61</sup> Since the work of the larger

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<sup>59</sup>. Ibid., p.490-1. Channon's remarks appeared prophetic. These difficulties would actually trouble the colonial universities when they finally emerged.

<sup>60</sup>. Ibid., p.492.

<sup>61</sup>. CO 987/1 Minutes of the ACEC Meeting, April 1941.

commission would encompass the entire British colonial empire, the ACEC therefore appointed a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Channon to consider the nature and form of investigation to be undertaken by the proposed broader commission.<sup>62</sup> That Channon would head this sub-committee was almost predictable. To a great extent, his memorandum had distinguished him in the ACEC as a key thinker on higher education in the colonies. Soon he became the leader of the academic lobby both in the ACEC and in the Colonial Office.

However, it was not until two years later that Channon's Sub-Committee submitted its report to the ACEC. This considerable delay was caused by the war situation which remained uncertain between May 1941 and November 1942. Ashby observed that the sub-committee had to work "under gruesome conditions of blackout, bombing, and the anxieties of war" and in some cases "discussions had to be postponed owing to the complexity of the problem and the possibility of carrying out the necessary consultations with heads of African colleges at that [critical] stage of the war".<sup>63</sup> Maxwell also agrees that the war crisis inevitably delayed the work of the Channon's group. According to him, "handicapped by the war conditions, they [the sub-committee] could not complete their task for two

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<sup>62</sup>.Other members of the sub-committee were Sir Fred Clarke, Julian Huxley, B Mouat Jones, W.M. Macmillan, Miss M. Perham and R.A. M.Davidson

<sup>63</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, pp.207-8.

years".<sup>64</sup>

Even in the ominous face of possible defeat, the idea of colonial universities lingered on in the Colonial Office. Although war difficulties set back development, other war-time events kept the flame of the concept of colonial universities alive. Between 1941 and 1942 Britain was virtually fighting a war for survival. The entry of the United States on the Allied side after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour hardly brought immediate relief to Britain. Rather, it provoked a protracted debate on the colonial question hinged on self-government, democracy, and self-determination. Although it is not the purpose of this study to consider the details of the controversy, suffice it to say that it resulted in a realistic self-examination by the Colonial Office of the goal of British imperial policy.<sup>65</sup> Worse still, the fall of the British eastern empire, particularly Singapore, was viewed by imperial statesmen as something more than just a military failure. In reality, the disaster "undermined faith in the quality of British administration" since the colonial peoples of the Far East had refused to rise in defence of the empire.<sup>66</sup> The Colonial Office could no longer avoid the need for a new policy, one which "would seize the imagination and inspire

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<sup>64</sup>.Maxwell, Universities in Partnership, p.7.

<sup>65</sup>.Lee and Petter, The Colonial Office, War, and Development Policy, p.120.

<sup>66</sup>.Wm.Roger Louis, Imperialism at Bay 1941-1945, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977, p.7.

confidence about the future".<sup>67</sup> Consequently Margery Perham and other members of the academic lobby called for the revival of the reform process which had been initiated by MacDonald. For Perham, the colonial peoples had grasped "the connection of poverty and subjection to ignorance, and there is no service for which they ask with the same passion as they do for education".<sup>68</sup> Thus despite the war the university idea continued to be supported.

In Britain as well as in the colonies it began to be increasingly appreciated that the aftermath of the war would usher in a new relationship between Britain and her colonial peoples. Partly as a result of American prodding, Lord Hailey had introduced the new doctrine of "partnership" with the colonies to replace the embattled and outdated principle of "trusteeship". The Colonial Office endorsed this new doctrine not only because it conveyed the idea of equality and friendship between Britain and the colonies but also because it would placate its American allies. In the colonies some governors began to brace up for the occasion. Governor Charles Dundas of Uganda was one such governor. In June 1942, he prepared a confidential memorandum meant for the local colonial service, a copy of which was transmitted to the

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<sup>67</sup>.Lee and Petter, The Colonial Office, War, and Development, p.121.

<sup>68</sup>.Margery Perham to The Times, March 14, 1942 as reproduced in Perham, Colonial Sequence 1930 to 1949, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1967, pp.225-233.

Secretary of State, Lord Cranborne.<sup>69</sup> At the end of the war, Dundas pointed out that:

Several forces will combine to impose in these respects reforms that will be in harmony with the spirit of the time. In the first place there is what I might call the Atlantic Charter spirit, the universal resolve that there shall, so to speak, be no under-dogs, a humanitarian doctrine that is the direct outcome of desperate resistance against tyranny. There is also the growing sentiment, born in England already before the war, for betterment of all conditions in our Colonies, and elimination of poverty, ignorance and subservient status among backward peoples.

There was no longer any doubt that Africans would exert more pressure for colonial reforms after the war. What mattered now was how to guide these inevitable post-war problems lest they run out of control. According to Dundas, "thousands of Africans who have served in many lands remote from their own, and who have seen much and gained many ideas, will now exert a new influence which will result in a demand for new methods and treatments".<sup>70</sup> Such demands, he noted, included education, employment of educated Africans in higher and better-paid positions in the public service, political representation, equality in all its ramifications and better conditions of livelihood. These demands "will not come only, and probably not most forcefully, from Africans, nor only from

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<sup>69</sup>.CO 847/23/9 Charles Dundas, "Memorandum By His Excellency the Governor on the Post-War Attitudes Towards Social and Administrative Policy in Africa, June 1942.

<sup>70</sup>.Ibid.

our own nation, it will be universally voiced". Under such circumstance, he further contended, Britain would no longer dictate to the Africans. Doing so would attract African opposition because it would contradict the principle upon which Africans and the Allied forces fought and won the war. Quoting "the old saw" Dundas wrote: "Good government is no substitute for self-government". Thus he called upon British officials in Africa and those in London involved in the formulation of colonial policies to "adjust their minds" to these impending and inevitable changes to avoid being "intellectually behind the spirit of the times".<sup>71</sup>

In his covering note to the Secretary of State, Dundas pointed out that his memorandum was "intended only to stimulate a more liberal spirit and broader outlook in preparation for future developments" among local officials.<sup>72</sup> He noted the persistence of "a rather too narrow and unimaginative attitude in certain local quarters", and insisted that such "somewhat ultra-conservative outlook...threatens to be ultimately stultifying". Having witnessed "the far reaching reactions of one war on Africa and African mentality", Dundas confessed:

I am apprehensive that the new post-war situation may come as a shock to some who, having long lived in the undisturbed atmosphere of Uganda, so far little

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<sup>71</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>. CO 847/23/9 Charles Dundas to Lord Cranborne, June 1942.

flurried even by conditions of war - may not be prepared for changes that I regard as inevitable and I have desired to rouse their attention to a situation with which they may be confronted and of which they should be forewarned.<sup>73</sup>

Dundas hoped that his memorandum would positively arouse the keen interest of the Colonial Office. He was also convinced that given the more liberal ferment of the time his initiative would not be misplaced. Cranborne sent Dundas a personal letter of commendation, praising his initiative. The Secretary of State acknowledged the "radical change of outlook which has taken place" in London "since the outbreak of the war" and "a steadily increasing interest in the affairs of the Colonies is apparent in the Mother Country".<sup>74</sup> The tone of Cranborne's response to Dundas' views clearly demonstrated the changing attitudes in London.

From November 1942, however, the fortunes of war turned in favour of the Allied forces, and the cabinet reshuffle of that month installed Oliver Stanley as the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Lee and Petter have observed that this period witnessed the shift of emphasis "from fighting for survival to preparing for peace" which ultimately "influenced the mood and agenda of the Colonial Office".<sup>75</sup> Simultaneously

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<sup>73</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>. CO 847/23/9 Secretary of State to Governor Dundas, 30 July 1942.

<sup>75</sup>. Lee and Petter, The Colonial Office, War and Development Policy, p.147.

colonial reform, which had been put in the back burner since May 1940 as a result of the defeats in war, began once again to receive a new impulse. The ideas of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act began to be revived. Stimulated by the great interest which Stanley placed on the issues relating to reforms and the provision of universities in the colonies, the Channon sub-committee began to work enthusiastically. Furthermore, the shifting of the fortunes of war in favour of Britain gave more hope and strength to officials of the Colonial Office and the ACEC. By February 1943, the head of the West African Department, A.J.Dawe, was complacent enough to state that "war pressures and uncertainties had subsided to a degree where it was necessary to start serious post-war planning for West Africa".<sup>76</sup> In February 1943, and at Stanley's request, Channon accepted part-time duties at the Colonial Office to speed up the production of his sub-committee's report and assist in following it up.<sup>77</sup>

In March 1943 Channon's Sub-Committee submitted an interim report to the ACEC. Introducing the report, Channon apologised for the delay in carrying out their assignment. This was as a result of, first, the late arrival for informal discussion with the sub-committee, of Mr. Stopford, the

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<sup>76</sup>.CO 554/132/33718/1943 as cited in *ibid.*, p.151.

<sup>77</sup>.Channon himself was acting as Adviser on Education to the Secretary of State for the Colonies at the crucial period in 1943; Sir Christopher Cox was then on an extended tour round Africa.



principal of Achimota College and Mr. Turner, the principal of Makerere College. Channon's group considered it necessary to sound out these men in order "to determine the form in which the colonies would best receive help and reactions to the proposals of the type described in the Channon Memorandum"<sup>78</sup> Secondly the Sub-Committee awaited receipt of the reactions of the home universities to the proposed scheme of higher education in the colonies.

In any case the interim report formally recommended the appointment of a more authoritative commission to consider the general question of higher education in the colonies. This was endorsed by the ACEC. Ensuring that the increasingly influential academic lobby was fully involved, Channon argued that the personnel of the proposed commission "would need to include considerable representation of the home Universities".<sup>79</sup> Also, the question of the desirability of another commission being appointed for West Africa was reviewed in the light of the all-embracing terms of reference that the general commission would be given. After considering the whole series of very important particular problems that a West African commission would investigate, the ACEC formally endorsed the need for two commissions to be appointed simultaneously. In addition, the need for overlapping

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<sup>78</sup>.CO 987/1 ACEC Discussion on the Interim Report of the Channon's Sub-Committee on Higher Education, March 1943.

<sup>79</sup>.CO 987/1 ACEC Discussion on the Interim Report of the Channon Sub-Committee on Higher Education, March 1943.

membership in both commissions was raised. The ACEC endorsed the idea, pointing out that "it would be necessary for the Commission that went to West Africa to have in mind the ideas at which the general Commission had arrived as a result of their preliminary deliberations".<sup>80</sup> Channon's group promised to produce another comprehensive report soon on the whole problem - a diagnosis of the present position and a discussion of lines of enquiry which the proposed commission might pursue.

In May, Channon's group presented its final report to the ACEC, which called for immediate action on the plans to deal with the general question of higher education in the colonies. The prospect of an early termination of the war and government's pledge of self-government for the colonial peoples, within the framework of the British Empire, gave a new drive to the university question. Accordingly,

there will be a spontaneous and rigorous impulse for self-development among the colonial peoples in the immediate post-war period and preparations must be made to satisfy this impulse. Long-term plans must be made now so that the course of the future events may as far as possible be pre-determined. Unless such plans are so prepared, pressure of events will later compel action to be taken, and action taken under pressure lacks the ordered sequence necessary to success.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>. Report of Channon Sub-Committee on Higher Education in the Colonies, 1943 as reproduced in Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African:, p.495.

Almost in total agreement with the educational philosophy of Governor Mitchell that the establishment of a university should go hand in hand with those of primary and secondary schools, the report maintained that "the progress of education at any level is not an independent thing; it depends in its turn of events proceeding at the different levels above and below it".<sup>82</sup> Quality teachers for the primary and secondary schools had to be produced by higher educational institutions. Good students who would be admitted into the various universities also had to be produced by quality teachers. In other words, no one segment of the educational process should be neglected. Progress should be simultaneous.

The report noted that "the basic problems of higher education are common to all territories wherever they may be, and that they require a common type of solution". It therefore concluded that "a clear statement of policy regarding these general problems is needed now, for in its absence more difficult and perhaps insoluble ones will arise later". "Once a general policy has been formulated," the report further stated, "adaptation to the local conditions is a relatively easy matter".<sup>83</sup> On the method of approach, the Channon sub-committee's report stressed the need for the home universities to lend their intellectual resources in the development of colonial institutions. British universities should forge an

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<sup>82</sup>. Ibid., p.596.

<sup>83</sup>. Ibid., p.504.

intimate relationship with the colonial universities, and guide them to constructive development. The need for qualified staff and the policy of secondment of "good men of varying seniority in teaching and research" was also highlighted. Such a policy on secondment would enable them to return to their posts in home universities after their service in the colonial institutions. It would equally ensure that only qualified staff taught in the colonial universities in order to avoid the production of "half-baked" graduates.

Rehashing Channon's memorandum, the report argued that the continued application of the present external degree methods in the colonies was unsound and could undermine the real purpose of higher education. It viewed the curriculum as "largely unrelated to the background and educational needs of the peoples", and questioned the reasonableness of the imposition of a syllabus designed for a British degree in conditions differing so radically from those in Great Britain. Furthermore, it questioned the wisdom of a system whereby "a College has no part in the examining and the external University has no part in the teaching".<sup>84</sup> The Sub-Committee advocated substantial modifications in curriculum and in the method of conducting examinations.

As a substitute for the University of London external degree system, the report suggested the creation of "an academic body representative of all the Universities of Great

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<sup>84</sup>. Ibid., p.509.

Britain with powers to award degrees in the Colonies". This body which should be known as "The Colonial University", should also include representatives from the colonial colleges. It was expected that they would act as "joint trustees" until colonial universities had developed and received their charters. The sub-committee believed that this arrangement "might overcome the possible difficulty of the students of West Africa regarding the new degree as an inferior substitute for the London degree".<sup>85</sup>

Considering the political, psychological and educational implications of a realistic approach to the university question, Channon's group insisted that the "very success of our own propaganda leaves us with no option but to go forward...giving the lead rather than being pressed into action".<sup>86</sup> The report further stressed the effects of the new consciousness at home and the impact of the Atlantic Charter and other pronouncements on the colonial peoples. Accordingly, "advantage must be taken of the new outlook at home, and the expectations of the Colonies must be moulded to fruitful and constructive purpose". Believing that the problems of university development in the colonies "must be investigated now, and that plans must be made ready" the report called for a more authoritative enquiry, wide and impressive. As the Sub-

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<sup>85</sup>. Ibid., p.512. This was the view expressed by the principal of Achimota College at a meeting with the members of the Channon's sub-committee.

<sup>86</sup>. Ibid., p.523.

Committee stated:

We ourselves are incapable of doing more than to provide a sketch of the problem as a whole; its solution must lie in more expert hands, and its political and educational importance with their wide implications are such that we consider an authoritative enquiry to be essential.<sup>87</sup>

When the ACEC considered the Channon sub-committee's report in July 1943, it viewed the argument as very persuasive and progressive. This is hardly surprising. For so long the academic lobby within the ACEC had sought to influence or initiate a forward policy for schemes of higher education in the colonies, beginning in 1933 with Currie's through De La Warr's reports down to the Mouat Jones recommendations. Thus when Channon's sub-committee presented the far-reaching and radical proposals for an immediate formulation of a policy framework for university development, the ACEC praised the report overwhelmingly and swiftly endorsed it. The ACEC reiterated its earlier resolve that an authoritative commission should be appointed immediately to consider the problem of higher education in all the British colonies. Finally the Committee strongly reaffirmed "the importance and urgency of immediate action" in the whole business.<sup>88</sup>

Although preceded by other commissions and sub-committee's, such as those of James Currie, De La Warr and

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<sup>87</sup>. Ibid., p.524.

<sup>88</sup>. CO 987/1 ACEC Resolution on the Report of the Sub-Committee on Higher Education, July 1943.

Mouat Jones, the Channon report, as Maxwell observed, "played a vital part in generating some of the principal ideas and in persuading authority of the need for a constructive policy".

It was particularly

the germ of the idea of an Inter-University Council, though De La Warr had suggested that 'it might be helpful if someone in London could be chosen to represent the common interests of the African Colleges', for example in such matters as securing the recognition of their diplomas.<sup>89</sup>

Similarly Ashby has described the report as "the pacemaker for all subsequent development in higher education overseas" which rehashed "in a more systematic and comprehensive way the ideas which Professor Channon had embodied in the memorandum...".<sup>90</sup>

Professor Huxley viewed the report as "a piece of intellectual lend-lease" while Creech Jones found its argument "irresistible" and the case for immediate action "overwhelming".<sup>91</sup> The Channon report therefore dwarfed the achievements of the preceding investigations as it became immensely admired by members of the ACEC as well as the officials of the Colonial Office.

It should be recognized, however, that several advantages played into the circumstance surrounding the Channon's report

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<sup>89</sup>.Maxwell, Universities in Partnership, p. 7-8. The origins, functions of the Inter-University Council (IUC) will be highlighted in the next chapter.

<sup>90</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.208.

<sup>91</sup>.CO 987/1 ACEC Discussion of the Report of the Channon's Sub-Committee on Higher Education, July 1943.

- advantages which its precursors had lacked. The report appeared at a more auspicious time when the tide of war had turned in favour of the Allied forces. Secondly the ACEC was now dominated by British academics, led by Channon himself, who were determined to push forward the interests of the academic lobby. Thirdly, Oliver Stanley, who had become the Secretary of State, was another "MacDonald" in respect to his drive for reforms and higher educational development in the colonies. Fourthly, the Colonial Office had taken full control of the colonial policy-making process and implementation hitherto left to British officials on the spot. Additionally, funds had become available through the CD&WA for a sustained scheme of colonial development. Also by 1943 the support of home universities could be more confidently counted upon, as demonstrated by unofficial discussions with Franklin Sibly, chairman of the Vice-Chancellors' Committee and John Stopford, chairman of the Universities Bureau.<sup>92</sup> Hence, when it appeared, the Channon report became the best thought on the problem, while those which predated it remained only preliminary.

Clearly the events which informed the pre-1939 efforts at university schemes in the colonies differed from those which guided policies from the 1940's. Although the Currie report of

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<sup>92</sup>.CO 987/1 ACEC Discussion on the Channon's Interim Report, op.cit. Both Sibly and Stopford agreed that an authoritative enquiry was essential and recognized that the home universities had serious obligations towards the colonies.



1933 recommended the establishment of university facilities in Africa, it was not until the West Indian riots that a realistic effort towards the socio-economic and political development of the colonies was begun under MacDonald. Although the outbreak of the Second World War tended to stultify progress under the CD&WA, the university question received a new impetus especially when the threat of defeat began to evaporate. Not only did it become necessary to maintain the peace in the colonies during the war, it also became very important to mobilize the colonial peoples in support of the war effort. The possible influence of the aftermath of the war on the colonial peoples had begun to worry the officials of the Colonial Office. Thus, to prepare for post-war problems and ensure that the attendant changes were wisely regulated, policies needed to be planned during the war. Additionally since the success of eventual "self-government", and colonial development of the colonies, required a large body of educated Africans as leaders, the university question became relevant in that process. Thus the proposed commissions on higher education - one for West Africa and the other for all the British colonies - were designed to give practical purpose to post-war reconstruction.

## Chapter Five

### THE ASQUITH AND ELLIOT COMMISSIONS, 1943-1946: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY 'IMPERIALISM'

From November 1942, when Oliver Stanley took over the affairs of the Colonial Office, matters relating to colonial development began to receive new impetus. Specifically he considered university education as "one of the most important questions in connection with the post-war reconstruction and development of the Colonial Empire...".<sup>1</sup> Under the new dispensation resting on colonial economic, social and political development, and coupled with pressures from African intelligentsia, the objective of universities in the colonies became clearer. It had become appreciated that development in the colonies after the war would certainly require the collaboration of an educated African elite with skills. Since this class was pitifully small the need arose to expand it if real progress were to be expected. Here the desire of the African educated elites to take control and the determination of the Colonial Office to allow a measure of responsibility coincided. The appointment of the Asquith and Elliot Commissions on higher education in July 1943 therefore became an essential first step towards British colonial post-war planning. It marked a turning point because, for the first

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<sup>1</sup>. Stanley to Channon, 23 February 1943 as cited in Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.211.

time, the question of university development in the colonies became a matter of high policy.

What soon became the Asquith commission was expected to survey the higher educational needs of the whole British colonial empire and to look into the general question of the principles which should guide the development of universities, and how the process might be assisted by universities and institutions in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, the Elliot Commission - limited to British West Africa - was meant to be more directly concerned with investigating the existing conditions of higher education, the needs of the territories and how these needs could best be met by university development. Since African informed opinion remained strongly in favour of the university idea, again, it became necessary to act urgently. The groundwork for the scheme was complex, carefully planned, and Stanley gave the project his utmost attention, personally working out the details while the great events of the war were turning against the Axis. Ashby portrayed the picture succinctly:

While the Allied general staff worked out a greater and more dramatic strategy in Casablanca and Washington and Quebec, Stanley and his advisers were devising ways to mobilize the British universities to carry higher education into the colonial empire.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of the commissions came to fruition and the members were chosen after a series of informal discussions

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<sup>2</sup>.Ashby, ibid.

between the Colonial Office and the ACEC. In most cases, Stanley was directly involved, with Channon acting as the spokesman of the ACEC. Since his memorandum, Channon had assumed a prominent position in London on matters of higher education in the colonies. In fact, in early February 1943, Channon was seconded to the Colonial Office to help advise Stanley on how the two proposed commissions would function. Stanley was preparing his speech for the July debate in the House of Commons, and wanted to be able to announce the new policy to establish universities which would train Africans for self-government. From the onset both the ACEC and the Colonial Office recognized the special role British academics would play. Those to be appointed to the proposed commission should therefore demonstrate remarkable standing and influence among British academics. Thus the opportunity had finally come for the academic lobby to influence British imperial policy significantly.

Since the findings of the two commissions would relate to each other, and to ensure co-ordinated efforts from the beginning, the Secretary of State readily endorsed the ACEC's idea of overlapping membership. When they were appointed in mid-1943, Professor Channon and Dr. J.F.Duff became members of both commissions.<sup>3</sup> Considering the broader question and the general principles, the Asquith commission held most of its

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<sup>3</sup>.Duff was the Vice-Chancellor of Durham University. The full list of all the members of both commissions is given later in this chapter.

sittings in London with occasional visits, usually of small groups, to various colonies. The Elliot commission, on the other hand, spent fairly some time in West Africa because its members were investigating the special problem presented by that region. When the two commissions reported, their ideas ultimately led to the foundation of university colleges in Africa along the lines of British Universities.

#### THE ASQUITH COMMISSION

By March 1943 Oliver Stanley endorsed the Channon Subcommittee's report and became very enthusiastic about setting up the general commission on higher education. But before he could proceed, he decided to sound out the views of the British universities which were expected to play a major role in the whole process. The Colonial Office therefore initiated discussions with other British universities, prominent amongst which were Oxford and Cambridge. The University of London became somewhat apprehensive. When finally the appointment of the Asquith Commission began to be rumoured in April, the university's anxiety heightened. The University's major concern was that its traditional role in the colonies through the external degree programmes, which had long been its source of pride, might be disregarded by the Colonial Office in the whole enterprise.

Writing to Alexander Carr-Saunders of the University of

London School of Economics, the Principal of the University, H. Cloughton confessed that he was "rather perturbed about our relationship with the Colonial Office".<sup>4</sup> He strongly feared that "matters may be maturing too fast in other directions whilst we are being left out in the cold". Deeply distressed about official dislike for the workings of the London external degree system<sup>5</sup>, Cloughton was convinced that "much was going on behind the scenes" between the Colonial Office and other institutions, such as Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Cloughton further affirmed that his fears "were somewhat intensified over the week-end (and this you must keep to yourself)" when a Colonial Office man told him: "I wish I could tell you what is going on behind the scenes but of course my lips are sealed".<sup>6</sup> Clearly, Cloughton wanted Carr-Saunders to give his own assessment of the whole situation. The principal was looking for "inside influence" with the Colonial Office because Carr-Saunders was a very powerful name from the academic world and in the Office circles. Thus he was

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<sup>4</sup>.AC 11/1/1 H. Cloughton to Alexander Carr-Saunders, 1 March 1943, University of London Archives and Palaeography, London (U.L.A.P.).

