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Editorial

RECKLESS DISSIPATION OF PUBLIC FUNDS

From time to time our various post-independence governments have found it necessary to set up commissions of enquiry to investigate top political leaders. Beginning with the Korsah Commission which investigated allegations of bribery and corruption involving Messrs J. A. Braimah, Krobo Edusei, and others in 1953, we have had the Apaloo, Jigage, Ollenu, Taylor, Aidoo and Anin Commissions (to name only the more famous ones) to investigate similar allegations. These reports have invariably revealed an underlying pattern of malfeasance, venality, skulduggery and corruption in the top administration of this country.

With the publication of each report there has been public dismay. Little, however, has it been realized that this underlying pattern of corrupt behaviour is also to be seen at all levels of our bureaucracy which has expanded enormously since independence. The ragged chorus of dismay which the publication of each report has caused has not been enough to arrest the spread of the cancer of corruption in the state enterprises, public corporations, government departments, and in the civil service generally.

That there have been secondary growths of this cancer in the whole bureaucracy has become clear with the publication of the 1979 Auditor-General's Report on the Public Accounts of Ghana (Report). It provides evidence that public officers of all grades are actively, irresponsibly and recklessly dissipating public funds; and that control over public expenditure is, at best, extremely weak. If the Report makes depressing reading it is mainly because it documents authoritatively administrative ineptitude, financial irresponsibility, naked embezzlement of public funds, outright stealing and poor financial control in practically every public organization in this country.

In the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, budgets are made available several months after commencement of the year to which they relate, and printed copies of budgets cannot come out until at the end of the year. The situation applies equally to most of the corporations, notably the Cocoa Marketing Board and the Black Star Line, though these offer better conditions of service than the Civil Service.

In the Controller and Accountant-General's Department, the activities of the Payroll section were replete with overpayment of salaries, under-deduction and over-deduction of amounts from the emoluments of payees. An appreciable number of public officers occupying government bungalows have

not been paying the prescribed rent; and some retired public officers who have been in occupation of government bungalows stopped the payment of rent from the moment they left the service. One of such officers had to pay arrears of rent covering a period of 33 months.

The more startling irregularities include the payment for purchase of goods which were never supplied. In 1977 almost C6,000 was used for the purchase of 1,741 pieces of polythene bags for the Ministry of Agriculture. Verification disclosed that the items were never supplied by the firm, E1 Gymon Enterprise. Certain officers indebted to the government in various forms left government service without any formal arrangement with the Controller and Accountant-General for the repayment of the amounts due from them. Such amounts total over C50,000. Clear instances of stealing are to be found in almost every government department. Over C17,000 worth of equipment and stationery were reported stolen from the stores of Ministry of Economic Planning in January 1978. Similarly, at the Ministry of Justice, a storekeeper in 1976 misappropriated over C26,000 worth of stationery.

There were serious financial irregularities at the Castle, the seat of power, where purchases were made at exorbitant prices; where there were payments to suppliers who failed to honour their obligations in full, and where there was failure to recover advances granted to staff. There were also large excesses of expenditure over approved votes.

Although in 1978/79, C800,000 was approved for the year, actual expenditure incurred on Castle entertainment amounted to over C2 million, an excess of over C1.5 million. The approved vote for maintenance of Castle vehicles in 1978/79 was C700,000, but actual expenditure incurred was again over C2.8 million. Of this amount, over C2.1 million was utilized in the purchase of spare parts for the Castle Workshop from private suppliers at exorbitant prices, while over C743,000 was spent on repairs of official vehicles at private garages.

The story of financial irresponsibility and sheer recklessness displayed by public corporations and state enterprises is blood-curdling. Up to the end of the 1978/79 financial year, the sum of slightly over C79m had been spent by the Ghana National Reconstruction Corp (established in August 1976), but the Corp had collected no revenue. The Corp bought vehicles without any approval from the Ministry of Finance; it kept no records on machinery hired out to private individuals and organizations; it failed to account for subvention given out to project and technical officers; it made ficti-

tious purchases, and paid 'ghost' settlers on its settlement Farms in the Northern and Upper Regions.

One emerges from a reading of this Report with a sense of unrelieving gloom. It is a long tale of woe. Need corruption be such a pervasive aspect of our public life? Complicated sociological analyses of our attitude to public property apart, it is quite clear that there are practical reasons for our readiness to embezzle public funds at every opportunity we get. First, real incomes are now so low that a number of people with fixed incomes are prepared to resort to sharp and corrupt practices in order to keep body and soul together.

Secondly, we establish giant institutions without thinking adequately about how to control the expenditures they incur. Like elsewhere in Africa, there is a tendency on our part to conceive of development in grand terms. We are impressed by giant public corporations, modelled on those of developed countries. We always aim at the peaks in learning from developed countries. We forget, as a wise contemporary has said recently, that you reach the peaks by first climbing a wide plateau. We need to keep our sights low in our development. We need to adopt a small step policy designed to utilize fully small, well-tryed institutions; it is only when we can demonstrate that such institutions cannot serve our present purposes and clearly defined goals that we should think of establishing new ones in their place. The Ministry of Agriculture, for example, was suited to perform all the functions given to the Ghana National Reconstruction Corp and those of the Special Marketing Unit. All too often, new institutions in our country simply provide opportunities for a few Ghanaians to enrich themselves.

The Report makes it clear that our record of financial administration is a gloomy one. It is equally clear that corruption is a 'big man' as well as a 'small man' phenomenon. The dismal character of the manner in which we recklessly dissipate and readily embezzle public funds should force a reconsideration of the machinery of financial administration. First, the Auditor-General's Department, bedevilled by lack of adequate staff of the right calibre and appropriate equipment for accounting work, should be given the funds and the cooperation to continue the performance of its admirable services. Also, we need to call a halt to the setting up of new institutions, examine how effectively our present bureaucracy serves our needs, and set up new institutions at a pace which will make it possible for the government to train capacities and skilled personnel for the careful and most effective use of the taxpayer's money.

Economy

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE 1980 BUDGET

By

A Special Correspondent

The Rorschach test is a widely used, and somewhat controversial, personality test in which a subject interprets inkblot designs in terms that reveal his (her) intellectual and emotional characteristics. The resulting interpretation is at least as much influenced by the subjects' mind as by the objective inkblot. In this article, your correspondent adopts the cast of mind of a political economist (such as Keynes and Marx were and Samuelson is not,) and subjects himself to a Rorschach test of the 1980 budget. How is the inkblot interpreted? A fiery demon threatening to leave a trail of destruction behind it? A dark cloud with a silver lining? The horns of a dilemma? The swampy forest en route El Dorado?

The State of the Economy

To do justice to the task set myself, I must briefly describe what present and prospective picture of the economy I bring to bear on the 1980 budget. The static view (a snapshot say in December 1979) is easily described: an economy paralysed by structural bottlenecks; an inflation rate of around 50 percent; external imbalance, hardly kept at bay by a restrictive import regime; shortages of food, and many intermediate and consumer goods; little growth in productive activity; some smuggling both in and out of the country; a thin but active black market in foreign exchange; and not least, much evidence of very wide disparities in the consumption standards of various groups and classes. A more dynamic view suggests that these anomalies are worse than they were in December 1978, except that the inflation rate has fallen: this is not surprising, for the growth of money supply fell from 69.4% in 1977-78 to 30.4% in 1978-79. There is little evidence that we were offered any thing other than monetarist medicine - somewhat necessary, certainly bitter, but clearly not sufficient by itself.

Let us cast an eye further afield, and imagine what we may realistically expect the state of the economy to be, say in 1985. The average growth-rate of the developing countries over 1980-85 is expected to be 4 to 5 percent; certainly we can aspire to achieve this average. International inflation is expected to hover around 10 to 15 percent, and that too seems like a reasonable target. Real

income distribution in Ghana can hardly worsen anymore, and given present levels of deprivation, must improve and do so quickly! The external balance picture has to be made more favourable, and this calls more for an increase in exports (traditional and nontraditional) than for a decrease or restructuring of imports. The fiscal (tax-expenditure) balance must quickly improve too, and this calls particularly for an increase in direct taxes (for the near future, increased indirect taxes will remain inflationary and inequitable) and a restructuring as well as some change in the trend of recurrent expenditures. Investments to foster growth must rise over the next five years, beginning in sectors and forms in which they are likely to be most productive (agriculture, infrastructure, increased capacity utilization) and shifting later to more capital-intensive sectors and forms.

In comparison with the PNP manifesto which seemed to have little by way of an economic programme, and the President's Sessional Address, which with all due respect, can best be described as an exercise in economics without scarcity or time constraints, the budget was a breath of fresh air. It at least attempted to unfold its 3 Rs (Rehabilitation, Redirection and Rural Development) in a conceptually and financially consistent manner. True, there is nothing novel in these ideas: Rehabilitation and Redirection are another name for Stabilization (a la 1966-68) and essentially continue where the 1979-79 budget left off; and Rural Development was a legacy of the Busia Government, later endorsed by the NRC in the guise of 'Operation Feed Yourself' and 'Operation Feed Your Industries'. What is reassuring is that they are the right general policies for the present time. How fortunate then, that we have direct historical experience of these policies to learn from! (Yet how depressing that we seem to have come full circle again).

The pertinent question though is: given the present state of the economy, the plausible 1985 targets, and the institutional (i.e. social, political and economic-structural) realities faced by the government, how adequately does the 1980 budget meet the bill? The answer, in my opinion, is unfortunately, far less adequately than could reasonably have been expected.

This is because: (a) it is incomplete - it not only entirely neglects, but worsens the foreign-exchange supply problem, while doing little to mobilize private savings and investment; (b) its choice of instruments is an unduly biased one - it rightly has a heavy dose of structuralist interventions, but while recognising the importance of price incentives, it offers none; and (c) perhaps most impor-

tantly, the adjustment problems associated with moving the economy away from the 1979 state are grossly inequitably distributed. Let me begin with the last point first.

Distribution of the Adjustment Problem: The Revenue Side

The single most important characteristic of the 1980 budget is that, in real terms, it accentuates the fiscal and monetary restraint of the previous year. This is crystal clear when one manipulates the data in Table VII of the budget to obtain the trend in the budget-deficit to GDP ratio:

Year	Government Revenue —GDP (%)	Government Exp. —GDP (%)	Budget Deficit —GDP (%)
1973-74	15.1	19.1	4.0
1974-75	15.6	22.5	6.9
1975-76	13.3	23.2	10.2
1976-77	11.1	19.9	8.8
1977-78	7.8	18.1	10.3
1978-79	7.0	12.8	5.2
(a) 1979-80	7.0	9.4	2.4
(b) 1979-80	7.5	11.5	4.0

Source: 1973/79 - based on Budget Table VII; 1979/80 - my estimates;

- (a) (optimistic) assumes tax revenues increase as planned and GDP grows at 2%;
- (b) (pessimistic) assumes no growth in tax revenue and GDP. The expenditure to GDP ratio differs under (a) and (b) because the base (GDP) is assumed to grow at different rates.

