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Editorial

DUPLICATION IN OUR UNIVERSITIES

ON the occasion of the second congregation of the University of Cape Coast, the Vice-Chancellor of the University announced that as from the coming academic year the University will offer courses in principles of management and accounting. A few weeks later the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Science and Technology seized the occasion of that University's annual congregation to tell the nation that the possibility of a second medical school being established as part of the University of Science and Technology was under active consideration. These two statements of intention are interesting because we are given the opportunity to learn of the serious attempts being made to expand higher education in the country. They at the same time give us cause for concern because we see in these intentions seeds of a coming crisis in higher education in the country.

The guiding principle behind the setting up of the Universities of Cape Coast and Kumasi was specialization: the former to concentrate on education which was in the hands of a humstrung institute in the University of Ghana and the latter to specialize in the applied sciences. But as is typical of organisations, the two universities in recent years have shown signs of expanding beyond the original intentions and this will ultimately not be to the good health of higher education in the country.

For what is the point in starting courses in principles of accounting and management in Cape Coast — courses which will ultimately lead to the setting up of a School of Accountancy and Management — when there is the School of Administration at Legon, which is in the process of expansion to cater for students interested in this area of study? The question applies to certain developments at the University of Science and Technology.

Though the University was set up to specialise in the applied sciences it was deemed right to run service courses in the liberal arts and social sciences to ensure that the professional engineers, architects etc. did not come out as narrow-minded specialists. Over the years these courses have come to take on the nature of autonomous university departments offering courses leading to degrees. Thus we find the ludicrous situation of one of the departments in the Faculty of Social Studies at Kumasi where two lecturers have only two students to prepare for the bachelor's degree. Are the activities of the French Department of the University of Science and Technology and these of the Department at Legon complementary or competitive?

It is in the light of these considerations that we question the

wisdom in setting up a second medical school at Kumasi even before the first one at Accra is well and firmly on its feet. The case for setting up a second medical school anywhere in Ghana has not been publicly made. But we believe that a second medical school would be premature for the following reasons: the first medical school in the country is still a young institution which must command all the resources that the government has at its disposal for the training of doctors. In fact the school is yet to be permanently sited, and it is interesting to remark that the Commissioner for Health has recently appealed to the W.H.O. to continue to assist the University in its efforts to train more lecturers for the school. It is clear from the Commissioner's appeal that the first school is not yet fully staffed or perhaps even equipped, and this makes it all the more premature to think of a second medical school.

There is also the question of the effect of a second medical school on science education and scientific research in the country. Already, owing to the higher salary paid to doctors as opposed to other science personnel, most science students who leave the sixth form aim first at the medical school and will even wait a year to ensure admission rather than enter the university to do another science course. Many of the students who are at present doing pure science courses are doing so as a second choice. The setting up of a second medical school will certainly aggravate our already serious problem of shortage of personnel to teach science in Secondary School and man our research establishments. There are two answers to this: the improvement of living conditions of other science graduates and the deferment of the establishment of the second medical school until such a time that our secondary schools are producing enough sixth form science students to fill both medical schools and the other science faculties in the country.

In any case, we believe that in order to avoid possible wasteful duplication, the Council for Higher Education must investigate and approve before any of our Universities is allowed to set up a new department or faculty; for not even in the field of university education nor even in the name of academic freedom can Ghana afford ostentation and waste.

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Agriculture

Guidelines for Agricultural Development (III)— Marketing

By
A Special Correspondent

Concern with the overwhelming problem of underproduction has led to a relative neglect of the equally important problem of defective marketing. Our marketing system is characterised by substantial loss of produce in the marketing channels, waste of human and material resources in the marketing process, and a pricing system which does not encourage maximum production by farmers. If production is to expand, the marketing system should improve to ensure ample and regular supplies at prices which will stimulate a regular and increasing flow of produce from our farms, and which are at the same time reasonable for consumers and industry. For this to be possible, returns to those performing marketing functions, such as assembling, wholesaling, retailing, processing, and transportation, should be enough to induce them to invest adequately in these services.

Road Network

The major defects of our agricultural marketing system are inadequacies in transport facilities, road network and communication links between producing and consuming centres, and storage. The transport problem becomes more acute as one moves from the urban to the rural market, from the rural to the village market, and from the village to the farm. Recent estimates of transport costs per unit of foodstuff conveyed (e.g. bag of corn) per mile by experts at the University indicate that transport cost on the village to rural market route is often as high as six to seven times that on the rural to urban market route. The cost of transporting produce from the farm to the village is even higher than the rate on the village to the rural market route. This should not be surprising, considering the progressively worse condition of the roads away from urban centres, and the associated lack of transport services. No doubt, the impact of costly transport on food prices is substantial, and policy needs to be directed at the causes, particularly the extent and quality of connecting roads, and the supply and condition of transport vehicles.

Produce from the farm to the house is generally headloaded. There is no mechanical transport to most farms. Consequently, one of the greatest

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problems facing farmers—and buyers—is how to organise the movement of large quantities of produce from the farm to the house or village, where there are no connecting motorable roads. Due to the poor transport facilities and the small volume of goods that can be conveyed, the first stage of movement from the farm has the highest cost. Improvements in the roads will help reduce costs and narrow the spread between producer and consumer prices. To hold down the costs of road rehabilitation and reconstruction, a serious approach to rural mobilization for development is urged.

In rehabilitating the rural road network, priority should be given to roads in areas where higher-valued or special crops have been selected for promotion, e.g. grains, and to roads serving larger villages, or areas where the volume of marketing is large or expected to rise significantly. The transfer of improved practices in production should also be accelerated in order to minimize the need for "shifting cultivation" practised under traditional agriculture, and encourage more settled farming around the villages and near local roads.

Transport Vehicles

The availability of food-carting services has lagged behind demand in the last decade, particularly since 1962. Firstly, the rate of importation of goods vehicles levelled off for sometime, and has lagged behind the rate of population increase and urbanization. Secondly, and consequent upon the first, the persistently poor supply of motor spares has led to generally poor maintenance of the existing stock of food-carting vehicles, whose owners have become increasingly unwilling to put them on the worsening rural roads. Thirdly, the evidence indicates that the proportion of cars in the old-age group, i.e. five years or older, has risen substantially in the last decade.

It should not take much calculation to show the connection between declining transport facilities and worsening road conditions on the one hand, and rising food prices on the other. The policy implications are equally obvious — Government should waive taxes on goods vehicles, raise the importation of spare parts, and, through a vigorous credit scheme, encourage investment in goods-moving vehicles.

Storage

Facilities for holding stocks after harvest for release to consumers later are inadequate. Farm storage facilities are rudimentary and inexpensive; they also afford little protection from rodents,

insects, weather damage, etc. Storage losses at the farm are quite high. Simple improved systems are being developed; their widespread adoption will depend on extension and credit. At the rural market centres further losses occur because of inadequate storage facilities. Again credit facilities would encourage private enterprise (traders, food buyers) and local councils to develop more and better facilities. Until storage is improved at the rural market centres and collecting depots, seasonal price fluctuations, estimated to be of the order of 45% for grain crops, will continue to frustrate consumers and producers alike.

Price Support and State Action

There are two policy issues which need attention: price guarantees and state intervention in marketing. For some years now we have been trying to use guaranteed prices to stimulate the expansion of certain crops, in recent years notably rice and maize. In 1969, for example, guaranteed minimum prices of ₦7.00 per bag of maize (220 lbs.) and ₦7.50 per bag of rice (100 lbs.) were established. Under the scheme, the government was to buy maize and rice at these prices when they were at their seasonal lowest, store them and release them to consumers later, when market prices were high. The aim, of course, was to reduce seasonal price fluctuations.

In practice, the government's agency, the Food Marketing Corporation, purchased not more than 2% of the crop, and indeed the scheme, till today, has never had any significant impact on producer and consumer prices. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the scheme has generated heavy operational losses for the Government and taxpayer.

Budgetary constraints apart, the operation of producer price support schemes rests on efficient stock control, storage facilities, and so on; in other words, it needs a corps of efficient and honest administrative personnel for implementation. And the indication is that this is a scarce resource in this country. The best that may be hoped for is that Government will begin to study and rationalize the operations of its institutions in order to make them more efficient; certainly, over the plan period, the Government should not expand their operations.

The best alternative to a pricing policy (of the type described above) is to intensify measures designed to raise the efficiency and lower the costs of production, and improve the marketing system. The market should be allowed to determine fair and attractive price for producers and consumers.

Social Problems

ROAD SAFETY: SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

By

S. T. K. Boafo

Motor traffic problems have always been of major concern to many people. Drivers, pedestrians, the police, those in the transport industry and, indeed, the general public have, at one time or the other, found themselves trapped in the web of traffic problems. The web may be traffic jams, accidents, flouting of traffic regulations. With August 4, the day for the switch-over to right-hand traffic, only a couple of months away, some of the problems of traffic will assume serious dimensions. To ensure traffic safety during the change-over, a series of activities and campaigns are on the way to prepare the Ghanaian public for the day.

