

No. I of 1931-32.

Gold Coast.



CORRESPONDENCE

RELATING TO THE

Proposal to close down the Gold Coast Commercial Intelligence Bureau

Ordered by His Excellency the Governor to be Printed.

GOLD COAST :

*Printed by the Government Printer at the Government Printing Office, Accra.
To be purchased from the Government Printing Office (Publications Branch),
Accra, Gold Coast Colony, and from the Crown Agents for the Colonies,
4, Millbank, London, S.W.1.*

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Price—One Shilling.



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I.

GOLD COAST.

No. 119.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,

ACCRA,

18th February, 1931.

MY LORD,

I have the honour to refer to the Governor's despatches No. 491 dated the 3rd July, 1929 and No. 26 dated the 7th January, 1930 on the subject of the Gold Coast Commercial Intelligence Bureau in which various arguments for and against the continuation of the Bureau were discussed at some length. Although measures have been taken to reduce the expenditure of the Bureau, the question of its continuance must now be further considered owing to the need for drastic reduction of the Colony's expenditure.

2. The subject was discussed at a meeting of the Executive Council under my Chairmanship as Colonial Secretary prior to Sir Ransford Slater's departure for South Africa; the Comptroller of Customs and the Director of Agriculture were invited to the meeting and asked to express their views. The Comptroller of Customs stated that in his opinion there was no justification for the continued existence of the Bureau so far as trade of the Colony was concerned and the Director of Agriculture held the view that it was of no assistance to agriculture.

After these two officers had withdrawn the Council considered the question in the light of the report of the Colonial Office Conference on Colonial Trade Agencies and unanimously advised that, in view of the paramount need for retrenchment, due to the diminished revenue prospects of the Gold Coast, and the definite refusal of the other West African Colonies to contribute to the support of a joint West African Bureau, steps should be taken to close down the Gold Coast Bureau by the 31st March, 1932.

In this connection I may state that the Estimates that will be laid before Legislative Council next week forecast a revenue for 1931-32 of £2,375,095 and require for expenditure a total of £2,859,836 of which £2,779,574 represent recurrent expenditure and expenditure on works financed from advances from the Colonial Development Fund. In such circumstances it becomes necessary to discard certain of the less indispensable services, among which the Bureau must, it is felt, be counted.

3. In making this recommendation the Executive Council expressed the opinion that it was highly desirable that, on the disappearance of the Bureau, some agency should come into existence whereby Gold Coast Africans visiting London may obtain advice and assistance in case of need. This should present no insuperable difficulty and, if Your Lordship's reply is in accordance with the recommendations of this despatch, proposals in its regard will be put forward. Two main lines suggest themselves at the moment. If the project materializes for a residential club for Africans in London it is quite possible that some arrangement of the sort could be made with the management. Alternatively, it should not be difficult to find a retired Gold Coast Official who would serve usefully in such a capacity. In any case, the Gold Coast Government will be prepared to provide sufficient funds to maintain some such agency, if and when required.

4. The advice of the Council was submitted to the Governor who directed me in writing to Your Lordship to state that he was unable to advance any argument of sufficient cogency to warrant his over-riding the unanimous advice of the Executive Council, the Comptroller of Customs and the Director of Agriculture but that, before coming to a final conclusion in the matter, he would be grateful for an expression of Your Lordship's views.

I would add that according to the terms of the Director's agreement his employment may be terminated on giving him six months' notice and the lease of the premises can be determined towards the end of 1932 or early in 1933. I am unable to give the correct date as I have no copy of the lease. As Your Lordship is already aware the Director has already been authorised to sublet the premises.

I have, etc.

G. A. S. NORTHCOTE,
Acting Governor.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE LORD PASSFIELD, P.C.,
ETC., ETC., ETC.

11.

GOLD COAST.
No. 247.

DOWNING STREET,
24th March, 1931.

SIR,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch No. 119 of the 18th of February, on the subject of the Gold Coast Commercial Intelligence Bureau, and to inform you that I agree that in the circumstances the Bureau should be closed down.

2. I suggest, moreover, that in view of the urgent need for economy and of the terms of the lease, which became operative on the 26th of December 1925, and must be determined by notice given before the 26th of June, 1932, Lieutenant Colonel Levey and his staff should be given six months' notice from the 25th of June, 1931, and that he be asked to endeavour to sublet the premises from the 26th of December, 1931. There seems, however, little prospect of a sublet with so little of the lease left to run, and, unless Lieutenant Colonel Levey sees such a prospect, it would be well to approach the landlord with a view to the cancellation of the remainder of the lease.

3. I would add that it appears probable that the Secretary to the new African Club will be able to carry out the functions mentioned in paragraph 3 of your despatch.

I have, etc.

PASSFIELD.

*The Officer Administering the
Government of the Gold Coast.*