<sup>5</sup>. Note that Channon, who was now very powerful in the Colonial Office, ACEC as well as in the Asquith Commission, had deeply criticized the London external degree system. Cloughton's fears may, after all, have been well-founded considering that Channon was from the University of Liverpool.

<sup>6</sup>. Ibid.

on no less than three Colonial Office Advisory Committees<sup>7</sup>, and Cloughton knew very well that there was not much of the major policy framework in the Colonial Office of which Carr-Saunders was unaware.

The University of London was clearly ambitious in this matter, and wanted primacy in the whole business. The university had become alarmed that the Colonial Office had not accorded it a special honour and role in the proposed development of colonial universities. Dominating university education in the colonies through its external degree scheme, London was outraged that Oxford and Cambridge Universities had been in serious consultation with the Colonial Office. Oxford, which had always proclaimed its "imperial mission", remained an academic as well as institutional rival to London, even if not directly in relation to external degree programmes.<sup>8</sup> This rivalry had accounted for the farcical Oxford-Makerere links in 1940 whose aim had been to challenge London dominance of colonial education. Thus one way or the other it seemed as if a "scramble" for educational influence in the colonies was in the offing. The panacea shortly became the idea of joint cooperation among British universities. Thus there was in fact

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<sup>7</sup>.Lee and Petter, Colonial Office, War, and Colonial Development, p.178. Carr-Saunders was a member of the Colonial Office Research Committee, the Social Welfare Committee, and Social Science Research Committee.

<sup>8</sup>.Neither Oxford nor Cambridge Universities had developed the external degree programmes in the colonies as the University of London had.

nothing conspiratorial in the discussions between the Colonial Office and the other universities, as later events would show. Instead the Colonial Office wanted to sound out, and possibly induce, the support of all the home institutions towards the work of the contemplated commission. It was therefore a relief to the University of London when the Secretary of State finally approached the University in May 1943. From then on, London's efforts were guided by its ambitions; goals which were ultimately fulfilled as will be shown.

In his letter to the University of London, also transmitted to the other home universities, Stanley formally outlined his intention to set up an authoritative commission on higher education in the colonies. He told them that he would need their help in order to implement the government's policy of extending university facilities to the colonies. Accordingly: "I am troubling you with this letter in the hope of enlisting your sympathy towards a project for furthering higher education in the Colonial Empire".<sup>9</sup> Reminding the various vice-chancellors of the government's deep commitment to "quicken[ing] the progress of Colonial peoples towards a higher level of social well-being and towards the ultimate goal of self-government", Stanley maintained that it was "essential to the success of this policy that the supply of leaders from the indigenous people themselves should be

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<sup>9</sup>.ULAP AC 11/1/1 Stanley to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, 29 May 1943.



rapidly increased". Under this framework he pointed out the urgent and fundamental need to enlarge university facilities without which those leaders could not be created.<sup>10</sup>

Stanley outlined two phases in the project for which assurances of interest among the home universities would be of great importance. The first was the preliminary task of investigation, while the second would arise after the commission had reported. In relation to the first phase, he suggested that the proposed commission must not only include the amplest representation of the United Kingdom universities but also count on their assistance in giving valuable evidence throughout the sittings of the commission. Stanley insisted that he would not "launch" it unless he felt assured that he could include in the commission's membership "some men of high distinction in our University life who would command confidence as exponents of university opinion upon the subject at issue". With regard to the second phase, he noted that while it was "impossible to anticipate what suggestions the Commission might put forward for eliciting the aid and interest of the Universities in the cause of higher education in the Colonies" it "would be heartening to know that the Universities would feel disposed to examine sympathetically any practical suggestions which the Commission might make". Thus he declared:

I naturally could both expect more than

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<sup>10</sup>. Ibid.

an expression of general goodwill and a readiness to approach any suggestion which the commission put forward in a helpful desire to assist if possible the achievement of the wider aims in view."<sup>11</sup>

Acknowledging that the war had greatly stimulated the aspirations of the colonial peoples towards a fuller means of self-expression both in the political and cultural regions of life, the Secretary of State surmised that "when the story of their contribution to the war effort is told, it will place beyond question their right to receive the best contributions towards their future advancement which this country can offer them". The colonial peoples expected Britain to provide them with that background of education and knowledge in the furtherance of the declared policy of higher level of social well-being and self-government. The acceleration of the wise development of universities in the colonies therefore constituted one of the most important steps which should be taken in the post war years. Such universities should be developed into active centres both of teaching and research equal to those of universities in the United Kingdom.

Additionally Stanley made an analogy between the past role of the home universities in "training and nourishing" imperial administrators, and the new role of rearing local colonial leaders of the future. Here Stanley was implicitly contrasting the former role of Oxford and Cambridge in training old colonial rulers with the new role of the

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<sup>11</sup>. Ibid.

University of London in rearing colonial "nationalists". Nevertheless, as a mark of confidence and flattery, the vice-chancellors were advised to treat the matter as confidential until the Secretary of State was in a position to announce the appointment of the commission in the House of Commons.<sup>12</sup>

The University of London was, of course, delighted to cooperate. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Frank Horton, assured Stanley that "this University, itself the pioneer through its External side in extending facilities for higher education throughout the Colonial Empire, would not be backward in its interest in any agreed schemes planned in the cause of higher education in the colonies and for the wise development of Colonial Universities".<sup>13</sup> Here, Horton directly represented the attitude of the University of London, and stated its case for empire over the new colleges. Clearly, the university was ambitious, and fervently desired to employ its external degree traditions to displace its rivals in the inter-university "scramble" for influence in the colonial higher education schemes. In the meanwhile, responses from other universities were similarly sympathetic. It would have been surprising for any of the home institutions to turn down this call for understanding and participation in the higher education of British overseas subjects, where the University

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<sup>12</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>. ULAP AC 11/1/1 Frank Horton to Oliver Stanley, 1 June 1943.

of London had hitherto dominated through its external degree system.

With such a strong assurance of co-operation from the home universities, Oliver Stanley felt confident to put education, especially university education, at the centre of his famous July 13, 1943 speech in the House of Commons. Noting, "we are beginning, rightly, to think of, and prepare for, peace" he reiterated the British Government's commitment to the social, economic and political development of the colonies. Issuing his famous declaration about the object of British imperial policy, therefore, Stanley affirmed:

...we are pledged to guide Colonial people along the road to self-government within the framework of the British Empire. We are pledged to build up their social and economic institutions, and we are pledged to develop their natural resources.<sup>14</sup>

Acknowledging that critics of empire both in Britain and abroad had often concentrated on political evolution he stressed that it was by the success in that field, success in advancing these colonial territories towards "self-government", that "critics are apt to test both our sincerity and our efficiency". But success in "self-government" must "have solid social, and economic foundations" without which "they will bring to those whom it is designed to benefit nothing but disaster". Significantly Stanley isolated

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<sup>14</sup>.Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), vol.391, col.47, 13 July 1943.

educational advance and economic development "as the twin pillars upon which any sound scheme of political responsibility must be based".<sup>15</sup>

"Self-government" and economic development must depend on a large body of trained professionals such as agriculturists, engineers, doctors, teachers, veterinary surgeons, and technicians. Stanley therefore stressed the immense part colonial universities would play not only in the training of these professionals but also in the area of research. To encourage the constructive growth of colonial universities and accelerate their wise development he emphasized the need for guidance and help from home universities, and further envisaged a partnership or "an intellectual Lend-Lease between the universities at home and the Colonial centres of higher education".

Expressing his confidence that from his "preliminary and unofficial inquiries" the home universities were ready to take on the task, Stanley then announced the appointment of a commission on higher education in the colonies under the chairmanship of Cyril Asquith<sup>16</sup> with the following terms of reference:

To consider the principles which should

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<sup>15</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>. Ibid. Cyril Asquith was a judge and the son of the Earl of Oxford and Asquith; knighted judge of King's Bench; Lord Justice of Appeal (PC); scholar of Winchester, Balliol College, Oxford, and a fellow of Magdalen College.

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".<sup>17</sup>

Simultaneously, he also set up another commission for West Africa under Walter Elliot which will be discussed shortly. Stanley could not give the House of Commons the full list of members of the commission, which was not yet complete. However he declared that he would like to have some overlapping membership between the two commission since their work "will be closely linked".<sup>18</sup>

There were no parliamentary objections to the appointment of these commissions. This demonstrated the extent of political transformation taking place in Britain during the war. The war witnessed a coalition in which Labour's participation in the government made it difficult for the Conservative government to do anything of serious political import to which Labour had strong objections. Paul Addison has shown how normal British party politics almost came to a stop in the interest of national unity when Britain came close to

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<sup>17</sup>. See the terms of reference embodied in Cmd.6647, Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, H.M.S.O., June 1945, p.A2.

<sup>18</sup>. Parliamentary Debates, (House of Commons), vol.391, col.54-57, 13 July, 1943. The idea of an overlapping membership was suggested in Channon's report and endorsed by the ACEC.

defeat. Furthermore he noted that from this period onward there was a huge swing leftward of British opinion particularly with the turn of the tide from November 1942.<sup>19</sup> Henceforth British parliamentary debates became influenced if not dominated by Labour ideas. It was during this period that Stanley presented his address on the goal of British imperialism as well as the appointment of the two commissions on higher education. Besides, Stanley was extremely anxious to create an agreed bipartisan colonial policy to avoid any bitter party politics or divisions. He was aware that for the policy of colonial reforms to succeed it was essential that inter-party bickering be avoided. Not surprisingly then, parliament raised no opposition when he announced the colonial university project.

By August, the list of members of the Asquith Commission was ready, after consultation with the ACEC, "with an eye to their standing and influence among British academics".<sup>20</sup> There were sixteen members in all including the chairman. These were A.M.Carr-Saunders, Donald Cameron, H.J.Channon, Fred Clarke, J.F.Duff, Lord Hailey, James Irvine, Richard Livingstone, R.Marrs, Lilian Penson, Margery Perham, R.E.Priestley,

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<sup>19</sup>.See Paul Addison, The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War, Jonathan Cape, London, 1975, pp.13-21, and Kenneth O.Morgan, Labour in Power, 1945-1951, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984, pp.229-269.

<sup>20</sup>.Eric Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.428, (footnote 42).

J.A.Ryle, R.V.Southwell and J.A.Venn.<sup>21</sup> Although the membership of the commission included celebrated political officers - Hailey and Cameron - the academic lobby dominated the membership, since the outcome of the commission's investigation and the success of the whole scheme would depend on their effort.

The Asquith Commission met for the first time on 21 September 1943. In his opening address, the chairman of the commission began by emphasizing the politics of the whole enterprise. He reiterated the Secretary of State's pledge "upon more than one occasion" to accelerate so far as possible, and to the utmost of his power the progress of the colonial peoples towards the ultimate goal of self-government. "It is obvious that a pre-requisite to that progress", Asquith stated:

is an advance in education, and ... it seems to me in our terms of reference, that the Government considers that there is no more hopeful means of providing a way to self-government than the extension and improvement of higher education.<sup>22</sup>

He reminded members that the commission's task would fall under three broad parts. One would be a survey of the existing

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<sup>21</sup>.Apart from Hailey and Cameron who were career-administrators, the rest of the members of the commission were British academics. Interestingly, there was no clergy in the commission, the first time that missionary interests were ignored in such a colonial educational body.

<sup>22</sup>.CO 958/1 Minutes of the First Meeting of the Asquith Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, 21 September 1943.



facilities for higher education in the colonies. Another demanded the formulation of general principles which should govern the development and extension of facilities. Finally, they must suggest practical proposals for giving effects to these principles.

For Asquith, "the necessary advance cannot be made by the unassisted efforts of the Colonies themselves which suffer from great difficulties and handicaps, in the lack of adequate staff and finance". Additionally, he highlighted the problems in the colonies which hindered experienced faculty members of home universities from taking up positions in the colonial educational institutions. Such difficulties include "unpleasant surroundings", ... the lack of necessary research laboratories, libraries and so forth".<sup>23</sup> Any meaningful progress would depend on the goodwill of the home universities. Asquith then notified members that the response from the British universities to the project had been "both sympathetic and encouraging".

Addressing the defective nature of the existing colonial educational pattern, Asquith argued that it "has leant strongly towards the vocational side ...; it has not been directed consciously to evolving those civic qualities or qualities of leadership which will have to be developed if self-government is to follow". Clearly the chairman's observation touched on the root of the larger question.

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<sup>23</sup>. Ibid.

Hitherto, it had been an aberration to train the colonial peoples as leaders. Since they were supposed to be educated as perpetual subjects, colonial education had been consciously modelled towards the training of those who would occupy the various intermediate positions in the colonial service. Such positions included clerks, typists, technicians, laboratory and medical assistants and other subordinate cadres. Deliberate attempts had hitherto been made to avoid the production of politically conscious elements whom the British feared as naturally troublesome and capable of upsetting the administration based on the indirect rule system. Asquith was therefore fully aware of the central political question underlying the task given to his commission; it amounted to a complete change in the assumptions which had governed political and constitutional thinking in the pre-war period.

Significantly the chairman reminded the commissioners that Britain had entered the fifth year of the war and that "opinions are fluid and the public is prepared to accept radical changes to an extent for which it is not prepared in peace-time". Consequently, "proposals which go to the root of the problem would be much more likely to be acceptable at this time, than at almost any other".<sup>24</sup> Asquith's statement was an apt assessment of the British opinion. With the huge swing of opinion towards Labour-style radical policies following war-time exigencies, Asquith felt that the initiative must be

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<sup>24</sup>. Ibid.

seized to push the colonial university question. He was not confident that after the war these reforms could be carried out with an appropriate urgency since the peacetime politics of compromise and rhetoric would dilute the whole business. Thus from November 1942 beginning with the victory at Alamein, policies which would have been rejected in peace time began to be accepted.<sup>25</sup> Fortunately, it was during this period that the Asquith group was working, hence the chairman urged the commissioners to make whatever radical recommendations they deemed relevant now that opinions were fluid.

In any case, before the inaugural meeting rose, it mandated the chairman to write to British universities to solicit their advice and co-operation during the course of the commission's work. It was also considered important to sound out the views of local colonial administrations through the Secretary of State. In October Asquith approached the British universities asking for their goodwill, advice and help, in looking for ways to associate British universities with the new colonial institutions.<sup>26</sup> A month later Annexure 11 was circulated to governments, vice chancellors and principals of colleges in the colonies through the Secretary of State.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>.See Addison, The Road to 1945, pp.13-21, and Morgan, Labour in Power, op.cit.

<sup>26</sup>.CO 958/1 Cyril Asquith to British Universities, October 1943.

<sup>27</sup>.CO 958/2 "Annexure 11: Points on which the Asquith Commission would Appreciate the Views of the Governments, Vice-Chancellors of Universities and Principals of the

The annexure included, first, the question of modification of curricula and syllabi to suit local needs, the issue of secondment of staff of British universities to the colonial institutions and the problem of sabbatical study leave for staff of the colonial colleges. Secondly, it proposed that before the colleges reached a degree-granting stage, their students should sit for external degrees which would be of high standard and relevant to local conditions, with standards determined by external examiners collaborating, either by visiting or otherwise, with the staff of the colonial colleges. Thirdly the annexure suggested that the colleges should be constituted not only as centres of teaching, but also of research. This question of research was a deeply held idea in the ACEC, among officials of the Colonial Office, and the University of London, based on the concept that only research could produce the much-needed local curricula in the colonial institutions. Fourthly the Commission would address the issue of qualification for entrance into the colleges, the possible fees to be charged and the numbers, subjects and values of scholarships. Fifthly views were asked for on the scope of studies required as a preparation for careers in the administrative service of governments, the general policy regarding the rate and nature of the development of professional courses such as medicine, engineering, agriculture, social science, the method of

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Colleges of the Dependencies", November 1943.

government of the existing colonial colleges, and adequacy of staff and finance. Finally the Commission wished colonial governments to sound out the desire of the peoples, not presently served by any institutions, for new centres of higher education after the war.<sup>28</sup>

The responses to the annexure from the African governments revealed that, while forced to accept a policy imposed from London, there was a distinct lack of enthusiasm. The Gold Coast government, for instance, had reservations about the role of the London University external degree, apparently thinking that the plan would entail simply the establishment of colleges working for the existing external degree. The view was that "External syllabuses cannot be adequately adjusted to local needs" because

the necessity for preserving general uniformity between the External examinations at centres all over the world makes it impossible for the syllabuses to have more than a limited local adaptation.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore the government argued that even though it would take some time to build up an adequate standard for the proposed university "this time should not be exaggerated". It considered research "of the greatest importance" in line with the view of the Asquith group on the problem. Without such

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<sup>28</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>. CO 958/2 Comment from the Gold Coast Government on Annexure 11 despatched through the Secretary of State, 17 November 1943.

research, the government further observed, "the teaching in a university would have little more than a general bearing on the political, economic and social life of the people of the region it serves".

Ostensibly very much concerned about adaptation and standards, it would appear that the anxiety shown by the Gold Coast government was related to its resistance to clear-cut Africanization of the colonial service. Thus despite the fact that it had been forced to accept the idea of university development the colonial government stressed the "need for a measure of caution in the turning out of graduates until there is a reasonable hope of the country being able to absorb them". It concluded that it could only proceed on the university project "at as great a rate as financial and other circumstances of the colony permit" and that "any West African university which is established should restrict its degree courses to those fields in which the likelihood of local employment is greatest". In admitting students to courses such as agriculture, engineering, education and medicine "the college authorities should relate the number of entrants to the prospective number of vacancies that are likely to be available".<sup>30</sup> The vacancies envisaged were normally those of assistants, and intermediate positions. Apparently the position of the Gold Coast Government on the whole question of a regulated production of educated Africans, which dominated

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<sup>30</sup>. Ibid.

much of the pre-war educational policy of African colonial administrations in their avowed effort to preserve the indirect rule system, had not changed much even in the face of the emerging war-time liberalism in Britain.

In its response to the annexure, the Nigerian Government agreed with the memorandum submitted by the Acting Principal of Yaba Higher College, W.A.Thorp.<sup>31</sup> It recognized the need for exchange of staff between the new colonial colleges and British universities, and unlike the Gold Coast, preferred the imposition of British standards on the Nigerian peoples. Nigeria's main difficulty, according to the government, "is that it has no standards comparable with those of more highly developed countries". Thus it insisted that the problem of inferiority and inefficiency of the Nigerian labour force could only be solved by the "importation of the standards and of the actual workmen and professional men of European countries". Furthermore, the government observed that:

The more closely Nigeria is tied to external standards the better is the chance of cultivating a desire for the best as opposed to something which is just good enough to pass muster.<sup>32</sup>

Evidently the Nigerian colonial regime had become less reluctant than the Gold Coast. The Yaba College controversy and the views of the Lagos intellectuals that London standards

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<sup>31</sup>.CO 958/2 Comments by the Nigerian Government on Annexure 11 As Required by the Asquith Commission, November 1943.

<sup>32</sup>.Ibid.

be adopted in the College had compelled the Nigerian government to begin to show some adjustment.

Besides, the government had come to realize that high standards were related to high skill. In a sense, the economic impact of a university was becoming clearer to the regime. Perceptively, therefore, it warned that "great social problems loom ahead in Nigeria" in the immediate post-war years unless economic research which "is perhaps even more urgently needed" was emphasized. The position of the Nigerian government on the economic aspect of university training and self-government remains very striking. African proto-nationalists during the inter-war years and particularly the period preceding World War II hardly gave any serious thought to economic development. Thus the N.C.B.W.A. focused upon the electoral process for the members of the legislative councils in the 1920s. What mattered so much to them was how to enter the colonial administration at par with the Europeans. Even those Africans who wrested political power from the Europeans from the 1950's committed the same blunder by thinking that political independence would automatically assure economic development. At independence, lamentably, it was discovered that the "nationalists" possessed no blue-print with which to tackle the attendant economic problems.

Supporting the idea of secondment and the possibility of the colonial college staffs visiting London for study leave, the Nigerian Government presumed that the policy "would help



to readjust mental standards and ... self-confidence" which would be difficult to achieve under isolation. It was under this sort of seclusion, the government further concluded, that teachers in Nigeria sometimes found out that they were setting such standards for their students "which could not be met in European schools". Furthermore it advised that research work should not be confined to the applied sciences.

Viewed from another perspective, it would appear that the Nigerian colonial government was equally apprehensive over the issue of employment for graduates who would qualify in the administrative courses of the envisaged West African university. The government regretted the commission's stress on administrative studies rather than the productive sciences fearing that such emphasis would make the new universities merely engines for training Africans for administrative posts in the colonial service. Hence it insisted that Nigeria "is less in need of African administrators than the men who will see that the country produces something to be administered".<sup>33</sup> For Sierra Leone and the Gambia, their administrations were somewhat indifferent to forging ahead with the university schemes. Following closely the Nigerian views on the efficiency of its workforce, the Sierra Leone Government stated that African "possessors of a Pass Degree have proved less efficient on the whole in the General Clerical Service than youths admitted at an earlier age and of the School

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<sup>33</sup>. Ibid.

Certificate standard". Basically both Sierra Leone and the Gambia preferred to offer scholarships to a few bright students to study overseas since they lacked the resources for any expanded local university schemes as envisaged by the Commission.<sup>34</sup> Clearly the various governments were fundamentally uneasy about the admission of Africans to higher posts.

Responses from African governments revealed their elemental resistance to Africanization of the colonial service. Lord Hailey's powerfully expressed views in his Report of 1941 that Africanization should be the key policy for winning over the educated elite, and should precede the granting of more elected representation in the legislative councils was endorsed strongly by the Colonial Office.<sup>35</sup> British officials on the spot were less enthusiastic about the whole idea hence virtually nothing happened along that line before 1945 despite the very serious shortage of human resources at the higher level (with British men of military age having left for the armed forces) which Africans could have filled. The fear was that admitting more Africans into the higher cadre of the colonial service would mean not only their own gradual displacement, but also the disintegration of

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<sup>34</sup>.CO 958/2 Comments for the Governments of Sierra Leone, and the Gambia on Annexure 11, November 1943.

<sup>35</sup>.National Archives of Nigeria (NAI) RG/H1 Lord Hailey, Native Administration and African Political Development, Report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1941.

the indirect rule system which had offered them much stability and honour. Thus when the Gold Coast government desired that college authorities should relate their number of graduates to the possible vacancies and the Nigerian government insisted that the country was not much in need of administrators, they were essentially venting their resistance to Africanization in a subtle and indirect fashion.

Regardless of the stance of the colonial governments and officials, the wind of change had begun to blow. The Asquith Commission was committed to give practical effect to the new mindset in the ACEC and the Colonial Office over the question of extending fully-fledged university facilities to the colonies. On their part, the various colonial administrations barely had any choice but to carry out orders issuing from London. Centralization and control of colonial policies resulting mainly from the exigencies of the war had placed the Colonial Office in the vanguard. Under the new direction, the colonial governments could only offer suggestions, which the Colonial Office was not bound to accept. Thus irrespective of the responses of the local administrations to the Asquith Annexure, the overriding consideration remained that the British Government was now committed to establish and pay for universities in the colonial empire in order to foster the economic and social development, necessary for the realization of the ultimate goal of self-government.

With the strong support of the Colonial Office, the

Asquith commission from the beginning carried out close consultation with the University of London. This was to give "practical purpose" to the basic principles which should guide the foundation of colonial universities as well as the nature of curricula and syllabi, because London had, through its external degree programmes, established viable contacts with the colonies in relation to university education. Fortunately for the Colonial Office and the commission, the University of London was enthusiastic about this enterprise and its own possible new and expanded role in the scheme. It could not have been otherwise. Certainly the university did not want to be relegated to the background in the new project having pioneered degree programmes in the colonies for so long. Well-placed senior faculty in London now took steps to seize the initiative to win control for London over the new overseas colleges.