Causes of Accident

The day is rare when no accidents are recorded. The increasing importation of vehicles is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, this will help solve the acute transportation problems facing the country. On the other, the increasing number of vehicles may lead to more accidents than at present. Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the number of vehicles imported and registered in Ghana.

In 1966, for instance, 7,481 vehicles were imported and registered in Ghana; in 1967, a further 7,089 vehicles were registered and in 1968, 8,236 vehicles were registered. In 1969, the number of vehicles imported and registered was 9,789 and in 1970, it was 12,080 vehicles. Further figures released by the Central Bureau of Statistics show that vehicles registered in 1972, totalled 8,628 and in 1973 the number was 8,010. For the past six years, the number of vehicles registered annually in Ghana has consistently been above the eight thousand mark. If this mark is maintained, it is estimated that by the early 1990's a further 128,000 vehicles will be plying Ghana roads. As a result, if there is no marked improvement in the state of the roads, if vehicles are not kept mechanically fit, if pedestrians are not observant and careful and if drivers do not get over reckless driving, more accidents will occur, more vehicular damage

done and, consequently, more homes left wretched and desolate.

There are four main causes of motor accidents. Accidents may be caused by drivers and by pedestrians; they may result from poor condition of the road and from mechanical defects of vehicles. The first two causes may be termed the human factor in accidents. Statistics indicate that the human factor is the most frequent cause of accidents in Ghana. To buttress this point, there is the need to use figures once more. Accidents statistics compiled by the Ghana Police Service indicate that in 1970, a total number of accidents recorded throughout Ghana was 10,614. In 1971, the figure rose up to 13,186, and in 1972, there were 12,697 accidents. Also, in 1970, 781 persons lost their lives through accidents while 13,889 were injured; in 1972, motor accidents claimed 907 lives and 12,458 were injured.

Drivers and Pedestrians

Out of the 10,614 accidents recorded in 1970, 6,418, that is over 60 per cent, were caused by drivers. Drivers were also responsible for 7,883 out of the 13,186 accidents recorded in 1971, and the cause of 7,241 out of the 12,697 accidents in 1972 has been attributed to the fault of drivers. Unwary pedestrians come next to drivers in the cause of accidents. Of the total number of accidents which occurred in 1970, 2,169 were caused by pedestrians. Pedestrians also caused 2,834 of the accidents in 1972 and 2,859 in 1972.

Taken together then, the human factor accounts for more than half of the number of accidents recorded in Ghana in 1970, 1971 and 1972. Reckless driving, tiredness, drowsiness, drunkenness, excessive conversation with passengers sitting near them are some of the factors which lead drivers into accidents.

As August 4 approaches, it becomes more and more incumbent on the various drivers' unions in the country, the Ghana Private Transport Union and transport owners to keep emphasizing to their drivers the dangerous consequences of careless driving. Even more important, the drivers themselves should realise that if they were more cautious in their driving, if they would refrain from driving when they are intoxicated, if they would desist from idle conversation with passengers occupying the fore seats with them, a number of accidents whose cause is blamed on them could be avoided. When pedestrians walk by the roads without much attention to traffic and cross the roads without much regard to on-

rushing vehicles, accidents often result, the cause of which the driver cannot be blamed. Thus equally important in the national crusade to reduce accidents is the need for the pedestrians to be more cautious and observant.

The poor conditions of the roads is of much concern to most Ghanaians. Almost everyday we read from our national dailies complaints about the deplorable condition of most of our roads. The national dailies often carry letters under such captions as: "Repair Cape Coast-Fosu Road"; "Begoro-Bunso Trunk Road"; "The Sunyani-Kumasi Road"; "Cover This Death Trap" and "A Danger to Motorists". Are the fears of those who complain about the roads constituting a great danger to motorists and pedestrians justified?

The Road Accident Statistics, earlier referred to, show that the condition of the roads accounted for 510 of the accidents recorded in 1970; 585 accidents in 1971 and 623 accidents in 1972. Depressions in the road surface, uncompleted roadworks, abandoned and unmarked vehicles on the roads and poor road signs are some of the "death traps" on our roads. Often repairs on the roads are slow and potholes are left uncovered for weeks. It is true to say that most of the major curves, steep descents and dangerous spots on the roads are marked. But in some instances, the road signs are so poorly done, or, worse still, so inconspicuously placed or so near the danger spots that they do not serve as sufficient forewarnings to the drivers to be on their guard.

Mechanical Defects

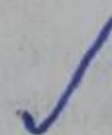
As part of a national campaign for road safety prior to and after August 4, a police petrol unit must ply the roads, especially the highways, both day and night, to alert drivers of any dangers and to install warning lights on all abandoned vehicles and unfinished roadworks. More effectively, drivers must inform the police of their broken-down vehicles so that the police can, as quickly as possible, tow these away from the roads.

There is also an urgent need for distinctly marked and conspicuously displayed sign posts and other warning signs as well as regular road maintenance. These are useful and effective measures to be taken to ensure the safety of vehicles and minimize the frequency of accidents. In this regard, it is gratifying to read from the **Ghanaian Times** of April 26 that "The Government has started full-scale project on the rehabilitation of roads and installation of new traffic signs in the country in preparation towards the change-over....."

Also frequent as the cause of accidents are mechanical defects of vehicles. As said earlier, abandoned and unmarked vehicles often lead to accidents. Poor maintenance of vehicles is the cause of these constant breakdowns which at times come so abruptly that the driver loses control of the vehicle, the result being an accident. According to the Road Accident Statistics, 1,208 accidents in 1970, 1,529 accidents in 1971 and 1,606 accidents in 1972 resulted from mechanical defects. The main objective of the Road Worthiness Certificate is to ensure that vehicles which ply the roads in Ghana are mechanically "well". Poor maintenance of vehicles goes back to the lack of adequate spare parts or the prohibitive costs of spare parts. Constant servicing and maintenance of vehicles is another way of scaling down the number of accidents which occur from mechanical failures.

These are the needed measures to safeguard vehicles and pedestrians on the roads and to prevent August 4 from ushering into Ghana a period of even higher accident rate than at present.