Given past experience, it is likely that the actual 1980 deficit will be closer to 4.0 than to 2.4 percent of GDP. In any case, such a reduction makes much sense. But the distribution of the burden of this adjustment is of the essence - which socio-economic groups and classes are to bear the brunt of this burden, and how does this distribution compare with the respective gains and/or losses made by them in the recent past? And is there not some trade-off between the desirable level of contraction and the distribution of its burden?

The contraction is a two-pronged one: revenue is to rise while expenditure (in real terms) is to fall. (That this is so is clear from the above table). The revenue increase, other than what will come about automatically due to nominal GDP growth, is to

be brought about primarily by: (a) increases in the taxes on the self employed; (b) changes in the administration of the import duty scheme; (c) an increase in the taxes on beer and cigarettes; and (d) marginal changes in the structure of income taxes. Of these, (c) and (d) require no comment - they are traditional ingredients, while (b) is to be highly commended - one hopes they will raise the average import duty collected from 23% to 45%. The tax on the self-employed has two parts: (i) the transfer of certain professional groups from the standard assessment to the variable income tax category, and (ii) the increase in the standard assessments for various other categories of self employed. The first of these is a long overdue step, since it affects high-level professionals in private practice who have largely escaped the tax net in the past (because they were only required to pay a standard tax). To the extent that (ii) is similarly an extension of the tax on the self employed it may be considered fair and overdue. (These reforms have, it would seem, been contemplated for at least a decade). But is this the right time to make the change for the second category of self employed? And is this the tax reform that makes the most sense at this time?

I would argue rather that this is the worst possible time for the second tax reform, on grounds both of inequity and suppression of entrepreneurship. The equity-related argument is simple: the increased tax revenues must come primarily from the wealthy classes - in particular, from those who have made the greatest gains from the hyperinflation of the last few years. Whoever they are, we know (because it is standard behaviour under hyperinflationary conditions) that they must hold their newly acquired non-productive wealth in the form of housing, durable consumer goods and/or foreign exchange. Although the latter is beyond reach, the former are not. The obvious tax is a property tax on one or more of the following: (i) all residential housing construction undertaken (say) since 1975-76 to be taxed heavily in a lump sum fashion now, while these and all other houses are taxed at a constant rate henceforth; and (ii) all non-commercial vehicles acquired in the same period to be levied a similar tax; and (iii) similarly for other consumer durables which are registered - say TV sets. To have let the rentiers in our society escape the tax net, just as they escaped the currency reform tax (see L.O., Vol. XI, No. 9, 8-21, June 1979) is outrageous. One keeps having to return to the question: is there something rotten in the state of Ghana?

The entrepreneurship development argument is even simpler: how can the government seek to foster the growth of small scale enterprises by going to such great lengths to provide them with access

to credit, among other things, and yet wish to reduce own-savings in so drastic a fashion? Own-savings after all are the primary source of investment funds for small enterprises!

A marginal increase in these rates, purely for symbolic purposes, may have been justifiable. But the increases average around 500 percent, while the parasites in our society get away scot-free!

Distribution of the Adjustment Burden: The Expenditure Side

The expenditure reduction part of the contraction is to be brought about primarily by: (a) the reduction of the fuel subsidy; and (b) the implied (real) cuts in the development budget. There is again a strong economic argument for reducing the fuel subsidy - but is this an absolute objective with no trade-offs vis-a-vis other objectives? How about the 3 Rs of rehabilitation, redirection and rural development, and their dependence on fuel prices? It is obvious that a more than doubling of fuel prices threatens to narrow rather than widen the many structural bottlenecks in the economy. Why this perverse absolute preference for the price incentive where it makes the least sense, and where some combination with a structural intervention (such as dual pricing with rationing) would have been superior? And why such gross inequity in the increases? The table below, based on page 22 of the Budget, needs little comment:

Type of Fuel	Old Price	New Price	Percentage Change
Premium per gallon	3.50	7.50	114.3
Regular per gallon	3.00	7.00	133.3
Kerosene per gallon	1.00	3.50	250.0
Gas Oil per gallon	2.00	4.00	100.0
L.P. Gas per cylinder	10.00	16.00	60.0

The burden of the real reduction in the development budget, on the other hand, seems to have been equitably distributed: agriculture suffers last, while various social services suffer somewhat more, and industry gets little other than project preparation funds. On this score, at the superficial level of analysis permitted by the Budget document, the distribution of the burden seems to have been balanced productivity and equity rather judiciously.

Where does all this leave us? The Government could have shifted the tax burden more towards

the rentiers and away from the productive self employed, but did not. It could have reduced the fuel subsidy less than it did and distributed the burden more equitably, but it did not. The chickens may come home to roost, and the political repercussions of these choices may not be pleasant! And what if these changes had meant a larger budget deficit? International experience is useful to quote here: the rate of contraction in Ghana for the 1978-80 period compares in severity with that enforced by the Chilean government under Pinochet's first two years: the deficit-GDP ratio would have fallen from 10.3% to 2.4% between 1978 and 1980, while the budget deficit government expenditure ratio would have decreased from 40% to 17% between 1979 and 1980. At what social cost must the economy contract, and why must the burden be designed to be so inequitably distributed? Is the economy facing a problem purely of aggregate demand? And given the government's share in GDP, is such a massive contraction not the surest recipe for stagflation? How, at any rate, about the supply problem?

The Budget's Choice of Instruments

There is the oft-quoted tale of the patient who had developed a high fever and whose temperature, had risen to 105° F; he was 'cured' by the quack who lived down the street: the remedy, apparently was to place the patient in a freezer. The patient's temperature did fall. But he went on to die.

The budget chooses three instruments on the demand side: real expenditure cuts, increased tax revenues, and reduced fuel subsidies (increased fuel prices). On the supply side, its choice is heavily biased in favor of one instrument, namely, structural interventions. There is little argument that many of our supply problems are structural in nature, and hence the many such reforms in the Budget are to be highly commended (assuming they can be implemented). Thus, we read of the (perennial) emphasis on ensuring adequate supplies of spare-parts; retooling existing plant and equipment; increasing the use of domestic inputs; rehabilitating the cocoa industry; rehabilitating agricultural stations, farm equipment, selected irrigation systems and feeder and trunk roads, etc. etc.

But how about price incentives which must, in all fairness, be recognised as an important complement to structural interventions? The standard argument against price-incentives is that they are inflationary. I have already argued in an earlier article (see L.O., Vol. XI, No. 12, pp. 284-87 November 1979) that wide-ranging price controls are neither feasible nor wise for the array of com-

modities they are presently imposed on, and in particular, that a large measure of the supply problem is price-related. The clearest proof of this is the persistence of cocoa smuggling which the Minister estimates as causing the country to lose between C362 and C465 million annually, not to mention other locally produced and imported commodities. Although the budget is sprinkled with comments regarding the importance of price incentives, only with respect to fuel prices (and export taxes on minerals and timber, see below) is this edict actually implemented, and as argued above, the fuel price increase, in the form proposed, makes little sense when assessed.

There has thus been a complete disregard for what is a crucial policy instrument on the supply side. Given the problems generally associated with the implementation of structural reforms, it is difficult to resist the view that we are being subjected primarily to demand contraction (plus an overdose of vigilante committees), somewhat like the patient who was expected to be 'cured' by being placed in a freezer!

Incompleteness of the Budget

The budget is inadequate on the supply side in two further respects: firstly, because it does nothing to increase private saving (and investment) in order to offset the reduction in government expenditure (and hence to avoid a deeper recession); and secondly, because it continues to view the foreign exchange constraint primarily as a demand problem calling for ever more judicious import programming, rather than primarily a supply problem calling for the initiation of policies that will, over the medium term, bring forth rising traditional and non-traditional exports. Let me take these points sequentially.

The recessionary effects of a reduction in government expenditure cannot be overemphasized - the expected share of government expenditure in GDP for 1980 is to fall between 9.4% and 11.5% (see above) compared to 18.1% in 1978. Low growth, and its attendant employment problems, has been due as much to inefficient government investments as to falling private investments. Since foreign capital inflows have been negligible over the past 5 years (and more), private saving must have fallen below the known level of 11.4% in 1974. With private and public investment falling, how is the economy going to begin to achieve the 4-5% growth target for 1985? Clearly the budget has been incomplete and irresponsible in not addressing itself to the declining saving problem, while pushing ahead with government cuts. The short-run employment effects

of this policy are likely to be even more onerous than the medium-term growth consequences. The only references to this policy area are in the decisions to leave interest rates unchanged, and to increase the number of rural banks. These do not, of course, constitute more than a jab at what is a colossal problem.

On the supply of foreign exchange, the budget simply notes that exports are an important sector and must be encouraged. It offers two unimpressive positive measures: structural reforms in the cocoa industry, and the removal of the taxes on mineral and timber exports. But it does not stop there. Worse, it goes on to remove the export bonus on nontraditional exports and to state that this incentive was "particularly needed at a time when the cedi was overvalued; however, following the exchange-rate adjustment of September 1978, Government now considers that the Export Bonus Scheme is no longer justified." Not only is the export bonus revoked, the Government is put on record as believing that the exchange-rate is not overvalued!

It is one thing to agree that the cedi is overvalued, and quite another to agree that the exchange-rate must therefore be changed. In other words, it is perfectly valid to argue that the cedi is overvalued (and it most certainly is as the unofficial rate clearly indicates, although I suspect by much less than it would suggest), and yet to decide not to change the exchange-rate, at least in the traditional fashion. The experience of devaluation in developing countries is being carefully reviewed and although the final word is not yet in, one conclusion is absolutely clear: that one-shot devaluations result in stagflation (recession plus inflation). We clearly have enough stagflation at present not to wish ourselves any more!