In December 1943, Fred Clarke, the Director of the University of London Institute of Education and member of the ACEC as well as the Asquith commission, drafted a confidential memorandum to the principal of the University, H. Cloughton, in which he initiated the discussions which ultimately resulted in the formulation of the scheme of "special relationship" between the University of London and the proposed colonial institutions.<sup>36</sup> This scheme, when

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<sup>36</sup>.ULAP AC 11/1/1 Fred Clarke to H.Cloughton, 6 December 1943.

consummated, would confer on the University of London the right and responsibility to regulate the academic standards of the colonial institutions, and to foster their 'healthy' development into fully-fledged degree-awarding universities once they were established. Even though Clarke claimed that the memorandum covered only his "personal view of the situation" there is no doubt that he was echoing the wishes of both the Colonial Office and the Asquith Commission. Since he was a senior member of the University of London, Clarke became the logical forerunner for the commission on the issue of adaptation and the new role the university might play in the higher education of the colonial peoples. Accordingly, Clarke told Claughton that:

the commission appears to be rather strongly desirous that a way may be found of adapting the University of London external degree to the needs of such institutions ... where facilities for higher education are now being developed, but where the conditions for full university status cannot yet be satisfied.<sup>37</sup>

However, what agitated the Asquith Commission from the start about the application of the London external degree arrangement was how to reconcile relevance and quality, the necessity for adaptation to indigenous needs and conditions, and the necessity to maintain degree standards at a level equivalent to those in Britain. It is noteworthy that the same issue had troubled Currie, De La Warr, and the Mouat Jones and

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<sup>37</sup>. Ibid.

Channon groups variously in their earlier investigations. Stressing the extent of the problem, therefore, Clarke reminded the principal that Africans were likely to react passionately against adaptation to local conditions since they would naturally feel that something of a lower standard was being foisted upon them. As he put it:

They may well look at any modified form of the London degree, adapted to local conditions, even if the point of equivalence were beyond all doubt. They would probably reject altogether any form of degree which left room for doubt and would prefer to take the external degree as it stands, even if that should mean a considerable amount of private study.<sup>38</sup>

The point which Clarke failed to make, however, relates to the reason why Africans demonstrated such predilection for London and British degrees in whatever form. This has been discussed elsewhere in this study.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, it should suffice to say that this preference became particularly strong given the employment and wage discrimination in the colonial service against those African graduates who secured their qualifications locally. Local graduates were "disappointed to find their qualifications considered inferior to their fellows who secured their education in an overseas university".<sup>40</sup> Be that as it may, Clarke then outlined the sort of arrangement

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<sup>38</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>. See Chapter Three, pp.159-166.

<sup>40</sup>. University of Ibadan Archives (UIA), Provisional Council File, The University College Report, 1948-1952, 1952, p.3.

over adaptation which the university might contemplate in the circumstance of a formal request from the commission. One was the need for some modification of the curriculum and syllabi "to meet local conditions", and the other, the participation of the local institution "both in the framing of courses and in the conduct of examinations". Under the scheme, Clarke further noted that:

While the actual degree awarded could hardly be other than the London External, it is hoped that the practical working of it could be sufficiently internalized to give the necessary training for autonomy for each institution.<sup>41</sup>

After almost a century of indoctrination that Africans were inferior either intellectually, creatively or in abstract thinking, it seemed essential that the curricula of proposed colonial universities should approximate that offered in the United Kingdom. It was necessary, not only to build self-worth in African students but also to establish in the colonial administrations the principle of equality, for salary and other purposes, of Africans trained locally and expatriates educated overseas. Furthermore the adaptation to local needs and conditions required a far greater amount of research than the British envisaged, much of which would come from Africans who after the first degree would continue into graduate research. Once such Africans joined the staff of the proposed universities, they would provide the impetus for the

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<sup>41</sup>.ULAP AC 11/1/1 Clarke to Claughton, 6 December, 1943.

adaptation to local needs. The local African community would be far more prepared to follow such adaptation than one designed and pushed by expatriates whose motives always remained suspect. Consequently, planners of the future colonial universities were correct in their desire for adaptation but were ill-advised to seek to determine what those modifications should be.

In any case, if British universities were to be fully effective in nourishing and guiding the growth of new universities in the colonies through the now popular "lend-lease" method of visitations, secondment of staff, and research, Clarke asserted that it was then imperative to "develop some common organ through which these functions can be discharged". This, he said, would be in the form of "a Colonial Council or Committee with a properly organised secretariat".<sup>42</sup> This idea became the harbinger of the what evolved as the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies. Clearly Clarke had outlined two major ways in which the University of London was to be involved in the entire business namely; as a member of the proposed Colonial Council and as the pivot of the special relationship scheme. The place of the University of London in the commission's work remained vital, and it would almost seem as if its expected role in the scheme was indispensable. In the words of Clarke:

The well-established prestige of the

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<sup>42</sup>. Ibid.



London degree and the great body of experience that has been built up in the working of it do seem to offer the best guarantee that here is the most suitable nursery already built and equipped, for the task of leading to maturity, growing institutions which are already showing such vigour and promise.<sup>43</sup>

Feeling confident that the university would give a sympathetic consideration to the responsibility with which the commission hoped to place upon it, given the trend of unofficial discussions on the subject, Cyril Asquith now wrote formally to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London.<sup>44</sup> He sounded out the university's willingness to undertake what he admitted would be "a massive responsibility" namely; the adaptation of its syllabi and curricula to the specific needs of the different colonial institutions, sending out examiners, allowing staff of overseas colleges to take part in examining and more importantly "to enter into partnership with institutions thousands of miles from London".<sup>45</sup> Undoubtedly the Asquith commission had formally approached, invited, and authorized the university to formulate the scheme of special relationship which, despite its shortcomings, was to dominate the practical implementation of the higher education project in the colonies. It marked the genesis of "university imperialism", with London University as the institutional

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<sup>43</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>. CO 958/1 Cyril Asquith to Frank Horton, 10 March 1944.

<sup>45</sup>. Ibid.

power-house while the various colonial colleges became its daughter offspring. Swiftly and favourably too, the senate of the university responded to Asquith's letter. According to the Vice-Chancellor:

the University of London would be proud to share in the general responsibilities contemplated for the universities as a whole, which the commission has suggested that it should undertake.<sup>46</sup>

It is hardly surprising, however, that the University of London would jump at this invitation to what appeared like an onerous task. It had desired and lobbied for a controlling role in the project.

Predictably the university did not waste time in accepting the general responsibilities assigned to universities of Great Britain as well as the special duty of nurturing the proposed colonial institutions to maturity through a special relationship scheme. Swiftly the university set in motion its own programme of action. It was delighted that both the Colonial Office and the Asquith Commission neither wished to ignore nor obliterate the degree arrangement it had already put in place in the colonies. The tone of discussions had convinced the university that the Colonial Office was eager to employ the university's degree granting system to develop institutions of university standard in the colonies. Furthermore, the London University had become more confident that its influence in colonial higher education

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<sup>46</sup>.CO 958/2 Horton to Asquith, 24 May 1944.

would not be undermined by the increasing interest in the new scheme shown by Oxford and Cambridge. Its anxiety ceased. Relishing its acclaimed honour for high standards, the University of London subsequently began to outline the conditions upon which it might offer its degrees to overseas universities if formally requested to do so.

Although the University of London had an age-old experience of external degree programmes in the colonies, which the Colonial Office and the Asquith Commission had recognized, Ashby observed that the problem depicted in the new scheme "was a novel one" because syllabi now had to be adapted to local conditions without arousing any suspicion, degrees had to be awarded, without depreciation of the currency, to remote colleges in non-European societies, and teaching staffs of the colonial colleges had to be encouraged to take part in the examining and marking of papers and be allowed to propose modifications in syllabi.<sup>47</sup> Evidently the new scheme envisaged by the Colonial Office and the Asquith group was a remarkable deviation from the existing external degree arrangement long practised and controlled by London with no consideration for its relevance to local conditions. Nevertheless the university acquiesced to adjust its syllabi and examination devices to suit the type of adaptation recommended by the Colonial Office and the Asquith Commission since it could not ignore the political aspects of the

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<sup>47</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.213.

university question upon which Stanley and Asquith had placed a high premium.

In July 1944 Cyril Asquith, again, wrote to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London to thank the Senate of the institution for its "sympathetic consideration" of the advice and help which the commission had sought from it. He noted that the commission was greatly delighted that the university had accepted to take part in a scheme "whereby the development of higher education in the Colonies would be promoted by the joint efforts of the Universities of Great Britain", and had additionally agreed "to conduct examinations for the award of degrees to students of Colonial Colleges".<sup>48</sup> In relation to the "joint efforts" arrangement, Asquith informed Horton that the commission was recommending that "there should be established in this country an inter-university organization", the nature of which "has yet to be defined but the home universities as a whole would have representation on it", which would have a permanent secretariat. The duty of this body should be

to foster the development of the [Colonial] Colleges in every way possible, and among its many functions will be those of giving advice on matters of general policy and on the provision of material facilities, and of providing help in obtaining members of the staff of high quality.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>.ULAP AC 11/1/1 Cyril Asquith to Frank Horton, July 1944.

<sup>49</sup>.Ibid.

This followed closely the ideas outlined in Fred Clarke's unofficial memorandum to Principal Claughton, so Horton was already aware of the plans. Clearly the functions contemplated for the inter-university body from the start were so wide that they dwarfed those of similar councils which existed in the United Kingdom. Its power contended with London's intended role as the vanguard of university imperialism.

Asquith however assured the Senate of the University of London that in contemplating the inter-university body the Commission recognized the fact that in all questions affecting the award of degrees, London "must have unfettered control and that the university must satisfy itself that the conditions it considers to be requisite to students to become candidates for degrees have been satisfied by the Colonial Colleges". In any case, direct contacts between examiners and the colonial colleges remained vital in the Commission's view not only because of the need to relate courses to local conditions but also to foster interaction with the staff of the colonial institutions. Most of, if not all, the examiners had never visited the colonies or met the students they would be examining. Under the existing London external degree system, standards were set in London with no regard to the socio-cultural milieu from which the students came. Thus the Commission felt that modifications were entirely essential. According to Asquith:

The Commission attaches greatest importance to devising direct contact

between the Colleges and their examiners, not only from the point of view of educating the members of the staff in the duties of examining and the standards to be achieved but for the valuable discussions which would result as to the suitability of the examinations and curricula to local conditions.<sup>50</sup>

As a result of the prominent role assigned to it by the Commission, the University of London set up a special Senate Committee on Higher Education in the Colonies in October 1944 under the chairmanship of Alexander Carr-Saunders, who was himself a member of the Asquith Commission.<sup>51</sup> This committee was charged with the duty of preparing a scheme for a special relationship between the University and the colonial colleges. In his further communication with Asquith, the Vice-Chancellor laid down the duty of this special senate committee: "to develop the new relationship with the Colonial Colleges and to co-operate with their staffs and with the proposed inter-university organization in the fostering of university education in the Colonies".<sup>52</sup> Thus from the onset the senate of the university became actively involved in the whole process. This, according to Ashby, had a beneficial effect ensuring that "all the tortuous and time-consuming motions of

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<sup>50</sup>.Ibid. He assured the university that its expenses in connection with the conduct of special examinations would be defrayed by the British Government.

<sup>51</sup>.ULAP AC 11/1/1 Minutes of Senate Meeting, University of London, 25 October 1944.

<sup>52</sup>.ULAP AC 11/1/1 Frank Horton to Cyril Asquith, 4 October 1944.

academic diplomacy which are essential before a university can be persuaded to agree to anything, had already been completed before the Asquith Commission submitted its report".<sup>53</sup>

Since its function involved the formulation of general principles which should guide the ordered foundation of universities in the colonies, the Asquith Commission sat mostly in London while sending delegations to the various colonial territories from time to time to evaluate the state of the existing facilities for higher education. By May 1945, after two years of hard work, the Asquith Commission submitted its report to Oliver Stanley, who in turn presented it to the House of Commons in June. In July the report was published as a command paper. Before the publication of the report the Asquith group had secured the co-operation of the University of London to enter into special relationship with the colonial institutions and to supervise their academic work. It was also assured of support from all the British universities in the form of membership of the proposed inter-university organization. Thus when the report appeared it became a blueprint as to how universities were to be developed in the British colonies. By August 1945 the Labour Party came to power, having won a landslide victory in the July election, and G.H. Hall replaced Stanley as the Secretary of State. Under the new administration, the university question still

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<sup>53</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, pp.213-214.

was a matter of high policy. The goal of British imperial rule - ultimate "self-government" for the colonial peoples - had been defined along bipartisan lines. Thus the Colonial Office remained resolved to follow the principles laid out by the Asquith commission to the letter without further delay.

Almost predictable in its recommendations, the Asquith Commission urged the immediate creation of university colleges "so situated that ... the remaining areas of the Colonial Empire shall be served by one of them". Stressing the urgency and practicability of the "immediate setting up of university colleges", the Asquith group insisted that "there should be no undue delay in converting these colleges into universities".<sup>54</sup> Since East Africa would not be covered by the Elliot inquiry, the Asquith commission recommended that Makerere College be developed to full university college status to serve the whole of the region.<sup>55</sup> Although the report cautioned that "no step could be taken which could more gravely prejudice the interests of these institutions than the premature grant of degree giving powers"<sup>56</sup> the commission was clearly as convinced as the Colonial Office that action needed to be taken immediately to avoid unpleasant post-war political and

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<sup>54</sup>.Cmd.6647 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, H.M.S.O., June 1945, pp.10-13.

<sup>55</sup>.Ibid., p.13. The Asquith group knew that the Elliot commission would be recommending the establishment of universities in West Africa thus they felt that East Africa should be included in any arrangement.

<sup>56</sup>.Ibid., p.13.



social consequences.

Furthermore the commission suggested the setting up of an "Inter-University Council" which should include representatives of all existing universities of Great Britain and the Colonies, to provide the machinery for close co-operation between them and the proposed institutions and foster "the development of Colonial Colleges in their advance to university status".<sup>57</sup> The Asquith proposal for an Inter-University Council demonstrated a sense of foresight because it was actually through this organ that much of the commission's recommendations, and the actual establishment of the colonial university colleges were implemented, as will be seen later.

Equally conscious that the development of higher education in the colonies must depend upon the grant of substantial financial aid from Great Britain, the commission recommended the setting up of a Colonial University Grant Advisory Committee to advise the Secretary of State.<sup>58</sup> Since this body would advise on the allocation of funds, the Asquith commission felt that the proposed Inter-University Council should not act in that capacity. Here the commission merely adopted the British system of a new single national University Grant Committee reconstituted in 1943, distinct from other

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<sup>57</sup>. Cmd.6647 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, p.30.

<sup>58</sup>. Ibid., p.54.

regulating bodies. With these proposals all seemed set for the task of the actual establishment of university colleges in the colonies, and funds from the CD&WA were expected to provide the initial amount for the take-off.

Since members of the commission were conscious of the political importance of their task, the report stressed that there should be a good mix between liberal and vocational education. They realized that in order to form a balanced judgement on political matters the new universities should not only pursue courses which should fit students into jobs but also undertake humane studies which could prepare them for administrative responsibility. The quality of education to be provided by the proposed institutions was now related to the role the educated African was expected to play in the new order predicated on economic and social development, and self-government. The Asquith commission fully realized that for the colonies to become viable independent nations their leaders would need that kind of intellectual integrity and acuteness which only high quality education could nourish.<sup>59</sup> In other words, the new colonial education policy prescribed by the report was one which was intended to prepare the colonies for responsible self-government within the British Empire.

Generally the Asquith report was not out of touch with the current of the time. It re-echoed the need for a reconsideration of British imperial policies and attitudes,

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<sup>59</sup>. Ibid., pp.10-11.

and stressed the fact that the social and economic development of the colonies was not intended to liquidate but rather to consolidate the British Empire. The policy of imperial partnership had, since the war, become desirable partly to appease international pressures and partly to assuage colonial peoples' agitations and aspirations. Addressing the colonial social and economic welfare question had been recognized as the only sure way of maintaining the peace and political stability in British imperial territories in the post-war era. The Asquith commission remained conscious of this goal throughout its deliberation. Thus when the report appeared, even Britain was psychologically in the mood for post-war reconstruction. No doubt, its proposals pleased the Colonial Office. It was also in consonance with the desire of the British academic lobby both within and outside the ACEC. Outlining the general attitude taken by the Secretary of State on the Asquith report, the chairman of the ACEC had noted that Hall,

regarded this document as fully justifying the hopes which were entertained when this Commission, representative of authoritative university opinion, was appointed, and he was commending it warmly to Colonial Governments and to all those concerned in the Colonies with development of education.<sup>60</sup>

As a necessary step towards the effective realization of the commission's recommendations, the Colonial Office moved

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<sup>60</sup>.CO 987/2 ACEC Discussions on the Asquith Report, 1945.

immediately to set in motion the machinery for the establishment of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies (IUC) as proposed by the Asquith Commission. Having secured a firm promise from the British universities of their willingness to co-operate with the Colonial Office, and help in the foundation of universities in the colonies, Hall finally appointed the IUC in February 1946 under the chairmanship of James Irvine with Walter Adams as secretary.<sup>61</sup> Other members were A.M.Carr-Saunders (University of London); W.Hamilton Fyfe (Aberdeen); R.G.Baskett (Belfast); R.Priestley (Birmingham); J.A.Venn (Cambridge); Ivor Jennings (Ceylon); James Duff (Durham); J.J.Macmurray (Edinburgh); N.Morris (Glasgow); N.Bentwich (Jerusalem), B.Mouat Jones (Leeds), J.G.Wright (Liverpool); R.Galea (Malta); W.J.Pugh (Manchester); W.T.S.Stallysbrass (Oxford); R.H.Stroughton (Reading); L.E.S.Eastham (Sheffield); Ifor Evans (Wales); and Christopher Cox(ex-officio) the Secretary of State's Adviser on Education.

With the exception of Carr-Saunders, Baskett, Macmurray, Wright and Stroughton who were high calibre academics, the rest of the members of the IUC were vice-chancellors and

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<sup>61</sup>.Irvine was a distinguished chemist and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of St. Andrews. He was also a member of the Asquith Commission. Walter Adams was formerly a history lecturer at the University College of London and Secretary of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

principals of British universities.<sup>62</sup> This "deliberate design", according to Maxwell, was "to ensure that the IUC could speak with authority on the policy and practice of university development and could give a balanced overview rather than a medley of specialist opinions".<sup>63</sup> Interestingly none of the members was an expert on African or Asian affairs, except Christopher Cox who was formerly a Director of Education in the Sudan. Nevertheless this deficiency was ameliorated by the co-option of Margery Perham, Lilian Penson and T.H.Davey.<sup>64</sup> Whether to create a new area of research or to exercise some kind of authoritative political influence, the British academic lobby had regularly sought a role in the policy-making process of imperial Britain. The inauguration of the IUC, composed solely of British academics, was thus the triumph of the academic lobby. On March 8 1946, the IUC held its inaugural meeting. The address sent to the Council by the Secretary of State confirmed his acceptance of the principle that the IUC should exercise a full measure of independence in its operation. Accordingly:

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<sup>62</sup>.Carr-Saunders was the director of the London School of Economics and Political Science, Baskett was a professor of Agricultural Chemistry, Macmurray was a professor of moral philosophy, Wright was a professor of veterinary surgery, and Stroughton was a professor of horticulture.

<sup>63</sup>.Maxwell, Universities in Partnership, p.11.

<sup>64</sup>.Perham was Reader in Colonial Administration at Oxford, Penson was a professor of Modern History at the University of London and a member of the Asquith Commission who later became the Vice-Chancellor of the University. T.H.Davey was a professor of Tropical Hygiene at the University of Liverpool.

I appreciate the jealous care with which the Universities guard their autonomy and freedom from governmental interference. I am sure that in such freedom you can better discharge the great tasks you have undertaken.<sup>65</sup>

The two principles - independence and the right to communicate directly with colonial institutions - were the fundamental issues stressed by British universities during the preliminary negotiations between them and the Colonial Office about the formation of the council.<sup>66</sup> Apparently the home universities were aware of how political considerations might be manipulated to override or even jeopardize matters of academic expediency, especially when it had to do with British colonies. By conceding these powers to the Council the Colonial Office had thus conferred upon it an unrestrained and unregulated authority to take control of almost all major policy matters in relation to the foundation of universities in the colonies. This was remarkable because it placed the universities almost outside the control of both the Colonial Office and the colonial governments, except in the final business of financing, and even that came from the British parliament, not the Colonial Office budget vote. Here, ironically, was a case of a liberal ethos being implanted into a somewhat totalitarian system to appease the academic lobby.

However, the Secretary of State placed no funds at the

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<sup>65</sup>.CO 987/3 Text of a Message from the Secretary of State to the Inter-University Council, 8 March 1946.

<sup>66</sup>.Maxwell, Universities in Partnership, p.9.

disposal of the Council for salary supplementation for overseas service or the extension of the projects relating to higher education in the colonies. The Colonial Office endorsed the view of the Asquith Commission that the Council "would have greater influence with the Colonial institutions" if its functions "were confined" to purely academic matters rather than financial administration".<sup>67</sup> In November 1946 therefore the Secretary of State set up the Colonial University Grants Advisory Committee (CUGAC) under the chairmanship of Hector Hetherington<sup>68</sup> to administer the funds under the CD&WA which were to be used to finance the activities sponsored by the IUC.<sup>69</sup> Even though the Secretary of State gave the IUC the power and autonomy to carry out its responsibility, he reminded them of the commitment of the British Government "to quicken the social, economic and political progress of the Colonial peoples and to guide them towards the ultimate goal of self-government". Linking the pledge to the question of the provision of universities for Africans and almost rehashing

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<sup>67</sup>.Cmd.6647 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, p.33.

<sup>68</sup>.Hetherington was formerly a professor of philosophy at Liverpool and the chairman of the British Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of British Universities.

<sup>69</sup>.In 1945 the sums voted by parliament under the CD&WA of 1940 were superseded by a new Act of 1945 which allocated the sum of £120 million for ten years. This new Act was the brainchild of Stanley to speed up colonial reforms just as MacDonald initiated the Bill of 1940. Out of the allocation for social and economic development, £4.5 million was set aside for higher education. Refer to Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.429.

Stanley, Hall pointed out that the success of British Government's policy would depend on:

the emergence, in the Colonial territory of increasing numbers of educated men and women with the technical training, the ability and desire to serve their communities as leaders in every sphere of public life in a sustained effort of partnership with us.<sup>70</sup>

Responding to the Secretary of State's message the chairman of the Council, Irvine, assured him that members were impressed with the importance of the task allotted them in the conduct of what he called a "great educational experiment".<sup>71</sup> Expressing the council's delight that the task placed upon them would provide a generous measure of the educational opportunities to the colonial peoples which would constitute a sure basis for self-government, Irvine noted that their work would also "have important repercussions on the policy of Home Universities and thereby will have an effect on public opinion in this country regarding the nation's duty to the Colonies". Furthermore, he noted that their assignment "will be one of the greatest of the factors enabling our country to fulfil its duty to the Colonies of the Empire".<sup>72</sup>

Undoubtedly, with the appointment of the IUC, and the arrangement with the University of London to sponsor

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<sup>70</sup>.CO 987/3 Text of Secretary of State's Message to the IUC, March 1946.

<sup>71</sup>.CO 987/3 Irvine to the Secretary of State, March 1946.