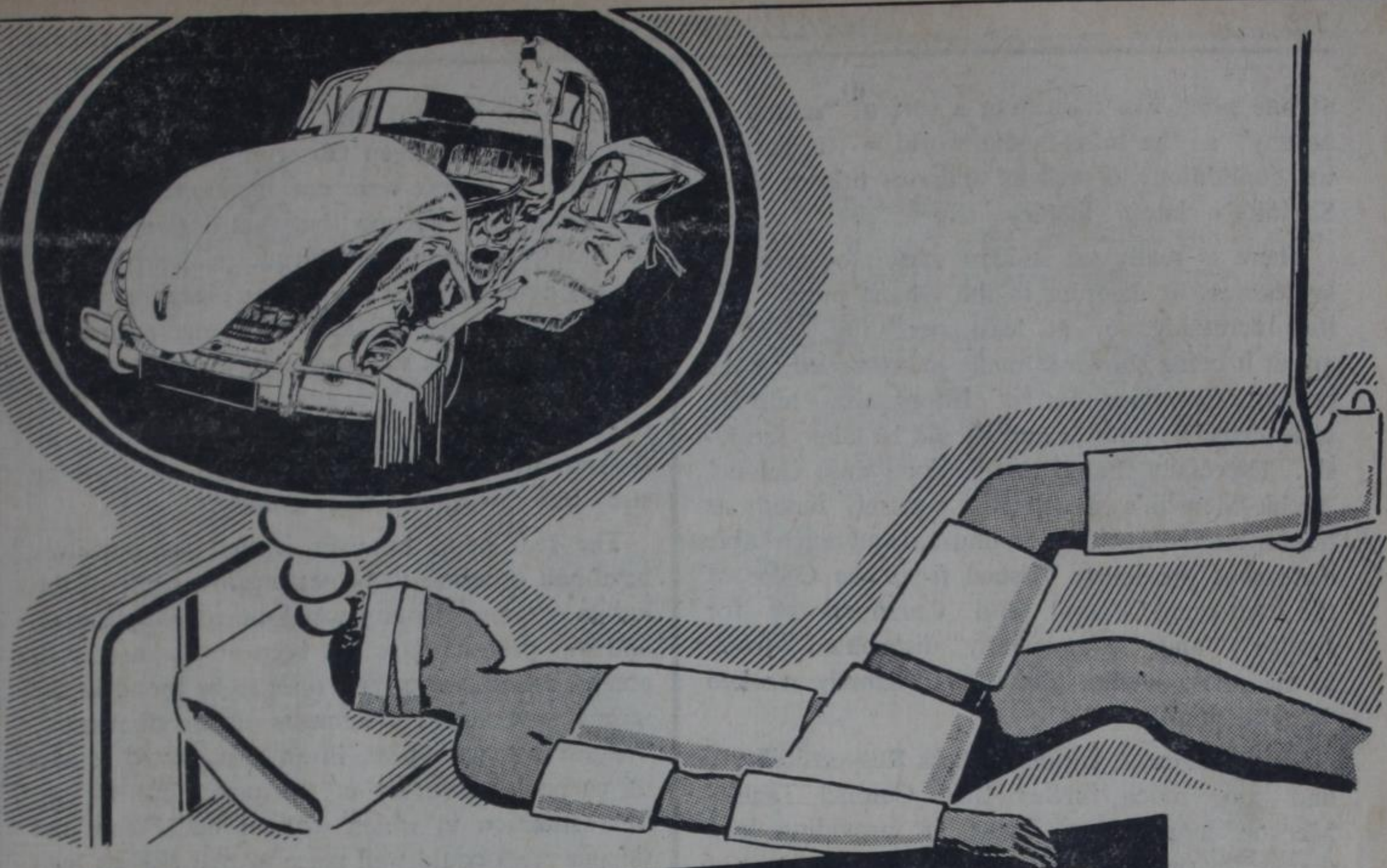
Observer Notebook



Government, Press and Journalist

Colonel C. R. Tachie-Menson is not the first Commissioner of Information or the Head of our Information Services to have delivered himself very fully on the press of this country. Still, he has done so, at a press dinner he gave for members of staffs of mass-media establishments practising in Ghana, some freelancers and certain representative individuals. The date was Friday, 19th April, 1974; the place, the hall of that spectacular structure at Independence Square which, incidentally, has no name of its own. Colonel Tachie-Menson in his speech called a spade a spade and not an implement for digging holes or trenches in the earth; he gave factual examples of his meaning and, in effect, quoted chapter and verse in detailing some faults and failings of the local press in its day to day operations.

Before this speech there were and since then there have been a large number of articles, letters to the press, discussions, a TV programme, and finally, topping the whole series, the Legon Institute of Journalism's "West Africa Regional Mass Media Conference" featuring another speech by Colonel Tachie-Menson. It had looked



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at one point like indicating a sort of "season of anomy" in the mass-media world — to borrow the euphonious as well as ominous title of Wole Soyinka's latest literary effort.

✓ There is really no sudden season or crisis of lawlessness or disorder in the Ghana press. But the increasing, or at least persisting, concern about it being shown in many quarters, led by the present Commissioner of Information himself, is nevertheless notable and should be taken seriously. Especially should this be done since Colonel Tachie-Menson's speech was squarely based, as he confessed himself, on an unusual and remarkable document previously "issued from the Office of the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice", and subsequently distributed freely to the mass media. (although originally marked "Confidential").

This document, entitled "Press Responsibility", had gone much further than Colonel Tachie-Menson himself later went, in providing lead themes for the dinner host. It had, in the name of the N.R.C. itself, levelled charges against the press: of "sensationalism", "defamatory and contemptuous reporting", "criminal libel", "breaches of journalistic ethics", "bad taste", "inaccurate reporting", and "suppression of news"—a truly formidable catalogue of misdeeds, to which the Commissioner, for good measure, added his own, as follows:

- (i) acceptance for publication of articles or advertisements of questionable value, or which are obnoxious or distasteful;
- (ii) the tendency to make blanket criticism where it would have been more politic to be specific; and
- (iii) failure to follow up stories already published, with the result that public confidence in state agencies or individuals is impaired.

The Commissioner then proceeded to give some details in support of his own accusations but did not name the specific newspapers guilty of the offences charged, as had the Attorney-General's paper. This one had been completely explicit in specifying the crimes, naming the offenders and giving all the other details in full; it had also analysed each case and incident, being at pains to prove by legalistic exposition and interpretation the criminal implications of some of the offences cited.

Speaking quite objectively, we think the government's representations, issued through the medium of the Attorney-General's office, make sad reading against the newspapers cited; nor were the Commissioner's observations, in turn, any less damning,

although he asserted, this was not what he was out to do. The **Legon Observer** and other non-government papers were not mentioned in either of these bills of offences, but that does not entitle us to adopt a Simon-pure attitude in all this, and we are not here doing so: after all, an extended further examination may well lead the same examiners, or perhaps others, to discover several journalistic crimes we may have committed too, over time. (Regardless of how often this should happen, though, we hope we can be caught on anything else but grossness and crudity.)

The real point however is that we ourselves have had occasion to protest against some of the habits of some of our journalistic contemporaries, and our protests have not been along lines or in areas dissimilar to certain ones to be found in the recent government statements under discussion. We are not, we repeat, in an unpredicted season of particular disorder in the press, but we are in a situation in which without better care the Ghana press could well place at real risk its own irreplaceable value to the community, as a partner of government in responsibility for the welfare of that community.

But there is another side to the coin — what else? We note with great wonder, for instance, that the government and its Commissioner of Information meticulously failed to list or mention one particular accusation levelled constantly and persistently at certain editors by many persons, in and out of the press itself, namely sycophancy on the part of the government owned papers, in "favour" of the government. Now, if the government had good reason to hold this charge to be unfounded and unrealistic, they should nevertheless have mentioned it and then disposed of it, with those reasons spelt out if there were indeed some to offer. As it is, their silence on this matter did their case not one tiny bit of service.

On the contrary, it gave significant, and at the same time puzzling, point to the vociferous claim made by one of the government editors on the TV programme mentioned before: to the effect that **no government censor habitually stands over his shoulder telling him from editorial to editorial what to say and how to say it!** If so, one may ask — as one of the TV panelists did ask: if so, why then the gratuitous sycophancy? But here comes the puzzle. The Attorney-General's paper on "Press Responsibility" proves against its own press that **government news, government statements and government explanations are often suppressed or "weakened" by that same press; and this lends great**

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credence to the editor's assertion that government does not censor them from day to day. Which further leads us to conclude that there is confusion in the government press camp and that perhaps there always was. For the press, we are assured, is not officially controlled, yet it is gratuitously sycophantic towards the rulers; on the other hand Ghana governments have repeatedly preached freedom of the press, yet they retire, and even sack, editors who offend them politically! Question: Where does all this lead? Answer: To low standards, ambivalence, instability, frustration, fear, insincerity and sycophancy.

One cure which the Commissioner proposes for journalistic ills is, we believe, only partially curative: "Increased training facilities for all grades of personnel in our Press", yes; but, please, not with emphasis on "our newspaper Editors and their senior members of staff" taking "periods of leave for refresher courses.....". These are precisely the people who can do with less further training, since they are most of them basically good enough to benefit just by specific pointers such as appear in "Press Responsibility"

and such as can elsewhere be laid out equally easily, at anytime, by competent lawyers and professional lecturers on journalism. The cadre of staff who need extensive training to qualify or attractive pay to stay on — as was agreed by all during the recent TV discussion — are reporters, staff feature-writers and proof-readers. These are really the people that make such a sorry mess of a section of our press. Editors as such are handicapped mostly by poor junior staff, poor communications, reluctant sources of information, lack of research facilities and research personnel, and inferior, obsolescent equipment.

All in all, government and press ought to get closer, in Ghana, to the understanding that they are both custodians of the common weal and ought to strive to overcome all handicaps, material and moral. The latter include, on the one hand, a tendency to excesses and irresponsibility and, on the other, a tendency to play trumps with the ultimate weapon of physical power. Neither will save us from the sins of omission and commission enumerated against the press of Ghana by the government of Ghana.

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Portugal and Africa

How open is Portuguese society going to be under the new de Spínola dispensation? The answer to this question, speculative though it is bound to be at this stage, will be a crucial determinant of how soon Mozambique and Angola attain their independence.

The main difference between Portugal on the one hand, and France and the United States, on the other, in the prosecution of their colonial or neo-colonial wars in Africa and Asia, was that Portugal was a dictatorship, a close society, and the others were not. Every other crucial variable in the achievement of a military solution in the colonialist or neo-colonialist wars concerned (in the so-called Portuguese territories in Africa, in Algeria, and in Vietnam) favoured France and the U.S. better. But political leaders in France and the U.S. had to be more responsive to radical — liberal sentiments at home and abroad. The high cost of those protracted and unjust wars, not only in terms of material and number of soldiers killed, but also in terms of undermining social values, and in terms particularly of opportunity costs, what had to remain undone because of the war, could daily be analysed and re-analysed, splashed across the news media, and generally used as rallying points of opposition against men in power. And none of these was illegal.

The real importance of the recent coup in Portugal, as far as the liberation struggle in Southern Africa is concerned, does not lie in the fact that the head of the new junta, General de Spínola, happens to think that a military solution to Portugal's colonial wars is moonshine. Although that, undoubtedly, is some advance. Its importance lies mainly in the high probability that it will usher in a more responsive, liberal regime. Military regimes are essentially authoritarian regimes. There is no question about that. But the nature of the regimes they overthrow, and to which they constantly react, is one of the pervasive influences on their political behaviour. The Salazar-Caetano regime in Portugal was a fascist dictatorship. Is it likely that the new junta would want to tread the same path? And would the power behind it, the embittered young officers, allow that? And would all the returning exiles and the released political prisoners, the militants of the left, allow that to happen without a struggle? And on whom would the junta rely then, were they to choose the illiberal path? Once a more open political system comes to be installed in Portugal, Mozambique and Angola should be independent in at most five years, provided the following can be ensured: (a) South Africa does not intervene to carry on the war where Portugal leaves off;

(b) the African freedom fighters are supplied with the necessary funds, arms and leadership and (c) the oil find off Angola does not prove to be more fantastic than it already is reputed to be. Oil-starved Europe might find that too difficult to abandon to nationalist leaders who would have had to fight for two decades to win their freedom.

