

SPEECH

by

His Excellency the Governor, Sir Arthur Richards, G.C.M.G.
to the Legislative Council, 28th August, 1947.

GENTLEMEN,

I had not intended to make any statement from the Chair today. It is not customary—other than at the opening of the Budget Session—for the Governor as President to make an opening speech unless some specific matter of importance urgently calls for a pronouncement from him. But there have arisen two questions which seem to call for a public declaration by me. They are, firstly, the economic crisis, which is world-wide, and secondly, payment of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

I will deal first with the economic crisis. All Honourable Members have received a printed copy of a personal message from the Secretary of State. The subject of that message is the economic crisis which has overtaken the United Kingdom and, indeed, practically the whole world outside the dollar areas, and its main purpose is to explain the ways in which the different parts of the Empire, particularly in our case the Colonial Empire, may at one and the same time, strengthen their own position in this emergency, and also assist the people of the United Kingdom in overcoming their difficulties.

I do not propose to traverse in detail, the ground covered by the Secretary of State's message, which lacks nothing in clarity or force, but I would earnestly request each Honourable Member to ponder every word of that message, and to explain its purport to the people in the various areas from which they come. An understanding between Government—which, assisted and supported by this Council, Regional Councils and Native Administrations, is the custodian of the interests of the people—I say an understanding between Government and the people themselves, is always necessary; but such understanding becomes of supreme importance in times of economic emergency which affect, in some degree, the well-being and work of almost every man and woman. Members can play an important and, indeed, an essential part in promoting such understanding and protecting those less well-informed than themselves against the malignant propaganda of persons who think that they see in persistent misrepresentation of the purposes of Government the gateway to personal power. I am confident that there is no one present in this Council, however desirous he may be to quicken the pace of the journey to full responsible Government, who shares the attitude of those who seek to depict as exploitation the

proposal that we should face the difficulties of the peace in the same spirit of loyal co-operation and mutual aid that won the war.

We talk of the economic difficulties of the peace, but in very truth the war is not yet over. The enemies of freedom lie defeated but the chaos and the damage they left still remains to be repaired and we can only do it by continuing the work together. Only when prosperity has been restored to the world, when industry and trade have revived, can we really say that the war is over. We have no intention of closing the book of freedom with an epilogue of economic failure. And so, the British Government makes no appeal for pity nor does it seek to exploit, but it does ask that the senior partner in this great Empire, whose sacrifices in the war, fought for the freedom of us all, were immeasurably the greatest, should be helped in her convalescence by the adoption of a guided economy throughout the Empire, until normal health and strength comes back to the world of trade and commerce and the free flow of goods again bears witness to industrial recovery. By increasing production now, and by planning ever greater production for the future, Nigeria will not only serve the interests of the British people and the interests of a world in dire need of its produce, but it will also serve—and in a high degree, its own present and future interests. You will observe that the Secretary of State suggests three ways in which the countries of the Empire can help in overcoming the crisis.

Firstly, more should not be imported than can be paid for from current earnings.

Secondly, he suggests that imports should be confined wherever possible to a level below the actual earnings of the exports, thereby adding to their financial balances and strengthening the general position of the sterling area.

Thirdly, he suggests increase of production.

Now, the first two of these suggestions can have only a limited application to Nigeria, since this country has for many years consistently maintained a favourable balance of trade, and it will even so be in this country's long-term interest in the period immediately ahead, so to control the volume of imports as to reduce trade to the minimum level compatible with maximum production. It is unquestionably in carrying out the third suggestion that Nigeria can make its most effective contribution to the problems of the crisis, and at the same time, strengthen materially its own internal economy. It is not always that the opportunity of co-operative service exactly coincides with the requirements of enlightened self-interest, but this is pre-eminently a case in point. I have assured the Secretary of State (and I am sure that I shall have your full support in this action) of the deep sympathy felt by Nigeria for the United Kingdom in her present economic difficulties, and of the full co-operation of this Government in any measure which

can be taken to assist practical steps which the consideration, and in a precise indication from The purpose of my problem of outstanding territories associated with co-operation in explanatory measures which may solution.