<sup>72</sup>.Ibid.



university colleges in the colonies through a scheme of "special relationship", the stage became perfectly set for the transplantation of the British university system to the colonies. Thus paradoxically in an attempt to develop institutions essential for "self-government", a kind of imperial framework of control was imposed. This actually encapsulates the entire phenomenon of the decolonization process, which was accompanied by what historians have called the "second colonial occupation".<sup>73</sup> It took far more human resources, and money, to decolonize than to colonize, and to do it needed much more ruling and governing than in the old days of minimal government, indirect rule, and development only by colonial revenue surpluses.

#### THE ELLIOT COMMISSION

The Walter Elliot Commission for Higher Education in West Africa was appointed simultaneously with that of Asquith's in July 1943.<sup>74</sup> In his speech in the Commons, Stanley declared that British West Africa was one area which needed "detailed

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<sup>73</sup>.Refer to Bill Freund The Making of Contemporary Africa, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984, pp.192-202. John Lonsdale and Anthony Low also employ the same terms in their writing. See D.A.Low and Alison Smith (eds.) History of East Africa, vol.111, Clarendon Press, London, 1976.

<sup>74</sup>.See Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), col.47, 13 July 1943. Walter Elliot was an M.P. for Kelvingrove and Minister of Health before his appointment as chairman of the Commission.

investigation" because it "presents a number of difficulties". Such difficulties included the existence of a number of centres of education of various standards, doing different work; the great distances separating the colonies; the great contrasts not only between them in social, economic and political development but also within each territory between development on the coast and inland; and the lasting effect of the war upon the conditions of the territories.<sup>75</sup> It was presumed that only a special inquiry could effectively address these problems. By August 1943 the list of members of the Elliot Commission was complete. There were fourteen in all: H.J.Channon, J.R.Dickinson, J.F.Duff, Geoffrey Evans, Julian Huxley, A.Creech Jones, B.Mouat Jones, K.A.Korsah, I.O.Ransome Kuti, Eveline Martin, Margaret Read, E.H.Taylor-Cummings and A.E. Trueman. Their terms of reference were:

to report on the organization and facilities of existing centres of higher education in British West Africa, and to make recommendations regarding future university development in the area.<sup>76</sup>

Like Asquith's, the membership of the Elliot Commission was dominated by British academics. However its composition was unique because unlike the Asquith Commission it had three African members - K.O. Korsah of the Gold Coast, I.O.Ransome

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<sup>75</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>. Refer to the terms of reference as stated in Cmd.6655 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in West Africa, H.M.S.O., June 1945, p.2.

Kuti of Nigeria and E.H.Taylor-Cummings of Sierra Leone.<sup>77</sup> The inclusion of African members was a particularly significant step by the Colonial Office for it vividly demonstrated how British attitudes towards the colonial peoples had changed dramatically during the war. It showed the commitment of Britain to the new imperial policy of partnership which had replaced trusteeship. The opinion had gained ground that Africans could, as a matter of right, play some part in the making of colonial policies relating to their own social, economic and even political well-being. Truly opinion had become fluid during the war when public sentiments tilted leftward, and the parliament was prepared to tolerate radical changes such as African representation on a British official commission.

However, the persistent West African agitation for universities cannot be disregarded in any analysis as to why the Elliot commission was appointed. By the late 1930's the question of university education for Africans had become a burning issue among the emerging African "nationalists". It was not unlikely that the appointment of the Elliot Commission was intended to pacify the now very vociferous West African educated elements. Certainly the British were not unaware of the age-old demands of West Africans such as Horton, Blyden,

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<sup>77</sup>.Korsah was a prominent Gold Coast lawyer, Middle Temple. While Ransome Kuti was the president of the Nigerian Union of Teachers, Taylor-Cummings was a medical practitioner in Sierra Leone.

Casely Hayford, and more recently Azikiwe for universities.<sup>78</sup> It was remarkable that Stanley and the Colonial Office met with Azikiwe over the university question in 1943 when he visited London. Thus a special investigation of the higher educational needs of West Africa, even if somewhat belated, would serve to harken to the demands. Moreover, the Colonial Office now felt that it was West Africa's turn to have a commission since a similar body had examined higher education in East Africa in 1937 under Lord De La Warr. This was notwithstanding the fact that West Africa was more advanced in the acquisition of western education than any other British region in tropical Africa.<sup>79</sup>

The Elliot Commission began its work with preliminary sittings in London to clarify matters of general principles before proceeding to West Africa. Thereafter, the Commission spent the whole of 1944 visiting the four British West African territories of the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia. Throughout its inquiry the Elliot Commission discovered that public opinion in West Africa was solidly in support of a fully-fledged university in the region with high academic standards. What actually became a major concern to the commission was the question of where to site the proposed

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<sup>78</sup>. Since 1937 when Azikiwe published his Renascent Africa which argued strongly for universities, he remained very forceful and even Oliver Stanley consulted him over the university question during the war.

<sup>79</sup>. Carr-Saunders, New Universities Overseas, pp. 30-32.

university, given that each of the territories was apparently uneasy over the matter. But this did not provoke a heated debate, presumably because of the costs involved. The colonies were still unsure about how to fund a huge project such as a university. Even though they were aware of funds from the CD&WA, it was not clear to them exactly how the university project would be funded. Hence, while giving evidence to the Elliot Commission, the Asantehene of Ashanti in the Gold Coast stated that:

as it is now, we the people have no money to establish a university ourselves and so must look up to the Imperial Government if a university we must have .... We live in the land of gold but not on gold.<sup>80</sup>

For some reasons, however, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone did not worry as much as did Nigeria over the site question at the time the commission was gathering information. In his oral submission to the Elliot commission, for instance, the Asantehene had declared: "Yes, my people would not mind where the university is, so long as it is in British West Africa and they have access to it".<sup>81</sup> Similarly in response to a Gold Coast journalist, Fara Abrahams, who asked the Elliot Commission whether the territory had any claims as to the site

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<sup>80</sup>.National Archives of Ghana, Accra (NAGA) NP 22/1, The Gold Coast Observer, February 25, 1944, "Visit of the Elliot Commission to Sir Osei Agyeman, Prempeh 11, Otumfuo the Asantehene of Ashanti on the 3rd of February 1944.

<sup>81</sup>.NAGA, NP22/1 The Gold Coast Observer, February 25, 1944.

of the proposed university, K.O.Korsah who was the Gold Coast representative on the commission asserted that:

We in the Gold Coast are broadminded over this question. Whichever country is best qualified for the university, let her have it. All we want is a university for higher education in West Africa.<sup>82</sup>

The Gold Coasters were quite convinced that their territory would be the only possible site for the proposed university given that compared to the others - Sierra Leone's Fourah Bay and Nigeria's Yaba - Gold Coast's Achimota was the most advanced in terms of courses and infrastructural facilities at the time. Additionally Achimota was already preparing candidates for the engineering degree (external) of the University of London and thus was the most likely to receive approval as an ideal site. To the Gold Coast people therefore the question of site was more or less a foregone conclusion in favour of the Gold Coast, hence they considered it unreasonable to hassle or make it the main issue in their submissions to the commission.

As for Sierra Leone, although the war had caused the requisitioning and transfer of Fourah Bay College to a wretched location, the people were equally as confident as the Gold Coasters that they had a better claim to the possible site for the proposed university. Since Fourah Bay College had established an enviable reputation as the only institution in

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<sup>82</sup>.NAGA, NP22/1 The Gold Coast Observer, January 28, 1944, National Archives of Ghana, Accra, Ghana.

Africa affiliated to a British university (Durham) since 1876, and with fully-fledged degree-awarding status, albeit only in Theology and Arts, Sierra Leone felt that the college could not be relegated in any circumstance. In fact, all the African representatives on the Elliot Commission were graduates of Fourah Bay and hence the assumption gathered force that they would naturally put the college first. The site problem, therefore, was equally not taken seriously in their oral evidence to the commission. It is probable that the government of both the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone played down the site issue because the larger question relating to funding of the proposed university still remained hazy. Apart from the problem of funding, the Sierra Leonean government was also disturbed by the supply of students for the proposed university, given the decrepit state of the colony's primary and secondary schools.

However, Nigeria presented a different case. The colonial government chose to support local nationalism on the issue of demanding a university in Nigeria. Most of the memoranda submitted by Nigerians to the Elliot Commission demanded that the proposed West African University be sited in Nigeria. Obviously the people of the territory were apprehensive of the politics which would pervade the question of site once the preliminary issues were settled. Nigeria appeared worse off in the existing situation. From the time of its foundation Yaba College had been discredited by the Nigerian intelligentsia as

a substandard institution designed to train subordinate staff for the various colonial government departments. Worse still, because of the exigencies of World War II the college had been requisitioned by the army, and its students sent to Achimota and Government College, Umuahia.<sup>83</sup> In other words, during the Commission's visit, Nigeria had nothing approximating the advances already attained by Achimota or Fourah Bay Colleges to commend it as a suitable site at the time. Nigeria was thus more uneasy than the other territories about where the new university would be located.

The Ife Branch of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), in its memorandum, urged the commission that "under any circumstance, a university of equal status with any British university and with an African bias, should exist in Nigeria".<sup>84</sup> Similarly in his own submission, presumably on behalf of the government, the Nigerian Acting Director of Education, C.R. Butler, contended that "Nigeria was the most suitable site for a West African University for many reasons, not the least of which was that there was greater demand for higher education here than in any of the Colonies" and that "the standard of education in Nigeria was definitely higher than that of the Gold Coast".<sup>85</sup> The C.M.S., Yoruba Mission

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<sup>83</sup>. See Adewoye, "The Antecedents" in J.F. Ade Ajayi and Tekena N. Tamuno (eds.) The University of Ibadan, 1948-73, pp. 12-15.

<sup>84</sup>. The Daily Service, February 26, 1944, p. 4.

<sup>85</sup>. The Daily Service, February 12, 1944, p. 1.



agreed that "the time was ripe for a university of West Africa and Nigeria was the most suitable site".<sup>86</sup>

For a highly-placed colonial official such as the Nigerian Director of Education to take this kind of position suggests that the era of territorial patriotism and parochialism, inter-colonial, and intra-regional jealousy and bickering had begun. It would come to a head over the site question. The Nigerian colonial administration saw the site question as transcending mere petty politics. In reality, earning the site was conceived as a measure of advanced educational attainment as well as an index of effective administration. It was almost predictable that the Nigerian colonial government would be much concerned with the issue. Nigeria had a huge land mass and a dense population compared to the rest of the colonies. The Nigeria administration was conscious of the fact that the question of the supply of students for the new university could sway the commission and thus place the territory in the top position as an ideal site. However, the poor state of Yaba College and its notoriety among the educated elite created some anxiety among Nigerian officials that Achimota might impress the commissioners more because of its better infrastructural facilities, and Fourah

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<sup>86</sup>. The Daily Service, February 15, 1944, p.4. From the early 1930's when British academics began to dominate the ACEC and pushed for a university for Africans, missionary influence increasingly declined. Missionary bodies could not fund universities, and moreover, the literary nature of the education they provided had come under attack both in Africa and London.

Bay because of its reputation.

In May 1945 the Elliot Report was ready, and was presented to parliament in June 1945 simultaneously with the Asquith Report by Secretary of State, Stanley.<sup>87</sup> The Elliot Commission produced two reports - a Majority<sup>88</sup> and a Minority<sup>89</sup> - because the commissioners fundamentally disagreed among themselves on certain issues. The Majority Report recommended that two university colleges should be established immediately in West Africa, one at Ibadan in Nigeria and the other at Achimota in the Gold Coast, and that Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone should be reorganized to attain university college status at a later date. They reasoned that "already the demand for skilled and responsible men and women has exceeded the training capacity of the existing educational institutions in British West Africa" and more so that "no single university institution, however excellent, could adequately supply these wider influences to the other colonies from one site in West Africa" because these territories "are not only themselves of wide extent; they are ... separated from each other by long distances, and by other states and

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<sup>87</sup>.Cmd.6655 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in West Africa, H.M.S.O., June 1945.

<sup>88</sup>.The Majority Report was signed by Walter Elliot, J.R.Dickinson, J.F.Duff, B.Mouat Jones, K.A. Korsah, I.O.Ransome Kuti, Eveline C.Martin, E.H.Taylor-Cummings, and A.E.Trueman.

<sup>89</sup>.Those who signed the Minority Report were H.J.Channon, Geoffrey Evans, Julian S.Huxley, A.Creech Jones, and Margaret Read.

governments".<sup>90</sup> When reorganized, according to the majority opinion, Fourah Bay College should serve Sierra Leone and the Gambia. The standards of the various stages of the courses proposed, they further advised, should be those of the British universities. With regard to funding, the Majority report recommended that "at first the greater share of the expenditure should be met from the Colonial Development and Welfare funds".<sup>91</sup>

The Minority group disagreed. Instead it recommended the establishment of only one "comprehensive unitary university college for the whole of British West Africa" in Ibadan<sup>92</sup>, Nigeria. The choice of Nigeria as the site of the new university was because of the vast population of the territory as compared to the other colonies. It was hoped therefore that Nigeria could supply the highest number of students for the university. Additionally the Minority Report proposed the establishment of three Territorial Colleges in Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone. In other words, both Achimota and

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<sup>90</sup>.Cmd.6655 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in West Africa, pp.52-54.

<sup>91</sup>.Ibid., p.128. They stated that the share to be met by the West African Governments should increase until they ultimately bore the whole expenditure.

<sup>92</sup>.Ibid., p.155. "Ibadan", the Minority faction argued, "is West Africa's largest native town, and one of character, situated in attractive country". With almost one million people, Ibadan was viewed as the largest catchment area for the future students of the proposed university. Ironically the Ibadan people possibly demonstrated the least interest in Western education of any major city in British West Africa.

Fourah Bay would be reconstituted into territorial colleges while an entirely new one would be established for Nigeria. The Territorial Colleges, accordingly, would provide academic courses to the intermediate level, to train teachers for the primary and secondary schools, and social workers, and to act as the main centres from which the extra-mural activities throughout each territory were to be organized.<sup>93</sup> To create three university colleges concurrently, the Minority reasoned, "will defer for a considerable time the provision of the type of university education which we would wish to see established as soon as possible". Furthermore, the proposals of the Majority

do not pay sufficient attention to the question of the number of students likely to be available, nor to the difficulties of making the necessary provision of staff, equipment and finance; they involve a diffusion of effort and resources when all the circumstances suggest to us the urgent need of concentration, if realization is not to be indefinitely postponed; they make what we regard as a provision for quantity when we would prefer one of the higher quality, more soundly based.<sup>94</sup>

The arguments of both factions appeared sound, and perhaps this accounts for why they could not strike a compromise. While the Minority seemed to have been more concerned about possible delay and the financial cost from imperial funds of providing for three university colleges

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<sup>93</sup>.Ibid., p.159.

<sup>94</sup>.Ibid., p.141.

simultaneously, the Majority was persuaded by political considerations. The latter appeared to have been more influenced by the possible political uproar should any of the three major West African higher institutions of Achimota, Yaba and Fourah Bay be elevated to a university college at the expense of the rest. The fact that the three African members of the commission endorsed the Majority view was indicative of the West African desire for more than one university.<sup>95</sup> But more fundamentally the division resulted from different judgements of how far the colonial reform movement could go. To both groups, British imperial policy was in transition but the extent of the transformation remained hazy and thus debatable.

While the Minority believed that asking for three universities at the same time might delay and possibly jeopardize the whole project, since the resources demanded were so huge (in money and manpower), the Majority was more radical and premonitory, and therefore ignored the minority position. They realized that British opinion had actually swung leftward since the war, and that Treasury had become less parsimonious. Hence they were convinced that the idea of three universities would possibly pass. Surprisingly, Creech Jones, a powerful advocate of radical colonial reforms in

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<sup>95</sup>.They might have either been apostles of territorial nationalism or were apprehensive that their *alma mater* had no chance of being elevated to a university college, and hence they went with the majority.

parliament, supported the Minority opinion as did Channon who had championed the cause of higher education in the colonies. It seems then that the larger question transcended funding. It was related to quality, standards and the urgency of the whole question. The Majority judgement was that the emerging trend of territorialism and nationalism would prove an insurmountable obstacle to the success of a unitary West African university college sited in any one colony. Channon and his group disregarded this factor. The Majority group was more far-sighted, as later events would prove.

With the reports of the Asquith and Elliot commissions in 1945 the stage became solidly set for implementation. While the Elliot proposals were specifically relevant to West Africa, the Asquith report provided the general framework on the principles which should guide the establishment of universities in the colonies. Consequently the Inter-University Council was set up to formulate policies while the University of London was given the authority to regulate the academic affairs of the new universities under the scheme of special relationship. Both the University of London and the IUC were to ensure that the academic standards and pattern of development of the new colonial universities would be British. While Makerere would become a university under the Asquith plan, the Elliot report, despite the duality of its recommendation, had also devised one or more universities for West Africa. Thus the policy framework for Africa was

complete. Generally the African educated elements were very pleased that the degree to be awarded by the new universities would be equivalent in reputation to those of the United Kingdom and hence the stage was perfectly set for British "university imperialism" in Africa.

## Chapter Six

### UNIVERSITIES COME TRUE: COLONIAL TERRITORIAL "NATIONALISM" AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASQUITH AND ELLIOT SCHEMES, 1945-1948

The coalescence of two important phenomena in mid-1945 - the end of World War II and the victory of the Labour Party in the British election - afforded a favourable atmosphere not only for a new stimulus for colonial reforms but also for concrete actions. Just before the Labour election victory, the Coalition government left the new government its legacy of the 1945 CD&WA, which increased the funds available for colonial investment to £120 million for the next ten years. Out of this sum, £4.5 million was set aside for higher education.<sup>1</sup> Roger Louis observed that such a colossal increase from the 1940 Act in the face of British war-time debt, adverse balance of payments, and domestic financial austerity "was truly the turning point in British commitment to improving economic efficiency and production, and to raising the standards of health, education, and welfare in the colonies".<sup>2</sup> With the increased funds now available, and the conducive political

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<sup>1</sup>. See Cmd. 6713 Colonial Development and Welfare, H.M.S.O., December 1945; Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.429; and Pearce, The Turning Point in Africa, pp.65-66.

<sup>2</sup>. Roger Louis, Imperialism at Bay 1941-1945, p.101, see as well Lee and Petter, The Colonial Office, War, and Development Policy, pp.215-217.



climate, the Colonial Office swiftly moved to implement the Asquith and Elliot schemes.

But crises soon erupted. While London was strongly disposed towards the establishment of a comprehensive unitary university for West Africa, as the Elliot Minority Report had suggested, each of the three larger territories vehemently demanded its own institution as the Majority anticipated. Territorial "nationalism" became a potent factor. The mood in the region sharply contrasted with those of the 1920's when the N.C.B.W.A., under the leadership of Hayford, clamoured for a unitary University of British West Africa. The Colonial Office finally succumbed to African "nationalist" pressures. For the first time organized groups of educated leaders, each of them expressing a sense of "national interest" based on the colonial territory, rather than a pan-British West Africa perspective of the pre-war period, agitated successfully for a major modification of a new colonial reform initiative. Their success not only expanded the scope of the policy for new universities, but was perhaps also a turning point which demonstrated that "nationalists" could affect and shape the detailed implementation of the new policies.

Soon after the publication of the Asquith and Elliot Reports in July 1945 a change of government occurred in Britain which ushered in the first Labour government to control a solid majority in the House of Commons. In August, G.H.Hall replaced Oliver Stanley as Secretary of State for the

Colonies while Creech Jones, one of the signatories to the Elliot Minority Report, became the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. Hall was a stolid trade unionist who, despite his years as Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the wartime Coalition Government, was not really very well informed, or of pronounced views on colonial issues (except those relating to labour, working conditions and trade unions). Creech Jones, on the other hand, was perhaps the most well informed of all the M.P.s on colonial, and especially Caribbean and African matters. As a leading figure in the Fabian Colonial Bureau, Creech Jones was regularly fed with detailed research reports, and kept up frequent personal correspondence with a host of African and Caribbean leaders. For almost ten years he had been Labour's acknowledged "authority" on colonial affairs in the House of Commons. Not surprisingly the Colonial Office became solidly inclined towards the implementation of the Minority suggestions.

Thus in October 1945, three months after the publication of the Elliot Report, Hall sent out a despatch to the governments of Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and the Gambia to inform them of his decision, after a careful consideration of the arguments of both the Majority and the Minority factions.<sup>3</sup> Having given much weight to the

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<sup>3</sup>.National Archives of Ghana, Accra (NAGA) ADM 5/3/122 From the Secretary to State to the Officer Administering the Government of Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia, 1 October, 1945.

recommendations of the majority in favour of three centres of higher education in West Africa, and the strength of local sentiments, Hall concluded:

I have, however, been much impressed by the arguments and criticisms contained in the Minority Report in favour of the development, at any rate to begin with, of a single University College for West Africa, and those arguments appear to me to carry so much weight that I feel no hesitation in stating at once that in my opinion the general policy advocated in the Minority Report is the one which, in the best interests of the people [sic] of West Africa as a whole, we should make every effort to bring into effect as soon as possible.<sup>4</sup>

Even though the higher educational needs of West Africa would call for the development of additional university institutions at a later date, Hall further pointed out that, "at the present stage the speedy development of a full range of university facilities is a consideration of the greatest importance". He argued that for West Africans to take their share to an increasing and effective extent in the plans for the development of their countries, and to make satisfactory progress along the road to self-government; "it is essential that the development of higher education should be promoted at the quickest pace compatible with the attainment of adequate standards". All these, Hall stressed, could only be effectively achieved by "concentrating at the outset upon the establishment of a single university institution on the lines

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<sup>4</sup>. Ibid.

advocated in the Minority Report".<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the Secretary of State pointed out that he subscribed to the Minority view that the proposed West African University should be founded in Nigeria "at the earliest possible date". As a safeguard against the university becoming dominated by Nigeria, he acceded to the Minority view that the College should be governed by a Council "fully representative of the four West African Territories". Leaving the more detailed recommendations, such as the proposals for the establishment of three territorial colleges and research institutes, for consideration in due course, Hall advised the governors that they should publish his despatch or use whatever appropriate means to disseminate its content in order to "ascertain the trend of public opinion" and reactions.<sup>6</sup>

Admittedly the arguments of the Minority were quite powerfully articulated in the Elliot Report while those of the Majority were no less forcefully enunciated. But Hall hardly gave sufficient credit to the opinions of the latter in his despatch. There was no doubt that the Minority group did not want the university question to be delayed simply because of the demand, synchronously, for multiple institutions. It was also clear that they were seriously concerned with the problem

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<sup>5</sup>. Ibid. One other factor which he emphasized was the impossibility, with the existing resources, of assembling a staff adequate in number and qualification for more than one university.

<sup>6</sup>. Ibid.

of securing enough funds, competent staff and qualified students. However, what remained baffling was why the Colonial Office now ignored the issues of great distances separating one British West African colony from another, and the great contrasts between them in social, economic and political development - an argument Stanley had made in parliament in 1943 as the compelling reason for a separate West African commission under Elliot.<sup>7</sup> It was ironical that while recognizing the emerging spirit of territorialism and nationalism in the colonies championed by the educated elements, and sustained by the local governments, Hall ultimately chose to endorse the Minority Report.

Hall hardly acted out of his own volition. As an "expert" on colonial affairs, Creech Jones was certainly the driving force behind Hall's support for the Minority opinion. For so long, Creech Jones had in the House of Commons continuously pushed for reforms and a re-ordering of British imperial goals. Hall, on the other hand, had little experience in imperial issues and hence had to rely heavily on the advice of his parliamentary under-secretary. No doubt both Hall and Creech Jones wanted a West African University to take root immediately. However, they seemed to have been excessively persuaded by the purely academic arguments of Channon that three universities established simultaneously would only lead

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<sup>7</sup>.Refer to Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), vol.391, cols. 54-57, 13 July, 1943.

to the dissipation of scarce resources (qualified academic staff and funds), the supply of students, and the maintenance of high standards. This was somewhat strange. As political men, it would have been wise for them to focus more on the possible political repercussions of the adoption of the Minority recommendations, against which the Majority forewarned. No doubt Creech Jones did not want to lose face, having not only signed the Minority proposals but now also being placed in a position to implement the schemes. However, there is no question that both Creech Jones and Hall wanted the university project to get started quickly. Thus he prevailed upon Hall to support the Minority proposals.