But if it is true, as the Budget recognises, that export promotion has failed over the last decade to respond to policy measures aimed at it, then surely one must ask whether the right policies have been adopted. In truth, in the planning history of Ghana, export promotion is the veritable emperor with no clothes on! Export diversification has been an aim of our planners at least since the Seven-Year Development Plan, and was even referred to in the Guggisberg Development Plan of 1920. It remains a primary aim today. Everything seems to have been tried other than the simple measure of ensuring that the effective exchange-rate facing potential exporters is equal to (or slightly better) than that facing importers. An international study of foreign trade regimes and export promotion, covering 10 countries including Ghana, comes to the conclusion that this simple policy measure is

precisely what seems to do the trick, as long as exporters expect that it will be maintained in the medium-term.

We already have casual evidence that our domestic manufactures are exportable, because they seem to find their way into neighbouring countries. And if this trade flourishes because of the excess of the black market exchange-rate over the par-valued exchange rate, it is also true that legitimate trade will require lower returns because it is less risky.

If we wish to encourage the growth of non-traditional exports in the mid-80s, we must offer a gesture to exporters now, and continue to reinforce it. Can this be done without the traditional kind of devaluation? There are at least two ways out. The first is to increase the export bonus, and declare that it will continue to increase at (say) the rate of inflation with a one-year lag, at least for the next (say) three years. The second variant, and one which I have spelt out in greater detail in a forthcoming article, is to split the exchange-rate, and allow one rate for all essential imports and traditional exports, while requiring all other imports and all non-traditional exports to exchange at a higher rate (say £3.50—\$1). Even more attractive would be to make the two exchange rates managed-floating ones. This would demystify the exchange-rate from its deification as a fixed rate, and depoliticize it because essential imports would come in at a lower rate. Undoubtedly, there are other variants that can be devised with the same general objective.

It is extremely unfortunate that the Government has given precisely the opposite signal to potential non-traditional exporters. The results of this policy, plus the falling real producer price of cocoa, are clear: exports will continue to dwindle. The biggest and most daunting structural problem of them all is left unfronted!

The Budgetary Control System

Before concluding, two other aspects of the budget call for some comment. Given the apparent breakdown in the expenditure control system during the NRC/SMC era, it is a relief to note that measures are being taken to reinstate such controls. There are however echoes of a zero-base budgeting expenditure control system in the Budget. This, if it is the aim, is likely to be a total failure. That at any rate is the view Aaron Wildavsky, one of the foremost authorities on budgetary system; his studies reveal, with little doubt, that zero-base budgeting has not succeeded in its aims anywhere, because it is utterly unrealistic in its demands. As such, in practice, most such systems end up using some hodge-podge of a budgetary control system. Wildavsky advises that the best budgetary control

system is one that reverts to a base that existed two to three years previously. Such a system has been used in Britain and Wildavsky's study demonstrates its practicality. It is in effect a cross between zero-base budgeting and the traditional method of incremental budgeting with the previous year's expenditure taken as sanctioned. Let us not engage in a futile effort to institute an unworkable system that demands large quantities of scarce manpower.

One policy tool that would be extremely useful in the expenditure control and programming exercise are 'sectoral recurrent expenditure ratios.' These refer to average ratios for each sector and subsector in the economy of the annual recurrent cost levels associated with each £1 of investment expenditures. If such ratios are calculated with Ghanaian data and cross-checked with ratios based on international data as well as corrected for inflation they can provide quick checks and predictions of recurrent expenditure budgetary requests.

A Concluding Note

In concluding it is pertinent to ask on the basis of the above analysis what worldview reveals itself in the 1980 budget: is it a monetarist one, a structuralist one, a neoclassical ("get the prices right") one, an egalitarian one and/or a growth-oriented one? To the extent that crude categories such as these are not misleading, I would characterize it as highly monetarist partially structuralist, not at all neoclassical, largely inegalitarian (and hence politically explosive), and overwhelmingly anti-growth oriented. If one agrees with the above analysis, one can see why the 1980 budget inkblot is so difficult to interpret: its strong monetarist bent and its inegalitarianism seem demon-like and destructive; its structuralism suggests a silver lining to the dark cloud; its avoidance of the neoclassical path of price incentives suggests perhaps the horns of a dilemma; its stabilization-orientation suggests that the swamp might give way to firm ground, but its anti-growth orientation confirms that El Dorado is yet a distant dream.

On second thoughts, the inkblot seems clear: it is the silhouette of Hamlet, sullen and despondent, murmuring to himself: "to be or not to be..."

**Read The
LEGON OBSERVER
Always**

Politics

WHY GIVE JUDICIAL POWERS TO CHIEFS?

By

G. B. Sarpong

Since the publication of the Constitution for the Third Republic of Ghana over six months ago, I have tried in vain to get a copy from the several bookshops in the country. But I have been told by many people, men and women, that a provision has been made in the Constitution giving Courts to Chiefs. According to my information, the National House of Chiefs shall have appellate jurisdiction in any matter relating to chieftaincy which has been determined by the Regional House of Chiefs in a Region. A national chieftaincy tribunal is also established, and will have original jurisdiction in any matter relating to chieftaincy. Regional chieftaincy tribunals are also set up to hear and determine appeals from the highest traditional council within the area of authority of the traditional authority within which they are established in respect of the nomination, election, installation or deposition of a person as a chief. If this is true, I would point out that it is a tragic error, a most tragic error, to give judicial powers of any kind to chiefs and that, that part of the Constitution should not be implemented under any circumstances whatsoever because of the following reasons, derived from my experience.

Tradition and the White Man's Laws

It cannot be doubted or gainsaid that before the first whiteman arrived in this country our chiefs had the inherent right to settle disputes among the people in their respective areas of influence. However, before the introduction of currency one or two pots of palmwine were taken from the guilty party, and nothing more. In 1884, however, when Treaties of Friendship were signed between the individual Head Chiefs and the British, acknowledging the suzerainty of the latter, each Head Chief, his Divisional Chiefs and Adikrofo (Head men) were allowed to settle minor cases in their areas, leaving the major ones for the British Judicial Assessor. When currency was introduced, the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance (N.J.O.) was passed, regulating the judicial functions of chiefs in the country. As prescribed by Section 2 of the N.J.O. the Head Chiefs had power to fine up to 6 ounces of gold or five pounds sterling (£10) or 1 month's detention in the house of the Chief to do any manual work there. The Ordinance also prescribed

fees to be charged for land cases and other civil matters. The Native Tribunal of the Divisional Chiefs had power to fine up to two pounds sterling or 2 weeks detention in the chief's house to do any labour demanded of the prisoner.

Among the criminal cases triable by the Native Tribunals were petty assault, slander or defamation, putting any person in fetish, disobeying the order of a Chief, reckless swearing of Chief's oath, adultery, seduction, committing panyarring according to section 3 of the N.J.O. At that time only the Government had prisons. The N.J.O. continued to operate until 1925. In that year, copying the pattern of the Indirect Rule introduced in Nigeria by Lord Lugard, the Governor-General of that country, our Governor, Sir Frederick Gordon Guggisberg, asked the Chiefs in this country to prepare a Bill which if passed into law, would give them more powers to rule their people as in Nigeria where the Chiefs were in firm control of the Nigerians and the Government there had little or no problem to worry about. Accordingly, in the first half of the year, the Chiefs in the Eastern, Central and Western Provinces met at Somanya, in Yilo Krobo, under the Chairmanship of Nana Sir Ofori Atta 1, Omanhene of Akyem Abuakwa. At that time, I was a Clerical Officer in the Office of the District Commissioner at Akuse.

1926 Ordinance

The Legislative Council passed the Bill in 1926 and became the Native Administration Ordinance which superseded or repealed the old Native Jurisdiction Ordinance. It was promulgated and became operative in 1927, coinciding with the sorrowful death of Dr. Aggrey in America. The Native Administration Ordinance gave more powers to Chiefs. Instead of £5 (£10) fine or 1 month detention, the Head Chief's Tribunal could now fine up to £50 (£100.00) or 6 months imprisonment with hard labour, and a Divisional Chief's Tribunal, £25 (£50) or 3 months I.H.L. All Tribunals were empowered to employ a limited number of able bodied men as policemen with powers to arrest. In addition, each Head Chief or an Omanhene was authorised to keep a State prison in which were incarcerated people unable to pay their fines. Chiefs, Tribunals were given extensive jurisdiction in many matters and increased fees and chiefs allowances. A Head Chief attending High Court as a party or witness received £1 (£2) for a day's allowance and a Divisional Chief 10/- (£1) but when attending his own Tribunal as such received £4 (£8) and £2 (£4) respectively. While bail bond was free in the High Court and in the Magistrate's Court, 4/- (40p) was charged by Tribunals. Viewing lands within a mile,

Chiefs charged double that of a Judge of the High Court travelling several miles away to view land. In their Administrative Districts, thie District Commissioners were, however, empowered to supervise the Native Tribunals and the State Prisons in the Headquarters of each Head Chief. They had powers to review judgments of all the Tribunals, quash judgements if given wrongly, reduce fines and sentence if excessive and unrelated to the circumstances of the case, or order the release of the prisoners whose sentence had been quashed or prisoners in cells without charge or warrants.

Misuse Of Judicial Powers

What did the Chiefs do when they had the such wider judicial powers in their hands? They misapplied and misused them to their own advantage at the expense of the common people. In criminal cases, maximum fines and sentences were nearly always imposed by Tribunals, and in Civil cases, particularly in land cases, costs were normally too high because of many adjournments by the Tribunals themselves. When the District Commissioner could not go out at the end of the month to inspect the Record Books of the Tribunals and Prisons because of being called to the Provincial Headquarters or Accra or due to pressure of work in the office, his Senior Clerk deputised for him. The clerk submitted full report on his finding on each case inspected and the condition of the prisons. Where and when necessary the D.C. ordered the record books to be sent to him to write his directive which must be complied with. In several Administrative Districts in which I served under District Commissioners I had many times inspected Native Tribunal Record Books and Native Prisons on the instructions of my BOSSES. In some areas I found incorrect judgements given, fines always excessive and accompanied by two or more sheep. Chiefs' police always brought suspects n handcuffs without regard to personality and the nature of the case or the crime alleged to have been committed. Prisoners complained of poor meals served at long intervals. If the prisoner happened to be a stool rival of a chief he must be prepared to take anything.

Exploitation and Use of Touts and Agents

In some record books I found undeniable evidence that some Tribunals were employing touts or agents to canvass cases for them. In one month, out of 29 criminal cases heard, one person appeared as complainant in 10 of them, and another person as complainant in another 7. The rest were brought by individual persons. All the 17 cases involved

the swearing of the Chief's oath in petty matters. Some of the charges read "you are charged that on... you called complainant a fool, an idiot, an insane, a dirty man, stinking fellow, senseless person etc. before Kofi or Kwame or Kwasi or Kojo." In each case, the complainant was awarded compensation out of the fine, and if he refused to accept it the law gave him the right to bring another civil case for damages against the accused in the same Tribunal. Thus in the past before the abolition of the Native Tribunals a person had to defend himself or herself twice in respect of one case.

