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SUPPLEMENT:

LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT.
—S. N. WOODE

EDITORIAL

THE DIALOGUE ON DIALOGUE

IN his statement (11th of December) to the National Assembly on the possibilities of dialogue as one way of ending apartheid, the Prime Minister is reported to have said:

I must emphasize again that the sort of dialogue we advocate is one directed towards securing the total abolition of the theories and practices of apartheid. There can be no question of a dialogue calculated to maintain the status quo in Southern Africa or to the acceptance of apartheid in any shape or form.

That, really, is the crux of all the talk about dialogue with South Africa on the question of apartheid. Politicians in power are not regarded as academics who, ideally, delight in floating abstruse ideas about this and that which may be of no immediate practical concern to their fellow men. Politicians deal with possibilities and the test of the soundness of any policy is its chances of success and the possible repercussions of that success. The debate on dialogue with South Africa, healthily engendered by the Prime Minister's overseas remarks, should be concerned with whether or not it is likely to succeed in eliminating apartheid.

Any sensible estimate of the chances of dialogue in securing the end of apartheid must be based on a good knowledge of the philosophical and socio-economic foundations of that doctrine; on a knowledge of the history of the Black, Coloured and 'liberal' White resistance movement which, as the Prime Minister himself pointed out, has embraced attempts at 'dialogue', in various forms, with the South African authorities; and on a knowledge of the content of the relations of the South African government with the Black African countries which have started doing business with it. It is difficult to see how one can talk meaningfully about dialogue as a viable policy without these kinds of knowledge. For this reason, and as a contribution towards the debate, the **Observer** plans a survey for our next issue on the questions posed above.

But even now certain points, arising out of the statement

MERRY X'MAS TO ALL OUR READERS

in the National Assembly, need clarification. The first relates to whether or not the statement was the sum of the P.M.'s individual reflections on the matter or it was the cabinet's collective view. The Prime Minister is reported to have told the National Assembly that he wished to take the opportunity 'to share my thoughts on the apartheid issue and my reason for suggesting that new approaches including dialogue in addition to whatever weapons that have so far been employed against apartheid should be explored'. But then, later in the statement, he also said:

My government is of the view that another weapon which could be effectively used is that of dialogue either with the South African government itself, or with moderate forces, black and white, within South Africa.

Did the Prime Minister mean that the 'thoughts' behind, and the 'reasons' adduced for, the policy of dialogue were his own, but that the whole cabinet had been persuaded to accept them? And are we, then, to expect no more contradictory statements from members of the government on the matter?

Secondly, the Prime Minister mentioned that the government would seek 'dialogue either with the South African government itself, or with moderate forces, black and white, within South Africa'. Is one to understand that there would be no dialogue with what may be called the 'militant' forces in South Africa? But this would be necessary if for no other purpose than to persuade them to abandon what the P.M. considers to be the futile, yet cruel, policy of sending a few people across the border to slaughter.

Thirdly, where is the dialogue with the 'moderate forces' to be held? It is common knowledge that even those 'moderately' opposed to apartheid—and 'moderate' apparently refers to the method of opposition to, and not to the degree of hatred for, apartheid—are normally prevented from leaving the country and that even tea parties that seem likely to discuss apartheid from its victims point of view are banned.

It may well be that the Prime Minister envisages some sort of agreement with the South African authorities which will secure permission for representatives of the 'moderate forces' to fly in and out of the country to engage in dialogues—perhaps participate in conferences—with other opponents of apartheid on the ways and means of peacefully ending apartheid. Or maybe those representatives of the 'moderate forces' will be allowed to pay frequent visits to the embassies of the African countries—which will be

established in Pretoria as a matter of course if and once the South Africa authorities accept the policy of dialogue—to talk about non-violent ways of ending apartheid.

Questions of this sort must suggest others about just what the dialogue both with the South African authorities and the moderate forces is to be about. Will the South African authorities now concede that apartheid is no more an internal affair and, therefore, open to international discussion?

It is difficult, indeed, to see how the dialogue trick is going to be pulled off unless the South African authorities fulfil the major condition the Prime Minister laid down for its success. This is that they accept the African advocates of dialogue as their equals. But this would mean the abandonment of the basis of apartheid and would herald the authorities' willingness to pull down the whole structure of institutionalized apartheid. In that case our intervention would cease to be called for: there are certainly enough talkers in the South African prisons to do all the talking that would then become necessary. The crucial point is whether or not there has so far been any sign, apart from the willingness of the South African authorities to put some African countries on the dole, that they are prepared to abandon the basis and the institutions of apartheid. There has surely been none.

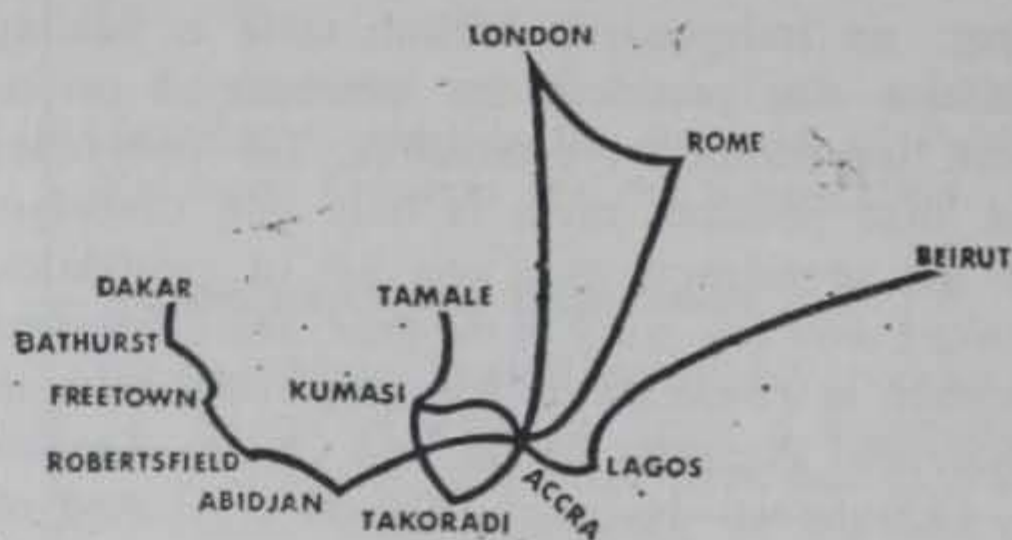
Hence even though one may understand the Prime Minister's weighty reasons for despairing of the armed fight against South Africa, one finds it difficult to accept the dialogue policy as a serious alternative. And as others have pointed out, talk about dialogue splits the African ranks and comforts the common enemy. One wishes that the matter had been mooted and discussed first behind the closed doors of an O.A.U. meeting.

For Ghana, the dialogue debate has been a useful exercise. If only the attention given to it would be brought to bear on domestic issues, we really should be getting some where. It does seem that the period of government by oracles is over.

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Politics

ONE-PARTY STATES AND THE ROLE OF OPPOSITION IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA

By
K. A. B. Jones-Quartey

FOR the last twelve months or more, announcement after announcement from the "Third World" has told the rest of the world the same thing: an independent African state is holding elections—for president, for members of parliament, for municipal councillors, for this office and that position; there is only one candidate for the presidency, only one list of candidates, *in short only one party in the field*. Thus President Senghor is re-elected to his umpteenth term in office; and President Banda, and Obote—Kenyatta—Houphouet—Nyerere—Mobutu . . . And of course their parties are returned, to continue ten, fifteen, twenty years in office, *without opposition*.