It is significant that Hall, in his despatch to the governments of West Africa, asked the governors to publish and test public opinion. This was unconventional. It was not the usual method of governing colonies, at least not in the pre-war era. From 1938 MacDonald attempted to centralize and concentrate authority in the Colonial Office, and the exigencies of the war necessitated the flow of directives from the Office to the colonies. Both the men on-the-spot and the colonial peoples were expected to, and they actually did, comply. But the end of the war ushered in a new principle of partnership whereby the colonial peoples would play an increasing role in deciding their future development. The idea of the university was to foster and expand the class of the African educated elite who would lead in this advance. By

undertaking to test African opinion on his resolution, therefore, Hall merely strove to demonstrate that British imperial attitudes towards the colonies had changed. Politically, however, this opened up the whole question, and gave the cue to educated elements that they could affect the outcome. Such a procedure invited interested groups to organize and express opposition or support. Clearly neither Hall nor Creech Jones anticipated the uproar because the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone had not vehemently insisted on the location of the proposed university in their territories as Nigeria did when the Elliot Commission was collecting evidence.

Accordingly, the various West African governments publicised the Secretary of State's despatch as well as the report of the Elliot Commission. Almost predictably the Gold Coast educated elements at once became upset. On October 1945, the territory's Central Advisory Committee on Education reviewed both Hall's despatch and the Elliot Report. Members frowned on the view of the Secretary of State and, instead, supported overwhelmingly the Majority recommendations. In November, therefore, they issued a statement in response. According to the Committee:

Irreparable harm would be done by denying work begun at Achimota its natural growth and by denying, therefore, the educational system the step in its development which it is now ready to take and which is urgently necessary to it and

to the Gold Coast.<sup>8</sup>

Several memoranda were also submitted to the government of the Gold Coast from various educational, political and social organizations, and interest groups. A memorandum presented by the Joint Provisional Council of Gold Coast Colony expressed unanimity in support of the Majority Report. Accordingly, "the establishment of a unitary university in any single Colony of British West Africa - notwithstanding the largeness of its population - without the support of the sister Colonies is destined to be a fruitless venture"; and there is no evidence that such support would be forthcoming since "interest is the secret of success".<sup>9</sup> Clearly this demonstrated the emerging spirit of territorial "nationalism". The Gold Coast traditional elites seemed to have sunk their traditional animosity with the educated class in defence of colonial territorial sentiments. Highlighting how the Minority proposals would diminish the regional educational achievement of both the Colony and Sierra Leone, the Council concluded that:

to reduce, therefore, Achimota College and Fourah Bay College which have done so much preparatory work in Higher Education in British West Africa to the status of

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<sup>8</sup>.NAGA ADM 5/3/122 Recommendations of the Gold Coast Central Advisory Committee on Education, 21 November, 1945.

<sup>9</sup>.NAGA ADM 5/3/122 Memorandum on Hall's Despatch and the Report of the Elliot Commission submitted by the Standing Committee of the Joint Provisional Council, 28 November, 1945. This Council consisted of all the paramount chiefs in the Gold Coast Colony.



Territorial Colleges as recommended by the Minority Report would be to frustrate the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone.<sup>10</sup>

The memoranda of many professional bodies and interest groups such as the Gold Coast Bar Association, Old Boys Association of Achimota College and the Gold Coast Teachers Union were all firmly in favour of the Majority Report. As a result of the outcry from interest groups and politicians against Hall's decision and the Minority proposals, a public rally was convened at the Rodger Club, Accra on December 1945 to ascertain the strength of popular opinion. It was sponsored and overwhelmingly attended by the educated elite and, predictably, the rally unanimously endorsed the Majority Report.<sup>11</sup> At another public meeting held at the Hodson Club on December 14 it was declared that "no university or university college could ignore the natural divisions and affiliations of the people for whom it is intended to serve". Hence the meeting decried the subordination of the natural and healthy development of higher education in the territories "to financial considerations, as if they are overriding factors in the establishment of a university", while "the human element is of minor importance".<sup>12</sup> Furthermore it was declared that

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<sup>10</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>. NAGA ADM 5/3/122 Resolution Passed at a Public Rally held at Rodger Club, Accra, 3 December 1945.

<sup>12</sup>. NAGA ADM 5/3/122 Resolution Passed at a Public Meeting held at the Hodson Club, Accra, 14 December 1945.

"democratic principles should govern all matters affecting the welfare and progressive development of all human beings" and thus the "principle of self-determination would be applied in deciding the type of institutions we in West Africa require".<sup>13</sup>

It is noteworthy how political all this had become. The Majority report foresaw the problem when they warned that West Africa, "by the very nature of things, has developed with a high degree of decentralization", and that the various territories "follow independent" lines of development.<sup>14</sup> There was no longer any sense of a single and indivisible "British West Africa" as Casely Hayford and the rest of the educated elements who formed the National Congress of British West Africa (N.C.B.W.A.) envisaged in the 1920's when they demanded the establishment of a single university for the region. Interestingly the West African educated elite now took pride in referring to the colonial frontiers established by the imperial powers as "natural divisions". Thus the colonial state now took over the psychology of nationalism as the Gold Coast began to see itself as "naturally" a distinct political entity, and linked its position on the university question as the right expression of "self-determination".

Evidently, all this pointed to the extent of political

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<sup>13</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>. Cmd.6655 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in West Africa, H.M.S.O., June 1945, p.54.

awareness in the colonies at the end of the war. The African educated elite had imbibed the war-time slogans of "self-determination" and "democratic principles", and were very ready to translate them into purposeful nationalist catch-phrases in the post-war era. The Colonial Office and many imperial statesmen had predicted these post-war effects on colonial peoples. Significantly, J.B. Danquah, the foremost politician who had formed the Gold Coast Youth Movement in the late 1930's, was part of this rally. The protest played into his hands as the rally turned out to be a sort of leadership colloquium, in a "democratic" fashion inaugurating the advent of the educated elite in the centre-stage of colonial politics and the decision-making process.

Seemingly swayed by what he termed the "strength of public opinion" the Governor of the Gold Coast, Alan Burns, despatched a letter to the Secretary of State to relay the views of the "people" of the Gold Coast. According to him: "I have been impressed by the strength of public opinion and high level of discussion both in the press and in the resolutions and memoranda submitted to me" and had discovered that "public opinion is overwhelmingly in support of the Majority Report".

Besides,

The people of the Gold Coast would wish their government to do everything in its power to ensure the uninterrupted development of Achimota on the lines recommended by the Majority of the Commission, even if this would mean a heavy contribution from the funds at the disposal of the Gold Coast to the capital

and recurrent costs of these developments...and that there would be strong opposition to the voting of public funds for any development of higher education in West Africa which did not include the immediate development of Achimota on the lines recommended in the Majority Report.<sup>15</sup>

What Burns was obviously hinting at was that even without any financial allocations from the CD&WA funds the Gold Coast could go ahead with the university scheme at Achimota. Thus he pointed out that informed opinion in the territory (politicians and educated elements) was resolute to press it upon their government to continue the development of Achimota into a university as had been envisioned by the former governor of the territory, Guggisberg, as far back as 1923.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout his tenure as governor, Burns had striven for a good relationship with the vociferous educated class, and to elevate his reputation by the advancement of the importance of the Gold Coast in regional affairs. Thus the university question presented him with an ideal opportunity to make his point. By relentlessly underscoring the strength of public opinion, Burns desired to use it to demonstrate to the Colonial Office that the war-time centralization and control of the colonies from London would prove very fragile in the post-war era. Burns, like all other officials on the spot,

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<sup>15</sup>. Sierra Leone Archives (SLA) CSO Miscellaneous/Confidential Files on Education (General), From Alan Burns to G.H.Hall, 23 December 1945.

<sup>16</sup>. Ibid. Refer to also to Gordon Guggisberg, The Keystone, London, 1924, p.32.

disliked the wide powers which the Colonial Office had assumed between 1938 and 1945. Naturally he informed the Office that he was merely reflecting public opinion after sounding out the unofficials in the Legislative Council as well as prominent politicians such as Danquah. Significantly, Burns had offered funds both for the capital and recurrent costs of the Achimota University College project and had also threatened that such huge funds would not be voted for the single University College in Nigeria. This remained a shrewd political move forceful enough to influence the Colonial Office. It later proved successful.

In Sierra Leone, as in the Gold Coast, the reactions of some sections of the people, particularly the Creoles, against the Minority Report and the Secretary of State despatch was no less vehement. This was quite predictable. Sierra Leone possessed the highest number of well-educated people in West Africa - predominantly the Creoles - who lived in the Freetown area. However, educational attainment for the hinterland dwellers remained critically impoverished, and hence this segment of the population rarely clamoured for a university college. Christopher Fyfe has noted that "only a tiny handful from the Protectorate reached secondary school level. The vast majority had no schooling at all, for there were not enough schools".<sup>17</sup> Fourah Bay College, which had been affiliated to

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<sup>17</sup>.Christopher Fyfe, A Short History of Sierra Leone, Longmans, London, 1962, p.167. In colonial Sierra Leone, the hinterland mostly inhabited by the Temne and the Mende was

Durham University since 1876, had been the only institution in West Africa which offered a full university degree in Theology and Arts. Nigerians as well as the people of the Gold Coast and the Gambia had attended the college. For the Creoles, therefore, the college had come to symbolize their great achievement. Inevitably the Minority Report now supported by the Secretary of State, which reduced Fourah Bay to the status of a territorial college doing work for the intermediate programmes, teacher-training and social work courses, and extra-mural activities instead of degrees, was considered not only an insult to the long-established tradition but also an affront to Sierra Leone.

The Creoles became highly incensed. To them, "to reduce the academic status of a college which has held the torch of enlightenment in West Africa for well over a century is to destroy a historical monument" and certainly "future historians will lament the attending tragedy if the academic status of Fourah Bay College is reduced".<sup>18</sup> In its memorandum to the government of Sierra Leone, the Fourah Bay College Council advised the governor to inform the Secretary of State that the people of Sierra Leone rejected the Minority Report

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referred to as the Protectorate while the Freetown area where the Creoles lived was known as the Colony.

<sup>18</sup>.SLA, CSO Misc./Confid. Files on Education (General) The Daily Guardian, 17 October 1945.

in its entirety.<sup>19</sup> Bluntly stating their viewpoint on the difficulties which Sierra Leoneans and the people of the Gold Coast would face in attending a university in Nigeria the Old Students of Fourah Bay, mostly Creoles, contended that "there are barriers between the different Colonies which are not only physical but social and psychological".<sup>20</sup>

However, unlike the government of the Gold Coast which was inclined towards the Majority Report in response to "public opinion" in the territory, the Sierra Leone administration of Hubert Stevenson failed to respond positively to local sentiments ardently expressed by the Creole elements. Certainly the government was very much aware that the educational priority of the majority of the population living outside Freetown was not necessarily university education. To the Sierra Leone administration, therefore, the provision of adequate facilities for primary and secondary training remained more crucial. Thus, communicating the decision of the Sierra Leone Board which voted in favour of the Majority Report to the Colonial Secretary, the Director of Education unmistakably reiterated his position to which the Government of Sierra Leone equally subscribed:

Tradition and local sentiment must

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<sup>19</sup>.SLA, CSO Misc./Confid. Files on Education (General) Memorandum from the Fourah Bay College Council to Sierra Leone Government, 17 November 1945.

<sup>20</sup>.Ibid. The Daily Guardian, 22 November 1945.

inevitably carry some weight; but in a matter of this importance it is absolutely vital to face the facts, and to consider the question dispassionately and from a realistic point of view. I therefore support the Minority recommendation.<sup>21</sup>

Sierra Leone, however, contrasted with the Gold Coast in many ways. The territory had no money with which to defy the decision of the Colonial Office. Hence the Sierra Leone government knew very well that any full-scale university scheme for the territory would have to depend on substantial financial grants from London through the CD&WA funds. Appreciating that the Colonial Office would not concede to any local pressure not fully backed with material and human resources the government of Sierra Leone ignored the demands of its educated and interest groups. The government refused to try to persuade Hall to develop Fourah Bay College into a fully-fledged university. Sierra Leone creole elements and politicians could not make much impact. They were normally overwhelmed by government flaunting of the grim financial argument coupled with the poor state of the primary and secondary education in the interior. Furthermore, the policy of indirect rule had directed the attention of the colonial administration from the Creoles to the peoples of the interior. Official attitudes were quite openly anti-Creole and in favour of the chiefly Temne and Mende and their

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<sup>21</sup>.SLA, CSO Misc./Confid. Files Memorandum from the Director of Education to the Hon. Colonial Secretary, Sierra Leone, December 1945.



requirements for primary education. Burns of the Gold Coast appeared to have been breaking the indirect rule mode while Sierra Leone and, to an extent, Nigeria, were less inclined to modifications.

In Nigeria, public reactions to both the Elliot Report and the Secretary of State's decision in favour of the Minority was naturally not as vehement as the fierce protests in the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone. Hence the government did not feel any compunction to respond to Hall's despatch until June of 1946. Nigeria's complacency was informed by the belief that the territory would certainly have a university no matter which part of the Elliot Report - Majority or Minority - was ultimately approved. As Governor Arthur Richards put it "public opinion over the question has not shown any marked strength of feeling one way or another, perhaps because Nigerian stands to get a university whichever Report is eventually adopted".<sup>22</sup>

Ostensibly the Nigerian government was favourably disposed towards the Minority Report. Hence even though the governor pointed out that the desire of the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone to preserve and develop their local institutions "is natural and reasonable" he nevertheless stressed that "it is essential to distinguish between local sentiments and

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<sup>22</sup>.SLA CSO Misc./Confid. Files, From Governor Richards to the Secretary of State, 11 June 1946.

academic efficiency".<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, the governor stated that there were certain interest groups such as the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) which supported the Majority recommendations. This was based on professional and sympathetic grounds. The NUT, for instance, called upon the Secretary of State to implement the Majority proposals without delay. Accordingly:

The Nigeria Union of Teachers deprecates any steps that might result in the retardation of the progress already made by the University College at Fourah Bay and Achimota College which have for seventy and twenty-four years respectively pioneered higher education in West Africa...while naturally appreciating the good things envisaged for Nigeria in both the Majority and Minority Reports of the Commission....<sup>24</sup>

After digesting all these reactions from West Africa, the Colonial Office realized that the problem transcended the Minority reasoning. Colonial and territorial "nationalism", as the Majority faction predicted, was becoming overpowering. What now plagued the Colonial Office remained how to garner, for the proposed unitary university of West Africa, the

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<sup>23</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>. Ibid. The NUT's position was not surprising. Ransome Kuti who presided over the Union was a signatory to the Majority Report. Just as Creech Jones was pushing the Minority opinion in London Ransome Kuti was equally demonstrating his strong support for the Majority view in West Africa. Kuti could not easily give up simply because Nigeria stood to gain in any circumstance. Besides, there were a large number of secondary school teachers in Nigeria who not only came from Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast but perhaps also attended Fourah Bay or Achimota. Undoubtedly they were a factor in the NUT's views.

support and co-operation of the other territories, given the outpouring of emotions over the Minority Report. London had discovered how resolute the Gold Coast educated elite, now backed by their government, had become in launching the Achimota university scheme. The colony had the necessary resources to support its claims, and the educated elements and politicians had seized the initiative. Compromise became necessary. In July 1946, consequently, Hall despatched another letter to the governments of the four British West African territories.<sup>25</sup>

In his letter Hall stated that he had been "urged to give due weight to local political considerations as well as those which are primarily educational and practical" that

a beginning in the founding of University Colleges should now be made in two, if not three of the territories concerned or that arrangements should be made by certain of the existing Colleges so that the foundation of a federal University of West Africa may now be laid.

While still resolved that a unitary university college, as recommended by the Minority, should be established in Ibadan, Nigeria as soon as possible, Hall felt that whatever decision he took "must be such as to secure a wider measure of consent from the people of all the territories and to enjoy the cooperation and goodwill of local feeling in the task

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<sup>25</sup>.CO 987/11 From Secretary of State to the Governors of Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, 6 July 1946.

ahead".<sup>26</sup> Therefore he suggested that there should be certain facilities in the Gold Coast for post-intermediate studies, and that as a temporary measure until the University of West Africa at Ibadan was fully developed Achimota should continue teaching for the B.Sc. (Engineering) degree. He concluded: "I hope that the proposal I now make will secure their cooperation not only in promoting and encouraging the facilities in their own country but for the University College of West Africa".<sup>27</sup>

As insignificant as the modification appeared, no such concession was extended to Sierra Leone. The Colonial Office knew that the colony could not support a fully-fledged university for lack of resources. Even combined with the Gambia, Sierra Leone could not supply an adequate number of students. Worse still, Governor Stevenson seemed apathetic to the Creole pressures and hence would not lobby London for a university college as did his Gold Coast counterpart. Furthermore, the Elliot Report had observed that "at the present time the chief educational need in Sierra Leone and the Gambia is for better qualified teachers in the secondary and primary schools especially in the hinterland".<sup>28</sup> As a result, Hall did not feel compelled to offer any compromise

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<sup>26</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>. Cmd. 6655 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in West Africa, p. 69.

about Sierra Leone, other than to elaborate upon the proposed territorial college which should serve the colony and the Gambia. Accordingly he maintained that the territorial college "should conform to the scope and purpose set out on pages 158-9 of the Elliot Report and should be sited in or near Freetown".<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Hall hoped that the CMS authorities would be willing to associate themselves closely with this college and that "the name Fourah Bay, so long associated with higher educational effort in Sierra Leone should be given to it". Responding to the Creole sentiments in favour of the reorganization of Fourah Bay to attain a university college status at a future date, as the Majority of the Elliot Commissioners proposed, Hall insisted:

I do not feel justified at this stage in encouraging at the College post-intermediate studies where the resources for the satisfactory university life and practice cannot be present, or in making available, from Imperial sources, financial or other assistance for the continuance or transference to the new institution of the present degree courses at Fourah Bay.<sup>30</sup>

While the Colonial Office position on Fourah Bay infuriated the educated elements in the colony, the government of Sierra Leone continued to argue that it had no financial resources like the Gold Coast to pay for what a fully-fledged

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<sup>29</sup>. Ibid. Pages 158-9 of the Elliot Report describes the functions of the proposed Territorial Colleges. These have been stated severally in this discussion.

<sup>30</sup>. Ibid.

university college entailed. As the governor remarked: "the controlling factor in regard to setting up a university college in the Gold Coast was not the constitutional position but the fact there were adequate financial resources available".<sup>31</sup> Pointing out further that there would be very heavy expenditure on primary and secondary education, the governor enjoined Sierra Leoneans to "take advantage of the university standards to be made available in the Gold Coast and Nigeria".<sup>32</sup> Driven by the force of territorial "nationalism" the various interest groups took their fight to the Legislative Council as they prepared for a confrontation. Since Sierra Leone possessed no financial base to disregard the instructions from London, the few unofficial members of the Legislative Council, who were mostly Creoles, became politically crippled. They could not pass bills to challenge the Minority Report as was the case in the Gold Coast, and hence the governor regarded a constitutional battle over the question as potentially futile. Clearly the larger issue involved funds and the educated elements understood that. There was scarcely any way out as Sierra Leone became almost a lame duck. In these circumstances, the position of the Colonial Office would hold sway, despite the strength or weakness of informed local opinion.

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<sup>31</sup>.SLA, CSO Misc./Confid. Files, Colonial Secretary's Note on the Governor's Remark on the University Question, August 1946.

<sup>32</sup>.Ibid.

Unlike Sierra Leone the Gold Coast was determined upon a showdown. The Gold Coast possessed all the favourable catalysts with which to confront the Colonial Office effectively. It had both a genuine case for which to fight and a supportive governor. Furthermore, the colony had an informed public led by the clamorous educated elite which insisted that a territorial college would not suffice but a full-scale university must come to pass. To the educated elements, therefore, Hall's compromise despatch of 6 July fell short of their expectations. The inaugural session of the Gold Coast Legislative Council held on July 24, 1946 was almost entirely devoted to Elliot's Report and the Secretary of State's despatch of July 6. Angrily reacting to what Hall considered as a concession to the Gold Coast, C.W. Tachie-Menson observed that "the Despatch allows, but at the same time does not encourage, the Gold Coast to develop either Achimota or any new centre of Higher Education in the Gold Coast into a University College".

Almost rehashing Burns' 1945 position, Tachie-Menson rejected Hall's proposition and affirmed that they "shall not support the expenditure of Gold Coast Revenue on any development of Higher Education in West Africa which does not contemplate the immediate development of Achimota on the lines of the Majority Recommendations".<sup>33</sup> In demonstration of how

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<sup>33</sup>.NAGA ADM 5/3/122 Extract from Honourable C.W.Tachie-Menson's Speech at the Inaugural Session of the New Legislative Council, 24 July 1946.

resolute the Gold Coast politicians were over the question, Tachie-Menson subsequently moved a motion requesting the governor:

to appoint a representative Committee to advise him on this matter to the end that the views to be submitted by the Governor [to the Secretary of State] may reflect the clear and undoubted wishes of the people of the Gold Coast on a subject so deeply concerning the future of the country.<sup>34</sup>

Readily the motion was seconded by Nene Mate-Kole who felt that the appointment of the committee was absolutely necessary in order to "implement and justify those strong views with competent speed and effective expression".<sup>35</sup> No one, including the official members, spoke against the motion. Doing so would have not only alienated the vocal educated elite and politicians but would have certainly offended the enthusiastic government. Clearly Burns was not displeased that the unofficials were raising a row over the matter.

Seizing the initiative provided by Tachie-Menson and Mate-Kole, J.B.Danguah presented a very powerful and emotional speech in favour of the motion. As he affirmed:

The Gold Coast is not Nigeria, and never could be. Achimota is not Yaba or Ibadan, and never could be.... There are nations in West Africa as there are nations in Europe. There are peoples among black Africans as there are peoples among white Europeans.... For purely cultural reasons

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<sup>34</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>. NAGA ADM 5/3/122 Extract from Nene Mate-Kole's Speech in the Legislative Council, 24 July 1946.



... this Gold Coast, a proud little country with a good reason for being proud, will never, can never and shall never be proud of a university situated at Ibadan and not Achimota.<sup>36</sup>

Danquah's speech illustrated explicitly how territorial/colonial nationalism, jealousy and parochial politics were being catalysed by the university question. It represented a sharp contrast with the 1920 pan-West African "nationalism" championed by Casely Hayford and the N.C.B.W.A. In the post-war years African "nationalists" such as Danquah, were all positioning themselves in their various countries for leading roles in the possible "self-government" which might follow shortly. The new premium which the Colonial Office placed on the immense role of an educated elite under the current colonial development policy was seized upon by the "nationalists" to carve out "empires" for themselves. Seeing himself as a rising "black star", Danquah's political and mass followership depended on how he could whip up public sentiments of this "proud little country" against Hall's decision.

Tachie-Menson's motion was ultimately carried by the embattled Council willing to show its commitment to fight for "the people's cause". In August, Alan Burns accordingly appointed a twelve-man committee under the chairmanship of Kenneth Bradley, the territory's acting colonial secretary.

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<sup>36</sup>.NAGA, ADM 5/3/122 Extract from Dr. J.B.Danquah's Speech in the Legislative Council, Gold Coast, 24 July 1946.