I now turn to education. As Honourable Member of the Committee on Finance (two (at a time to be fixed of this Council), to control the vote for education have been supplied with it has become necessary and I do not now propose certain major facts for attention, in the confidence mind in their consideration. No one will question the voluntary agencies in this country, predominant of their great achievements enjoy the blessings of labours there is, I am the historic services only because it is well-Government is under voluntary agencies in have, in recent years, no longer rely on the the more prosperous are now faced with the of paying their staffs salaries paid in other required. Of late, a of Government services acute. The teachers remuneration at level qualifications in Government addressed less to the approach, though opposed based on a misconception.

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can be taken to assist in the solution of the current problems. The practical steps which the situation may call for in Nigeria are still under consideration, and in certain matters I must necessarily await a more precise indication from His Majesty's Government of what is needed. The purpose of my observations today is to direct your minds to a problem of outstanding importance to the United Kingdom and to all territories associated with her in the sterling area, and to invite your co-operation in explaining the problem to the people, and in any measures which may be proposed as Nigeria's contribution to its solution.

I now turn to education and payment of the teaching profession. As Honourable Members have already been advised, the Standing Committee on Finance of this Council is to meet within the next day or two (at a time to be fixed with reference to the disposal of the business of this Council), to consider an application for a substantial addition to the vote for educational grants-in-aid. Members of the Committee have been supplied with full information of the circumstances in which it has become necessary for the Government to make this application, and I do not now propose to enter into details. There are, however, certain major facts and considerations to which I desire to draw attention, in the confident hope that the Committee will keep them in mind in their consideration of this complex and important problem. No one will question the immense value of the contribution which the voluntary agencies have made to the progress of education in this country, predominantly in the Southern Regions. The first beginnings of their great achievement date back to the time when Nigeria did not enjoy the blessings of unity and peace, and in the areas affected by their labours there is, I am sure, no lack of gratitude among the people for the historic services which they have rendered. I pay this tribute not only because it is well-deserved, but also in order to make it clear that the Government is under an obligation to approach the problems of the voluntary agencies in a spirit of practical sympathy. These problems have, in recent years, greatly increased in difficulty. The agencies can no longer rely on the sustained flow of philanthropic support which, in the more prosperous days of Europe, was drawn from overseas, and they are now faced with the problem of rising costs, particularly the problem of paying their staff salaries relative to their qualifications, and to the salaries paid in other occupations where similar qualifications are required. Of late, as a consequence of the general revision of salaries of Government servants, this latter problem has become particularly acute. The teachers employed by the voluntary agencies have claimed remuneration at levels corresponding to those paid to officers of similar qualifications in Government employment, and those claims have been addressed less to their employers, than to the Government. This approach, though open to some criticism on theoretical grounds, and based on a misconception of the relationship between the Government

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and the voluntary agencies, was not unnatural. Government has always recognised its interest in the working of the voluntary agency system, which is engaged on a great public service and, therefore, its interest in the well-being and efficiency of the teaching profession as a whole. It was for this reason that I encouraged the Board of Education (Southern Provinces and Colony) in consultation with the Nigeria Union of Teachers to arrive at agreed conclusions as to the future scales of salary appropriate for voluntary agency teachers. These agreed conclusions represent, in my view, a reasonable settlement. But the recognition of this fact cannot imply that the entire cost of implementing this settlement must fall on the general revenues of Nigeria. Apart from the fact that these revenues are drawn, to a material extent, from areas not served by the voluntary agencies, it is mistaken to suppose that Government can accept a direct financial responsibility for the remuneration of a large body of persons not in its employment or under its control. During the period which followed the severe economic troubles of the early 30's, and particularly during the recent war, the Government of Nigeria has found it necessary, from time to time, to give financial help to the voluntary agencies in difficulties caused by rising staff costs; such assistance was given at critical moments and without reference to principle; and it may be that, as a result of these measures, a mistaken conception has gained currency that voluntary agencies' teachers are virtually Government servants. This is, of course, not the case. It thus becomes essential to re-define the relationship between Government and the voluntary agencies, so that in future, Government, the voluntary agencies and their respective staffs know clearly their several and related responsibilities. This re-definition constitutes, of course, a problem of great magnitude and complexity, involving important organizational and financial issues, and a solution of it can only be found through a comprehensive review of these issues. I have made arrangements which will, I trust, ensure that decisions on the basis of such a review will be made in time for incorporation in the Code or Regulations to be issued under the new Education Ordinance, which will, if all goes according to plan, be placed before this Council in March next. I do not wish to anticipate those decisions, but one thing is clear, and that is that the principle of control on the basis of efficiency and social usefulness, which is the only appropriate basis on which Government's revenues can be given to support non-Government schools, must be the foundation of future policy. Meanwhile, pending the contemplated review of the main problem, I consider that material assistance must be given to the voluntary agencies to help them to meet their present difficulties during the current financial year. An interim and provisional settlement is, therefore, proposed. I regret that the assistance is not all that the voluntary agencies have asked for, but I can assure them that it is all that I feel justified in asking the Legislative Council to provide in advance of a full examination of grants-in-aid policy. It is indeed,