'Re-electing' One party Presidents

This phenomenon is characteristic of, but not exclusive to the third-world countries of Africa. In Asia, the Near East, the Arab world (considered as a cultural unit) and in South America, the underdeveloped states and the newly established independencies are persistently and everywhere "re-electing" one-party presidents, governments, municipal councils, and the rest of the monolithic paraphernalia. What does this phenomenon mean and emphasize? To try to answer that question and re-examine one of the foremost phenomena of our time is the purpose of this paper. It was first presented to a Department of History seminar at Legon in 1966. In the four years and more since then, the situation which the paper tried to analyse on that occasion has changed not at all, except, significantly, in Ghana. Therefore, only slight modifications have been made in the analysis that now follows.

The revolutionary leaders of contemporary Africa have, in the overwhelming majority, chosen one-party government as the only political way out of the initial handicaps of independent status. And they have rationalised their position by the following postulates, *inter alia*:

(a) Party political opposition, Westminster style, is unnecessary in emergent Africa, incompati-

ble with its traditions—its own sense of democracy—and unrelated to its realities;

(b) party political opposition is thus a foreign luxury Africa cannot afford, because

(c) it is politically and economically wasteful, and is less expensively provided for in the traditional process of harmonisation of interests within the "Council of Elders", or, in the modern sense, within the single party through "democratic centralism";

(d) opposition, worse than merely being wasteful, creates factionalism and separatism, where the urgency for political harmonisation and economic reorganisation—where, that is to say, the consolidation of the gains of the revolution — demands, instead, unity of purpose and of aim from all section of the polity;

(e) factionalism and separatism cannot even be expected to, and certainly do not necessarily, stop there, but often proceed to violence, internecine warfare, and defeat for the revolution; to balkanisation, neo-colonialism and the re-enthronement of western capitalist exploitation, with its resultant bourgeoization of an illegitimate, apesh African elite.

Though much of this argument can be and has been disproved, or at least challenged with varying degrees of success, the case of the revolutionary left in contemporary African politics—even as expressed in the extreme terms of subparagraph (e) above—is still not to be dismissed out of hand with some disdainful "democratic" gesture. There is a valid rationale for the political attitudes that occasion these postulates, though perhaps there is no theoretical or even factual justification for all of them. In any case we have the living reality with us of the persistence of one-party states in Africa and elsewhere, making nonsense of indignant and self-righteous democratic claims. We might as well compose ourselves, therefore, to further serious examination of the phenomenon and its ideological foundations.

David Apter's analysis (in "The Role of Political Opposition", in *Africa—The Dynamics of Change*, 1963, Passin and Jones-Quartey, editors), modified, is pertinent:

(a) Most new nations attain independence only after a prolonged period of struggle against the colonial rulers. During this struggle the nationalist leaders naturally mono-

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- deny that possibility of validity or potency;
- (b) the failure of federalism and multipartyism in Nigeria, say, and, on the other hand, the "success" so far of one-partyism in the Ivory Coast—these two differential cases would tend to suggest that at least all the answers are not yet in.

From this I would like to proceed to my major proposition, namely that there is still a case to be made out for my suspicion that *"Africa" has not yet discovered its most suitable political and economic system or systems*, and that the present condition of flux and upset is not one in which to *determine* that it should be this or that system and not another. A re-study of the social history of nations, the continuing re-study of revolutions and of the ideas of our contemporary revolutionaries — not omitting Franz Fanon and Julius Nyerere — is clearly a duty resting upon us.

Be precise. Take sides and stop hedging.

IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT IN GHANA

By

J. F. S. Hansen

THE struggle for a socially emancipated Ghana has yet to begin and when it does, it cannot overlook the hypocrisy of camouflaged vested interests in existing social inequalities and the natural right of the individual Ghanaian for social justice. It is bound to be a struggle between a neo-elitist, pseudo-patrician democracy which the typical Ghanaian phrase-monger euphemistically calls the "Welfare State" and a democracy of the common-man, a democracy of the dispossessed, the politically disinherited and the exploited.

For the Peoples' Popular Party (PPP) the concept of social justice presupposes the actual existence of continuing social inequalities and injustices in our society. Social justice, however, may mean different things to different people. For example, a conservative interpretation of social justice must necessarily differ from that of the socialist; for while the former is primarily interested in preserving the *status quo* of master-servant relationship the latter believes that society must be purposefully transformed in order to make the concept of the equality of man more meaningful.

In political affairs the notion of ideology is indispensable to the formulation of party political programmes. For it answers the all-important question: what *type* of society? A political party

has accordingly to determine its position not only in relation to strictly internal social and economic problems, but also to the prevailing economic and political issues beyond its borders. Declarations of ideology, therefore, far from being mere scholastic issues, involve the most explicit formulation of the mental plus the intellectual climate of the enquiring mind in search for solutions to specific political, economic and social problems.

At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, Malthus, for instance, attributed the poverty and misery of the rising industrial proletariat to an absence of "sexual discipline" and Ricardo, accepting the basic premises of Malthus, formulated the notorious "Iron Law of Wages", which held the proletariat entirely responsible for their poverty and misery. For, so it was argued, more wages for workers would merely encourage the production of more children which, in turn, would result in a fall in the "real" value of their wages.

Faced with a situation involving grinding poverty and increasing misery for the workers, the methodological approach of Malthus and Ricardo ignored the fact that there was something inherently pernicious with Laissez-faire capitalism. Instead, it accused the oppressed human element — (the workers), caught up, as it were, in the merciless vortex of capitalist exploitation — of lacking "moral self-control." Thus the classical economists failed to understand that social inequalities, including misery of the workers, was being more and more accentuated by the inherent contradictions of the capitalist system, a system of organised exploitation which equated man with machine.

The Welfare of Workers

Socialist thought is therefore indebted to the perspicacity of Karl Marx not only for debunking the ideological assumptions of the classical economists, but also for reversing their methodological postulates. In so doing Marx squarely attributed the misery and poverty of the industrial proletariat to the internal contradictions of capitalism which, was, and still is, concerned more with the volume of *profit* and less with the welfare of the Workers. It is clear, then, that the methodological approach of the classical economists to the crucial question of social inequalities was ideologically different from that of Karl Marx who argued that the whole complex of social inequalities as a social evil cannot be eliminated from society unless and until the means of production, distribution, marketing and exchange are in the full democratic control of a consciously organi-

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sed proletariat. Hence his famous clarion-call: "Workers of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to win." For all socialists this means a world of actual not hypothetical social justice, a world in which a conscious redistribution of the national wealth not only bridges the glaring gap between the rich and the poor, but also eliminates what the American economist, Veblen, has described as "conspicuous consumption."

For all socialists, the socialisation of the workers—i.e. arousing their consciousness as a class of exploited people for the purpose of organising them into a political force opposed to the exploitative voraciousness of the capitalist system and its ethical presumptions—is the only means of achieving social justice.

It is, therefore, clear that the struggle between "Capitalism" and "Socialism" for social justice in Ghana is bound to continue to be a topical, live and dominating issue precisely because for all socialists the ideology of "capitalism" and the ideology of "socialism" are mutually exclusive. Furthermore, since the validity of the theoretical basis of a party's socialist programme must, in the final analysis, determine its political activity, there is nothing pejorative in a party being committed to a theory of socialism it proposes to implement, at the appropriate time, with the full backing of popular mandate.