When a Tribunal sat there were always two or more money lenders present with money in their handbags ready to pay fines for those who could not.

After payment, mortgage was prepared on the amount, the debtor giving his house in a commercial area or cocoa farm or farms in security for the loan repayable within a period not exceeding 6 months. The normal interest charged was one hundred per cent. If the debtor failed to pay the money after this short period he must risk transferring the house or cocoa farm or farms to the money lender or allow the property to be sold by public auction by an auctioneer. In the latter case it was the money lender or his agent who bought the property. The Chiefs' Tribunals provided fruitful avenue for those who had money. Throughout the country, money lenders were flourishing. In this way many people lost their houses, cocoa farms, coconut and coffee plantations, creeks, citrus plantations and other properties. This was the cause of the general impoverishment in the country and was the cause why many could not send their children to schools and colleges.

Popular Discontent and Reform

Then, early in the Nineteen Thirties, a violent agitation by the common people shook the country. There were reports of destoolment of Head Chiefs and other categories of Chiefs. The big ones among them ran to Accra to seek support of the Secretary for Native Affairs. They could not go back to their State because of the fury of the people. All the grievances centred around the chiefs and their Tribunals. To find solution to the problem the Government appointed a Havers Commission of Enquiry to look into the structure and working of the High Court, and a Blackall Committee to review the structure and operation of the Native Tribunals and make recommendations which would bring peace between the Chiefs and their people. Mr Havers was an eminent Jurist brought from Britain, and Mr. Blackall was our Attorney-General with many years experience in the country. Here I am con-

cerned with the Blackall Committee on Native Tribunals. Its report and recommendations were far reaching.

Implementing some of its recommendations, the Head Chiefs and Divisional Chiefs were removed from Tribunals and a Panel System was introduced. Two subchiefs and a gentleman from outside constituted a Panel of three appointed by the Government on the recommendation of Chiefs to hear cases in each Tribunal Area. After a period of three months new Panel Members were appointed to replace them. But since the Panel Members were nominees of the Chiefs, the latter clandestinely influenced their judgements and dictated the fines to be imposed in certain cases. These unsavoury activities of the Chiefs compelled the Government of the First Republic to abolish altogether the Native Tribunals or Native Courts and the Judicial powers of Chiefs, except in Chieftaincy matters. And soon after the Independence Local Court Magistrates were appointed to hear cases in conceivable areas so that the people would not have the need to travel long distances for cases.

Dangers Ahead

Why do the chiefs want Courts or judicial powers, the powers they misapplied and misused to enslave their people? The powers by which they wrecked homes and families; the powers by which the common people lost all their properties; the powers by which general impoverishment reduced the common people into dust. What do the people who prepared the Constitution for the Third Republic hope to achieve by granting judicial powers to Chiefs. Is it a step forward or backward? It is a very, very sad reflection on the part of our intellectuals who sat to produce the Constitution for the Third Republic of Ghana. Either they did not know the history of the country or they were persuaded to overlook the past. Let them answer. Let them be answerable for the egregious blunder they have committed against the common people of Ghana.

In view of the foregoing, I am appealing to the President, the Chairman and Members of the Council of State, the Legislature, the Press in the country and all other articulate bodies, on behalf of the common people in the country that we strongly oppose the granting of Courts to our Traditional Rulers, the Chiefs; otherwise they will take from our mouths the scanty bread our hard labour provides and deprive us of the houses we sleep in after a day's labour. In conclusion, I need not emphasise that if Chiefs are given Courts tragedy will befall the country and Ghana will be doomed forever.

Education

WRITING SKILLS, ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND MARKET DEMAND

By

E. G. Suple

The system in Universities today is loaded in favour of the student who can write well. It has not always been so but today the success or failure of an individual in academic life depends very largely upon his ability to write lucidly and fluently. As long as the student arrives in the University with a high degree of literacy his academic success, if not guaranteed, is unlikely to be blighted by his inability to communicate on paper. The Market Demand for successful students stems not only from the Universities but also from the Business Sector and the Ministries. Academic success permits individuals to enter these areas at levels where they can earn, or more usually hope to earn, high salaries. Success being ultimately gauged by the amount of money an individual can command. Writing skills contribute to the attainment of academic success and eventually to society's respect as measured in cash.

The problem facing Ghanaian students now is that over a period of time there has been a decline in the standard of writing in English in the Secondary Schools and Training Colleges and the deterioration is beginning to affect the tertiary level. The most dramatic decline in standards seems to be in the Training Colleges but the Universities if not already faced with the problem will soon have to cope with freshmen who though bright and intelligent have not been given sufficient training in communicating their ideas.

"The Standard of English is still not Encouraging..."

The problem is not confined to Ghana but is world-wide. Only too frequently there are complaints in the media about the inability of secondary school leavers to write and even to read. Take for example a report from the State of California in 1975:

"In addition to acknowledging the recent publicity in the news media of the lack of writing ability among entering freshmen, the committee is concerned with the writing abilities of students at all levels and in all areas of study. Professional dismay with student writing is almost universal." (THES p. 12, 7/3/75).

The answer in this case was to reintroduce

remedial English on the nineteen campuses of the state system. Another article entitled "English as she is wrote" from Canada stated that one in ten students had "extreme problems" in expressing themselves in writing. At the University of British Columbia, nearly 40% of students in the first-year English course failed an examination in basic English composition skills (THES 11/4/75).

Other North American University Departments of English, in despair, have turned to a consultancy group to help them with their students' problems with composition work. Although the group offers its clients various services, by far the largest demand has been for advice on how to set up writing centres for "the growing number of students unable to write correct English" (THES 10/9/76 "English Consultants Face Growing Demand").

Just as the North Americans are dismayed by the sheer size of the problems facing them so too are educationalists in Britain daunted by their apparent failure to design a successful education system. Though this is not the place to discuss whether the system in Britain has failed as massively as many people in Britain believe, nevertheless, it is true that the schools in Ghana have followed the British tradition in education and it is likely that the faults inherent in the British tradition may have been repeated and even exacerbated in the Ghanaian educational system. (One is reminded here of the controversy which raged in the local press about the detrimental effects of the Colonial bureaucratic system on Ghanaian bureaucracy).

"In Some Cases it was Deplorable"

In many eyes, one of the gravest faults of the system of education found in Britain and Ghana, is its heavy emphasis upon academic success. An emphasis which is reinforced by the system and the seeming success of the system for those who passed through it and have come out on top. Young men and women from the rural areas of Ghana only too frequently see academic success as the culmination of their ambition. The way out of the fields, the village, the slums, for them is the road of academic studies. When they are successful everyone is delighted - their family, their friends, the schools and the society as a whole. The schools measure their success by the number of their students who manage to get into the University at Cape Coast, the University of Science and Technology at Kumasi or Legon. The barrier to success consists of written examinations.

The schools therefore are largely geared to the development of academic skills and continue to produce students for the market which they believe

they can best satisfy. A change in direction, it is argued, would cost too much and the existing Market demand is at least partially satisfied. The University of Ghana at Legon does not appear to have become vigorously disturbed by the level of the F.U.E. students. As for the Public Sector and the Business sector, they are not fully staffed and are unlikely to be in the immediate future. To a degree, they take whatever is on offer. So partially, at least, the system is successful.

However constant demand and consequent scarcity - as is well known in Ghana - can lead to the acceptance of low standards. The fact that goods are snatched up as soon as they appear on the market does not mean that the consumer receives what he wants or what he needs. There is also a tendency for the product to shrink though the packaging remains the same. Does Ghana in its present situation need academics at all? Can the Universities supply the market with what it actually needs? One argument which I can understand though not entirely favour is that "academic skills" are not what this country needs anyway. The country, it is argued, needs individuals trained in such practical skills as how to mend and maintain cars, air-conditioners, the water supply, the electricity supply etc. Men who get their hands dirty! That the country needs such men is perfectly true but it also has a need for those with academic skills. So the best must be made of the present situation.

"Candidates' Expression in English is very Bad"

At the School level, the essay or composition is the most highly regarded form of writing. It is probably the least useful as regards preparation for the purposes of business, the professions, enjoyment or profit (J.A. Bright & J.P. McGregor 'Teaching English as a Second Language' Longmans 1970 p. 140). J. F. Green in an earlier article was more vigorous in his comments on the writing skills taught in schools: "...a futile hotch-potch of essays, sentence building, structure drills and vocabulary exercises" (1967 ELT 21,2 "Preparing an Advanced Composition Course"). He went on to comment upon the needs of the Universities: "Success or failure (at college or University) will largely depend on the student's skills in expository writing. Imaginative, narrative or informal personal writing is rarely required. Indeed the lively personal writing so often demanded in English classes is an unsuitable model responsible for many stylistic errors."

Yet it is precisely this model which most frequently leads via "O" and "A" levels to academic success. Success is measured in the schools by the numbers of ex-pupils in the Universities.

It is not that the schools are not alive to the discrepancy between expectation of the business and public sectors as against what is actually achieved. They are often very much aware of their own inadequacies. But any charges are difficult to make because of syllabus problems, examination demands and above all because of a lack of adequately trained staff. It is a startling fact that though to teach French in a school in Ghana you must be qualified in French this is not the case for English. Anyone can teach English whatever their background of studies!

“Muddled thinking”

The examiners for their part seem to be fully aware of the gap between the expectancies of the public, the teachers, the pupils and themselves. They are often instrumental in bringing about changes for the better in syllabuses in schools. But not all schools respond favourably to change and many teachers and pupils have very different ideas about the purposes of examinations. This is most clearly reflected in the examiners comments on examinations. These quotations from examiners' reports are fairly typical:

1. “In some schools inadequate time is spent on practice in writing essays which demand selection and comment.
2. Candidates should be taught the meaning of key words such as **assess, analyse, discuss, compare** and how these instructions differ from requests for **descriptions**.
3. Candidates equip themselves with the minimum of knowledge and seem desperate to present it whatever the question.
4. Too many candidates perform below their potential because though persuaded to absorb and reproduce information, they appear to have little training in thinking about, or in distinguishing in a given context, between what is important and what is not. To train examination candidates to answer examination questions is not a form of ‘cramming’, but an exercise in intellectual discipline.
5. Questions are not designed to act as triggers, releasing a flood of information on any particular topic. (From an article by Robert Wood TES 18.6.76)”

Unfortunately, advice of this type is only too frequently left unread or ignored. While examiners seek new methods of assessment, the teachers seek methods of getting their students through the examinations by hook or by crook.