The task of the committee was very simple. Influential interest groups in the colony wanted their own university college, and nothing less. In November 1946, three months after its appointment, the Bradley Committee submitted its report to the government.<sup>37</sup> The Bradley Report reiterated strongly the determination of the Gold Coast to have a university college. It recommended the immediate development of a Gold Coast University College which "should evolve from the existing university courses at Achimota". Since it was the view of the committee that Achimota site "could not be satisfactorily adapted for permanent use" it identified a separate site for the proposed university college on and around Legon Hill, some two-and-half miles from Achimota and eight miles from Accra, and recommended that it be secured.<sup>38</sup>

As for the bigger question of funding for the proposed university college, the committee considered that the capital cost of approximately £750,000 over a ten-year period "can be made available from the Colony's surplus balances" while the recurrent costs "should be met from endowment, which should be built steadily as the resources of the Colony permit". Furthermore, Bradley's group noted the assurances given by the people, while the committee was collecting evidence, that they

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<sup>37</sup>.DP/LA 1611/G5/G35 Report of the Committee on Higher Education in the Gold Coast, August-November 1946, Government Printer, Accra, Africana Section, Balme Library, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana.

<sup>38</sup>.Ibid. pp.12-13.

were prepared to make sacrifices for higher education even if it implied higher taxation.<sup>39</sup> In relation to the nature of financial contribution the Gold Coast should make towards the proposed university in Nigeria, the committee recommended that "this contribution should take the form of generous *per capita* grants in respect of government-sponsored Gold Coast students attending that university college".<sup>40</sup> The Bradley Report represented a blue-print for, and could be seen as the origin of, what soon became the University College of the Gold Coast.

The turn of events in the Gold Coast overwhelmed the Colonial Office. Either London would accept a second university college in the Gold Coast or the Gold Coast government would unilaterally begin to build one, as the Bradley group had recommended. Seeking to end the feud the newly formed Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies (IUC), on December 1946, sent out a delegation to West Africa under the leadership of William Hamilton Fyfe, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen.<sup>41</sup> Initially the IUC group was to investigate the situation in each territory and the possibility of action to implement the Secretary of State's decision on the Elliot Report as outlined in Hall's despatch of July 6. In other words, this was another

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<sup>39</sup>.Ibid. p.14.

<sup>40</sup>.Ibid., p.15.

<sup>41</sup>.Other members of the delegation were Professor H.H.Bellot representing the London Senate Committee, Professor T.H.Davey, Professor L.E.S.Eastham, and Walter Adams.

practical step by London to implement the Asquith and Elliot plans for Africa. Earlier in July 1946 an IUC delegation under the chairmanship of A.M.Carr-Saunders had visited Makerere College in Uganda to inspect its facilities in relation to upgrading to university college status. Finding the site of the college excellent the delegation however observed that some facilities should be improved.<sup>42</sup> Generally, however, the delegation concluded that "indispensable foundations for a college of a university standing have been laid" at Makerere, and advised that a rapid effort should be made to build "on those promising foundation."<sup>43</sup> As a necessary first step, the Secretary of State appointed Dr. W.D.Lamont as the principal to see Makerere Higher College through this transitional process.<sup>44</sup>

Before the Hamilton Fyfe delegation left for West Africa, the Bradley Report reached the Colonial Office. The content of this report obliged the Secretary of State and the IUC to instruct the delegation to pay particular attention to the claims of the Gold Coast. The delegation first arrived in

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<sup>42</sup>.These facilities include the Library, teaching and residential accommodation, and improving both the scope and standard of courses in Arts and science.

<sup>43</sup>.Report of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies, July 1946, p.21 as cited in Maxwell, Universities in Partnership, p.197.

<sup>44</sup>.Cmd.7331 Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies, Report 1946-1947, H.M.S.O., February 1948. Dr.Lamont was a lecturer in Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow.

Nigeria to inspect the site of the proposed University College and on December 28, 1946 Hamilton Fyfe

pushed his way through the undergrowth into the 'bush' a few miles north of the town of Ibadan ... until he reached a clearing where it was possible to see a few yards ahead. He planted his walking-stick firmly into the ground and said: 'Here shall be the University of Nigeria'.<sup>45</sup>

Thereafter the delegation left for the trouble spot - the Gold Coast. The discussion between members of the Hamilton Fyfe group and the various interested bodies convinced the IUC delegation that immediate steps should be taken to establish degree courses there, "if necessary with local resources". As to whether the proposed college would enter into the special relationship scheme with the University of London or remain on unmodified external degree arrangement, the IUC group favoured the former which was readily acceptable to the Gold Coast Advisory Committee on Higher Education. Ultimately when the delegation submitted its report in January 1947 it recommended the establishment of "two university colleges in West Africa, one in Nigeria and one in the Gold Coast, each providing courses for degrees in arts and science within the terms of

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<sup>45</sup>.Kenneth Mellanby, The Birth of Nigeria's University, Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, 1958, and republished by Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, 1974, p.15. By calling it the "University of Nigeria" and not "of West Africa" the impression was created that the Hamilton Fyfe delegation had decided to recommend in favour of the University College of the Gold Coast even before the group left London, and visited the Gold Coast.

the special relationship with the University of London".<sup>46</sup> In view of this new arrangement, the delegation advised that the term 'West African' "would not be appropriate for either college" since its use might "perpetuate some of the grievances engendered in the majority-minority debate". Instead, they recommended that a place name title be adopted for each of them.<sup>47</sup> Although the delegation recognized the possible shortage of "adequately qualified staff willing to serve on the West Coast" the Hamilton Fyfe group felt that "it would be wrong to take a merely defeatist attitude".<sup>48</sup> On funding, they referred to the Bradley report which expressed the ability and willingness of the Gold Coast to provide both the capital and recurrent funds for its university and recommended that:

the main proportion of funds available for West Africa from the higher education allocation under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act should be used for establishing the college at Ibadan.<sup>49</sup>

Clearly the IUC delegation had modified, on the spot, the Colonial Office and British Government policy on the number of university colleges which should be founded in West Africa. There is no doubt that the delegation based its recommendation

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<sup>46</sup>.National Archives of Nigeria, Ibadan (NAI) MED/FED 1/10 CADW 33 Report of the Inter-University Council Delegation to West Africa, 21 December 1946 - 15 January 1947, p.4.

<sup>47</sup>.Ibid., p.5.

<sup>48</sup>.Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>.Ibid., p.10.

not necessarily on academic expediency but mainly on the strength of local sentiments which could no longer be resisted. For a whole year, the Colonial Office had found itself almost powerless to implement the university project in West Africa. Furthermore the Secretary of State could neither veto nor ignore the recommendations of the delegation because it had given the IUC wide powers, and above all, independence from government interference in the discharge of its functions. Given the impasse created by the intransigent opposition of the Gold Coast, and Hall's refusal to approve a second university college, the intervention of the IUC served as a saving grace. The Gold Coast initiative was a success and the Colonial Office ultimately yielded. Significantly, it was a triumph for African "nationalists" who discovered that their opinion now seriously mattered under the new dispensation. From then on they would begin to seize further initiatives.

Hamilton Fyfe's group also revised the conception of the territorial college as outlined in the Elliot Minority Report. These Colleges would no longer have as one of their primary functions teaching for the intermediate examinations, thereby serving as "feeders" to the university colleges. Instead the delegation proposed the creation of "regional colleges" in Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone "to provide a coherent and complete training, and not merely part of the

training to be completed elsewhere" - in the university.<sup>50</sup> In other words, the new regional colleges should be in the nature of polytechnics to relieve the university colleges of most vocational courses unsuited to them, and to supplement efforts in secondary education. The IUC delegation craved to make this clarification so as to remove these regional colleges from its responsibility. "Since the regional colleges are not and never will be university institutions", the delegation opined, "we presume that any responsibility for their development ... will only indirectly concern the Inter-University Council".<sup>51</sup> As the delegation had proposed that the regional colleges be assisted, financially, from the CD&WA allocation for higher education, it therefore made a strong representation to the British government to provide separate and substantial funds for the colleges.<sup>52</sup>

The visit of the IUC delegation to Sierra Leone and its consequent report on Fourah Bay College created more indignation. This was not only because the Hamilton Fyfe group did not support the claims of the colony for a university college but also because the scope of the regional colleges

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<sup>50</sup>. Ibid., p.14. They should be one of the most flexible organs in the educational system, quickly responsive to the employment requirements of government and of society.

<sup>51</sup>. Ibid., p.16. The territorial colleges would rather be the concern of the ACEC. Contrary to the delegates views that the colleges "will never be university institutions" nearly all of them ultimately became such after the various colonies had attained independence.

<sup>52</sup>. Ibid., p.17.



the delegation proposed would further degrade Fourah Bay College if certain courses taught by that institution were transferred to the regional colleges. However the group suggested that the Fourah Bay College site at Mount Aureol be extended until the new regional college took effect. It further recommended that a grant-in-aid from the CD&WA funds should be made to Fourah Bay to keep the Durham degree arrangement going until university courses began in Nigeria and the Gold Coast. Such financial help would only be necessary if the CMS was unable to maintain the college degree work for that interim period with the assistance of the local government. Considering the tense political situation in Sierra Leone, the IUC delegation could not recommend an immediate stop to degree work at Fourah Bay hence they argued for a possible grant from imperial funds. As they stated:

It would be a ludicrous climax to all the public discussions of West African higher education during the past years if the only institution on the West Coast in which students can obtain British degrees were to expire before degree courses are provided elsewhere on the Coast. This would arouse great and justifiable indignation locally and create a very embarrassing political situation.<sup>53</sup>

In any case, although the claims of Sierra Leone for a university college could not be supported by the IUC delegation, these interim compromises were steps which later permitted the eventual development of Fourah Bay into the

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<sup>53</sup>. Ibid., p.19.

University College of Sierra Leone. But it was clear that progress would be really slow given all the difficulties. What is important to note is how local pressures were affecting the whole process of Colonial Office decision-making. African reactions were dictating the details of policy implementation.

On March 1947, the entire IUC endorsed the report of the Hamilton Fyfe delegation to West Africa, and advised the Secretary of State to approve a second university college for the Gold Coast. While the Colonial Office was considering the question, Governor Burns of the Gold Coast announced at the opening of the March 1947 Budget Session of the Legislative Council that the Gold Coast was proceeding with the establishment of its own university college. A second university college in West Africa had become a *fait accompli*. The Colonial Office knew this, and to continue to argue otherwise would be foolhardy. In his despatch of August 16, 1947 to West African governments, the Secretary of State, Arthur Creech Jones, who had taken over the mantle from Hall in a cabinet reshuffle, "agreed in principle to the proposal that a University College should be established in the Gold Coast". However, he added that his acceptance in principle of the arrangement "was based on the assumption that the greater part of the cost of establishing and maintaining the College could be met from Gold Coast funds".<sup>54</sup> By giving approval to

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<sup>54</sup>.NAI OX/A28 From Secretary of State to the Governors of Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, 16 August, 1947.

another university college, Creech Jones, who had consistently favoured the Minority idea of a unitary University of West Africa, ate his own words. As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State under Hall, Creech Jones put the Secretary of State in a tangle by seeking to force the Minority proposal upon West Africa.

The turn of events since 1945 demonstrated that those who signed the Elliot Majority Report were much more far-sighted than the Minority signatories, including Creech Jones. In recommending more than one university colleges the Majority fully understood the vitality of local sentiments, and the emerging colonial territorial nationalism in the entire question. They also realized the ambitions and strength of African educated elements under the new colonial policy which placed high priority on them. As a career politician, Creech Jones was clearly too late in recognizing these factors. But that he eventually did, marked a significant triumph for the African educated elite who used the university issue as a test case for the vigorous nationalism which followed later. Accordingly:

I recognized, however, that any successful educational advance must depend on active and informed popular support and, in view of the strong public demand in the Gold Coast for the establishment of a University College there and of the necessary financial support, I have agreed in principle that a University College should be

established in the Gold Coast.<sup>55</sup>

Creech Jones further endorsed the recommendation of the Hamilton Fyfe delegation that neither of the two university college should adopt the term "West Africa". Consequently the Nigerian college now became known as the University College of Ibadan (UCI) while the other became the University College of the Gold Coast (UCGC). In the meantime the Secretary of State had appointed Dr. Kenneth Mellanby as the principal-designate of the UCI, Nigeria.<sup>56</sup> In July, Mellanby left for Nigeria to examine problems relating to the establishment of the college. Later in the year also, David Balme was appointed the principal-designate of the newly-approved University College of the Gold Coast.<sup>57</sup> Thus by the end of 1947 a major step had been taken for the actual take-off of two university colleges in West Africa. Mellanby from London and Balme from Cambridge would imprint upon the respective colleges they pioneered, organizations, attitudes and the academic cultures reminiscent of the institutions from which they came. Eventually Ibadan exhibited a legacy of the University of London while Legon (the University College of the Gold Coast) showed the stamp of Cambridge.

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<sup>55</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>. Appointed in May 8 1947, Dr. Mellanby was a university Reader in Medical Entomology in the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

<sup>57</sup>. Balme was formerly a Senior Tutor of Jesus College, Cambridge and University Lecturer in Classics.

As for Fourah Bay College, the Secretary of State reaffirmed his unwillingness, despite the strong representations made to him by the C.M.S., the Methodist Missionary Society, Durham University and other influential interest groups within and outside Sierra Leone, to support the development of Fourah Bay as a university college. Creech Jones strongly felt that Sierra Leone did not possess the resources to build and maintain a university college and that the funds available from the CD&WA could not provide for a third university in West Africa. As he asserted:

I do not believe that Sierra Leone in its present stage of development can undertake the necessary recurrent financial commitment to maintain a University College of the required quality and it is certainly not possible to contemplate assistance from the Colonial Development and Welfare Vote for three university colleges in West Africa.... I believe that the needs of Sierra Leone can best be met by the University Colleges established in Nigeria and the Gold Coast and the regional college on the lines suggested by the Inter-University Council.<sup>58</sup>

Agreeing with the proposal of the IUC delegation Creech Jones conceded that in recognition of the role of Fourah Bay College as the only institution providing degree courses in arts and commerce in West Africa these programmes "will continue until the university colleges in Nigeria and the Gold Coast are in a position themselves to provide such degree

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<sup>58</sup>.NAI OX/A28 From the Secretary of State to the Governors of Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia, 16 August, 1947.

course". During this interim period, the Secretary of State agreed to make available to Fourah Bay a measure of financial assistance if this could be shown to be required to enable the college to continue with its activities.<sup>59</sup> Predictably, this would not appease the Creoles and other interest groups in Sierra Leone. Ultimately they opposed the arrangement because it fell short of what had been granted to the other contending territories. Since the Gold Coast had been given a university college, it was clear that nothing would pacify Sierra Leone's elite unless it was the immediate reorganization and development of Fourah Bay towards ultimate university status. For Sierra Leone's educated elements, therefore, the matter had not been laid to rest. Resistance persisted.

Meanwhile, as Sierra Leoneans were protesting against the content of the Secretary of State's despatch of August 16, 1947 events were maturing rapidly in both Nigeria and the Gold Coast in respect of the university colleges. The Colonial Office no longer wanted to delay action any further, and Mellanby had been mandated to ensure that classes started at the UCI in January 1948 by adapting the former 56th General Military Hospital some five miles from the permanent site at Ibadan, which the Hamilton Fyfe delegation approved. Lectures accordingly began in January 1948 with 108 students transferred from the Yaba Higher College. However, not all of these students were university candidates. They were mainly

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<sup>59</sup>. Ibid.

intermediate and teacher-training students who completed their programmes in the new university college. It was not until October, 1948 that about 148 new university students were admitted for the various degree courses offered by the UCI. Thus a university institution took root in Nigeria. The larger part of the financial support for capital costs, to the tune of £1,500,000 for the initial take-off, was provided by the British Government from the CD&WA allocation to higher education in the colonies, as recommended by the Asquith Commission. The Nigerian Government bore the recurrent expenditure.<sup>60</sup> This University College was tied to the apron-string of the University of London under the scheme of special relationship. The degrees the students took under this scheme were those of the University of London.

In the Gold Coast, likewise, the Secretary of State officially approved the establishment of a university college for the territory and this was immediately matched with action. The appointment of David Balme as the principal-designate in late 1947 and his arrival in the Gold Coast in January 1948 set in motion all efforts to make the start. Finally, in October 1948 classes were begun in the University College with ninety undergraduates taken from Achimota's post-secondary programme. During these foundation years the UCGC shared accommodation with the teacher-training department at

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<sup>60</sup>.NAI, CSO 26/4197/vol.1 Proposals for the Future Financing of the University College, Ibadan, Government Printer, Lagos, 1952, pp.2-3.

Achimota. The rate at which expansion was embarked upon meant that work had to begin immediately at its permanent site. For whatever reason Legon Hill, some three miles from Achimota which Bradley Committee had recommended was chosen in preference to Kumasi even when the Hamilton Fyfe delegation pointed out that the Legon Hill site "has some serious disadvantages".<sup>61</sup> Since Creech Jones refused to promise substantial financial support for the UCGC, the bulk of the funds required for the initial establishment were provided by the government and people of the Gold Coast. While the Gold Coast Government provided the sum of £1,100,000, the Gold Coast Cocoa Marketing Board gave £1,896,718 for the development of an agriculture department and associated sciences.<sup>62</sup> The Gold Coast later felt burdened by this financial arrangement in which the government and peoples were compelled to fund the UCGC while huge Imperial funds were being poured into the Nigerian UCI.

As the two new university colleges were being built in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone was embroiled in protest against the interim measure proposed for Fourah Bay

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<sup>61</sup>. See the Report of the IUC Delegation to West Africa, p.12. Some of these disadvantages the delegation stressed were that it was a coastal belt with desert-like conditions, it was in the midst of non-African influences near the artificial town of Accra, and that it was on a hill, 450 feet above sea level.

<sup>62</sup>. Refer to the Report of the Principal of the University College of the Gold Coast, 1948-1952, Government Printer, Accra, 1952, pp.28-30; and CO 1004/1 Governor of the Gold Coast to the Secretary of State, 22 February 1950.



College by the Secretary of State. Maxwell has observed that Creech Jones' interim arrangement of August 1947 "met with a worse reception in Sierra Leone than his predecessor's [Hall's] refusal in July 1946" to approve a university college for the colony.<sup>63</sup> It was an emotional injury to the Sierra Leonean educated elements and interest groups that Fourah Bay College which had had a long tradition of degree work could be so relegated to a regional college to offer courses of a secondary school, or of polytechnic character. Further representation were therefore made to the Secretary of State by the Sierra Leonean paramount chiefs and other influential lobbies. But Creech Jones stood his ground not to alter the overall plan for higher education in West Africa any further. The IUC advised against any further concession to Sierra Leone, and the Secretary of State concurred. In the opinion of the IUC, any attempt to divert the CD&WA funds to Fourah Bay should be viewed as "purely a political gesture, when justifiable educational claims elsewhere far exceeded the available resources".<sup>64</sup>

Lobby groups came to realize that the main point at issue for the refusal of London to approve a university college for Sierra Leone was the lack of resources to build and sustain it. Thus a mass rally was organized in early 1948 which set up a committee "to appeal to the people of Sierra Leone for funds

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<sup>63</sup>.Maxwell, Universities in Partnership, p.177.

<sup>64</sup>.Ibid., p.178.

to serve the College". The committee was only able to raise the sum of £7,000.<sup>65</sup> This could hardly make a meaningful base for a university college. Sierra Leone was not comparable to the Gold Coast either in resources or in the disposition of its government toward the university idea. While this was going on locally, a group known as the Friends of Fourah Bay continued lobbying the Colonial Office and the IUC for a sympathetic reconsideration of the Fourah Bay College case.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, in early 1948, Hubert Stevenson had been replaced by George Beresford-Stooke as governor of Sierra Leone. As his actions would demonstrate, this new governor appeared more sensitive to the Creole interests and the fortunes of Fourah Bay College than his predecessor.

In any case the Colonial Office urgently desired to get the regional college for Sierra Leone and the Gambia off the ground. But given the intensity of local sentiment and opposition against the regional college idea progress seemed unlikely. Furthermore, the Sierra Leone Legislative Council might refuse to vote funds for the new regional college in protest against the humiliation of Fourah Bay. These factors coupled with the powerful pressures from Friends of Fourah Bay

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<sup>65</sup>.Sierra Leone Collection, (SLC) RS 378.664/SA97 Harry Sawyerr and Eldred Jones, "The Story of Fourah Bay College", 1960, p.15.

<sup>66</sup>.Ibid., p.16. Members of this lobby group seem to have consisted mainly of the former as well as current staff of Durham University who had long-standing connections with Fourah Bay College.

in London convinced the Secretary of State of the need for further concessions. Thus in his despatch of October 1948, Creech Jones, after giving "the very fullest weight to local opinion and aspirations", proposed what became known as a "compromise solution".<sup>67</sup>

By this arrangement, imperial funds from the CD&WA allocation were to be granted to Fourah Bay College for five years, in the first instance, provided that it became a composite institution, embracing academic work envisaged for the regional college, and a university department conducting the existing degree courses. This was on the condition that the university courses would not be expanded until reviewed by the Sierra Leone Government after assuring itself "as to the cost of continuing or expanding degree courses". Even though he asserted that "the responsibility of deciding the future of the College rests with the College authorities", Creech Jones further advised that before any full university scheme should be undertaken a commission of enquiry drawn from both London and locally should be appointed "in four or five years' time...to investigate and report on the educational requirements of Sierra Leone at all levels in the light of the funds available, including the question of the future of degree course teaching in Sierra Leone". Stressing the importance he attached to the proposal for a commission the

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<sup>67</sup>.SLC RS 378.664/G798 Secretary of State to the Governor of Sierra Leone, 20 October, 1948.

Secretary of State concluded: "I feel that acceptance of this proposal must be regarded as an essential part of the compromise which it is the purpose of this despatch to propose".<sup>68</sup>

By this proposal Creech Jones demonstrated considerable political adroitness. He purposely set the interim period in order to allow tempers to cool in Sierra Leone, and to afford enough time for the two university colleges in Nigeria and the Gold Coast to take root. Furthermore the Colonial Office desired that the regional college for Sierra Leone and the Gambia should begin immediately, even if under the Fourah Bay umbrella. Evidently, Creech Jones was buying time. He was not unaware that the tense political situation over the question in Sierra Leone could derail the entire plan in both Nigeria and the Gold Coast. Furthermore, it appears that the Secretary of State's interim arrangement was more a divide-and-rule ploy than it was intended to establish a university college in Sierra Leone. As Maxwell aptly described it:

Behind the decisions lay the expectation that in five years' time the current bitterness would have passed and that the legislative council, with by then a majority of members from the hinterland where school facilities were desperately poor, would not willingly devote an excessive share of educational resources to Fourah Bay College to meet the wishes of the Creole population of the Freetown area.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>. Maxwell, Universities in Partnership, pp.178-9.

In December 1948 the Fourah Bay College Council accepted the Secretary of State compromise plan. This was on the condition that "the position of the Degree courses in the new Fourah Bay College is safe-guarded by the division of the College into Departments" and as long as there was "the possibility of developing out of the existing courses, honours courses in Arts as the University of Durham may approve and as soon as circumstances justify such a development", and "provided that the enlarged Fourah Bay College should be largely autonomous".<sup>70</sup> Thereafter the governor of Sierra Leone, Beresford-Stooke, despatched an urgent letter to the Secretary of State in which he accepted the observations and recommendations of the Fourah Bay College Council. According to him, it "gives me particular pleasure to transmit to you the proposals by the Council to which this Government can attach its general support, and which I can commend to your favourable consideration".<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Beresford-Stooke observed:

In my view the report of the Council offers a basis on which an agreed solution of this problem can be reached. I trust that you will be able to accept in principle the recommendation made by the Council and that we shall then be able to proceed with plans for developing

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<sup>70</sup>.SLA CSO Misc./Confid. Files on Education, "Observations and Recommendations of the New Council of Fourah Bay College on the Secretary of State Despatch", December 1948.