Large Measure of Agreement

In an article, in the (L.O. V/23), Dr. Asamoah confesses that the "Manifestoes issued by the Parties (i.e. PP, NAL, UNP, APRP) are "quite similar", and goes on to admit that this was "not an accident" "because for a number of reasons [not stated] there is a large measure of agreement about the ends of contemporary Ghanaian society and the means by which they can be achieved."

Although Dr. Asamoah hardly bothers to explain what he means by the phrase "quite similar" and a "large measure of agreement . . .", a distinction must be drawn between the strictly technical limits of Ghanaian society within a Ghana considered as a geographical fact, and the ethical goals of political activity in Ghana. If, therefore, by "ends", Dr. Asamoah means the "ethical goals" of genuine political activity in contemporary Ghanaian society, then he has a duty to explain what these goals are. It would therefore appear on the face of it that the tireless efforts of the opposition to duplicate and triplicate the PP into NAL, UNP, APRP etc., is hardly worth the declaratory effusiveness of the

leaders since the opposition, by its own account, is being presented to the public as ideologically emasculated and therefore all talk about opposition to the PP amounts to nothing but breezy political chicanery.

Dr. Asamoah further says that "indigenous exploitation has not yet taken the form that lends itself to Marxist analysis". But what does Dr. Asamoah mean by "indigenous exploitation"? Does he mean the "exploitation" of "indigenous" people? If, so, by whom? Or, does he mean by "indigenous exploitation", the exploitation of "indigenous" natural resources? If so, by whom? It is painfully clear that Dr. Asamoah's choice of words has not been a happy one. Dr Asamoah is, however, entitled to his own opinion even though his own analysis is unwittingly a vindication of the Marxist analysis.

How many more iniquities should "International Capitalism" perpetrate in Ghana in order to become susceptible to Marxist analysis? Any dispassionate student of the history of contemporary social development in Ghana cannot fail to observe that there is in Ghana a process of incipient social stratification, however inchoate. The overriding concern of socialist political activity, therefore, is to arrest this process in order to prevent it from fossilising.

Opposing 'International Capitalism'

According to Dr. Asamoah, "the main cause of exploitation in developing countries, including Ghana, is "International Capitalism". Every socialist is bound to agree with this diagnosis of the malaise plaguing Ghana, and indeed all developing countries. But it should be strongly emphasised that it is precisely for this reason, and in order to rid Ghana of all forms of capitalist exploitation, that the P.P.P., as a socialist party, is unalterably and implacably opposed to all manifestations of capitalism including "International Capitalism".

It is common knowledge that the P.P.P. was banned to eliminate dangerous rivalry in the 1969 General Elections on the specious ground that it was Nkrumah's party, a sub-conscious political Oedipus-Complex which is still haunting the minds of the guilty. That the P.P.P. is not dead today is a result of a relentless struggle to affirm the constitutional right of any political party to exist in Ghana. Furthermore, the commitment of the P.P.P. to socialism is a direct logical opposition to all other parties which are not socialist.

As a socialist party, the People's Popular Party

has no illusions whatsoever about the ethical goals of socialism, i.e., the collective endeavour of all sections of the community to establish and ensure a just society. Nor is the P.P.P. deceived by pious phrase-mongering. Naturally as a socialist party, the P.P.P.'s main pre-occupation is with the unethical basis and structure of our society which continue to create a vast complex of social inequalities. For the P.P.P., social inequalities in contemporary Ghana are **significant** enough facts which cannot render a party "insignificant" merely because it advocates their total elimination. But was the P.P.P. banned because it was "insignificant"? If so, then nothing could have demonstrated more clearly the political immaturity, illiteracy and obtuseness of the N.L.C.

Some beneficiaries of the present iniquitous social system in contemporary Ghana are understandably bound, out of sheer self-interest, to oppose socialism. Such people, however, should do so with less hypocrisy and with more sincerity. The most "traumatic" event in the Nkrumah era was not that socialism "failed", but that as a historical truth, socialism as an economic proposition was still-born. Otherwise, how, for example, could a genuine socialist economic policy have seen fit to purchase with the tax payers' money sub-marginal gold mines in Konongo while leaving intact and undisturbed, the International capitalist stronghold of the Ashanti Goldfield's Corporation on our main rich gold ore resources?

The 'Craze' of Nkrumah's Era

Independent observers of the West have also pointed out that the "craze" of the Nkrumah era for infrastructure (new roads, new ports, new facilities for general and technical education and the attempt to transform an otherwise Colonial Frontier Force into a genuine, but idle National Defence Force equipped with expensive modern weapons) ironically contributed largely to Nkrumah's own downfall. Oddly enough it was the beneficiaries of the new elitist stratum of Nkrumah's "socialist" Ghana who conspiratorially opposed his "socialism". If this argument is true then the lesson must be clear. There is little point in attempting to build socialism with opportunist or with either fawning or gaping sycophants, in short without convinced and dedicated socialists. In the coming struggle for social justice in Ghana, the P.P.P. will be guided not only by the lessons of the past but also by the lessons of the present.

The Economy *

THE UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM

By

J. L. S. Abbey & Ken Brew

The role of human resources in the development of any country cannot be overemphasised. If in any country, therefore, a large proportion of the people who can work are idle for various reasons or human resources are in general under-utilised, this represents a serious economic waste, not to talk about the social and political problems that it may give rise to.

Broadly speaking, the latter problem may be termed underemployment and the former unemployment. The focus of this article is on unemployment. This is not to say that underemployment is not important in the country but that we see it as more of a rural problem, much less distinguishable, which the government's emphasis on rural development will hopefully eliminate in the near future.

Elimination of Underemployment

Rural development is of course aimed at more than the elimination of rural underemployment but we believe that any such policy in Ghana should at least include this crucial objective: the raising of rural and agricultural incomes in a meaningful way. This essentially amounts to the provision of adequate marketing facilities and in this regard the government's establishment of the "task force" is a step in the right direction. It would seem at least probable that if every farmer could be assured of a market for his output there could be less talk of low productivity, mechanisation etc. Surely productivity should be based on total output (which we do not know for most of our non-export agricultural products) rather than what gets to the market.

More than underemployment, however, it is unemployment which has received more publicity in Ghana over the past few years in both official and unofficial circles, because being an urban phenomenon it is more conspicuous. It is indeed one of the cornerstones of the population debate and the family planning exercise in particular. Serious as the problem is, however, in the hands of fanatical and perhaps over-committed advocates for population control, the unemployment problem has been, on some occasions, blown out of proportions. So it is that in a September issue

of a local newspaper it was claimed that half of Ghana's population was unemployed. It has also sometimes been said in official circles that 600,000 people or 25% of the labour force is unemployed.

In the absence of detailed figures on unemployment levels and reliable data from official publications to go on, attempts at estimating unemployment are hazardous. Thus in the pamphlet "Ghanas Population Policy" published in 1969, which launched population planning as an ingredient of development policy, it was stated that in 1960 "unemployment was already high—25% of the wage labour force and about 9% of the total labour force — and there has been no significant success in reducing these proportion".

Finding Additional Jobs

It was also stated in the same document that "the economy will have to find additional jobs for an average of about 144,000 persons each year until 1985". The rationale for this latter estimate may be found in the new one year development plan, for the period July 1970 to June, 1971, published in September, 1970. On page 145 of this document it is estimated that "as many as 210,000—225,000 enter the labour market each year. A growing proportion of these are middle school leavers. The preponderance of this group among new entrants to the labour force is the result of the expansion in the 1960's of middle school education. In 1970, more than 65,000 are expected to complete middle schools. Of these only 11% will gain admission into secondary schools. If 55,000 to 60,000 jobs are opened up for replacements because of death and retirements, there remains a residual of 145,000 or more additional job opportunities required to accommodate the annual increase in the ranks of job seekers".