“We Expect ‘A’ Level Candidates to Write Fairly well”

One of the positive advances in examinations has been the introduction of more objective tests. One such test is the multiple choice test where there are a number of answers offered to a candidate and the candidate has to choose the best answer from the alternatives. Multiple choice testing has many virtues and not a few vices. The main disadvantage is that in this type of testing it is the more receptive skills which are being tested. (By receptive I do not intend to imply that the test includes the various skills to signalling employed by some students to beat the system ...) By receptive skills is meant the skills of reading and to a lesser extent of listening as against writing and occasionally speaking. The main advantage of multiple choice tests is that they are quantifiable.

With the productive skills of speaking and writing there is an enormous difficulty in assessment. With the productive skills of speaking subjective judgements have to be made by interviewers. To test large numbers of students is not only time-consuming and expensive but also not very accurate. Many ingenious attempts have been made to try to make the results more trustworthy but to date only experienced and very highly qualified interviewers seem to give consistent results.

As for writing skills, anyone involved in marking scripts will understand the problem. What is the difference between a script worth 65% and one worth 66%? Many schemes have been evolved for marking scripts and essays more objectively. They have usually been evolved, tested and rejected. In Britain in 1975 the Bullock Report, “A Language for Life,” went into the problem of essay and composition marking in great depth. They came to the conclusion that there was no really satisfactory method of assessing essays. They suggested that the following method would probably give the most satisfactory results. Three assessors read through the scripts and sift them into three piles A, B and C. Another panel of three assessors then sifts through pile ‘A’ and places the scripts in three categories. They deal with piles ‘B’ and ‘C’ in the same manner. This is not the cheapest and quickest method of assessment!

And yet to omit the productive areas from the examinations is to leave untested the most important areas of learning. It is like teaching someone how to ride a bicycle and then giving him a test which does not include his actually getting on the bike and pedalling away. With the spoken skills of English, the lack of an obligatory examination at “O” level has led many schools to drop the teaching

of spoken English from the lessons. The inclusion of an obligatory spoken English test in the future is being considered and though expensive it may stimulate the schools to put more effort into this productive area.

As for written skills, although the marking of essays is not an exact science we continue to persevere. In conjunction with objective tests it gives us an overall assessment of a candidate which seems reasonably accurate. There is now more emphasis upon other forms of writing such as letter writing and types of controlled paragraph writing. But the basic problem of assessment remains.

"Candidates Exhibited a High Level Mastery of the English Language"

The Business sector, the Ministries and tertiary education including the Universities are the consumers of the product from the schools. The University is a particularly demanding consumer in that it creams off the pick of the "A" Level students. The University has tremendous prestige and it also has the ability to dictate, to a point, to the schools. An example of its prestige can be seen in the immense importance of the University in the political scene. An example of its influence might be its ability to change the school curriculum by its decisions. If the University decided that it wished to have Arts students with a science background then it could include an "O" Level pass in a sub-science subject as obligatory for all applicants for places in the Arts subjects. The schools would be forced to react to such dictates

One of the basic demands of the University is that its students be literate in English. Why English? A native English speaker could argue that this is because English is the language of Shakespeare, of Dickens and of other great writers. But equally it could be simply noted that use of English is an historical accident. Not an unhappy accident but a very fortunate one for Ghana as English happens to be the international language of the world. To allow the English language to decline in Ghana would be a mistake as it provided the Ghanaian with his major link with the outside world. To argue the case for Twi or any other Ghanaian language as the major language of the nation would be interesting but at the moment, a red herring. English is with the Ghanaian student for the foreseeable future.

In the past and among those who are fortunate enough to go to a few select secondary schools today, the level of English was and remains extremely high. In the past the best students of the schools entered business, the ministries and the Uni-

versities and took with them their skills in English. Today the process continues but there is one significant change. At first, the schools were staffed largely by expatriates who passed on to their students an English which was accurate and fluent. Today there are fewer expatriates in the schools and much of the English taught is not as accurate and fluent as it might be. Many excellent teachers continue working in the schools but their influence is diminishing.

To clarify the issue it is worthwhile considering the status of English in any ex-colonial country. The first teachers were naturally enough native English teachers but the subsequent generations in the schools were taught by teachers who were receiving their English at second, then third, then fourth, then fifth hand. If all the best English speakers returned to the teaching of the language then communication might continue at a high level. But the best, unless highly motivated, do not often take up the poorly paid profession of teaching, they are usually more ambitious. Secondary and Primary school teachers do not have a great deal of prestige in society and English is in demand in all the sectors of the community. The result is what I call the "dreadful, downward spiral" towards an English which deviates so greatly from the international norm that it is almost unintelligible.

"Poor expression of facts was popular with many candidates"

The position in Ghana is that the level of English seems to be spiralling downwards.

The exodus of teachers to Nigeria and other countries around us includes not only mathematicians and scientists but also English language teachers. Assuming that a school is lucky enough to have a graduate in English, he or she will normally work with the upper forms only. The lower forms are taught with varying degrees of ability and application by any teacher who is available. This is of course not true for every school but it is for far too many. Add to the problem of finding well-training staff, the problems of discipline in the schools and the future looks grim. The freshmen arriving next year at the University will be the cream of the country and as usual they will be on the whole very good. But the likelihood is that there will be greater number of weaker students than in the past. Their basic literacy in English may be called into question. As the main criteria for academic success is the ability of students to pass written rather than spoken examinations, a far greater investment in time and efforts has to be made in the area. If we can improve the

writing skills of the majority then we can, I suspect, at the same time look forward to an all round improvement in the performance of individuals. Before beginning to discuss writing skills it should be made clear that to talk about them in isolation from reading skills would be to be like a person blind from birth trying to explain the art of painting. Just as we assume a painter can see so we must assume that a writer can read.

"The hand writing of candidates continues to be legible"

One of the skills of reading which we teach at the Language Centre, Legon is that of Speed Reading. Most of our first year students read too slowly. They also write too slowly. But if we ask them to increase their speed of writing they frequently produce illegible work. They need practice in the complementary skills of writing clearly and quickly. The Inter-Faculty Board which considers pleas from students for reviews of examination results has obviously had to deal with legibility problems in the past:

The (Inter-Faculty) committee holds further that by themselves alone representations (for review of examination results) of the following kind are undeserving of attention and should not be referred to departments for comment:

- i.
- ii.
- iii. candidate suspects having been penalized for bad handwriting. (BFA4(2) 79-80 Univ. of Ghana Legon)

With the best will in the world a lecturer who cannot easily read a script cannot help but become frustrated and annoyed by the task facing him. S.L. Pressey and F.P. Robinson highlighted the problem in 1959 in an article upon improving students' writing (S.L. Pressey & F.P. Robinson "Laboratory Workshop in Applied Educational Psychology" 3rd Edition, New York, Harper and Row, 1959). They designed an error analysis chart and in their research found that usually writers make most of their errors on two or three letters only. Thus they might write 'u', for 'n', 'o' for 'a' and 'wou' for 'm'. As a result a word such as 'man' appears as 'wou' and can only be deciphered in context. Yet, the identification of the commonest errors and then a brief period of practice can eliminate up to sixty per cent of the errors made by an individual.

Just as with Speed Reading it is possible to improve both the speed of reading and the comprehension at the same time so also with writing it is possible to improve both the legibility and the

speed of the writers. For a start, it is much easier to check over your work if you too can read what is says!

"Many candidates did not know how to set down in clear language the description of tests, observations etc."

Having made life easier for everyone by improving the legibility of the scripts, the next area which needs to be tackled is that of vocabulary.

The teaching of vocabulary is not merely the introduction of technical terms, the explanation of the common Latin roots or the study of synonyms etc. It is also the study of the acceptability of words in contexts. For example, in letter writing at a formal level there are conventions that have to be observed. There is an avoidance of such non-formal words as "nice", and abbreviations such as "don't." In formal examinations the use of a phrase such as, "I didn't get the writer's point", is unlikely to impress the reader.

Errors in sentence structure are also not likely to impress the reader. In the teaching of English as a Foreign language an attempt is made to improve the student's ability to communicate by giving exercises requiring grammatical changes: pronoun adjustments ('I' to 'he'), nominal changes, tense changes etc. ("New Directions in Teaching Written English" M. Sharwood Smith, P.2 Forum, Vol.xiv, No. 2, April, 1976). The writers are encouraged to look upon their work as a functional act - an act of communication. There is a writer and a reader. The writer therefore must check his work for grammatical errors. To be able to spot a grammatical error is not easy and so time is spent on teaching grammar. Using as a basic text "A Communicative Grammar of English" by G. Leech and J. Svartvig (Longmans 1975) students are introduced to problem areas such as the use of the articles, the positions of adverbials and the tense and time system of English. The same approach could successfully be employed with undergraduates. Problem areas need to be identified and the students need to be practised in these areas.

Linked with grammar is the area of punctuation. Just as grammar is not entirely mechanical (consider for example the choice between "I have seen the film" and "I saw the film") so too punctuation has to be used with discrimination. But a good deal can be taught mechanically and quite rapidly.

"Students' inability to select facts....."

Beyond the sentence brings us into a far less well-understood area than that of the sentence itself. However, though the theory of

writing beyond the sentence may not be highly developed the practice has a long and venerable history. L.C. Kelly in his book "Twenty five Centuries of Language Teaching" (Rowley Mass: Newbury House Publishers 1976) notes that copying set passages can be dated to 1523, writing variations of model passages to 1660, manipulating various styles of writing to 1512 and doing guided composition and semi-controlled writing to 1831. In 1706 Phillips was describing the paragraph in much the same terms as we might describe it as was L. Murray in his "English Grammar" of 1821.

Frank Chaplen's "Paragraph Writing" (Oxford 1970) continues to offer us a solid base from which to begin work on paragraphing. Chaplen gives us what might be considered the tradition of a paragraph - "a unit of information unified by a controlling idea" - but also recognizes that many writers break up large chunks of text which are on one controlling idea because these chunks are felt to be too long. The break is made on the basis of length rather than on ideas. The students are taught in this book to recognize main, controlling ideas, topic sentences, the structure of a paragraph and links between paragraphs. They are also provided with extensive practice in the writing of paragraphs.

".....their inability to develop logical thinking or argument....."