<sup>71</sup>.SLC, RS 378.66/SI 17 Governor of Sierra Leone to Secretary of State, 28 December 1948.

higher education in Sierra Leone.<sup>72</sup>

On receipt of the council's views and the governor's comment, the embattled Secretary of State telegraphed to the Governor of Sierra Leone: "I accept the modifications which the Council have suggested in the arrangement proposed in my despatch [of October 1948]".<sup>73</sup> The speed with which Creech Jones gave his approval to the Fourah Bay Council's views demonstrated how relieved the Colonial Office was that a solution had been reached. Fourah Bay College had presented a perennial problem in British efforts to provide university facilities for Africans. Although the Gold Coast resistance to the Hall/Jones' decision in favour of the Elliot Minority proposal was much more ferocious, the opposition of the Creoles, albeit more subtle, was more protracted. Both encounters proved weakening to the Colonial Office ability to face the university issue with vigour.

On February 1949, therefore, the Sierra Leonean Legislative Council gave its official approval to the new arrangement, and Fourah Bay College became reconstituted by Ordinance No.1 of 1950. It became a composite college offering both degree courses and middle-level training of a polytechnic nature. Under the plan, the IUC, which had consistently avoided involvement in Fourah Bay, was glad to be relieved of

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<sup>72</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>. SLC, RS 378.66/SI 17, Secretary of State to the Governor of Sierra Leone, January 1949.

the responsibility as Durham University and the newly appointed Advisory Committee on Colonial Colleges of Arts, Science and Technology (ACCCAST) took over the duty of providing advice and financial support. In September 1950 the sum of £450,000 was granted to Fourah Bay College from the CD&WA funds; £100,000 for recurrent and £350,000 for capital expenditure.<sup>74</sup> However, it took almost ten more years before the college could attain university college status. Advance was very slow. Before then a commission had been appointed, and had reported<sup>75</sup> as required in the compromise plan. Sierra Leone finally got its own university college, but very belatedly, as the IUC and Colonial Office had foreseen. Although planned as a step-by-step process, ostensibly, a co-ordinated development of universities in West Africa soon eluded Britain. Once the scheme was set in motion, Africans seized the initiative and dictated the pace.

The foundation of the two university colleges in Nigeria and the Gold Coast in 1948 influenced events in East Africa. In 1937 Makerere College had begun its long and sluggish march towards a university college status as the De La Warr Commission envisioned. World War II became a stumbling block.

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<sup>74</sup>.SLC, RS 378.664/F825 "Fourah Bay College - Past, Present and Future: A Memorandum from the College Council to the Fulton Education Commission", 1954, p.9; see also SLC, RS 378.664/F74 C.P.Foray An Outline of Fourah Bay College History, 1827-1977, pamphlet, 1977, p.22.

<sup>75</sup>.See the SLC, RS 370.9664/SI 17 Report of the Sierra Leone Education Commission, 1954.

However, the Colonial Office plans for post-war reconstruction in the colonies gave the college a new impetus. In September 1947, a year after the visit of the IUC delegation led by Carr-Saunders, the college applied to the University of London for admission into the special relationship scheme. This was not approved because the university wanted further informal discussion with the college "concerning its constitution, staffing, courses to be offered and other matters".<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, the IUC was determined to see Makerere College advance towards university college status as envisaged by the Asquith Commission. Its progress should, if necessary, be induced since within the college and government circles there had been some division of opinion on the wisdom of proceeding immediately with development towards university status.<sup>77</sup> But in view of the progress made in West Africa, the College Council in November 1948 made a public statement to declare its stand on the university question. Accordingly:

Both for educational and political reasons it is most important that ..., as early as possible satisfactory arrangements should be made between the University of London and the College

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<sup>76</sup>.Maxwell, Universities in Partnership, p.198.

<sup>77</sup>.Although details and issues involved in this rift were not documented it would appear that while government departments which insisted that Makerere should remain a higher college were concerned with the supply of middle-level manpower those who supported a university were the Ugandan chiefly elite. However, given the "Oxford complex" of Makerere, the Baganda chiefs might have opposed an external relationship with the University of London, a less prestigious institution than Oxford in their opinion.



authorities whereby students of the College can read for external degrees of the University.<sup>78</sup>

This statement confirmed the IUC desire to establish, as soon as possible, a link between Makerere and the University of London in the scheme of special relationship. The commencement of the two university colleges in West Africa in 1948 under the special relationship plan with the University of London hastened things in East Africa. Negotiations on the modalities of the scheme with respect to Makerere began in London in January 1949, and in July of that year the Carr-Saunders IUC delegation revisited Makerere to assess its progress. Even though they observed that there might be a need for "further negotiations on points such as Matriculation of the degree courses" and a reorganization of the College Council to ensure African representation, the delegation felt that Makerere should "assume the status of a University College" without delay. For the IUC group, therefore, the college was entitled to recognition as a university college, and so greatly increased financial assistance should be extended to it.<sup>79</sup> In November 1949 the college was duly accepted into the special relationship scheme with the University of London, with its name and status changed to the University College of East Africa. Professor Bernard de Bunsen

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<sup>78</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>. ULAP AC 11/12/1 Report of the Inter-University Council Delegation to East Africa, July-August, 1949, pp.42-48.

was appointed the principal of the new institution.<sup>80</sup> Educated at Oxford, de Bunsen vigorously pursued Oxford tradition at Makerere while maintaining the special relationship links with London. For the initial take-off, the sum of £1,250,000 from the CD&WA was granted to the college for capital expenditure.<sup>81</sup> Thus a third university college was approved in Africa under the Asquith plan.

Clearly, East Africa presented a sharp contrast with West Africa in that its educated elements were not as large and forceful in championing the cause of territorial nationalism as those of West Africa. From the beginning, efforts at higher education in East Africa had been centred at Makerere while in West Africa, various centres emerged in the different territories. Furthermore, apart from Uganda, none of the other East African territories had even a handful of African educated elements who could put pressure on the Colonial Office for separate university colleges. Worse still, none of the territories, apart from Uganda, possessed the resources to pursue any independent university project. Kenya's settlers were not keenly interested in the issue since they preferred sending their children to England for university education. It was recorded that out of the total number of students at the

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<sup>80</sup>.Professor de Bunsen was formerly a director of education in Palestine, and later Professor of Education at Makerere College. He was educated at Balliol College, Oxford University.

<sup>81</sup>.Macpherson, They Built for the Future: A Chronicle of Makerere University College, 1922-1962, p.102.

University College of East Africa, Makerere, in 1954, there was only one European.<sup>82</sup> Obviously, despite its change of name, Makerere was still a Ugandan affair and a Ugandan institution, supported by the chiefly elite and a colonial budget surplus with an ambition to become the Oxford of Africa.

In West Africa, the Gold Coast like Uganda had the resources with an altogether more vociferous educated elite; Sierra Leone had no money but it possessed the largest number of educated Africans - the Creoles - as well as the only institution in West Africa which had offered degrees since 1876; Nigeria, although poorer than the Gold Coast was the largest British West African territory both in population and land mass. It also had vocal educated elements. The Gambia, the smallest of all the territories, was also the poorest in everything and hence did not present any demands. Obviously, the physical and human resources of the various British African territories correlated with the demand for universities.

Significant in all these events were the pressures and lobbying of the African intellectual elites, which led to very important real changes in policy already laid down in the Colonial Office. This is central to the whole business of the fundamental change which was occurring in the focus of

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<sup>82</sup>.SLA, CSO Open Files on Education (General) Cmd.9515 Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas, 1946-1954, H.M.S.O., 1954, p.26.

imperial policy upon the transfer of collaboration patterns from traditional to new and educated elites. Profound in this new collaboration was the willingness of the Colonial Office to seek actively the opinion of the educated elite thereby circumventing colonial establishments. Indirect rule was in decay and doomed. By reshaping, adjusting, and modifying its university policy, the Colonial Office demonstrated a sensitivity toward the educated elite quite unique in its history. It upset the gradualism and imperviousness of colonial establishments usually more attuned to the chiefly predispositions of indirect rule, than to the Westernized elite. In this new colonial policy lay the link with decolonization.

Even when the change of attitude was not actually intended to lead to complete transfer of power as it later did, the expansion of the class of African educated elite and the relegation of the traditional class to the background boosted the "nationalist" movements. The new elite, unlike the traditional one, had initiatives and demands of their own, and these had to be met as the price of their collaboration with the colonial economic, social, and political development policy of the Colonial Office. The university issue became, therefore, one which touched deeply and fundamentally on elite class interests, because the universities were seen as the engines which would enlarge their class, gain it entry into the administration, education, the professions, and ultimately

lead them along the corridors of power into the control rooms  
of the colonial state.

## CONCLUSION

It took almost one hundred years before the British could see their way to the provision of the necessary facilities for university education to Africans. The reason for the somewhat deliberate policy of ignoring the university idea did not lie entirely in British lack of recognition of the positive role which higher education could play in the social and economic development of a people - particularly the colonial peoples. Instead, the larger question involved the place which the highly educated African was expected to occupy under a form of colonial rule which depended on the collaboration of traditional elites. As well as demonstrating why earlier African demands for the establishment of a university between 1860 and 1900 failed, this study has shown that the ideas which essentially informed the foundation of universities in Africa in the 1940's - the expansion of the class of African educated elite for colonial development - were fundamentally the same as those which frustrated it in the late nineteenth century.

Between 1860 and 1920, the agitation for the establishment of a university in Africa came almost exclusively from Africans such as Horton, Blyden, Johnson and Hayford. Except for Blyden's demand which attracted the sympathy of Governor Hennessey of Sierra Leone, the rest hardly made any tangible impact in London. The Colonial Office

failed to be persuaded mainly because the "loose talk" in the British Parliament about "self-government" for the colonies in 1865 quickly evaporated, even before Blyden publicized the university question in a more sophisticated fashion. Had it sincerely been pursued, the idea of "self-government" would have entailed the training of African an elite to take over and run the new African states along British lines, as in the 1940's colonial reform ideology. But the university idea was clearly ahead of its time, since the question of British withdrawal from Africa soon became moribund. Thus the British Treasury would have laughed at any request from the Colonial Office for funding of African university schemes.

Between 1860 and 1900 the C.M.S. possessed a near monopoly on education in British African territories. Believing strongly that successful proselytization must depend on effective control of educational institutions, the Society jealously guarded its dominance. Hence it was quick to dismiss Blyden's demand for an indigenous and secular institution as an attempt to establish a "godless" university.<sup>1</sup> Because the missionary bodies actually funded most of the schools, thereby relieving the Sierra Leone government of the responsibility, African demands hardly received any serious official British attention. However, to consolidate its control, the C.M.S. settled for the affiliation of Fourah Bay College to Durham

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<sup>1</sup>. Henry Cheatham (Bishop of Sierra Leone) to Henry Wright (Secretary of C.M.S., London) 13 March 1873 as reproduced in Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, Africa, pp.463-464.

University in 1876, not surprisingly, for the award of external degrees in Theology and Classics. Essentially, this was meant to cool off African agitation and ensure that neither the local colonial government nor London would have any logical reasons to support Blyden and his group. It worked. Soon after affiliation, African demands for a university lost their vitality as the era of the scramble and partition set in, from the 1880's onwards.

The affiliation occurred at the end of the period when British policy somewhat favoured a social policy of assimilation of Africans into European civilization, Christianity, and commerce. Horton, Blyden, Johnson and the archetypical "Black Englishman", Samuel Crowther, were all products of this age. It was an age when some British officials, such as Governor Pope Hennessey and missionary personnel such as Henry Venn, believed that African "inferiority" had resulted from the lack of opportunity.<sup>2</sup> For them, to encourage education, spread Christianity and promote trade and modern commerce would eliminate the different levels between Africans and Europeans. Within this framework the logic of a university institution became quite obvious. Thus the Fourah Bay affiliation was partly intended to cater to the assumptions of the "civilizing mission".

On the level of policy and overall goals, educated

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<sup>2</sup>.E.A. Ayandele, African Historical Studies, Frank Cass, London, 1979, pp.92-93.



Africans did not differ in essentials from either secular or religious foreign officials. Blyden, who stressed adaptation, became a spokesman for African opinion. Although, as later events demonstrated, not all believed wholeheartedly in his advocacy of an Africanized syllabus, fearing that it would not only be interpreted as inferior to the education offered in England but also serve to legitimize European racial claims. As a result African educated elements, almost without dissent, indirectly approved educational "imperialism" and urged the British forward. Ironically however official British thinking underwent a profound change of opinion just as the affiliation of Fourah Bay occurred, and the change became complete by the end of the scramble. Britain began to administer her appropriated territories while the idea of ultimate withdrawal from Africa had become little more than a joke. Consequently, whatever assimilationist progress there had been earlier, became abandoned and replaced by a set of new, and in essence racist, ideas surrounding the concept of indirect rule and colonial occupation.

To justify colonial rule Africans were now considered as either genetically inferior and therefore not fundamentally changeable by education and Christianity, or so many millennia behind Europeans in cultural development that they would take centuries to catch up.<sup>3</sup> Indirect rule was postulated on these

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<sup>3</sup>. See Charles H. Lyons, To Wash an Aethiop White: British Ideas About Black African Educability 1530-1960, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York, 1975, pp.122-

new assumptions. The "civilization" of Africans now became the "White Man's burden" as European arrogance grew. Philip Curtin aptly noted that the new racism became "the most important cluster of ideas in British imperial policy".<sup>4</sup> Similarly Basil Davidson has also pointed out how Africans were treated as inferior to Europeans under colonial rule, this justified by a whole range of myths which supported "white superiority".<sup>5</sup> The belief then followed that Africans would require possibly a thousand years to evolve, in their own time, at their own speed and along their own lines to a "civilized level". The idea of a university, therefore, became something which seemed to threaten the slow evolutionary gradualism of the indirect rule ideology, tending only to disrupt and undermine the system.

Educated Africans who had achieved fame in medicine and university education were now dismissed as unusual exceptions. Where they were given credit at all, it was naturally shrouded in racism as some officials contended that Africans possessed an exceptional power of memory without a corresponding ability

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<sup>4</sup>.Philip D.Curtin, The Image of Africa, Macmillan, London, 1965, p.364.

<sup>5</sup>.Basil Davidson, Modern Africa, Fourth Impression, Longman, New York, 1991, p.5. Refer also to Joseph E.Harris, Africans and their History, New Edition, Mentor Books, New York, 1987, pp.13-28.

to apply their knowledge in practice.<sup>6</sup> For long this theory was used by British officials as a justification not to hire well-educated Africans. Until these ideas began to change in the late 1930's - and they changed more rapidly in England than among the European rank and file in the African colonial service - there was no hope of undermining indirect rule and securing universities.

It has been demonstrated that the elevation of the African traditional elite over and above the educated elements under the indirect rule policy caused the educated elite to abandon their demand for a university to fight for recognition in the colonial administration. Realising that there was no role for them, they began to make noises. This accounted for the meeting of the leaders of the West African educated elite in Accra, the Gold Coast in 1920 under the auspices of the National Congress of British West Africa (N.C.B.W.A.). In a sense, it was the exclusion of the educated Africans which actually helped to create the germ of the nationalist movement in Africa. As the two elites were one and the same in Uganda, it was not surprising that nothing approaching a nationalist movement took place during the first phase of decolonization. Since British colonial officials collaborated with the traditional elites, African intellectual elements in West Africa were seen as adversaries if not

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<sup>6</sup>.See CO 847/5/7 Note by E.R.J.Hussey, Nigerian Director of Education, on Draft Report of the Sub-Committee of the ACEC with regard to University Education for Africans, 1935.

actually subversive. Thus it is not surprising that British officials refused to "exert themselves to provide what the 'educated and Europeanized natives' wanted, namely facilities for university education".<sup>7</sup>

From the 1920's there were feeble efforts at the provision of higher educational facilities resulting in the foundation of Achimota College in the Gold Coast and Makerere College in Uganda. Not surprisingly these two colonies were the most financially secure. The establishment of these institutions was essentially a response to the middle-level manpower needs of the colonial service, and not necessarily a benevolent official response to African demands for a university. It has also been demonstrated that American involvement in African educational matters under the auspices of the Phelps-Stokes Commission in the 1920's forced the Colonial Office to issue, for the first time, an education policy for British African dependencies, and establish the ACNETA. Nevertheless, university education remained an anathema to indirect rule enthusiasts because it would expand the class of highly educated Africans for which no role existed under that colonial dispensation. Ironically, the expansion of this disgruntled educated class, which British officials studiously avoided between 1920 and 1940, became not only necessary but ultimately constituted a matter of high policy in London in the 1940's.

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<sup>7</sup>.Carr-Saunders, New Universities Overseas, p.31.

African preference for overseas training against local qualifications had been misunderstood. In the mid-1930's, especially following the Yaba credibility question, Africans lost faith in official British attempts to establish institutions of higher learning. Suspicious of the motive of colonial education and fearing that a "second rate" academic status was being foisted upon them, Africans preferred to obtain their qualifications overseas. Worse still, the non-recognition of African diplomas and certificates beyond the borders where they were obtained, coupled with government employment discrimination - in wages and positions - against those who trained locally tremendously encouraged the African predilection for British qualifications.<sup>8</sup>

In Uganda these comparisons did not exist since the educated elite and the British operated in almost two distinct administrative services. Within the Kabaka's government, Makerere standards, certificates and diplomas were usually the only ones which counted. Ugandans did not look upon them as really inferior but rather equal to those obtained from Britain, even when they were actually not. In West Africa, colonial regimes degraded the local qualifications from Achimota and Yaba and hence the African intelligentsia also maligned them. It further became frustrating when colonial administrations would not recognize certificates and diplomas secured from the other territories. Given the degraded role of

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<sup>8</sup>.See Chapter Three, pp.159-166.

Africans in Kenya and even Tanganyika, there was little incentive for Ugandans to work outside their own country. East Africans looked up to Makerere with awe, while West Africans viewed Achimota and particularly Yaba with disdain and Fourah Bay's reputation revolved only around its theological foundations.

Thus the attempt by the Gold Coast government in 1935 to "Africanize" the Achimota curriculum was resisted by the local intelligentsia.<sup>9</sup> The feeling of the educated elite was that special courses constituted an attempt to keep Africans in subordinate intellectual and social positions indefinitely. Even in Uganda, informed opinion pushed for changes which would increase rather than lessen the western character of African education.<sup>10</sup> Thus mental colonization was inaugurated by British officials hostile to "assimilation" and imposed by Africans upon themselves. It became logical for British officials to employ the same argument of African opposition to local standards to convince the Colonial Office that the university scheme should not be embarked upon.

To a large extent the British looked upon African universities as manpower factories. Since under indirect rule they did not need African skilled manpower, universities were

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<sup>9</sup>.CO 847/5/7 Acting Governor of the Gold Coast to the Secretary of State, 12 October 1935. See also Foster, Education and Social Change in Ghana, 167.

<sup>10</sup>.Refer to Pratt, "Administration and Politics in Uganda, 1919-1945", in Harlow and Chilver (eds.) History of East Africa, vol.11, p.524.

not required. However when the decolonization got underway, highly qualified colonial human resources became urgently necessary and thus the rush to establish universities. Unfortunately the view of universities as merely producers of manpower became transferred to African governments after independence. But manpower production remains only one function of a university, only half of its mission. The other half involves research in preserving and explaining the culture, in developing its languages, arts and theatre, in studying the diseases of the environment and improving agriculture, in examining forms of government, in criticizing policies and in analyzing the social consequences of various economic policies.

But the late 1930's witnessed early signs of a changing attitude in London when the academic lobby within the ACEC picked up "paragraph 19" of the recommendations of the East African Directors of Education and elevated it to a matter of vital significance. Even though it was not a university institution, the foundation and endowment of the Makerere Higher College in 1938, following persistent lobbying from the ACEC, clearly marked a turning point. For the first time, British funds were used for a scheme of higher education in Africa; for the first time too, British official opinion in London began to shift demonstrably in favour of universities in the colonies. The causes of this change of attitude are central to this study, and hence considerable attention has

been given to them.

Driven by the academic lobby within and outside the ACEC, and by apprehensions that Africans might be forced to flood the United States for education unless university facilities were provided<sup>11</sup>, the Colonial Office enthusiastically embraced the Makerere project. Besides, the crises in British colonial territories as exemplified in the West Indian riots had unsettled the Office and demonstrated the urgent need for action. Furthermore, pressures from imperial critics, some outside, but most within Britain, who argued that Britain was running a "slummy" empire, coupled with what Emudong refers to as "the anticipatory factor"<sup>12</sup> ultimately resulted in the Treasury breaching its traditional parsimonious policy. In London, by 1938, the argument gained ground that it was far more dangerous to British imperial prestige, politically and socially, to deny Africans access to university education than to satisfy that urge.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless what Africans desired was not a higher college which awarded only certificates and diplomas which were not even recognized in London. Hence the Makerere breakthrough did not go far enough. However, it marked the

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<sup>11</sup>.See CO 847/3/2 Report of the ACEC Sub-Committee on 'Paragraph 19' of the Report of the Conference of East African Directors of Education, 1933.

<sup>12</sup>.Emudong, "The Evolution of a New British Colonial Policy in the Gold Coast, 1938-1948", p.37.

<sup>13</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Secretary of State to Secretary of Treasury, November 1937.



gradual shifting of initiatives from African demands to an impetus emanating from London. Presumably Ormsby-Gore's success in persuading the British Treasury to commit imperial funds to the Makerere Higher College scheme in 1938 encouraged his successor, MacDonald, to seize the initiative to push further for the Colonial Development and Welfare Act. Treasury was right in its insistence that it was "being launched upon almost an uncharted sea".<sup>14</sup> Soon after, that "sea" became charted with the coming of MacDonald, and the passage of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940.

MacDonald's assumption of office in 1938 as Secretary of State gave new vigour to the already changing attitude in London. The ideas evidenced in Hailey's African Survey gradually began to convince the Colonial Office that an increasing role should be given to the educated elements in the political, economic and social affairs of the colonies. Determined to institute reforms from the start, MacDonald initiated the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 which provided funds for schemes of colonial development. Granted that MacDonald came into office with the spirit of reform and the idea of colonial "self-government", it has been argued that he was basically compelled to launch the bill by the West Indian crises and the domestic and the international climate of opinion, particularly after the outbreak of World

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<sup>14</sup>.CO 822/83/11 Hale (Treasury) to Flood (Colonial Office) 18 December 1937.

War II. The establishment of universities constituted an essential part of the reform process.

With funds now available from the CD&WA, the Colonial Office moved to centralize colonial policy as it began to undermine the positions of British officials on the spot. It was against this shift of power that the opposition of the West African governors to the university idea became inconsequential. Imperial statesmen now felt that the war years were the ideal period to prepare for the post-war social, economic and political transformation of the colonial empire. Oliver Stanley's appointment as Secretary of State in November 1942 marked a watershed in the colonial reform initiatives. Not only did he revive the CD&WA which had been placed in the back burner between 1940 and 1942 when Britain faced the threat of defeat in the war, he also linked the role of universities effectively to the goal of training colonial leaders for post-war reconstruction and development in the colonial empire.<sup>15</sup>

Consistently the academic lobby had stressed the role of the local educated elite in the reform process and they had urged the Colonial Office that the time to train these leaders had come. Although the war of defence and defeat from 1940 to 1942 tended to stultify the reform process, with the turn of the tide in 1943, British confidence revived, and with it the

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<sup>15</sup>. See Stanley to Channon, 23 February 1943 as cited in Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.211.

desire to expand the African educated elite. This made the appointment, in 1943, of the two commissions - Asquith and Elliot - a matter of high imperial policy. Hitherto, the idea of a university had remained detestable because British officials had dreaded the expansion of educated elements disrupting indirect rule. By the 1940s the notion had begun to change, at least in London.