There are two points to be made about these two quotations. The first underlines the lack of adequate knowledge of the total number of unemployed, not to mention what the characteristics of these are. Clearly there will not be much progress in reducing these proportions till one knows more than we now do. This means that even if we succeeded in creating the requisite number of jobs they may not be filled because the new entrants may not be found to be suitable or, what is perhaps a better way of putting it, the jobs created may not be suitable for the job seekers. This is evidenced by the claim that at the same time that unemployment is high, "there is also an

insufficient supply of high level trained manpower, a shortage which highlights the need for expanded costly higher education". The point to note here is that what may be deemed high level trained manpower is difficult to specify, especially if one bears in mind that we now have the problem of unemployed university graduates. Surely the problem is obviously more than the mere expansion, of costly higher education.

Then again the estimate of 145,000 new jobs is on the low side since only a small number of 55,000 to 60,000 jobs openings due to deaths and retirement can be filled by the new entrants. Also although 11% of all candidates seeking admission to secondary schools get admission much less than 11% of the middle school leavers gain admission.

Effects of Expansion

Finally, the real effects of the expansion of primary education have not yet appeared on the employment scene. The free and compulsory education programme was started in the 1961/62 academic year. In that year enrolment in primary Class I was more than double that of the previous year, from 106,928 to 231,784. The majority of these pupils have faithfully gone through the system and in 1968 there were 133,577 of them in Middle Form 2 as compared with 80,870 in the previous year. We therefore estimate that at the end of the present financial year the first batch of Middle Form 4 pupils who started on the programme in 1961 will enter the job market and there will be some 120,000 of these! Clearly from the next financial year 90% of all new jobs created should be for Middle Form 4 School leavers.

As already noted the unemployment problem is largely an urban phenomenon. This is the result of the drift of people from rural to urban areas which is of course not peculiar to Ghana. One of the explanations usually given is the existence of a minimum wage in the urban areas which tends to attract more people than could be coped with. This may not be too important since this minimum wage is enforced only in the labour union—controlled establishments. Also there are many types of jobs, especially domestic employment, which do not fall within the scope of the minimum wage legislation and in fact does not directly affect salaried employment.

What might be more important is the mere satisfaction derived from being in an urban area and enjoying the things that modern civilization has to offer. More seriously the availability of

ocial amenities and subsidised services means extra "real" income for the urban dwellers for if these had been non-existent they would have had to pay for them.

Another factor is the system of education. The basis of the present system of education has never been questioned seriously. The only theories of education that we have are those that we inherited from our colonial masters, suited presumably to their more developed economies. This form of education therefore is a luxury for us. To think that any form of education at all will increase productivity, generate surplus value and expand the economy enough to be able to absorb all those pouring out of the educational stream, thus justifying the initial investment, is a fallacy of misplaced concreteness. It must be pointed out that education is not just investment but consumption and, at the moment in Ghana, our education is mainly for consumption in its overemphasis on formal academic education further encouraged by the nature of remuneration.

Resources Vs. Production

This structure of remuneration has tended to increase the expectation of school leavers. In the 1950's and early 1960's, when only about 20% of children of school going age went to school, it was easy enough to provide white collar jobs for suitable school leavers in the urban areas and at salaries well above what they would have earned in the rural areas. At the moment when the rate is about 60% and the numbers larger, it is no longer possible to provide jobs for all of them in the urban areas and they have thus swelled up urban unemployment.

Another reason for the urban unemployment is the improper balance between resource endowment and production in the modern sector. Thanks to our colonial heritage we have tastes for certain goods and services which if we cannot produce we have to import. One way of getting around this has been to plunge blindly into import substitution.

Since we are poorly endowed with the necessary resources we either have to imitate the raw material imports or import them. This is inimical to rapid expansion. Not only do we have to import the raw materials and machinery as well as skilled personnel which not only jeopardises our balance of payments but also part of the little employment which is created is taken up by foreigners

Secondly, the small size of the market means that most industries cannot operate at full capa-

city so that fewer people than possible are employed. Also with excess capacity, production is inefficient and this is reflected in the high prices of the locally produced goods. Added to this, the relatively capital intensive techniques of production militate against making use of our cheapest input, with labour, and forces us to use more capital which we can ill afford. All these militate against the rapid expansion of the modern sector and, therefore, the creation of job opportunities is hampered.

If we are prepared to live with all these contradictions in the economy, then, to reduce the population even would not leave us any better off. If we cannot produce goods and services efficiently then we have to stop producing human beings. For these imply that not only are children luxury items but that adults are superfluous.

MODERNIZING AGRICULTURE

By

V. K. Nyanteng

IT IS noted that a typical farmer in Ghana farms on a piece of land as long as it is fertile often up to 3 to 4 years. Once the fertility of the land is diminished, the land is left to revert to bush or its natural vegetation. The farmer then moves on to another piece of land which may be miles away which he clears for his new farm. Meanwhile the fertility of the abandoned field is regenerated by nature. Within any period from two to about 20 years, depending on the vegetation and the crop the farmer intends to cultivate, the land is considered again as suitable for a new farm. This system of farming is called shifting cultivation.* In fact, it constitutes the main farming system in Africa.

There was rationale for practising this system of farming in the environment in which a Ghanaian farmer found himself in the past. Land was plentiful and population relatively sparse. In the absence of knowledge of the existence and use of fertilizers, and the use of compost and animal droppings to maintain or improve the fertility level of the used field, the only way known to regenerate the fertility of the used field was to allow

* **EDITOR'S NOTE:** I think, I should point out that there is a difference between "shifting cultivation" which means cultivators move settlements to obtain new lands and "bush fallow" system which involves only a change of farm sites.

the field to fall fallow.

Although shifting cultivation is the response of the traditional Ghanaian farmer to environmental circumstances, it has been established that the system is wasteful of capital in the sense that capital is invested in clearing the field which is abandoned in a few years. It is estimated that if the field could be maintained and the capital invested in clearing a new piece of land is used to expand and to improve the fertility level of the old field, farmers could make big farms. At present an average farmer only cultivates about 2-5 acres of land. Because a farmer shifts after staying on a field for a relatively short period, the system gives the farmer no incentive to invest in the land they work in other ways. Under the system, a farmer may have as many as six small farms scattered over a wide area. This leads to both management and marketing problems. It is noted that the system is one of the greatest obstacles in the way of agricultural development in the whole of Africa.

The Major Cash Crops

In an effort to increase the rate of agricultural development in Ghana, an attempt has been made to change this system of farming. Farmers have been told that this is an uneconomic system of farming. They have further been educated on the advantages that could be obtained by staying on one field much longer if not for the whole of one's life and how this could be achieved through the use of chemical fertilizers, compost and animal droppings to maintain or even to improve the fertility of the soil. However, despite all the lectures and demonstrations, shifting cultivation still remains the main farming system. It is necessary, therefore, to look more carefully at the problems faced by a farmer attempting to follow a more settled system of agriculture.