The links between paragraphs and also between sentences deserve attention. Ruquaiya Hasan's article "Grammatical Cohesion in Spoken and Written English: Part one" in "in 1968 (Programme in Linguistics and English Teaching Paper No. 7 1968) posed the question of how a text differs from a series of sentences. Since then ideas of cohesive features have been developed and now form a more purposeful part of our teaching programmes. We need to introduce them so that we can successfully teach the students to plan reports, essays and letters. There is not much sense in teaching a person to plan or report from materials he has gathered if he does not know how to link the parts together. For example, as an exercise in cohesion we might provide an opening statement and call for a prediction following the statement:

I normally hate spinach. However.....
or we might deal with presuppositions as against hypotheses:

It surprises no one that (we teach linking words)

It is likely that (the same techniques have been used for centuries)

(Examples from: "Teaching Writing by an Anticipation Method" D. Ortblad, Forum xvi No. 2 April 1978)

Finally we need to look at the problems associated with the selection of material and its organization into a form that will satisfy tutors as readers. This higher level skill of organization is based upon the mechanical and discriminatory skills. When a student writes legibly, rapidly, with suitably apt vocabulary and with mastery of structures, punctuation and paragraphs, the basic writing skills are firmly established. If he is able to discriminate between main subordinate ideas and and if he is capable of employing a wide range of of logical coordinators and cohesive features, he should be able to communicate with his reader in an intelligent logical manner. However, if he cannot, then we must guide him in his selection of materials and the planning of his work. Most lecturers are mainly concerned with the content, and the presentation should ideally be a support to the content not a hindrance. They look for accuracy in mechanical skills: correct titles, paragraphing, citations, references, appropriate vocabulary for the subject material, avoidance of excessive emotional content, and adequate length proving thought about and reading on a subject. The lecturers look for a logical development of ideas and signs of intelligent ordering of materials. The students are expected to know the correct organizational framework for the material and to avoid presenting essays as if they were reports and mathematical formulas as if they were essays.

"In addition, the standard of expression of what the candidates pretend to know has been lamentably low....."

Future employers in the Business sector and Ministries have equally high standards and the student must, if he is to be successful, master not just one type of writing but several. He must learn that writing functions as a system of communication and that just as the spoken registers of English vary, so do the written.

In the Universities there should be a commitment

In the Universities there should in addition be a commitment to some type of philosophy. Our students should not simply be introduced to the mechanical skills of writing. They should also be encouraged to try to create for themselves. Creative writing is not a prerogative of the English Department! Our students need to express themselves even if they belong to the Department of Computer Studies. For writing is not solely for examination purposes. In any course on writing then there must be some provision for committed writing in the form of voluntary creative writing groups and in the recognition by the tutors that this other dimension exists.

"Lastly Candidates' expression in English is very Bad and has Largely been Responsible for most Failures....."

Ghana needs success. Not just Academic Success but success of all types. The University has to make the best uses of its resources to achieve a success in University terms at a time when all resources are depleted. My suggestion is that it can best do this by allocating more to one single area. Academic success depends very largely upon the ability of individuals to write and write fluently and logically. If the students in the first year of the University can learn to communicate easily, accurately and knowledgeably then the remaining years can be used more productively. If they can learn to communicate well in both speech and in writing so much the better but if there is to be a priority it should be in Writing Skills. This is the more difficult production area and the one to which the most weight is given by society. It has the most status but not only because it is the repository of the 'best' and the 'finest' of the Language. It is true that the best of our literature is written but Written Skills are not important only for this. The world we know is dominated by the written word. Many of us find it hard to organize our thoughts unless we set them down on paper. We are accustomed to giving and receiving instructions by means of the written word. All around us there is an ever increasing number of written instructions. As for our students - if our young people wish to 'get on' in the world then they have to prove their worth not on the battlefield or on the farm but in the examination hall.

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G. B. SARPONG: *Slightly over 80 years old, lives and farms in Juaben, Ashanti, his home-town. He joined the colonial administration as a District Commissioner's Clerk in 1923, and retired voluntarily in 1949. He was for a time a lay magistrate and is presently writing a history of political agitation in Ghana.*

E. G. SUPPLE: *Acting Director, Language Centre, Legon. Lectures in the teaching of English to francophone students.*

EBOW DANIEL: *Senior Assistant Registrar, Registrar's Offices (Academic Section), Legon.*

An emphasis upon academic skills is not all that is needed for the development of the country. The man who can keep the fields productive is successful too. But it is wrong to throw the baby out with the bath water and there is a place for academic success in Ghana. Because the Universities have failed to solve Ghana's deep rooted economic problems, it does not mean that they should be altered out of all recognition. Perhaps they should be revitalised. One step in this direction would be to deliberately set out to improve our raw material. Not by weeding out the weaker elements to try to keep to some ill-defined standard, nor by doubling the numbers that we allow in. Let us take what we have and improve them. We could start with their writing.

(The quotations in bold type were culled from the Chief Examiners' Reports, WAEC HSC/GCE "A" Level exams, June 1978)

Notebook

FOOD DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION

Something very unpleasant is brewing up at the Food Distribution Corporation, which, if not checked, will be to the detriment of the whole nation. Facts available to us seem to indicate clearly that the performance of this corporation since its inception, has been most unsatisfactory, and, in recent times, appalling.

The FDC was set up ostensibly to coordinate the purchase of food from the hinterland to the urban areas, as a response to persistent cries that food gets rotten in the bush each year because of poor and uncoordinated evacuation and storage. Recently, however, the FDC has been importing large quantities of food while we always hear of food getting rotten in the bush for lack of transportation or some such other excuse. There was the recent case of the present Managing Director applying for import licence of 2 million cedis to import palm oil from the Republic of Benin!!! It took no less a person than the President himself to query, and finally reject the application - and rightly so too. The present Managing Director, who happens to be a lawyer even though the qualifications attached to that job clearly demand a trained agricultural economist, has been arguing that the instrument of the FDC permits it to import food items, and also distribute essential commodities such as soap and matches to farmers. This ma

be so. But we fail to see any sense in importing large quantities of food when what is available locally has not been properly evacuated and distributed. The case of the rotten tomatoes vividly illustrates this point.

The Managing Director always complains of lack of transportation to bring food from the bush. But if there is no transportation, then, what facilities is she going to use for distributing the food she wishes to import? If there is transport to distribute imported rice, there should be transport to bring rice from Tamale to Accra, or maize from Nkoranza to Takoradi.

The FDC has been too much of a drain on the Ghanaian taxpayer for far too long, and it is about time the gross inefficiency being exhibited there under the cloak of lack of this and lack of that, is halted once and for all. We need a lot more energy, inspiration and proper managerial skill in running that place, not legal niceties and empire-building.

✓ PAYING FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

The recent announcement by the Minister of Education that parents will soon bear 75% of the feeding cost of their wards in secondary schools, will doubtless have a mixed reception in view of its far-reaching consequences.

✓ Government expenditure, especially on education, has been rising so steeply in recent times that it is reasonable to take a critical look at areas where some savings could be made. Costs, riots over food, and the general lack of discipline in boarding schools have called into question the whole philosophy behind boarding schools as institutions for moulding the character of the youth.

While accepting in principle the rationale behind the Government's intention, we would like to caution that the programme should not be implemented piecemeal, but should be part of a whole package deal, so as to minimise the devastating effects it might have on children from poorer homes. In this regard, we would suggest that:

(i) The intended reform should be extended to University and other Post Secondary institutions, though not to the polytechnics. At the moment there are about 10,000 students in our three Universities, and it costs over 40 million cedis annually to maintain these students at the expense of the taxpayer, an amount which almost equals the total subsidy on feeding secondary students all over the country. We consider University education to be a privilege for a small minority, whereas it should be the aim of Government to provide post-primary education for every child as a matter of right.

Parents who can afford it, should therefore be made to pay for feeding their children in Universities.

(ii) In order not to deprive children from poor homes the right to secondary education purely on financial grounds, the Government's scholarship scheme should be examined again, so as to ensure that only children from poor homes benefit. The practice of waiting till children enter school before considering them for a bursary cuts out a large proportion of children whose parents cannot afford the initial financial outlay. The Government could perhaps consider setting up an education endowment fund to which industries and other profit-making bodies like the banks and insurance houses should be made to contribute. Proceeds from this could be used to meet the cost of educating the poor and needy.

(iii) The setting up of day schools should be pursued more vigorously than ever before. Proper implementation of the programme will save money, make more classrooms available, and make it possible for every neighbourhood to have a well-equipped and good secondary school. With the establishment of more of such community schools, parents living within such communities are bound to take greater interest in the running of the schools, and this will raise standards, and make it unnecessary in the long run for every man of substance or privilege to wish his child attends Achimota, Mfantsipim or Wesley Girls High school purely for their nostalgic attachment to these institutions as "old-boys and girls."

The Minister's decision is in the right direction. We only caution that in its implementation, care should be taken not to let the underprivileged in the society suffer undue hardship.

IT PAYS TO
ADVERTISE

in the

Legon Observer

Letters

The Vigilante Jazz - A Rejoinder

S.R - In the Vol. XII No. 3 issue of the Legon Observer, 15th - 28th February, 1980, Mr. Kwasi Ofori-Mante wrote a letter with the heading "The Vigilante Jazz," and from his introductory statement, I thought he was inviting readers to examine the Vigilante idea closely but not to review the activities of some members of the group as the letter turned out to do.

He said that "the so-called vigilante committee members have turned out to be questionable characters from the P.N.P. camp". Even if that is true, (I don't have any data upon which I should agree or disagree with him on this point), I don't think it was part of the idea. I hope he remembers that when Dr. Limann put the idea forward in his radio and T.V. broadcast, he invited people from all political parties, voluntary organisations, ethnic and all indentifiable groups to join. Everybody could join from their own free will. Therefore, if Mr. Ofori-Mante, finds himself the most commendable character to join the vigilante but has opted to stay out only to allow people of dubious character to join, then that should not be Dr. Limann's making.

I shall not be surprised at all if Ofori-Mante should come up one day with a suggestion that the Police Force or the Border Guard should be abolished because a policeman has extorted money from a trader, or a border guard has collected money and helped a smuggler across the border. Or Customs and Excise officials at our borders and ports be removed because an official has been caught in a deal. Or because these institutions were not 'holy' ideas of Dr. Limann they are okay?

Look, the sky-high refuse dumps in Accra were there before the vigilante idea was proposed. I don't think he is suggesting that the Vigilante people who he finds fit for clearing refuse, should be conscripted to go and do that job, for at least in Ghana now, perhaps unless under a state of emergency, everybody has the right to choose the work they would like to do.