Letters

Safety On Our Roads — A Rejoinder

SIR — After reading the editorial of the last issue of the *Legon Observer* on the change-over from driving on the left to driving on the right, I felt I should raise a few points on some of the very important issues raised in it.

Some of the reasons given for the change-over to driving on the right were "conformity with International Practice" and "facilitation of movement in West Africa", considering that Ghana is the only West African country still driving on the left. This is where I find some of the rules governing our change-over from left to right hand driving a bit disturbing. For example, what a motorist must do at a roundabout is not clearly defined, and it appears as if what we are expected to do would be at variance with what is in practice in other countries which have had a longer experience in driving on the right.

The new highway code only indicates which direction one must follow when one gets to a roundabout. It does not say who must give way to whom at a roundabout. The practice at the moment, with driving on the left, is to give way to traffic ON OUR RIGHT. One perhaps expects logically that when we change over to driving on the right, we shall give way to traffic ON OUR LEFT. The highway code is strangely silent on this, and except for a casual reference to this in a documentary film recently shown on G.B.C. TV, the whole campaign on right hand driving has been silent on this important issue.

If our aim of standardising traffic regulations at an international level is meant seriously, then this is where our logical assumption of giving way to traffic on our left, raises several questions. The fact is that in most countries where driving is done on the right — countries like Senegal, Australia, France and Ivory Coast — even though traffic moves on the right, one is still expected to GIVE WAY TO TRAFFIC ON THE RIGHT. This may beat logic, but this is ACTUALLY what happens in the countries referred to. In these countries, all traffic on one's right has absolute right of way. The practice is even carried to the extent that in a city like Dakar, when a car is on a major road and another car is coming out from a minor road to join the major road, or even from the "drive-in" of a house, provided the car is on your right, you have to give it the right of way even though you are on the major road. The only exception to this is in cases where the area of intersection of the major and minor roads is clearly marked with white crossed lines. In effect, in these countries, "RIGHT IS ABSOLUTELY ALWAYS RIGHT".

These rules which would appear to us as illogical in view of our present driving practices, have been success-



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Going to great lengths to please

fully overcome in some other countries such as Germany where they drive on the right, by virtual elimination of the roundabout and the extensive use of traffic lights in all the major cities.

If we wish to conform with so-called international standards, then we either have to think seriously of eliminating the roundabout altogether, or seriously consider throwing logic away and giving way to traffic on our right at roundabouts, as is being done in many of the countries we now wish to emulate.

Chemistry Department
Legon

I. Addae-Mensah

The Cape Coast-Sekondi Road

SIR — I hope that anyone who has driven on the Cape Coast-Sekondi road within the last few weeks will agree with me that it is an exasperating experience. From the Elmina Junction to the end of that portion of the road belonging to the Central Region, a distance of about 23 miles, there are 19 portions of the road which have been dug up for repairs, not counting minor irritations.

I certainly do appreciate the enthusiasm of the authorities responsible for the maintenance of this road, but have no respect whatsoever for their commonsense. Why is it that they chose the beginning of the rainy season for this particular exercise? And was it not possible for them to dig up a portion and repair it before moving on to another portion? And on the evidence of those who have been using the road regularly of late, there is no indication of urgency on the part of those working on this road. It is also difficult to know by what criterion those particular portions of the road were dug up for repairs because to many laymen's eyes those parts were not any much worse than those left untouched.

The case of this road is particularly irritating, but it is not entirely isolated. In many towns half-hearted repairs are being undertaken on roads which are far better than others which are so potholed as to constitute serious dangers to both vehicles and pedestrians, and yet the authorities pretend not to have noticed these hopelessly "unvehicleworthy" roads.

The overworked and underpaid taxpayer is being taken too much for granted in this country and too many tin-gods are becoming intolerably complacent and callously irresponsible. When people pay taxes they are not giving alms to some anonymous mendicant, they expect services in return, and the reasonable and rapid maintenance of roads is one of the legitimate expectations.

The authorities responsible for the proper maintenance of the Cape Coast-Sekondi road in question may be given a prize for misguided enthusiasm, but they have no right to expect even a consolation prize when any are being awarded for commonsense. They might, of course, win the first prize for idleness, but that is a different matter.

Dept. of Modern Languages
Legon

P. A. V. Ansah

Onward With the Revolution!

SIR — It was all there, in black and white. The Honourable Gentleman "refused a dish made of potato chips, salad, roasted chicken", and instead "asked for his plain 'tuo' and hot palm soup". This indeed was news. And as a footnote to the courage of countless Ghanaians who have turned away from so foreign a dish since the revolution, and a compliment to countless more who do not know what it is all about, this piece of news was considered important enough to merit Editorial comment. The warning is there for us all to heed. For these are the signs of the times.

But being normal human beings, some of us are bound to ask a few questions. Is salad really foreign? If you care to take a drive around Accra, you can see the very native-looking growers of salad leaves at work. One would think that the salad leaves must be bought and eaten to keep these hard working Ghanaians in employment. And since when did the chicken become a foreigner? It would appear that a 'chicken-leg' (boiled) on the farmer's table at Gyatokrom is native; but the same 'chicken leg' (roasted) could cross the revolutionary barrier to become foreign if served at the Ambassador Hotel. Can we therefore assume that even rice, which is used in preparing 'tuo' can be foreign in some other context? The capacity of the Ghanaian for adulation is unlimited. We would go to all lengths to please, even if in the process we will have to assume ridiculous postures. A couple of years ago, it was rural development. And we saw rural benefit in all types of government-sponsored development activity. Now, of course, it is SELF RELIANCE.

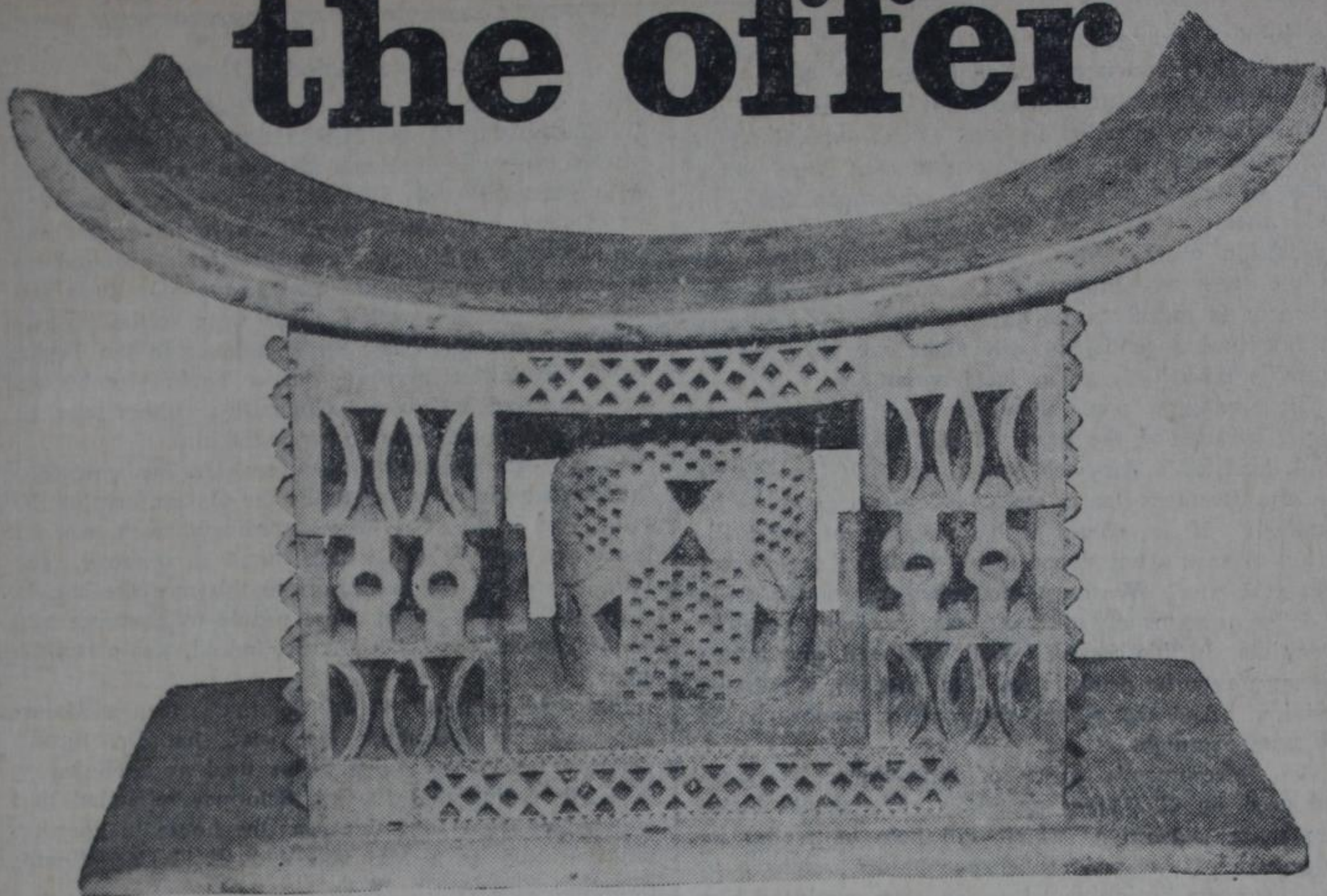
It could be that the Honourable Gentleman, on that day, had a strong urge to enjoy a dish of "plain 'tuo' and hot palm soup" and preferred it to potatoes and chicken. We all have to make a decision like that at one time or the other, and I do not see how a decision either way should deserve national recognition or condemnation. In fact, we may unwittingly have established the basis for embarrassment: from now on, our honourable gentlemen should take note that food items like potato chips, salad and roasted chicken add up to a debasement of the revolutionary spirit. This surely, is ridiculous.