Ghana has two main vegetational zones, forest and savanna. In the forest zone where cocoa has become the major cash crop and has claimed a greater part of the zone, shifting cultivation has been reduced drastically. The nature of the cocoa crop makes the farmers in the forest zone stay on the same land for as long as 50 or more years. Staple food crops of the "forest" people are plantain and cocoyam and these could easily be grown on the cocoa farms.

In the savanna zone, shifting cultivation still has greater attraction and is practised probably to the same extent that it was a century ago. The two main contributory factors to the perpetuation of

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About 80% of yams found in markets in Ghana are grown in the savanna zone. The farmers in this zone, through experience, have found out that yams always require "new" land for cultivation in order to get good yield. Based on this experience, a "new" field is always cleared to cultivate yams every season. For this reason yam is always the first crop to be cultivated on a new land cleared for farming if the farmer cultivates yams as one of his crops. Yam farms can now be found at distances of more than 12 miles from villages. After harvesting this crop, other crops such as maize, rice, groundnuts, cassava, etc., are grown on the same land. Some farmers claim that maize can only do well on land on which yams have first been grown. The explanation is that such land in the area normally supports some grass (*Hyparrhenia dissoluta*) called **nkunkuma** by the Brongs. This grass has an extensive root system which forms a thick mesh few inches down the soil. If the grass is cleared, the roots remain in the soil. If maize seed is put into this soil it fails to germinate. However, if mounds are made for the purpose of growing yams, the roots of the grass are dug up and die under the sun. So that after harvesting the yams, the land becomes suitable for maize cultivation.

The Problem of Farmers

Farmers who want to use "nkunkuma-infested" land for the first time for maize cultivation clear the field much earlier, leave the grass to dry on the field and then burn it. This action destroys the roots in the soil and the field can be used for maize cultivation. This slashing and burning method is not widespread because the "savanna" people largely subsist on yams and always see to it that they grow yams at least for their subsistence before considering other crops for cash. Some farmers have discovered that if the field is ploughed, the roots of the soil come to the surface and die, thus making the soil suitable for maize cultivation. The problem of the farmers who would like the use of this method is that they find it difficult to get tractors and other implements to plough the land.

The use of fertilizers might enable these farmers stay on the same land and maintain the yield or even improve on it. But here, too, there are problems. Most of these farmers are so poor that they cannot afford the cost of fertilizers and with the knowledge that the yam can do well on new land,

which they still find abundant, they give preference to shifting from field to field with the seasons. Some farmers have tried the use of fertilizer on their yam farms and have not been successful in its application. Such farmers have concluded that it is probably not true that fertilizers can make the difference. Others who are convinced that fertilizers can make all the difference and enable them to stay on the same field, find it difficult getting fertilizers to buy in their area. With the belief that yam always requires a new field for its cultivation and the problems of getting the fertilizers, shifting cultivation has remained the main farming system among the foodstuff farmers in the savanna zone.

Practice of Shifting Cultivation

Another important contributory factor to the continued practice of the shifting cultivation system of farming is a grass plant (*Imperata Cylindrica*) called **entoo** by the Brongs, **sebegro** by the Ashantis, and **tempremu** by the people around Asuboaso. The vegetative part of this grass is used as a roofing material by the farmers for their buildings, storage structures, etc. After a new field has been cleared and put under cultivation of some crop, this grass starts germinating on the field. Initially, the grass grows gradually and not all over the field so that a new field could be cleared at long intervals. On new land which is supporting, say, yams, weeding may be done about 2-3 times between planting and harvesting. It is claimed that on an old field the grass grows so rapidly that, if such a field is used to cultivate yams, weeding may be done about 4 to 6 times between planting and harvesting. It is believed that, if fertilizer is used on such a field, the grass grows much faster and weeding has to be done at relatively shorter intervals. This contributes to the farmers' unwillingness to stay on the same land and use fertilizer to regenerate the fertility of the soil.

This is one of the problems caused by this grass. Another problem is that when it is weeded and it starts germinating again, the young plant stabs the farmers when they go to work on such a field. They claim it is very painful. Because the grass grows faster, and may soon cover the whole field, it becomes difficult for the farmers to work on such fields. So after the land has been used for a short time of, say 2-4 planting seasons, for various crops, it is abandoned to be taken over by the grass.

There are at least two possible solutions to the

problem of the grass. The first solution to the grass problem is that the field should be ploughed after every season's cultivation so that the grass, which starts growing, is largely destroyed as explained above. The other solution might be the use of weedicides to kill the plant to the root. Stam F.34 and Swep powder have been tried at a rice experimental farm near Amantin in the Brong Ahafo Region to destroy the grass.

In conclusion, it is being suggested here that if the shifting cultivation system of farming is to be stopped to give way to a better system of farming in the savanna zone, then the use of ploughs and weedicides must be considered along-side the use of fertilizers

Observer Notebook

The Fight against Cholera

THE Ghanaian press reports that on Friday the 11th of December, the Minister of Health made a statement in the National Assembly detailing the measures taken by his ministry to counter the possible outbreak of cholera in this country when the officials learnt of its occurrence in neighbouring Guinea.

The measures, according to the Minister of Health, included a thorough briefing with films and lectures of all doctors in the ministry's major centres and regional heads of Medical Services on the measures to take for the prevention, treatment and cure of cholera. The doctors were asked to investigate all cases of diarrhoea by laboratory methods. In keeping with international practice, certain priority groups were singled out for anti-cholera vaccination, these included fishermen whose occupation took them along the West African coast and who, therefore, were likely to contact the disease and spread it most. The fishermen, however, had refused vaccination because of its unpleasant side-effects.

The disease, the minister is reported to have said, had, as been foreseen by his ministry, been imported into the western and central regions. The outbreak in Keta had been transmitted through mourners in Togo. Rigorous measures against a further spread of the disease, and for the speedy cure of cases had been immediately taken. But the ministry still thought that 'the only way the disease would be overcome was to accelerate the provision of good drinking water and an efficient

latrine and refuse disposal system for the population'; that 'it was ridiculous to clamour for vaccination, when it was much easier to prevent cholera by the observance of personal and public hygiene.'

The Minister of Health made a brave show, but did not really meet public criticisms of his ministry's handling of the cholera problem. The first point is, why, knowing the generally loose character of our West African frontiers, did the ministry not start immediately with vaccination, on hearing of the out-break in Guinea but resorted to the magical formula, 'there is no cause for alarm?'

If vaccination is unnecessary, why then did the ministry resort to it at all? It is certainly ludicrous to talk of sanitation as the really effective preventive measure against cholera. It will take generations for Ghana generally to acquire good water and that sort of sanitation system, personal and public hygiene that would check a cholera outbreak once it appears on our borders. And that just is the reason why vaccination, to which the minister himself, with all his impeccable personal and household arrangements, has probably had a recourse with his family, is necessary.

The public is concerned about the lack of foresight shown by his ministry not only in failing to set about vaccination promptly but also in the bizzare arrangements made for the operation once it got under way. The minister surely saw for himself the endless stretches of attendants at the Adabraka polyclinic. And if this is what happened in Accra, how did the villagers fare? As it is, it is meaningful to ask how many deaths have occurred of which we know nothing.

The Ministry of Health must be told that words like 'there is no cause for alarm' are never a substitute for action and planning and that the public expects some imagination in the deployment of work teams on occasions of this sort. The officials are paid to cater for the convenience of the public.

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Letters

The Effects of the Surcharge

In a letter published in the (L.O. V/23) a contributor criticized the manufacturers of this country for their inability to put up a concrete case for any objections they may have against the surcharges recently imposed on imported raw materials.