About his allegation that the vigilante men are selling a stick of cigarette for 60p. at Orion Cinema, congratulations on his vigilance. Report them to the appropriate quarters for action to be taken against them, for being a member of the vigilante group doesn't make one immune to the laws of Ghana. I wonder how he got to know that these guys he is referring to are vigilante members. Or he

thinks anybody who is not as well dressed as him must automatically be a vigilante? Is that the reason why he is suggesting they should be made to go and collect refuse? Please don't make a mistake! Are cigarettes so scarce that a stick should sell at 60p? He should ask himself this and offer an alternative idea to vigilante.

I appeal to Mr. Ofori-Mante to come out with the shortcomings of the vigilante idea so that we can all examine them and advise ourselves including Dr. Limann. His letter failed to convey any useful piece of advice to anybody but only succeeded in exposing a partisan attitude to a national issue. This won't do for a journalist that he is aspiring to be.

MensahSarbah Hall
Annex B 209.
University of Ghana
Legon.

Isaac Kwame Wiredu

The Vigilante Jazz

SIR - Many thanks for bringing Mr. Wiredu's rejoinder to 'The Vigilante Jazz, to my notice.

Unfortunately, Mr. Wiredu got his points all wrong because he refused to understand the simple language I used.

What I said was that the vigilante idea should be closely examined and I went on to portray some of the drawbacks of the idea which necessitate this examination.

We cannot all be vigilante men but we can offer useful criticisms to those who are. That not all "commendable characters" can join should not be a licence for vigilante members to harass and intimidate innocent traders.

Thank God, I shall never come up with any outrageous idea such as a call for the abolition of the Police Force, or the Border Guard or the Customs and Excise Department. For, if we say we are going to abolish all institutions where corrupt practices are rampant, then Ghana would be left with nothing because corruption is endemic in our society. This is a fact.

What we must do is to find out the root causes of these vices and their relevant remedies. This is what is meant by examining something closely.

My original letter did not imply that the institutions he mentions are okay because they are not the 'holy' ideas of Dr. Limann. Is Wiredu saying

that all ideas of Dr. Limann are okay? Beware of muddled thinking.

I did say the vigilante men can help clear refuse because that will be a very good service to the community. Presently, I do not see what they are vigilantizing about.

I never said vigilante men are selling cigarettes at 60 pesewas per stick at Orion Cinema. I said, "There are boys as rough as the vigilante men selling a stick of cigarette at 60 pesewas." Or is it the simile which is beating Mr. Wiredu? Apparently, he has problems with comprehension when it comes to the English Language. May be a second reading (in the real sense of the word) of both the original letter and this current one might help.

And Mr. Wiredu, wherein lies my partisanship? Meanwhile, the only alternative to vigilante is to flood the market with goods.

School of Journalism and Kwasi Ofori-Mante
Communication
Legon.

Who Doesn't want money - Vigilante?

Does whoever initiated the idea of Vigilante Groups ever think that he was creating another job opening, and a source of income for the lazy man?

Though whoever might be responsible for introducing this idea had no bad motive, Ghanaians now are not sure about whatever gains he might have thought this idea would achieve. Now and again one hears of the arrest of some members of Vigilante Groups for fraud and other petty offences. About eighty-five percent of the groups in the country presently are MORE THAN CORRUPT.

It is only when you refuse to grease the palms of vigilantes that they become extra active, raising their shoulders high, in threats - "if you fail to act on this case, (usually to any peace officer to whom they report case a) I'll send your particulars to the Castle."

Just imagine a vigilante boss himself being arrested and sacked - is that all? Is that a commensurate punishment for such a crime? What should be the degree of punishment for a policeman who always arrests people for stealing but who himself is always caught in the act? Or is the law still being made a respecter of persons and positions in Ghana?

The recent suspension of activities of vigilantes in the Ashanti Region by the Acting Ashanti Regional Minister must sound a warning to those of the other regions. If the vigilantes do not change and work above reproach, we'll be compelled to advise ourselves. After all we can be and are vigilantes ourselves, of course without the desire for some "cola" passing under the table.

Pannell Fitzpatrick & Co. T. R. Kwawu
Accra.

Security Problems

SIR - In the recent letter of Dr. Agovi published in the L.O. XII No. 3 the following statement appears:

"Shortly after the first round of the recent Presidential elections in June 1979, there were unconfirmed reports (emphasis mine) of moves in high political circles to create a Government of national unity consisting of all the major political parties."

Why does Agovi decide now to refer to that fiasco in such lame terms? Some of us remember that at the time the moves were reportedly going on (?), Agovi claimed to have been actively involved in making this history! He is not entitled to talk about the affair in such lame terms. Let us have a bit of honesty about everything.

Faculty of Law, Kofi Kumado
Legon.

Security Problems

SIR - I really do not know why John Pobee should still find it necessary to associate me in his reply to Fui Tsikata's letter which appeared in L.O. Vol. XII, No. 3. I can only register my dismay at his insulting language in referring to me as a 'confused thinker' in a context which should not admit of any reference to my person or my attributes. I realise that Pobee finds it difficult to accept young men like me and Fui Tsikata as his academic colleagues. But if Pobee considers himself an academic Methuselah merely because of his long stay on a University campus, (see L.O. Vol. XII No. 4) then his use of language in public debates should equally reflect the sober maturity of a long-standing academic and Associate Professor of a reputable University.

Equally, Kofi Kumado's rejoinder to my letter on "Security problems" in this issue can only be described as unfortunate. I do not think that the issues I raised in my letter (which appeared in L.O. XII, No. 3), failed to be understood because I did not boast to the whole world that I was a party to the original negotiations for a government of national Unity. Perhaps, the phrase "unconfirmed reports" may be a 'lame' and disappointing way of expressing Mr. Kumado's own sense of modesty had he taken part actively in the negotiations. On my part, however, I used that expression merely to draw attention to the fact that no official government statement or communique was issued at the time to deny or confirm 'the moves in high political circles to create a government of national Unity'. In any case, if Mr. Kofi Kumado agrees that the move was a 'fiasco', and consequently no statement was issued on it, wherein lies the justification for anybody to turn it into an achievement of great personal and historical significance?

Whereas it is my privilege as an individual to share confidences with colleagues in private, I am not under any obligation to proclaim the same to the world, especially where I have no authority to do so or when the occasion is not appropriate. In my own experience it is only domestic dogs which bark at just anything in sight, no matter the place, time or the object.

Institute of African Studies, James Kofi Agovi.
University of Ghana
Legon.

Food Production And Nkoranza Residents

SIR - According to the President, agriculture is the key to Ghana's prosperity, and he has therefore declared that the first two years of his administration would see major improvements in agriculture. The Vice-President has also called on the press to focus attention on agriculture.

It does not seem to me however that this government, like past governments, is doing much about agriculture, as will become clear if we look closely at Nkoranza, an area I know best.

Situated in the Brong-Ahafo Region, Nkoranza produced 55,000 tons of maize and 600,000 kilos of cotton last year. Occupying an area of 5,400 square miles, many food crops are grown on a traditional basis to meet the demands of all those who travel from the Northern, Upper and Ashanti Regions to buy food. Nkoranza is the leading tobacco producer, and the national tobacco chief farmer lives there.

Any casual visitor to the district will be surprised at the number of articulator trucks which come to

carry groundnuts, maize, plantain, oranges, garden eggs, pepper and banana to all regions of the country on the main market day, Tuesday. The Food Distribution Corporation has a depot near the market and it is surprising that while the current price of maize is €200.00 a bag the Corporation offers €120.00 for a bag.

In such an important food-producing area, it is almost impossible for farmers to come by the tools of their trade. Cutlasses, hoes and fertilizers are not sold there, and one has to travel to Sunyani or Kumasi to arrange to buy them. Essential commodities like sugar, milk, sardine, soap, kerosene are rarely seen there. Charcoal producers around Kintampo cannot get chain-saws, cotton growers and workers at Pramposo Ghana-Austria cattle Project do not get soap, and labourers at Akumah River Farm Estates have similar problems. It is extremely difficult for farmers in the area to get loans from the local Agricultural Development Bank. The government goes to considerable trouble to provide urban workers with essential commodities, but farmers are a forgotten people. If this is the plight of farmers in such a rich food-producing area, then, I am not sure that the government attaches much importance to food-production. Deeds not words.

P. O. Box 30 Nana Kwaku Donyinah
Nkoranza. Brong Ahafo.

Trial By Fetish?

SIR - "A University that has a Faculty of Science cannot endorse anything to do with charms. All right-thinking staff members look on you to call an immediate halt to this episode."

This theme, expressed in a letter to the Vice Chancellor of Songhai University by radicals in Chukwuemeka Ike's novel *The Naked Gods*, is one which came to mind when I read Flight Lt Rawling's reported statement that he prefers to be tried by fetish.

Catholic Bishop Sarpong believes that - "witchcraft exists only in the fantasy of people." Flight Lt. Rawlings, are you saying that in this day and age when progressives have disavowed belief in things like witchcraft, you still harbour such "fantasies"?

By such beliefs it would appear that you are encouraging people to adopt a non-scientific approach to the solution of our problems.

Humane Education Society Augustine Andoh
of Ghana,
P. O. Box 1734
Accra.

Viewpoint

JUST A MATTER OF SPEECH

By

Ebow Daniel

Edwin Newman, the celebrated American newsman, is on record as saying that our politics would improve if our ability to communicate our thoughts effectively did. Something to that effect. Newman's title "Strictly Speaking" is the inspiration for this piece, incidentally.

Some Basic Defects in Communication

Without ever having been a student of communication this writer is still able to say that sometimes we fail to make the desired impact on our audience because we resort to expressions not quite felicitous. For instance, did the leader of the People's National Party travel to Cape Coast the other day with the express purpose of telling the people of Cape Coast that their favourite political party was led by half-baked professionals of various kinds? What did he hope to gain? To be sure the precursor of the PNP had an arsenal of vituperatives from which such gems as "Tsombe-faced-nincompoop" and "tse-tse-fly-foreheaded-so-and-so" were hurled from time to time. There is no record however of the leader of that party having ever borrowed from the arsenal. And legend has it that that party never lost a bye-election in which its leader personally campaigned for the party candidate.

Inability to communicate effectively also stems partly from carelessness which, if pardonable in the spoken word, cannot be pardoned in the written word:

The terrible rate of tax evasion is seen in the fact that most of the many many of the suddenly rich people in the country owe it to the money they have kept for themselves which they ought to have paid as tax revenue to Government.