If I, Kofi Workman, after months of hard work, should decide to dine out for a change, and use my own hard-earned cedis to pay for a dish of potato chips, salad and roasted chicken, including of course the other condiments like cream, sauce, flower buds etc, etc; well if so, then what? Does that make me any less Ghanaian

than the next man who chooses to ask for garri and kotommire? I used to know a foreigner who quite often would get himself completely lost between the plate of fufu and groundnut soup before him and the sheer enjoyment of the dish. He is still the foreigner he has always been.

There is doubt if the 'potato chips, episode has made any revolutionary impact at all. To my mind any achievement by the publicity given to it is at best rather mundane. Those who relish the dish cannot be impressed by any such single act of public rejection; the majority of Ghanaians have trouble enough feeding themselves without having to worry about who eats or does not eat potato chips! If we are to nurture a cultural revolution, the press must seriously educate

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the public. Indulgence in trivialities signals a period of uncertainty and unrewarding brush with destiny.

Tea-drinking senior men sweating from heat? There is an obvious contradiction here. I am not quite sure one could find the type of 'senior men' who prefer coffee or tea at 2 p.m. in office conditions that will make them 'sweat from heat! But this picturesque description of the ridiculous Ghanaian is thrown in all the same to complete the picture of derision the comment is meant to portray. I can only hope that all honourable gentlemen will make sure that tea or coffee is taken only under ideal conditions.

The timing, 2 p.m., shows that coffee drinking is wrong because of the heat. Would it be all right to drink iced tea under such conditions? Or could it be that the beverages (tea or coffee) being foreign are to be shunned? If so, would it be evidence of self-realization to have a hot 'cocoa drink' while we sweat from heat at 2 p.m.? We must remember that the drinking of coffee or tea or any other beverage is a habit acquired over time. In this regard, I Kofi Workman, give notice that my favourite drink is tea. Not just tea, it must be Twinning. And the potato chips affair cannot change my taste overnight.

The Government's policy of self-reliance has been embraced by Ghanaians generally. We should therefore make suggestions which will help us realise its objectives. If we wish to change habits, we have to start from the beginning. I am sure we would all like Ghanaians to drink products from our cocoa rather than tea or coffee. We should work towards the future, and the best way to achieve this is for the Cocoa Marketing Board to promote the formation of the habit in the younger generation. Cocoa drinks should be freely given out to children in the primary and preparatory schools, instead of milk. If this basis is formed for a while and the habit is set, parents will be forced to buy cocoa products for their children, and we shall have solved tomorrow's problem today. The 'Senior man' who prefers tea buys his own. Leave him, he may not have too much time on his hands to make much difference.

If we must stop eating potato chips, the best thing to do is to stop its importation. It is wrong to allow potatoes and other foreign foods to be imported and sold and at the same time consider their consumption to be unpatriotic. Ban the importation or cultivation of potatoes, salad leaves, cauliflower, runner beans, and all such other foreign items which are known to have an anti-revolutionary effect on Ghanaians who show preference for them. This indeed would be the final act. The revolutionary signet to ensure that we all remain perpetually and truly Ghanaian.

The self-reliance concept is an ideology; it holds promise for the future; and for the present, it emphasises the pleasure of being Ghanaian — rather like the lovely young lady in your arms. If you get carried away by hopes for the future and forget the present, you become her slave. If on the other hand, you live too much in the excitement of the present and insist prematurely on enjoying all of her pleasures, you are in your excitement likely to strangle her. Either way, nobody gains.

Let us learn to lose our 'foreign' habits, by all means; but please let us keep our heads.

Ghana Commercial Bank
Valuation Department
Liberty House, Accra

Y. Amefia Opoku

Dr. Busia's Odorkor House

SIR — After the overthrow of the Busia regime on the 13th January, 1972, the NRC set up two Assets Committees to probe the assets of some specific members of the ousted regime. The rationale behind the setting up of these committees was to ascertain whether any member or members of the Busia regime acquired his or their assets through unlawful means. Dr Busia was among the persons whose assets were to be probed. Unfortunately, Dr. Busia wrote a letter to the Taylor Assets Committee informing Justice Taylor that he was not appearing before the Committee neither was he recommending anybody to represent him.

In my own estimation, therefore, Dr. Busia justified the confiscation of his assets by the Government of the NRC, and if the NRC had accordingly taken over all his assets, nobody would have raised an eyebrow. The NRC, however, did not resort to this measure but, in "fairness" to Dr. Busia, chose people to represent him at the Committee. This gesture, indeed, was a healthy sign.

Strangely enough, Lt.-Col. Selormey (then a Major) announced in December last year that Dr. Busia's Odorkor house was going to be used as a clinic. It is worth noting that Lt.-Col. Selormey reiterated that with effect from June this year the house in question will be used as a Maternal and Child Care Centre (*Graphic* 23rd April, 1974).

I humbly submit that it is, to say the least, improper for Lt.-Col. Selormey to insist that Dr. Busia's house should be used as a clinic. This is because the very fact that the NRC allowed the Taylor Assets Committee to probe the assets of Dr. Busia means that it has given up its right to confiscate any property of Dr. Busia until such time as the Committee will come out with a report on Dr. Busia's assets. It is my personal opinion, as a layman, that the Government can confiscate the property of any person whose assets were probed **only** on the strength of the report of the Committee that probed that person's assets. And since the report of the Taylor Assets Committee had not been published in December 1973, Lt.-Col. Selormey committed a blunder (if not a contempt of the Assets Committee) by hastily confiscating the house in question. The seriousness of this blunder can be well imagined if one considers the possibility that Justice Taylor might have found that Dr. Busia acquired his Odorkor house through lawful means and has, therefore, recommended that it should be given back to him!

To avoid any unpleasantness to both the Government and Dr. Busia, I humbly suggest to Lt.-Col. Selormey to "let sleeping dogs lie" until the contents of Justice Taylor's Report are made public. Upon the strength of the Report and its acceptance by the Government, Lt.-Col. Selormey will be well disposed to take any action which will be in the interest of fairplay.

I earnestly entertain the hope that the NRC will give this suggestion the attention it deserves and put things right, because as it stands, Lt.-Col. Selormey's intended line of action will set a bad precedent in the sense that present and future politicians (whether in uniform or not) cannot be sure when and how their assets will be arbitrarily confiscated, the report of an Assets Committee notwithstanding.

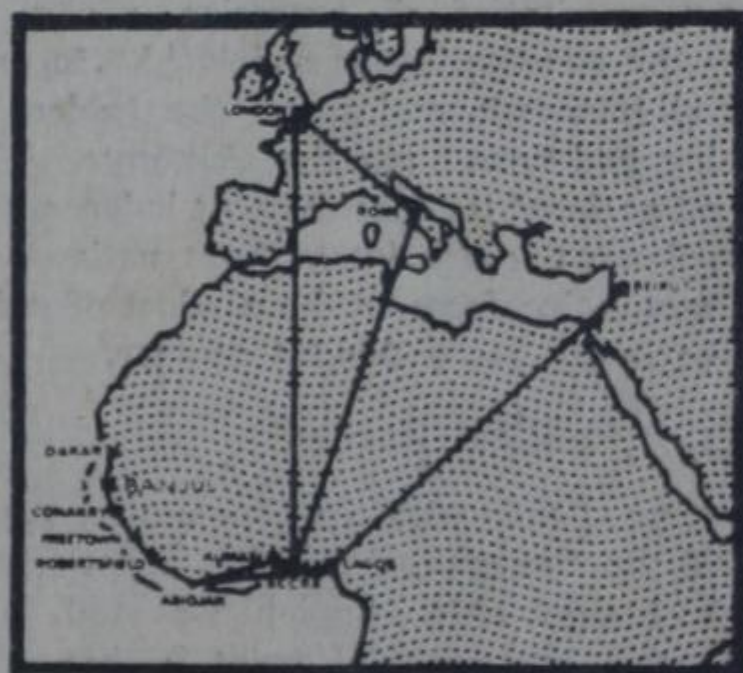
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Matters Arising

Joe Appiah's Future Constitution

By
Kwame Arhin

IN his third lecture in the 1974 Series of the J. B. Danquah Memorial Lectures, Mr. Joe Appiah asked Ghanaians to join him in debating his outlines of a future Constitution for Ghana. I wish to offer a few remarks on his proposals, not as a student of comparative political institutions but as one of Ghanaian society. His proposals derive from his diagnosis of the failure of our past Constitutions. I, therefore, first discuss that diagnosis and then the proposals.