In making these comments, your contributor was obviously guided by the recent statement which was issued by the Manufacturers' Association and published in the local dailies. I am not a member of the Executive Committee of the Manufacturers' Association and cannot speak for them. But I can imagine, coming, as it did so soon after the Press interview by the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, that the statement was intended to be a reply to the Minister's interview which was published in the Graphic issue of 10th October, 1970.

I agree with your contributor that the Association's statement did not merely beg the question but it was altogether uncalled for. I personally considered the Minister's comments so arrogant that nothing short of an outright condemnation should have been the most appropriate thing to do. However, the Association, perhaps cowed by the Minister's words, thought it fit to retreat from its previous stand and to adopt that defeatist attitude. I think the time has come when this sort of sheepish submission to authority should cease, and that people should begin to put on their thinking

caps and behave like men.

The manufacturers have not been able to call for cancellation of the Open General Licence system and the surcharge, because to an extent, the present situation is their own creation. At a time when this country was in such economic difficulties, when the balance of payments position was in danger of possible dislocation, the businessmen piled up pressure upon the government to place raw materials on Open General Licence. Whether they thought this could be achieved without some means being devised for protecting the foreign exchange position I do not know. Now that they have got the O.G.L. they asked for, can they turn round to tell government to cancel a system they have themselves advocated? And so the half-hearted approach and contradictions, to say nothing of the confusion in the minds of the public, must go on.

This is not to say that the government has any justification in introducing import surcharges of such severity. Before the Budget, manufacturers in the shoe industry, for example, were paying import duty on raw materials at the rate of 10%. This rate of duty has now been increased to 66⅔%, an increase of 56⅔%. In addition to this, we now have to pay import surcharge of 40%. This brings the total additional tax burden to 96⅔%. Where we have to import new machinery for replacement purposes we have to pay another 5% surcharge.

What is the sense in this, I ask? How on earth can such increases in taxation be justified? I can understand a graduated increase of say five, ten, twenty, or even thirty per cent. But how can you jump from ten to 106⅔% and expect the manufacturer to continue in

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business. And yet this is what has happened in the case of the shoe industry.

To add pain to injury, the government has persistently warned that in spite of the increased taxation, it does not expect any significant increase in prices. This is precisely where I disagree. We have it on record that with 43% devaluation, prices rose in 1968 by no less than 14.9 per cent. Devaluation loss cannot be said to be a direct item of cost to a manufacturer and if it should influence prices to this extent, then it is obviously wishful thinking to say that with these fantastic increases in the cost of raw materials the existing price level should be maintained. If the government is not prepared to rationalise these taxes then it should be bold to tell the people to expect price increases which, to my mind, would be considerable. It is necessary to make this quite clear to save businessmen from being used as scape-goats.

Ambassador Shoe Factory Ltd.
P. O. Box 368
Accra

E. E. B. Ofori-Atta
Managing Director

Leadership in Rural Development

SIR—May I add a thought to Clemence Kudiabor's suggestion of utilising local notables for the development of villages.

To achieve high and evenly distributed growth in our rural areas, it is assumed that a multiplicity of small projects covering a large proportion of the villages in Ghana will be necessary. This approach, however, has proved and will continue to prove the most difficult to conceive and operate. For each small project the three essential ingredients are **expertise** (including finance), **local knowledge** (of the people and agriculture) and **motivation** (integrity, having the confidence of the people concerned, and a willingness to help). However, rarely will all three be present in sufficient quantity for success. Up to the present time the Ministry of Agriculture has been making strenuous efforts in local agricultural development by relying on village-based agricultural assistants, who tend to emphasise their own general agricultural expertise to the detriment of a full appreciation of the problems of their particular environment, not to mention any lack of motivation (as Ofori Akyea said—"civil servants do not have to exert themselves to get paid").

If (as L.O. V/24 implied) the above methods are not proving satisfactory, is it time to turn our attention to "the village school master, the catechist etc"? The qualities likely to be found in a few prominent persons in each community would include local knowledge and motivation but not agricultural expertise. Could not this expertise problem be tackled by a strategically placed department through which the government could find its proper role and achieve the success it so cherishes with surprisingly little cost?

Envisaged is a department based on district or regional level, staffed by a handful of competent agriculturalists and equipped with a carefully prepared series of "Do-It-Yourself-type" manuals such as "Introducing tomatoes as a cash crop" or "How to build a small dam for irrigation". The development process would then rely on the initiative of these local leaders (who wish to help the community, understand the environment and the people personally and are respected, trusted and

intelligent) to approach the "projects" office at district level and say "We have a problem but also the willingness to solve it if you will help us". The project officer can then proffer advice and the appropriate literature and, if necessary, visit the project. The local initiator, however, would remain primarily responsible for the project.

In this way, not only will the cost of developments be cut, but its success made more sure because it rests in the hands of the community itself.

Agricultural Economics Department
Legon

Neil Parker

The Lost Opportunity Of The Hutchful Incident

SIR—Correspondence on the Hutchful episode and especially Mr. Adjei-Brenyah's letter in your last issue (L.O. V/24) have so shocked me that I must overcome my indifference and write to give one other side of the story.

One had hoped that for once the Hutchful episode would spark a revolution amongst Ghana students so that they would rise up to their responsibility towards themselves and society. But Ghanaian students sit quietly and do nothing when politicians talk of slashing their grants but the politicians continue to ride in big cars. They do nothing when after one year these politicians do not declare their assets as enjoined on them by the Constitution. But above all, they seem totally unaware of what, for instance, Djakarta students did to their politicians when they thought they were guilty of profligate spending and were thus letting the revolution down.

Ghanaian society not only took the Hutchful challenge lying down but also had to employ the old unsober adulatory arguments to justify its reverence for people who take it for rides—yes, Ghana is so great that our Prime Minister should ride in a Mercedes Benz. How dare one suggest OUR Prime Minister should ride in a smaller car when every small businessman can buy such a car etc. etc. They are totally unaware that in a country like Sweden, for instance, the Prime Minister, campaigned in the last elections in a Volkswagen; that in a country like Sweden, the Prime Minister has not even an official residence yet, whatever you may think, Sweden is definitely greater and much richer than Ghana.

Indeed a people gets the government it deserves and Ghanaians are doing just that, including the Legon Society on National Affairs, whose only activity seems to be publishing its "organ" every fortnight; including me who am so sickened by it all that I have opted out of the society and think only of myself and mine.

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The Need for Press Council

SIR—The Minister of Information, Mr. Brodie-Mends, has called for the immediate establishment of a Press in the country. The need for a Press Council has been stressed over and over by almost all the newspapers in the country including the *Spokesman* and the *Legon Observer*. The call by the Minister should, therefore, be welcomed by all those who cherish the freedom

the press.

The occasion of the Minister's call, however, raises the fears about the motive behind his statement. The Minister's call was the immediate result of the Spokesman's report that Scotland Yard was helping the Ghana Police in their investigations on a currency deal. Another report was on a news despatch on the health of the President. According to Mr. Brodie-Mends, the news was 'killed' by "people who respected themselves and their profession".

One could conclude that the Spokesman's report was accurate. Now the questions which arise are these: why didn't any of the government-owned newspapers publish the Scotland Yard story? Why did the government choose not to inform the Ghanaian public of the true condition of the President, and especially of the nature of his illness?