A sentence should be meaningful. The meaning of the above sentence from an editorial dated Saturday 23rd February is not clear. "The rate of tax is money" is what the sentence seems to say and that is an idea which is not too clear. Unintelligible communication could be deliberately intended to camouflage one's intentions or to confuse one's audience. Asked to surrender certain Presidential Files to the Special Watergate Prosecutor, the White House Press Secretary in 1974 is reported to have requested a four-day deferment of the order

to enable the President's Lawyers to evaluate and make a judgement in terms of a response when all he needed to say was that the President needed time to think it over.

Defining Terms

We need to come to some understanding about the meaning of expressions that recur in political discussions, especially. Some of those expressions convey to some of us at least the opposite of what the speakers probably intend. The following are among the more common cases:

National Interest - In nearly every context that the phrase "national interest" occurs, "self-interest" could be substituted. During 1972-78 politics and political parties were supposed to have been banned in the national interest. The ban on political parties was to continue even in the Union Government Third Republic. It was never explained how the ban served the national interest. It was the case however that the ban served the interests of those who imposed it. The absence of organised political groups than can subject acts of Government to a critical analysis is an ideal that every petty dictator cherishes. If the ideal could be conjured into reality by liberal references to such platitudes as "national interest", "patriotism" and the like in official speeches the better for the dictator. We assume anyway that all politicians and public officers act in the national interest. So why do they bother to tell us? This writer's recommendation is that we drop "national interest" altogether from our vocabulary.

Subsidy - Is it possible to suspend usage of this word until the economy improves? One is aware, of course, that petrol costs more in other parts of West Africa than it does in this country. One is also aware that if the sale price of petrol falls short of the cost price at source then petrol in Ghana can be said to be subsidized. It is simply that one objects to Government appropriating the word for exclusive use. Cocoa fetches far more money than the Government pays farmers. While the farmer does not complain about the short-fall he is expected to be grateful when Government sells him matchets at subsidized rates. For the same qualifications and the same amount of work teachers of all grades do in this country they would get far more money in any country on the west coast than they are paid here. To the extent that teachers in this country are willing to receive salaries which fall short of their market value in other parts of West Africa they are subsidizing the Government; they are enabling Government to buy a commodity cheaper than its real value. The Government and

the electorate have to help each other in our peculiar economic situation and mutual help is indeed the case: the electorate takes low salaries on the understanding that it will have some things free, health and primary education, for instance, and other things at slightly reduced rates. If Government officials understood this relationship better they will be less arrogant in their pronouncements: the Government cannot afford to continue subsidizing... The fact is that Government is being realistic when it sells cheaply to an electorate which sells its services to Government at take away prices. Let's shelve subsidy - its usage at any rate!

Criticism - There has come into being a new discipline which while awaiting proper christening may be referred to as taxonomic studies in criticism. The preoccupation of the taxonomist in criticism is to classify and label criticism. Species of criticism identified so far include the negative, irresponsible, armchair and the constructive. It is generally held in the discipline that if one found fault with a particular proposition one has an obligation to supply another proposition that is fault-free otherwise one is being irresponsible. In other words it is not enough to criticise a Minister's hair-cut as unbecoming; the critic must propose a different style of hair-cut for the Minister's consideration. Surely, a bad hair-cut can be shown to be bad and we should be grateful that anything bad is brought to attention even if ideas for remedy are not immediately forthcoming. Constructive criticism is a favourite with students in the field among whom may be counted several politicians, both professional and amateur. Usage to date would seem to suggest that constructive criticism is that type which encourages one along a chosen path and by encouragement is meant helping to remove impediments in the way. Any suggestion of an alternative path or abandonment of a project altogether in favour of some other is a contribution which is other than constructive. Thus, if a man decides that he wants to hang himself with a 6-inch-long thread, the decision may be criticised only with a view to identifying a thread sufficiently long and durable for the purpose of hanging. Similarly in respect of budget proposals such as were read to Parliament recently, the constructive critic is expected to say the proposals are capable of curing all the national ills (hear! hear!). But since the exercise is criticism rather than hailing (in this country we do not approve of budgets, we hail them), one must remember to murmur disagreement to this or that detail. Specifically, one must say something like the money allocated to the contingency vote being small; in view of the several unexpected assignments the Government might be called upon to undertake in the national interest,

the vote must be increased (hear! hear!). Anything else is negative. A particularly devastating piece of criticism is subversive. Ultimately constructive criticism is criticism favoured by the person being criticised. The observation is that many public officers in this country are too pre-occupied with the taxonomy of criticism to attend to substance. A further observation is that people who spend their time classifying and labelling criticism are generally intolerant of dissenting views. Further still, classifying and labelling is a useful smokescreen behind which one feigns responsiveness to criticism while ignoring substance:

Questions Mr. Commissioner is it true your sister received the largest import licence allocation this year?

Answers I am aware that my interrogator is a highly trained economist. If he would be willing to propose the perfect formula for allocating import licences, he would be behaving as a responsible citizen and my Ministry would be most obliged.

Questions Is it true nonetheless that the Commissioner's sister received the lion's share of this year's allocation?

Answers I refuse to respond to malice.

Confrontation et al. - The Government said the other day that it had authority under the constitution to appoint editors. The editorial staff of the **Daily Graphic** denied the Government had the authority it purported to exercise under the constitution. As far as the editor of the **People's Evening News** is concerned, even before there was any suggestion that the matter might be referred to the law courts, the editorial staff of the **Graphic** was seeking a confrontation with the Government. We may as well agree that every disagreement with a Government viewpoint is a confrontation. Civil servants whose duty it is to offer advice to Government should anticipate the kind of advice Government would be pleased to have lest they are accused of being in a state of confrontation with their Ministers. Why do all foreign currencies have to be "had-earned" or "scarce"? Hard-earned dollars! Scarce foreign exchange! The cedi could not possibly be hard-earned or scarce either seeing that C164,000 could be found to pay for a single Presidential trip to the Western Region. There is also the matter of our "dirty linen", an item of clothing which is not supposed to be washed in public. The import of the metaphor is that disagreements between otherwise friendly parties should not be publicly aired. Discussing the issue of who has authority to appoint editors, the Editor of the **People's Evening News** specifically advises the

Government and the editorial staff of the Graphic not to wash their "dirty linen" in public. Why not? Experience with the Establishment's landrat would seem to show that those items that are not washed in public eventually come out far more dirty than we want them. We did not know till after the event that the Unigov campaign was financed from the contingency fund; or that each member of SMC II received at least C5000 per month in operational funds. Has it occurred to anyone that we refer to newspapers which have nationwide circulation as local dailies? To distinguish them from foreign newspapers, perhaps. **The New York Herald** is local just because of the occasional presence in the US of the **Daily Graphic**!! Accra Hearts of Oak may be all right but an Accra Magistrate is the limit. An Accra Lawyer said the other day that he did his BL abroad which confused me to no end. There is no academic or professional distinction known as BL, certainly not in the tradition to which belong the gown and the wig. Barrister-at-Law admits of no abbreviation. That is so. It is a pity we do not say an Accra Managing Director. A Kumasi Lieutenant would be divine and an Accra Principal Secretary just super! In the hierarchy of the PNP, Imoru Egala and Krobo Eusei are apparently Father and Deputy Father respectively which probably explains why a friend of mine who is an ardent supporter of the Party has taken to referring to his three boys as Son, Deputy Son and Assistant Son. I have not been to my friend lately because my vice daughter is not too well.

Other Sources of Confusion

Besides expressions of doubtful meaning there are of course other sources of difficulty in the matter of understanding what one hears or reads:

The Unfathomable - Language is especially difficult if it seeks to convey ideas which are themselves difficult to grasp. One particular editor in this country is forever trying to provide an ideological base to everything he writes about. He sees the interplay of group-interests and group-conflicts in every situation. The analysis is often so contrary to commonsense that understanding is the more difficult. For instance, boarding schools with their bigger budgets provide greater opportunity than day schools for filching which is the reason why headmasters of public secondary schools are opposed to converting boarding schools to day schools. Again, students and school managements are in a state of perpetual confrontation because students are excluded from the decision-making processes especially with respect to finances. The idea of vigilantes is a good one because it would enable the masses to protect themselves against exploitation; only cheats are opposed to vigilantes. Income-earners who pay direct taxes remain small because having repudiated Nkrumah's novel and

revolutionary style of Government in 1966 subsequent Governments are afraid of novel measures "which smack of revolution." These are of course fanciful accounts about phenomena which admit of ordinary explanations. The number of people who pay direct taxes has not become smaller because Nkrumah left the scene. We could get many more to pay if we could document who does what and where and the documentation was not any better in the First Republic. At this point in time the view that the vigilantes will succeed is as plausible as one that they will not succeed. One does not have to be a cheat to entertain cynicism about the eventual outcome. Our campuses are restive because there is no food; other facilities are lacking. How does the mere appreciation on the part of students that the school management is doing its best assuage hunger or even make the situation tolerable? As for the view that headmasters have a vested interest in boarding schools because of the greater opportunities for filching why isn't that compliment extended to the managements of all public establishments which maintain boarding facilities - the Universities, the Ministry of Health and State Hotels? Why were Nkrumah's G.E.T. schools provided with boarding facilities in the first place? We should not presume to criticise journalists because according to one of them journalists are better qualified for the jobs than other professionals are for theirs! Sustained!!

The Obvious - GBC II made reference the other day to Lady Dora Limann, wife of the President, Dr. Hilla Limann! Another time it was Madam Victoria Opoku Ware, wife of Nana Asantehene, Otumfuo Opoku Ware II!! And who said stool names were available for the taking by spouses, anyway? The media still find it necessary to remind us who we are:

Ghanaians Have Been Advised to Eschew Laziness.

Ghanaians To Pay More For Petrol

The President Warns Ghanaians Against Bribery and Corruption.

Such headlines would no doubt make a lot of sense in foreign countries where they would be understood to be appeals specially directed to the Ghanaian communities in those countries. But in this country, when the President speaks it must be taken for granted that we are the audience. "The French Go to the Polls" is a meaningful headline in any paper other than one printed in France for French readers. It's long time since we were "children of the Gold Coast". If in the early days of independence we needed to be reminded of our changed identity, continued reminders are beginning to have a negative effect on some of us. "Fellow Ghanaians" suggests an opening at a meeting of the Ghana Students Union - in London'.

Good day Ghanaians.

Mild international Embassy.
The smooth way to go places.