According to Mr. Appiah, the military takeovers of government in 1966 and 1972 were marks of the failure of the 1960 and 1969 republican constitutions. The coups occurred because our rulers had failed to operate in a desirable way the British-style constitution that we had adopted. That constitution was doomed to failure from the start because the framers had imposed upon us a disembodied constitution, a mere form without the collective social experience with which to operate it. It was, then, hardly surprising, that, in both the First and Second Republics, parliament turned out to be mockeries of the real thing. Our rulers ignored the unwritten conventions of British parliamentary life; for example, to pursue their inordinate lust for money and power, they elevated their parliamentary majorities into repositories of sovereign power and wisdom. Even the constitution was violated. In order to attain the all-important majorities, the leaders resorted to bribing and corrupting the electorate. They forgot the urgent national tasks of the post-independence period. In parliament, party interest not national interest was the motivating force in the conduct of public business and the result was a divided country.

Political Parties

I am not concerned here with the comparative merits and demerits of the Convention People's and Progress Parties, though I think Mr. Appiah was unfair to the Progress Party. The essential point is that, I do not agree with Mr. Appiah's diagnosis. Our Constitutional failure was not due to the failure of the constitution makers to take into account our traditional experience and institutions, or the failure of our erstwhile rulers to understand the constitution. The makers of the First Constitution largely rejected the past because they recognized the passage of time and its corrosive influences both on the setting and content of traditional experience. They knew that beside changes in the economies, settlement patterns, social institutions, the depth and range of experience—resulting from education and increasing social mobility—of the various peoples of this country, the supreme change was the fact of the state of Ghana itself. The main problem was how to subject the centrifugal forces inherent in village or tribal 'democracies' to the demands of the unfolding state-nation. Clearly political parties were the answer: political parties with ideologies could wean villagers and 'tribesmen' from their parochial affiliations and all allegiances and give them a national consciousness and promote the process of national integration.

It was not a question of what sort of institutions. It was one of what the rulers and their opponents wanted to have and to do and of the extent to which Ghanaians as a whole were prepared to permit them to go. There was partisanship not because it was desirable in itself but because it was the surest way in which one could share in the wealth and join in the government of the country. Both are legitimate desires.

The sin of the Convention People's Party was that they turned the state into a predatory one: it was clear to all adults not only that the Party stalwarts suffered less than non-Party men the hardships consequent upon Ghana's deteriorating economy; but also that some of the party leaders were getting richer than they were actually worth. And tinkering with the Constitution was closely related to the predatory character of the state. One could not plunder the assets of the state with peace of mind if one allowed parliamentary opponents to ask needling questions.

I am suggesting that the First Republic fell because there was a disproportionate distribution of Ghana's dwindling resources among the various sections of Ghanaians, and because of the corresponding distortion in the allocation of power among those sections. Whatever General Kotoka and his fellow coup-makers would say, I believe they made their coup because they disapproved of the increasing inequality in the distribution of wealth, among Party and non-party men, and because of the Constitutional changes by which the Party sought to buttress that inequality.

Father of the Nation

The second coup occurred for much the same reason. It was becoming increasingly clear that whatever our economic difficulties in the two years of the Second Republic, the Progress Party leaders were having it much better than others, and it could also be said that infringements of the Constitution were partly the beginning of attempts to provide constitutional cushions for the economic self-aggrandizement of those who were lucky to be in the front-ranks of the Progress Party. The Second Coup appears to me to have been an attempt to halt the development of a full-blown state-sponsored bourgeoisie.

It is, then a mistake to blame yesterday's constitutional failures on either foreign constitutional forms or on excessive partisanship.

Upon the background of his diagnosis, Mr. Appiah then outlines his future constitution. His main concerns are to avoid party politics or partisanship, and to get into power a 'Father of the Nation' who would somehow avoid the mistakes of the erstwhile party leaders.

His major premise is 'the well-laid proposition that, as a people, we have certain time-honoured traditions and institutions by which, our sires of old regulated their lives long before the establishment of the White-man's hegemony in these parts'. With the chief as a model, he wants a popularly elected president who would be Father of the Nation. The President would select his own Cabinet, and appoint his own principal secretaries. He believes that such a president would be a non-partisan one. To ensure this, there should be restricted campaigning and the state itself would bear the cost of propaganda for the candidate. A candidate of this sort, elected with the minimum of organized support, or of a party (in the normal sense of the term) would be enabled to prosecute the development of 'the

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ideology of Patriotic Nationalism". In order to prevent future coups d'état, we should bring into the councils of state representatives of the professional and vocational bodies or groups and of the traditional rulers in this country.

As a check on the activities of the government, legislation should be subject to approval or rejection by regional bodies, constituted by representatives of all sections of the people.

In order to ensure discipline in the public services, personnel from the Armed Forces should be posted in the offices to exercise surveillance on public servants. To ensure justice for the people, we should have an ombudsman and there should be an independent judiciary which would interpret the Constitution in the case of disputes. Human Rights as contained in the United Nations Charter should be guaranteed.

Mr. Appiah sees a problem in how to establish local, district and municipal councils since straight elections would promote partisanship which has hitherto led to 'double-crossing and corrupt practices'. For local and district councils his solution is therefore that 'the whole village or group of villages' should assemble in the 'village square' and the eligible voters file behind 'the man of their heart openly'.

He ends by disagreeing with the advocates of what he calls the whiteman's "Parliamentary Democracy" who think we should go on trying it, and reminds those advocates that the leopard can never change its spots; "common experience teaches that borrowed cloths, unless trimmed and adapted to suit the physical features of the new wearer, can never sit well on him".

Partisan Politics

I doubt that Mr. Appiah's constitution would attain either his own modest aim of eliminating 'partisanship' or the more desirable objective of ensuring economic justice among the people of Ghana, which alone should go a long way towards ensuring stability in our public institutions. One cannot avoid partisanship simply by formally abolishing parties. It is clear that even today there is partisanship; that the Ghana Army constitutes a 'party' of sorts so that a criticism of government activities is construed into a general dislike of 'the soldiers'. One need not mention those who genuinely believe that army rule *per se* is good.

The formal abolition of parties will engender 'conspiratorial dens and caucuses'. His envisaged non-party President will be surrounded by informal networks of relations, cronies and hangers-on who would expect to be rewarded with wealth, prestige and influence, without public accountability. The President's cabinet, principal secretaries and their supporting staff would soon turn into partisans, united not only on the basis of expectedly coherent set of ideas of how society is to be run but also on how to lengthen their rule.

Mr. Appiah is mistaken if he believes that the mere manner of election will in itself produce a 'Father of the Nation's sort of politician. Statesmen of the kind are not produced by elections. It is a little bestowed by a grateful people upon a man who, in spite of human frailty, of temptations and the corruptibility of political power and the pressures of partisanship, yet manages to bestow a lasting benefit such as unity upon his countrymen.

As to 'patriotic nationalism', one cannot infuse it into people by exhortation. People become patriotic to the extent that they do not feel that the country and its wealth are, as it were, in the pockets of a few; that they share equitably in its wealth; that they have in practice, not just in theory, adequate legal protection; and that they feel they can fulfil themselves or satisfy their legitimate ambitions in their own country. This is what all good Constitutions seek to promise those who live under them: when these 'goods' are secured in practice, patriotism develops. One could theorize on present-day bribery and corruption, hoarding and smuggling in Ghana on this basis.

The issue of civil service which Mr. Appiah raises is a tricky one and deserves careful handling. As presently constituted, it has faults. But it certainly still guarantees to us a certain measure of stability in public activity in an area and period of political flux. I think one way to avoid its inconveniences is to have appointive political super-principal secretaries.

Mr. Appiah is mistaken about the nature of traditional politics. There were factions even though the areas of disagreement were rather narrow. There were divisions over the election of chiefs: in the more complex politics, factional activity in chieftaincy disputes led sometimes to shooting civil wars.

In any case, village politics today are as complex as you would find them anywhere else. And one cannot avoid village politics simply by eliminating the ballot box. Whether one allows formal parties or not, open campaigning or not, there will be politicking. I repeat, to banish open politics is to sow the seeds of dangerous conspiracies.