From the start the Colonial Office was determined to use British universities, particularly London, to implement the university scheme in the colonies. This was understandable. For so long the University of London had dominated higher education in the colonies through its external degree arrangements. Neither the Colonial Office nor the University of London wanted this fact to be discounted. For some time too, the academic lobby had pushed for the recognition of its group interests in British imperial policy to little avail. These new schemes, therefore, became its opportunity. Dominating the two commissions on colonial higher education, British academics strove to carve out an empire for themselves. They succeeded. Hence the reports of the commissions insisted that the proposed colonial universities should be excellent centres of teaching and research and that British universities should guide their development. This was the genesis of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies, consisting of representatives of home universities.

It was partly the intense pressures from the academic lobby which culminated in the actual establishment of universities in Africa; it was also its enterprise which inaugurated "university imperialism" by transplanting British models to Africa. Since the University of London would award the degrees to graduates of the colonial universities under the scheme of special relationship, the existing African intelligentsia were pleased. British degrees had become the hallmark of academic achievement which, in turn, served to initiate neo-colonial links between Britain and the subsequent African post-independent states.

By 1948 when the university colleges were eventually established in Africa, colonial territorial nationalism had begun to manifest itself in the continent, particularly in West Africa. The effects of the Second World War on the colonial peoples were underestimated in London. The British continued to believe that they could direct the affairs of the colonies from London. Thus the Elliot Minority Report had proposed a single unitary university college for West Africa with the notion that the pan-Africanist spirit of Horton, Blyden, and Hayford's era could still hold West Africans' loyalties. They were mistaken. Territorial nationalism based on the colonial boundaries created by European powers had permeated the body politic of Africa's new elite. The overwhelming strength of colonial nationalism proved vital in forcing the Colonial Office to establish two university

colleges (and preserved a third - Fourah Bay - from certain death) against its official policy. This constituted a high water mark. African educated elements had seized the initiative and would from then on actually influence decision-making emanating from London.

The transfer of collaboration from the traditional to educated elites from the 1940's had profound effects both in London and the colonial empire. Since the educated elite saw a sign of "weakness" in London over the unitary university college feud, they would stop at nothing in further pushing for other vested interests. Soon the wind of change (agitations for the transfer of political power) began to blow. Swiftly, educated elites transformed themselves into influential nationalists, began to build mass support, and took control of the decolonization movements in their various colonial territories, ultimately overpowering the cautious evolutionary plans of the Colonial Office. Thus the university question was a central element to the whole process of British colonial reform, and therefore to the decolonization process which arose from it. Conceived as engines to facilitate a transfer of alliances from the traditional to modern collaborators, the new universities in the end became nurseries for a new ruling class which would expand elite territorial nationalism into mass political parties and take charge of the transformation of colonial units into independent states.

## EPILOGUE

The history of the university colleges at Makerere, Legon and Ibadan after their foundation, and the subsequent development and proliferation of universities in the former British colonial territories in Africa, is a much broader subject than the topic of this thesis. This author would not claim to encompass these ensuing developments after 1948 in the scope of this present study. Nevertheless, having analyzed the origins of the idea among West Africans, its early rejection, its revitalization as part of the colonial reform process, and its actualization in Africa, an epilogue which at least sketches in the main consequences of these decisions and their effects (or not) on subsequent university development seems necessary if the reader is not to be left with more questions than answers.

At their foundation, the three university colleges - Ibadan, Legon, and Makerere - were tied to the apron-string of the University of London through the scheme of special relationship. Worked out by the Colonial Office, the Asquith Commission, the IUC and the University of London, the scheme became a sort of imperial behest on higher education handed down to the colonies. Academic standards were regulated by the University of London, and the African elite were initially satisfied with the arrangement. Since London actually awarded the degrees, and given the quality of their staff, the new

colleges readily gained international recognition as outstanding centres of teaching and research. Each of them strove to replicate the academic culture of London with little attempt at modification of curriculum until the advent of mass nationalism in late 1950s.

Despite few adaptations in curricula, the academic standards, costs, teaching methods, the range of subjects at the new university colleges were guided by British notions of what constituted the ideal model. As Ashby observed, "the fundamental pattern of British civic universities - in constitution, in standards and curricula, in social purpose - was adopted without demur".<sup>1</sup> Beside the imposition of the academic standards of the University of London, the elitist social manners of Oxford and Cambridge Universities were consciously transplanted in the new colleges.<sup>2</sup> According to Van den Berghe, the British intention from the beginning was to create in Africa a class of social elite "patterned after the ideal of the Oxbridge gentleman-scholar".<sup>3</sup> At Makerere, Ibadan and Legon, for instance, there was the practice of Oxford "high table" culture whereby the lecturers and other distinguished persons ate at an elevated platform while the

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<sup>1</sup>.Ashby, Universities and Western Tradition, p.20.

<sup>2</sup>.See John Flint, "Mammon, Politics and Academe: The Foundation of the University of Nigeria, 1955-1963", Manuscript, (undated), p.3.

<sup>3</sup>.Pierre L. van den Berghe, Power and Privilege at an African University, Schenkman Publishing Company, Cambridge, Mass., 1973, pp.18-19.

students dined at a low table. What a social stratification in display! Thus in reality, the university colleges were only African in geographical location and in the composition of their student body. In every other respect, they were typically British.

Once British academic culture was imposed Africans themselves soon became the most enthusiastic defenders of foreign models. They continued to regard adaptation with suspicion. Chukwuemeka Ike has pointed out how, at its early years, Ibadan students proudly referred to the University College, as "the University of London situated at Ibadan for purposes of convenience".<sup>4</sup> Prior to the 1920s Blyden and Hayford had argued for a West African University deeply rooted in indigenous African life. But with the consolidation of indirect rule in the 1920's coupled with the racial assumptions that Blacks were intellectually inferior, Africans began to dispel such stereotypes by seeking to compete with the Europeans in educational attainment. Hence university education adapted to suit African conditions became suspect. It was viewed as an attempt to legitimize the racial claims of whites. British colonial officials in Africa further accentuated the African predilection for British qualifications by a policy of discrimination, in employment, wages and positions, against those trained locally. Yaba

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<sup>4</sup>.Ike, University Development in Africa: The Nigerian Experience, p.1.



medical diplomas and certificates, for instance, were not registrable or recognizable in England. To compete on equal terms in the colonial service Africans began to clamour for British qualifications. Thus whatever adaptations the British were willing to allow in the new university colleges were often resisted by Africans who remained suspicious that a second rate curriculum was being foisted upon them. The position altered with the approach of independence when African nationalists began to launch brazen attacks on the British colonial heritage.

Meanwhile, from the 1950's the university colleges became serious burdens on the budgets of the various territories. Guided by British ideals, the pioneer staff, who were almost entirely British, embarked upon huge expansion and the erection of extravagant physical structures. Although the Colonial Development and Welfare Act provided funds for capital development until independence, these were hardly enough. The increasing deficits and the recurrent expenditure were borne by the local governments. By 1954 for instance, the gigantic capital development at Ibadan was making huge financial demands on the Nigerian treasury. Worse still, the college could not, or perhaps was unwilling to, fulfil the expanding demand for university education in Nigeria. Increasingly the new university colleges came under the attacks of African nationalists who had become disenchanted with their elitist, foreign and prodigal image.

Hence during debates in the House of Representatives in Lagos in August, 1954 Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe accused the Ibadan authorities of "financial irresponsibility" and "culpable negligence". He insisted that "What this country sorely needs today is a first-class institution of learning and not a first-class exhibition of streamlined buildings".<sup>5</sup> He did not see anything wrong with using prefabricated houses for junior and senior staff, and further suggested the admission of non-residential students.<sup>6</sup> Azikiwe was so furious that he dismissed the college as "a million dollar baby". Accordingly, "every time the baby cried, he is given a kiss worth £1 million and so the baby has found out that it pays to cry and crying becomes his pastime".<sup>7</sup>

The criticisms against the new university colleges, particularly Ibadan and Legon, were aggravated by the small number of students admitted and the few graduates turned out in their first seven years. By elevating the issue of high standards to a quasi-mystical concept, the number of students who actually gained admission could neither justify the huge local expenditure on them nor satisfy the hopes of the Colonial Office to expand considerably the class of African

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<sup>5</sup>.Nigerian Legislative Council Debates (House of Representatives), 28 August 1954, Government Printer, Lagos, 1954, p.265

<sup>6</sup>.All the African university colleges founded under the Asquith and Elliot plan were residential.

<sup>7</sup>.Nigerian Legislative Council Debates (House of Representatives), 28 August 1954, p.265.

educated elements who would lead the process of colonial development. Contrary to the Elliot Minority view that there would be difficulty of getting qualified students for three universities, West African university colleges were actually unable to accommodate the large number of candidates who qualified for matriculation. Maxwell has noted that in 1949, 700 qualified candidates applied for 120 places at Ibadan, and that at the end of the first year seventy-seven of those ultimately admitted were withdrawn.<sup>8</sup> Ashby also reports that in 1954, only 300 candidates were admitted for degree work out of 1100 who applied for placement at Ibadan, and that for its first seven years the Ibadan had only 527 students; Makerere in its ninth year had only 448; and Legon in its seventh year had only 349.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly student admissions were not increasing at the rate the restive nationalists desired. It is also hard to believe that either Stanley or Creech Jones would have desired this extremely slow rate of growth. Public criticisms mounted. The nationalists were quick to accuse the university college authorities of deliberately imposing high standards on Africans, which could hardly be met even in London, in order to keep the number of graduates low. Ironically, many of those

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<sup>8</sup>.Maxwell, Universities in Partnership, p.96.

<sup>9</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, pp.258, 262. In 1957, the UCI could only admit 350 out of 1100 applicants. See Hannah Papers, Andrus to Hannah, 6 November, 1957, University of Michigan Papers as cited in Flint, "Mammon, Politics and Academe", p.4.

who were rejected by these colleges ultimately went to Britain and the U.S.A. to secure their qualifications, and later returned to teach at the same institutions which had rejected them.

Nonetheless, as independence approached, African nationalists began to question intensely the rationale for the imposition of foreign standards on Africans. Things indigenously African began to be glamorized. British ideals became incompatible with nationalism. Falling back to Blyden's views the emergent "statesmen" began to call for adaptation of university curricula to the basic needs of the African peoples. Having proved that they were intellectually equal to Europeans, as demonstrated by the high levels of their educational attainment, African elite leaders now began to relate the concept of independent status to economic, social and political development. The new university colleges began to be spurned as irrelevant "temples of learning" and "ivory towers" for the training of members of the elite class to the abject neglect of the actual productive stratum of the society.

The nationalists had come to recognize that the emerging independent African states would definitely need vocational expertise and high-level manpower as much as they would need the clerks. Colonial service had inculcated in Africans a deep preference for the clerkly office jobs. Clerks had, for so long, enjoyed an exaggerated prestige and it had become

difficult to "persuade Africans to accord an equally high status to jobs in technology".<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly, none of the new university colleges offered courses in rural economy, architecture, home economics, law, public or business administrations until the late 1950s. Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast became very uncomfortable with the curriculum at Legon. As he insisted: "While I fully subscribe to the vital principle of academic freedom, a University must relate its activities to the needs of the society in which it exists".<sup>11</sup> Similarly Azikiwe was appalled by these defects. Accordingly: "We must frankly admit that we can no longer afford to flood only the white collar jobs at the expense of the basic occupations and productive vocations...particularly in the fields of agriculture, engineering, business administration, education and domestic science".<sup>12</sup> Thus adaptation was no longer dreaded as nationalists correlated the concept of development and the basic societal needs to university education.

Africanization of academic curricula and syllabi now became the war cry of the nationalists. To the nationalists, especially those trained in the United States, the university

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<sup>10</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.245.

<sup>11</sup>.Daily Graphic (Accra), 30 May, 1953.

<sup>12</sup>.Nnamdi Azikiwe, "Chancellor's Inaugural Address", as quoted in the University of Nigeria's Prospectus, 1962-1963, p.7. See also as cited in Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.245.

colleges were seen as grooming Africans for the "second colonization", properly called "neo-colonialism". Azikiwe's attacks on Ibadan, and Nkrumah's denigration of Legon curricula, although sometimes justified, were a revolt against the British system as opposed to the American pattern of education. However, the research conducted in the new university colleges between 1950 and 1960 resulted in the publication of a few textbooks upon which Africanization of curricula subsequently depended. Soon research began to concentrate upon the needs of Africa and Africans. In the history department at Ibadan, for instance, Africanist faculty led by Dr.K.O.Dike began to demonstrate that Africa had a rich past worthy of inclusion in university curricula. Courses such as African literature, and African traditional religion were later introduced in Ibadan as degree programmes. Gradually emphasis began to shift from what Europeans prescribed as ideal for Africans to what Africans considered best for themselves, and the University of London became less and less rigid over modifications to curricula under the special relationship scheme. Nationalism came in full swing as the new university colleges hastened to adjust to the ferment of the time.

Thus by late 1950s a combination of numerous factors provoked agitations and the need for more universities in Africa. These included the question of the small number of students admitted to the university colleges; the obsession

with, and the imposition of high standards; the irrelevance of foreign syllabi and curricula to African needs; the neo-colonialist tendencies of graduates of the Asquith colleges; and above all, the ethnic and regional tensions in African societies. The first moves were made in East Africa where Kenya and Tanganyika began to consider the University College at Makerere as an Ugandan institution. In 1954, the Kenyan Indian community collected £200,000 to finance the foundation of a degree-awarding institution in Nairobi.<sup>13</sup> The Baganda had lost their predominance in education to the Kenyan Kikuyu after World War II, and most Kenyans could not understand why they should continue to look towards Makerere for university work. Tanganyika also began to make demands for a separate university. These agitations resulted in the appointment of a Working Party under J.F. Lockwood to look into the future of higher education in East Africa.

The report of the Working Party<sup>14</sup> resulted in the institution of an independent federal university - the University of East Africa - which came into being in 1963 with constituent colleges at Makerere, Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. Unlike West Africa, however, where by the late 1950's the number of qualified matriculation students exceeded the available places at both Ibadan and Legon, Makerere

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<sup>13</sup>.Ashby, Universities: British, Indian, African, p.317.

<sup>14</sup>.ULAP, AC 11/2/4 Report of the Working Party on Higher Education in East Africa, July - August, 1955.

continually lacked qualified students to fill the available places. Here in East Africa, therefore, was another clear case of territorial nationalism. As Bernard de Bunsen contended, it was only "natural that new countries with growing political consciousness should desire their own institutions to match and serve their distinctive political aspirations".<sup>15</sup>

In West Africa, the first move came from Nigeria where the government of the Eastern Region under Azikiwe passed a bill in 1955 establishing the first independent Nigerian university at Nsukka along the lines of the American land grant college. Although this university was genuinely meant to focus on vocational studies there was no question that it was ethnically motivated. The Igbo, like the Kikuyu, had begun to refer to the University College, Ibadan as a Yoruba institution by virtue of its location. Paradoxically, the Yoruba were also embittered that the Igbo almost dominated the college staff and student body. In any case, Azikiwe's move startled the IUC and the Colonial Office because it was a deviation, in style and content, from the British pattern based on the Asquith scheme. Although it took another five years before the proposed University of Nigeria at Nsukka actually took off it constituted a landmark. Despite the widespread adoption of the American pattern at Nsukka at its

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<sup>15</sup>. Bernard de Bunsen, "University Notes from Makerere", Universities Quarterly, vol.10, No.1, November 1955, p.13. Bunsen was the principal of the University College of East Africa at Makerere in 1955.



foundation, over time the university came more and more to conform to the standards and practices of the Ibadan University. It remained difficult to convince the Nigerian intelligentsia that the American standards were better than those of the British.

Nevertheless, the Nsukka scheme was remarkable because it inaugurated an Anglo-American and even broader international cooperation in higher educational matters in Africa. It also unleashed a series of demands for more universities from the other sections of Nigeria. Subsequently the Ashby Commission, composed of American, British and Nigerian educationists, was appointed by the Nigerian government in 1960 to report on the higher educational needs of the country in the next ten years. The report of the commission<sup>16</sup> finally led to the foundation of three new universities in Zaria, Lagos, and Ife by 1963. Thus, three years after independence Nigeria possessed five autonomous universities. Yet agitations for more institutions continued as the location of, and access to, universities became almost entirely politicized. Unfortunately, as Okwudiba Nnoli aptly asserted, the situation not only created competition but also increased personal alienation as well as inter-ethnic hostility.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>.ULAP, AC 11/2/9 The Report of the Commission on Post-School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria, September 1960.

<sup>17</sup>.Okwudiba Nnoli, "Education and Ethnic Politics in Nigeria" in Victor C. Uchendu (ed.) Education and Politics in Tropical Africa, Conch Publishers, New York, 1979, pp.63-81.

In the Gold Coast, Nkrumah was similarly dissatisfied with the small number of elitist graduates turned out by Legon. Since he was American-trained, the British pattern did not particularly appeal to him. Furthermore the Ashanti were naturally not pleased with the location of the University College in Fantiland. Both groups had been traditional rivals. Meanwhile, in 1957 when the Gold Coast attained independence and changed its name to Ghana, the college was renamed the University College of Ghana. Constant feuding between the University and the College of Arts, Science and Technology at Kumasi (Ashanti) over the engineering degree led the Prime Minister, Dr. Nkrumah, to appoint an international committee to advise on the future development of university education in Ghana. The inclusion of Americans, Russians and British in the committee demonstrated the new regime's belief in the principle of non-alignment in educational matters. By the time the committee reported the way was clear for the establishment of two more universities in 1961- one at Kumasi and the other at Cape Coast. Clearly Nkrumah created the University of Cape Coast primarily to gratify his region of birth.

In Sierra Leone, a Commission of enquiry on the educational needs of the territory, as required by the compromise agreement on the status of Fourah Bay College, was appointed under J.S.Fulton after the expiry of the interim period. It reported in 1954 in favour of the transformation of

Fourah Bay College into a university college.<sup>18</sup> Though the number of students was small, and funds and physical facilities inadequate, the commission reported that the university department was very "viable in size and vitality". As nationalist activities blossomed the Creoles vehemently pushed for a university. Nothing less was acceptable to them. In 1958, the teacher-training department was removed from Fourah Bay College. In May 1959 the College received the approval of the IUC, and in December, it was granted a royal charter as Fourah Bay College - The University College of Sierra Leone. Although the College now had power to award its own degrees it retained its links with Durham while refusing admission into the University of London special relationship scheme.

With Sierra Leone's independence in 1961, however, the Durham links were severed even though the University continued to render solicited help to Fourah Bay. Since the Prime Minister, Milton Margai, and most of his ministers were non-Creoles, they began to cater to the demand for another university in the hinterland, outside Creoleland. Njala, an agricultural school in the interior, was quickly converted into an autonomous university. Since its inception, Fourah Bay College had no agriculture department and hence those who called for a new agriculture-intensive university in the

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<sup>18</sup>.SLC, RS 370.9664/SI17 Report of the Commission on Higher Education in Sierra Leone, 1954, p.21.

hinterland had a genuine case. Finally, even in the face of financial crisis in the country coupled with shortage of qualified matriculation students, political and ethnic considerations dictated the establishment of another university at Njala.

Except in East Africa where the foremost nationalists of the 1950's down to the early 1960's were former graduates of Makerere, almost all West African political leaders of the period were educated overseas. Milton Obote, Benedicto Kiwanuka and Kabaka Mutesa, all from Uganda, Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika and Ronald Ngala of Kenya all graduated from Makerere College even before the institution gained a university status in 1949. In West Africa, Nkrumah of Ghana and Azikiwe of Nigeria were trained in the U.S.A. Obafemi Awolowo and Tafawa Balewa both of Nigeria, Dr. J.B. Danquah of Ghana, and Milton Margai of Sierra Leone, were all educated in Britain. While those educated in Britain naturally glorified the British system of education, American-trained nationalists showed little sympathy for Legon or Ibadan. For them, these colleges represented the imperial tradition, and since they were not products of that system it was only natural to view them with scorn. Conversely, East African nationalists, although few in number, did not look upon the University College of East Africa at Makerere with disdain. After all East African nationalists owed their elevated status to their *alma mater*.

It was actually after independence when links with the University of London had been broken that the products of the university colleges began to make a visible impact on the social, economic and political sphere of their various countries. These graduates were the first to find employment in top government positions, and even as university lecturers in the independent universities which emerged from the 1960's. True to the foreign social and academic culture they had imbibed, the behaviour, taste and thought of the African "Oxbridges" isolated them from their peoples. Flaunting British ideals, the new elite continued to wear business suits even when the African sun threatened to melt rocks! Furley and Watson have pointed out how Makerere produced an elite class of East Africans who "developed notions of superiority, holding themselves aloof from the struggles of their own communities, for they were assured of jobs...."<sup>19</sup>

Thus finding themselves in positions of power, products of the Asquith colleges began to extol British standards which they now regarded as the ideal model. This signalled the triumph of the "second colonization" as products of the university colleges extolled British academic tradition. Adaptation of curriculum, once again, became suspect. To the new elite, although African universities were now independent degree-granting institutions, they should be guided strictly

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<sup>19</sup>.Furley and Watson, A History of Education in East Africa, p.309.

by British standards. Neo-colonial links could not be severed. As Nnoli puts it, the post-colonial leaders "represent classes which have vested interests in maintaining the inherited colonial structures and therefore the nature and pattern of colonial education".<sup>20</sup> Eventually all the universities retained the external examiner system with only a slight modification, almost along the lines which the University of London had pursued under the scheme of special relationship, and which the nationalists had hitherto denigrated. The difference in the new system being that it was no longer the monopoly of the University of London Board of Examiners. Thus the concern for standards persists.

It should however be mentioned that by the early 1960s Africa's universities had achieved international reputations as first class institutions. They had created a vast body of research conclusions which consolidated African-centred curriculum. They developed whole new fields of inquiry, such as the insights into the psychology of Africans, specialized archaeology, and pre-colonial historical research. Furthermore, African universities were able to pull in really substantial foreign financial assistance shortly after independence. Ibadan and Makerere, for instance, received millions of dollars from the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Trust Fund, Nuffield and other bodies. Monies poured in not only because this was the age of aid fundamentally pushed by

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<sup>20</sup>.Nnoli, "Education and Politics In Nigeria", p.70.

the cold war between the east and west but also because aid was the prominent tool of the "new imperialism" - neo-colonialism. Nevertheless, international assistance soon fizzled out, and with the proliferation of universities African institutions of higher education began to face serious fiscal problems.

By and large, universities in the Western concept, style and content have proved just too expensive for most African states to maintain. The effects of weak economies have been shattering, and foreign exchange problems have worsened the situation in Africa's universities. Furthermore, the British legacy that a university must be an architectural masterpiece worthy of its name had continued to sap the meagre resources of most African states. Thus the available funds are expended on the erection of magnificent structures - laboratories, libraries, hostels and teaching hospitals - to the abject neglect of instructional supplies. In almost all Africa's university libraries, there are no books published after 1980. Standard journal runs end about the same date. Laboratories have gone to ruin, or where maintained are poorly so.

Worse still, professors and lecturers, in the 1950s perhaps the most respected and prestigious social group, are now poorly paid, often unable to do the job professionally because they must take on more lucrative outside work to feed

their families.<sup>21</sup> Compared with the years from 1948-1970 this is a sorry picture and a sad comparison. The volume of the "African voice" in international scholarship has been reduced drastically since the 1970s. In a way, we are now back to the 1950s when most African research which received international notice and publication were conducted either by foreigners, or by Africans who are part of a serious "brain-drain" working in European or American universities. As William Saint, a higher education expert with the World Bank in Washington, has warned: "If African universities continue to be ignored, Africa will face a grim future with its greatest poverty being the lack of ideas".<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>.Here one might be thankful to the external system which puts a real impediment in the way of corrupt grading. Otherwise the degrees of African universities would have long been designated "for sale" in the face of poor pay.

<sup>22</sup>.John Stackhouse (Reporter), "Grim Future at African Universities", The Globe and Mail, April 12, 1993. Starved of funds and desperate for staff, many of Africa's 97 universities are in "suspended animation".



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