Does Mr. Brodie-Mends want a Press Council made up of members who will be chosen by the government, to whom they will be "yes-men?" The occasion of the Minister's call was unfortunate. What we want is a Press Council comprising members with notions of rectitude and of independence of mind, who will have the good sense to public the truth. If what is desired is the concealment of facts which may be unpleasant, then what is required is a Censorship Board and not a Press Council.

Legon Hall
Legon.

Emmanuel Addy

Split in the Volta Region

SIR—Mr. Cosmas Yaw Khra's comments in the Legon Observer (L.O. V/23) on Mr. J. H. Kodzo Fiafor's earlier expressions about recent moves for secession from the Volta Region of the Krachi District as publicly stated by some of its leaders were irrelevant and misconceived.

Every people has the inalienable right to associate with whichever country it likes, provided conditions are favourable. Mr. Khra has every right to express his loyalty to the Krachiwura and his M.Ps, but his efforts to blindly uphold their infallibility have only succeeded in laying bare his own ignorance of national trends so far as development planning for areas in the country is concerned.

I believe Mr. Fiafor was rightfully ventilating his viewpoint and concern about the erroneous way groundless ethnic sentiment was being projected to explain the neglect of Krachi District, which is just one among many undeveloped areas. It is strange to suggest that the Volta Region Administration and Krachi District Council, are responsible for the alleged "discriminatory" neglect of Krachi. It is strange still for a well informed citizen of today's Ghana to be so pitifully unaware of the source of development planning for the regions at least before the Second Republic as to conceive that joining another region would be the solution to neglect. So Mr. Khra's Keta analogy is not just unfitting but funny.

Honourable M.P.s for the area should at least know the truth and make it their responsibility to clear the minds of their people of such an error instead of lending their support to it. In any case we know that our government knows the situation and its implications better. Happily, too, we know that Krachi is one of the undeveloped areas in the region on the priority list.

With the devaluation of planning in the regions now should the leaders of Krachi be at a loss as to what to do about their grievances, they are advised to quickly make them known to the Volta Region Planning Committee.

Mensah Sarbah Hall
Legon.

J. K. Sapient Akpa

Observer's Language

SIR—Please allow me to draw attention to the following problem.

The reading public of the Legon Observer on reading, and highly appreciates, the contribution both national and international affairs, which are of high quality, and show marks of objectivity in presentation of the facts. But a problem occurs when there is choice of over-specialized words, which are often beyond the comprehension of some of us. With special reference to both Special Editions—"Busia So Far" (Vol. V/20) and "Opposition So Far—Ghana and Africa" (Vol. V/23) the contributors went too far and made it impossible for some of us to appreciate their efforts.

May I appeal to your contributors to write more simply bearing in mind the varying standards of your many readers.*

L.A. (Anglican) Middle School
Fumesua-Ashanti

J. E. Domfeh

* Editor's Note: We hope our contributors will take note of this.

Miscellaneous

LEGALISATION OF ABORTION

By

E. M. Otchere

ON the 19th of November, 1970, an honourable member of Parliament tabled a motion calling on the House to legalise abortion.

May I take this opportunity to comment on this all important motion. The honourable member asserted that illegal abortion in the country has been on the ascendency within the last ten years basing his assertion on figures released recently by the Minister of Health. Out of 18,955 abortion cases treated, 111 women, many of whom were unmarried and girls. This is very serious and the report should attract attention of all citizens.

But the questions now to be looked at are whether the move to legalise abortion is an end to abortion or reduce the number of abortion cases; and if it is legalised, what will be its religious and social implications?

It must first of all be considered if it is not to encourage abortion as far as religion is concerned. Christianity or Islamic, is concerned. The Commandment of the Decalogue—"Thou shall not kill". In the Chris-

Therefore, any one who causes abortion is as guilty of murder as anyone who gets it caused. This decision has been arrived at because I am convinced that causing abortion—leading to the death of the foetus and premature birth of a child by the father or mother—is no less a crime than stabbing a dagger through the heart of another person. This act is vehemently opposed to religious beliefs and teachings. If the house should overrule these points and approve of the motion, then it would be indirectly helping people to cause abortion and it is likely to incur the bitter disapproval of the religious bodies in the country and in fact the world at large.

Will our women stop this practice if abortion is legalised and will they always go to the government hospitals to have it caused as was anticipated by the honourable member?

It cannot be over-emphasised that, with the legalisation of abortion, our women, particularly the young, will be encouraged to indulge in fornication and habitual sexual acts at the expense of their health. Many women and girls are likely to fall victims and the number of abortion cases will increase in great numbers. The people to suffer most will be our lady students and village school girls. And since many of them are far away

from government hospitals, the quack doctors will definitely go into business on a large scale. The number of deaths among our girls will increase instead of being reduced.

Legalisation of abortion will definitely be a boon to our numerous "high time" girls and lure others into prostitution since they would be able to have a legal way out to avoid having "unwanted" babies. They will ever look upon married life with contempt and shun it so as to enjoy the pleasures of "care-free" life. Will they not then become a menace to the society?

It has been observed that divorce is usually averted when women get into the family way. There is often a reconciliation after safe delivery and peaceful married life continues. Some girls, particularly school girls, have been able to get husbands because the men who put them in the family way have often been compelled to marry them. What would have been the fate of such women if abortion had been made legal? The "fortune hunters" would have quickly resorted to abortion to enable them write off their prospective wives and concubines.

Legalising abortion means legalising the sale of abortion drugs. And can it be guaranteed that in their haste to "get the thing out" our girls will

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patient enough to take the drugs according to instructions and also go in for the right type of tests?

Viewing this case in its entirety, one would be justified to conclude that legalising abortion is tantamount to leaving a house by the main gate and to steal back into it through the back door. In this connection, may I suggest that the Planned Parenthood Association be given every assistance, both financially and technically, to intensify and extend its operations to educate women on how best they can avoid having "unwanted" babies. Prevention is better than cure and our women should not be encouraged to take refuge only to dispose of it through legal abortions. Furthermore, legal action should be taken against any quack doctors who cause abortion as well as the women who go to them to have their pregnancy aborted, and severe punishment meted out to them. Where shall we head to if abortion is legalised?

**For the information of Mr. Kwadwo Kontopiaat
LETTER FROM THE CITIZENS OF KONTOPIAATKROM TO HON. KWADWO KONTOPIAAT**

SIR — We ought to have written earlier, but for pressure of work and the question of paying for postage, coupled with timidity.

During your last visit to your constituency of Kontopiaatkrom, it was agreed at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the dynamic "Ebi Nti Yie Party" that our annual Fund Raising Harvest should take place on Sunday, 15th November, 1970. Before you left for Accra in your new shining "Super", you remember how we organized a fitting welcome with the propaganda of blaring high-life music with intermittent announcement of your arrival at Kontopiaatkrom and how the whole village was turned into jubilation, as if there was a wedding march in one of the big towns. It was with some hesitation that you invited your parents who cannot do away with their walking sticks, to ride in your new "Super", with all the villagers looking in amazement, "the inside of your car", the radio and your charming wife by your side. In fact, it was a day which the citizens of Kontopiaatkrom will never forget.

We followed your instructions to the letter and wondered how the townsmen and women would be able to make their contributions towards the annual harvest. As you are aware, owing to the recent heavy rains the expectations of the farmers of good cocoa harvest had been shattered. Already some farmers, including your old uncle who had done so much for the dynamic "Ebi Nti Yie Party", had raised loans from some middlemen with the understanding that payment would be made during the cocoa season, with the threat of legal action against them. Some of the farmers did not take their creditors seriously nor threat of court action since the raising of loans is not a new thing to them.