Lastly it would be extremely dangerous to institute regional bodies as checks on government. As has already been pointed out by a commentator, that way lies fragmentation of the country at the worst and a paralysis of central government at the best.

Let us have an executive presidency if we want one. But politics and partisanship there will always be. We can only hope and watch out for leaders whose sole concern will be not to secure and lengthen their tenure of office. (In Ghana power has been and will remain 'sweet'. Political and even administrative power often enables one to make material provision for oneself for the present and for the future; to gratify personal whims and fancies; to settle personal scores; to become a 'great' man overnight with scores of newly-found admirers; one even can attain temporary infallibility through power. I find it strange that some people should declaim so loudly against Ghanaians who seek power). We must watch out for those leaders for whom the public good will in theory and fact be the supreme law. If one dislikes politics and partisanship, the only thing to do, if one would be allowed, is impose a dictatorship. Or else the competition for power should be left open, as one of the salient features of a living not 'dead or captive society.

To sum up: the basis of a stable society is the feeling among all sections of the population that they are getting a fair deal in the share of the country's resources. A constitution must guarantee this in theory, and in practice allow peaceful competition to secure it, in order to find acceptance and minimize conflict. We certainly cannot do this simply by electing a nominal 'Father of the Nation'. He will turn out a 'will-o-the-wisp'.

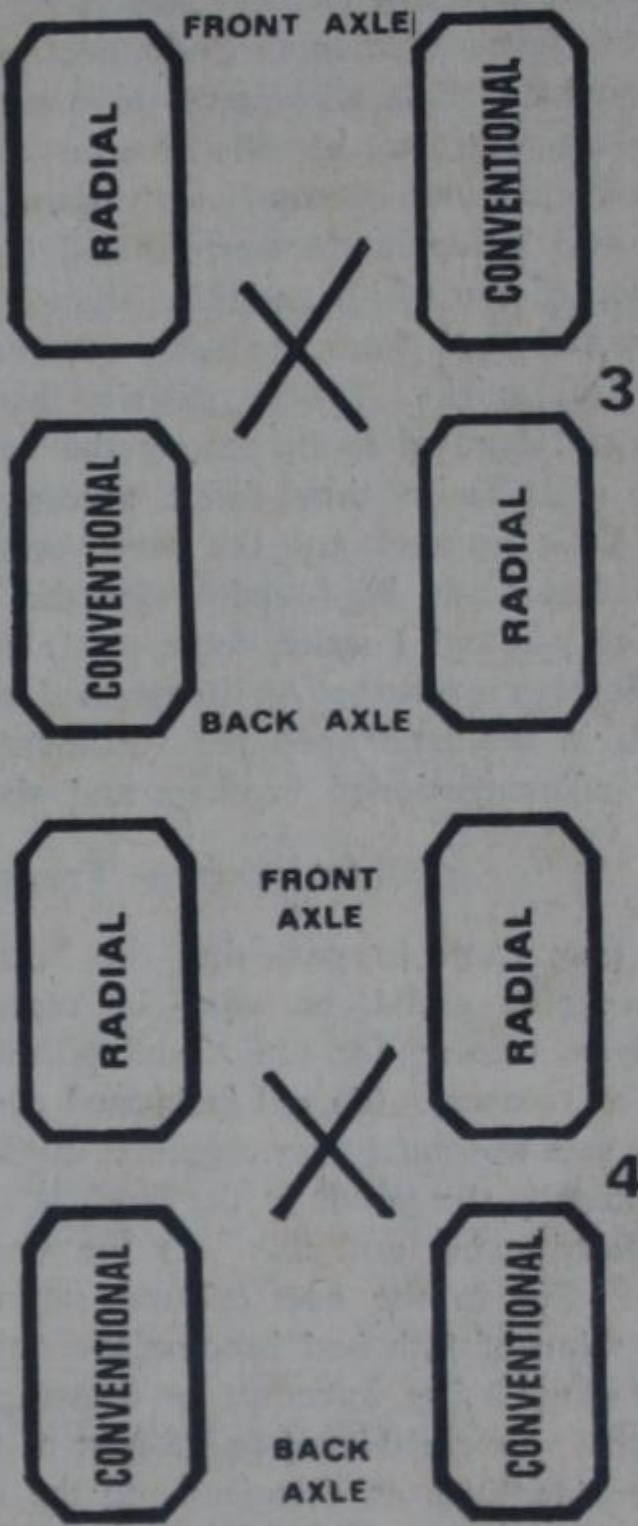
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Miscellaneous

AND IT CAME TO PASS ...

Epistle No. 8

By
Santrofi

AND it came to pass in those days that another argument arose in the empire concerning the apparel that the youth might be permitted to don. For it had been noticed by certain citizens that there was the danger of a veritable vestimental alienation among the youth. They were clad in all manner of raiments some of which were adjudged to be offensive to pious or even just decent eyes and subversive of morality. In effect the lads and lasses in the empire had come under the influence of their kith and kin beyond the seas who had journeyed back home to seek communication with the ancestral spirits. These pilgrim brothers and sisters were not reputed to be among the most opulent in the land wherein they dwelt across the seas, and so was their apparel not the most esthetically appealing ones that could be found under the sun. But in this empire whereof I write, there was a natural fascination for foreign consumption items, and so it was that the youth in the land aped the vestimental mannerisms of their aforementioned brothers and sisters.

Pillow Cases as Trousers

It thus came to pass that the fashionable youth in the empire could be seen in ragged multicoloured garments passing for tunics and pillow cases masquerading as trousers. To old fashioned eyes such as I have, there was absolutely no elegance in them, and this was accepted by the youth in the land, but they were adjudged fashionable and this was the important point for them. For in the new cultural setting, the deliberate cultivation of filth had become the norm for those *a la mode*, and being unkempt in dressing and uncouth in manners was considered to be part of the revolt against conventionalism, conformism and the old morality. To some of the elders and even some of the youth in the empire who believed that the apparel oft doth betray the man, this perversion in dressing had to be legislated out of existence by the imperial authorities, for they saw in it some evidence of degeneration. Others, even those who did find the latest fashions outrageously unesthetic, considered it supremely foolish that the imperial authorities should be called upon to pontificate on what the citizens might be clad in. For, they did argue, if the emperor should be given the right to legislate on clothing, what would prevent him from legislating on that wherewith the citizens might nourish themselves. And the debate raged on for many a week, but the imperial authorities displayed commendable maturity by taking no notice at all of the frivolous noises, believing that the empire was beset with problems of much greater moment than vestimental proprieties.

And problems there certainly were in the empire. For it came to pass that telephone communications, for example, were gradually grinding to a halt, and there was a real danger of several communities, not excluding the metropolitan academy, becoming marooned and cut off from what there remained of civilization in the empire. But even at this juncture, as was the revered

custom in the empire, another major paradox was created. For, while people within the boundaries of the empire had difficulty in communicating telephonically, it was solemnly proclaimed that telephonic relations of a highly sophisticated nature were going to be established with an adjacent empire to the north. And after all what did it matter if the citizens in the empire could not communicate with one another, provided they could establish links with their brothers and cousins outside the empire? There were not many citizens in the land that could comprehend this anomaly, but of course emperors are known to move in mysterious ways so that they can better perform their wonders, creating paradoxes and resolving other contradictions.

For it came to pass that in those days, a major contradiction was resolved, or so it was made to appear. As I have had occasion to discourse on in preceding epistles, the empire had the custom of commemorating the occasion whereon the first emperor was "disappeared" from the imperial scene. At the same time the said first emperor had been rehabilitated after his demise and preparations were in progress to canonise him. It did transpire, however, that the commando leader responsible for the political liquidation of the first emperor had himself been despatched to the nether world by a bunch of impetuous legionaries. It did happen that both the commando leader and the fallen first emperor had been called to their respective ancestors in the same month, though in different years. In this particular year whereof I write, it did happen, or it was so contrived, that the commemoration of the seventh anniversary of the demise of the commando leader coincided with the second anniversary of the passing away of the first emperor. Coincidence or contrivance, it came to pass that the double commemoration provided an opportunity for one of the cleverest men in the empire to demonstrate that there was really no contradiction in treating both fallen men as national heroes since their respective contributions to the life of the empire had been complementary to each other. This clever man expatiated on the matter by arguing that while the emperor concentrated on material development to the exclusion of individual liberty, the commando leader undertook his dawn attack to restore individual liberty, even if he had no opportunity of providing material development. He concluded therefore that both men had made excellent contributions to the total welfare of the citizens in the empire, for which reason they both deserved to be honoured. Whereupon it was agreed by all that, allowances made for a certain amount of equivocation and sophistry, the contradiction had almost been resolved and the mighty opposites had been posthumously reconciled.

And it did come to pass in those self-same days that there was a general clean-up campaign in the empire. This exercise did not only cover the type of apparel the youth might be clad in, as aforementioned, but there was a general campaign to rid the streets of elements that tended to subvert morals with especial reference to chastity. In effect, there was in the land an impressive array of lasses, not all winsome in their looks, who earned a living by seeking carnal communion with willing clients for financial consideration. As an acquaintance of mine was wont to remark, these daughters of Eve behaved almost exactly like professors of literature, doing for monetary consideration what others did for mere pleasure. In the recent past some

of these had been arrested and given instant correction through drilling as was then the custom in certain parts of the empire, but in the intensified stage of the campaign, the culprits and suspects were transferred before tribunals where, on being convicted of plotting to take the chastity of certain male citizens by storm, fines were imposed on them. The fines would have been deemed quite heavy in normal times, but having regard to the new world-wide pest of inflation, a fine of 5000 drachmas was deemed reasonable in those hard times.

As usual, another debate was started in the empire as to the wisdom in imposing such heavy fines on these mercenaries of Eros. Some argued that such fines could only provoke the wenches into drinking deeper at the fountain of Venus to find the wherewithal to pay the fines, and since they had no other skills but these native ones, the problem, if it really was one, would become more accentuated. Others even took a more radical or liberal view and truly wondered whether the fact of those wenches earning a living through the exploitation of that particular talent constituted such a problem as to engage the attention of the jurisprudential authorities. True, there was a whole arsenal of laws in the land making what was defined as loitering or soliciting a punishable offence, but these radical liberals or liberal radicals were only questioning the wisdom behind the laws. For, it was argued, citizens beyond a certain age should be left free to hawk whatever wares they had, God-made or man-made, without harassment, provided they did not coerce potential clients into purchasing them through indecent assault or what was vulgarly known as rape. Before I departed from the empire, I learnt with some relief that the imperial authorities had set up a committee of sociologists and psychologists to look into the whole problem with a view to finding out if these meretricious lasses could be salvaged and pressed into productive services of the empire through the inculcation of alternative and less controversial skills. Whereupon it was agreed that the authorities had done well.

Nor was this question of libidinous lasses flouting all rules of continence the only one that solicited the attention of the legal division of the Imperial Services. There were many other problems of graver proportions. For example, in their efforts to ensure that stability in the land was not disrupted or that citizens were not harassed by thieves, robbers and highway-men, or that there were no dealings in contraband goods across the empire's frontiers, or even that there was no excessive accumulation of consumable goods in individual hands, laws had been passed imposing heavy sentences on these offences, including the forfeiture of life. Now it was agreed by all that some of the offences were so subversive of good government as to be severely punished with the ultimate sanction of confiscating the culprit's life. But so also was it agreed upon by all that some of the offences were too minor to attract the savage sentences imposed by the new dispensation. What further puzzled some of the citizens was that the decision as to the tribunal before which an offender in a particular matter would be charged was left to the discretion of the Keeper of the Imperial Seals. And the wonderment of it all was that certain citizens who had made personal use of vast resources appertaining to the empire were put before ordinary tribunals where their life was never in jeopardy, while on the other hand, other citizens who had deprived the empire of

much lesser resources were transferred to specialised tribunals where in case of guilt their physical survival thereafter depended solely on the magnanimity of the emperor. The whole situation did appear absurd and preposterous, but great consolation was reposed in the fact that the emperor was a most benevolent man.

For it had come to pass that many a man whose life was to have been forfeited to the empire had been most graciously reprieved by the magnanimity of the emperor. Other people whose life had been forfeited more by the stringency of the new laws than by the gravity of offences committed had been similarly spared. It therefore became a subject of another public intellectual disputation whether the laws were not too draconian with respect to certain offences contained in the schedule. For, argued many, if people were to be mandatorily condemned to death only to be reprieved later because the offences were not grave enough, what was the point in not amending the laws. The disputation went on for many and many a month, and the sages concluded that the retention of the law in all its particulars was necessary, since it had the advantage of providing the emperor with opportunities for making gestures of clemency. Whereupon it was concurred that the law had definite political advantages and should be retained, but it was by no means certain that the final word on the matter had been heard.

While all these things were going on, the emperor, who had been meanwhile proven to be a true-born of the empire, strode upon the land in his Olympian glory and looked upon his work and found, as usual, that his work was good.

For The Record

Tuesday, May 7

Enskinment Nullified

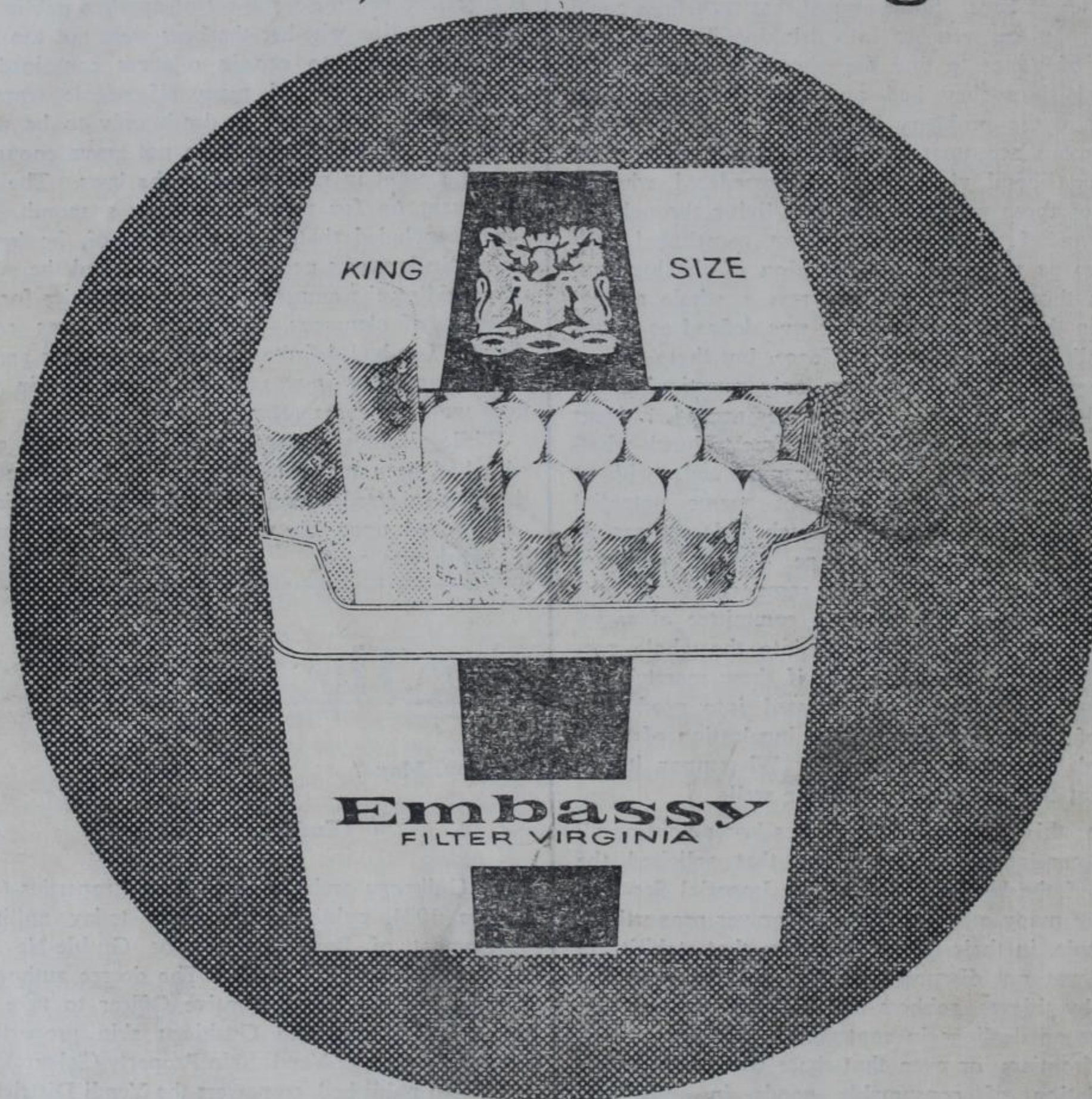
THE Gulkpegu and Gushiegu Skin Properties (Seizure) Decree 1974, published in Accra today nullified the enskinment of Bawa Yakubu as Gushie-Na and of Alhassan Idi as Gulkpe-Na. The decree authorises the Tamale District Administrative Officer to take possession of Gulkpegu and Gushiegu skin properties. A similar decree, the Yendi Skin Property (Seizure) Decree, 1974, also published, empowers the Yendi District Administrative Officer to take possession of the Yendi Skin property from Mahamadu Abdulai or whosoever may for the time being be in possession of it. The decrees state that any person who shall obstruct the district administrative officers from carrying out these functions shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to imprisonment not exceeding two years, without the option of a fine.

Wednesday, May 8

Ghana Recognizes Cambodia Govt

THE Government of Ghana has formally recognized the Government of the National United Front of Cambodia led by Prince Narodom Sihanouk, an official announcement said in Accra today.

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