Since your last visit there had been series of deaths, including young and old at Kontopiaatkrom.

Owing to the funeral celebrations, our secretary, Koo Bro wasted the time of the whole Executive Committee members failing to call a meeting to finalize all arrange-

ments in connection with our annual harvest. At last long, the secretary travelled to the local governors, at a distance of about 7 miles, for a permit to enable us to organize our annual fund raising harvest. According to the secretary, who incidentally is an illiterate, the local governors, (you know them better than we villagers and so there is no need for giving their official titles) have not changed their attitude since the colonial days.

They insisted that Koo Bro, the secretary, should "grease their palms" before they issue him with a permit. He made it plain to them that this was the "Ebi Nti Yie Party" in power and that if they would not discharge their duties without favour, he would see to it that they were either transferred or dismissed. Further he would not hesitate to bring it to the notice of our Member of Parliament, Hon. Kwadwo Kontopiaat, D.D.T., A.S.P.R.O., A.P.C., A.F.R.O. Realizing that Koo Bro was not a man of straw who should not be played with, a permit was hurriedly issued to him.

It was upon Koo Bro's arrival to Kontopiaatkrom that it became known at the local "Don't Mind-Your-Wife Palm Wine Bar" that the local governors were encouraged by the "Jokers Party", our rivals, to disrupt all our plans, and prevent us from organizing our annual fund raising harvest festival.

On the day of the harvest the whole population of Kontopiaatkrom went wild with joy, as we paraded the narrow streets with our harvest products, which included a big goat and danced to the music of "Sea Never Dry Brass Band". You remember, the Organising Committee of the harvest passed a resolution of no confidence in you, for neglecting to fulfil your promises, especially the tarring of the village narrow streets. Koo Bro who has been watching your interests all these days, took a decision and managed to raise a loan with which he purchased the goat at the harvest for the "ring leaders".

With Christmas on our door-steps, and our hopes shattered by the poor cocoa harvest we obtained just NC10.00 from our harvest sales. You could well imagine how poor are the citizens of Kontopiaatkrom. We had to pay NC5.00 to the "Sea Never Dry Brass Band" which we could ill afford, so we are appealing to you to remit this amount to us at your earliest convenience, as the leader of the band is threatening to institute civil action against us at the local Odikro's Court.

We have been working "harder" and "faster" towards the completion of the local Community Centre and the Water Supply, through communal labour with technical advice and financial assistance from the "Pro-Sure" government. The two projects must be completed before Christmas, so that we can invite you to the opening, to grace the occasion with your presence and dignity, as the M.P. for Kontopiaatkrom Constituency.

All the folks at home join me in their felicitous greeting to you. Please do not overwork yourself and do not forget to champion our cause at the National Assembly for your reward is great and moreover we cannot afford to miss you, our saviour, mentor and benefactor whose absence from Kontopiaatkrom has created a vacuum which cannot be filled by the secretary, who regrettably is an illiterate.

God bless you.

Your's sincerely,

University College
Cape Coast

Koo Bro.

Book Review

The Dark Wanderer

By Albert W. Kayper-Mensah
(Horst Erdmann Verlag, Federal

Republic of Germany)

Reviewed by Gerald Moore

THESE poems clearly spring from an honest attempt to keep coherence in a life which has diverged physically and spiritually further and further away from Africa. Mr. Kayper-Mensah is himself perhaps aware of the distance which now separates him from the daily experience of African life, for, after a good many years at British universities, he has spent the last twelve in diplomatic attachments in London and Bonn. He seeks to compensate for the duality of his present existence by invoking, for instance, the spirit of Beethoven and the wisdom of the Akan proverb in alternate groups of poems. Thus we have many passages expressing the exaltation inspired by classical music:

And a Pastoral Symphony brought
Back memories from sounds of woodland
Of arabesques of pleasure and passionate desire
A feel distinctly German . . . ,

and some in praise of the more earthy delights of High-Life:

Nkomo kom
Who thirsts and hungers
For your voice,
Your laughing looks?
But the best of sights
Is the thirst of thighs.

If this doesn't work, it is because the writer no longer views Germany with enough critical detachment to create the sense of a genuinely new relationship with it. Take a verse like the following:

In those qualities of mind
And temper that have made
The German mind
Such a prize among
The Nations — the Heidelberg
Of the human spirit,
Rarest and most vital
Plank in his House of Sciences:

This sounds perilously close to Leopold Senghor asking the Immortal Powers to set his beloved France on the Right Hand of the Father. I say nothing of those other things which Germany must inevitably represent for anyone who has lived through the past forty years (as Mr. Kayper-Mensah has). It is enough to remember only where Ghana actually stands in relationship to the richer and more ruthlessly progressive nations of the day — of which Germany is certainly one — to feel that the poet is in danger of congratulating himself on the degree of his acculturation, rather than telling Ghanaians at large anything they might usefully hear.

There is much to be said for writing honestly of one's experience, and Mr. Kayper-Mensah's is that of an elitist; but a saving sensibility to the lot of others is also part of the true poet's equipment. It would have saved this poet from writing lines like the following:

Home is where the book is friend;
And film, record, tape and slide

Are tools for fashioning delight;
And the turning of a knob
Brings the tuneless in great music,
Oratory and poetry
Into here and now and loving.

Perhaps, I find more relevant to where Ghana stands now the figure of Ayi Kwei Armah's naked teacher (Pace Abiola Irele, I believe he is rightly and significantly naked) lying on his hot, narrow bed and listening to the bitter words of a popular High-Life, which contrast so ironically with some of the surroundings in which it is actually and enthusiastically danced.

Can it be that a certain woodenness in the lines (those quoted are sufficient example) goes with this lack of any real centre to which the poet's reporting his experience? A certain amount of family *Gemutlichkeit*, complete with snow and fir-trees, is really no substitute. Good poetry arises when the need of a poet to articulate his suffering and his joy coincides with the need of a whole people to hear a new voice. How to do this in Ghana, where most people cannot even hear English anyway? A painful question, but I believe it is most likely to be done by those who, even though using English, appeal to a common fund of experience and voice a mood that many are longing to hear voiced.

If this is true, the growing points of Ghanaian literature are Kofi Awoonor-Williams, Ama Ata Aidoo and Ayi Kwei Armah. Sad that two of these three are also in exile from the land. One can only hope that this exile will not endure to the point where the writer can only address his own experience as an exile, an experience necessarily divorced from that of most of his people.

But there is hope. English poetry was never richer than when Shelley, Keats and Byron were all in Italy, and only Wordsworth was left to bleat upon our native hills.

Poem

On the Birth of an Unknown God

(For V. A. K., Surgeon)

Miracles are common today;
Your irreverent tinkering with foetal mysteries
Has made the child determined to be born
A creature without divinity.

Yet your laconic notes this time proclaimed
A real event; and your stuttered explanations —
Your unaccustomed incoherence — gave the lie
To your fetish of compendious brevity.

Parthenogenesis is something that your kind
Will contemplate with but a sceptic smile.

His reality, corroborating his mother's ignorance
Locked her in mortal humility; divinity
Is jealous, you see, and her's
Would have robbed you of all-human pride
In Aesculapian achievement.

Go on then, mortal magician,
Cousin of Prometheus; give her a sacred hearth
Wherein to make the progenitive fire of passion
Of which her Maker denied her.

K. K. Dei-Aang



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