unlikely that that policy can be so shaped as to give, from the revenues of Nigeria, all that the voluntary agencies may expect. It would be idle to disguise that consideration, and it is proper that voluntary agencies should take note of it. This, like all other administrative problems, is not merely one of what Government would wish to do under ideal conditions, but one of what it can do, having regard to its total resources and its other commitments. The agencies can rest assured that the contemplated review will pay due regard to the very important place which the voluntary agencies occupy in the educational system of the more Southerly parts of Nigeria, and will aim at supporting their position. I have already instructed the Director of Education to consider what voluntary agency schools, not at present qualified as Assisted, might suitably be added to the list of assisted schools, and his recommendations on this point will be taken into account in the review which is to be made.

I have so far referred only to voluntary agency schools, but in the Northern parts of this country, the native authorities have, in general, undertaken responsibility for primary education. There are also native authority schools scattered through the Southern parts. So far these schools have not received financial assistance from Government. Under the scheme of grants-in-aid to native authorities, which is to be adopted as a consequence of the review of financial relations between Government and the native authorities which took place last year, native authority schools will qualify, under certain terms, for grants-in-aid, in the coming financial year. It has seemed to me entirely proper to anticipate that development to the extent of including in the interim settlement a substantial token sum to cover the additional cost of paying their teachers at rates approved, or to be approved, by them. This may be regarded not only as a practical measure of financial help, but also as a formal recognition by the Government of the important position occupied by native authority schools in Nigeria's education system.

I cannot conclude my observations on this question without reference to the basic question of finance. The educational advancement of Nigeria, which we are all at one in desiring, cannot be obtained free. Education is an expensive service, though in the end it pays great dividends. The Education vote for this year amounts to well over one million pounds, and it is twice as much as the actual expenditure two years ago. To this must be added an estimated expenditure this year on education of over four hundred thousand pounds under the Plan of Development and Welfare. The native authorities spend something like two hundred thousand pounds on education. And yet scarcely one-third of the vast field has been ploughed. It follows from these facts that, if the desire of the people of Nigeria for further education is to be met, additional resources will be absolutely necessary. The growing educational fabric can only be supported if the Government,

native authorities and the voluntary agencies can secure the necessary funds, and these can only be derived from school fees, private or communal generosity, and taxation, national and local. I trust, therefore, that if my successor decides to ask this Council for the means of securing additional revenue to meet the claims of progress, including of course educational progress, the response will be ready and even enthusiastic.

I turn now to personal matters.

The old order changes giving place to new. The Chief Secretary, after all too brief a period of office here during which he has won the affection and respect of all races, is going on promotion to the Governorship of Sierra Leone. Our best wishes go with him. Sir John Patterson, who is the embodiment of the Northern Provinces, is also going on retirement after a lifetime of devotion to the interests of Nigeria which has been his first and last love. His knowledge of the North is encyclopaedic and has never been surpassed. He also carries with him our affection and gratitude. The career of such an officer is a challenge to the rising generation and he hands on the torch of devotion to the public service still burning as brightly as when he received it thirty-three years ago.

During my four years of office I have—in speeches from the Chair—covered the main field of Government policy and I have—I trust—left no doubt of the policy which the Nigerian Government has been trying to carry out. Success has not always crowned our efforts, but as we all know “’Tis not in mortals to command success.” The least we can try and do is to deserve it. Looking back over the past four years no one, I think, would deny that much has happened and few would fail to admit that much progress has actually been made in Nigeria—political, social and economic—while the foundations for greater progress still have been steadily laid. The deep and disturbing questions which confront us can only be solved in a spirit of understanding and co-operation and a desire for truth. And those who sow hatred and malice can never expect to reap a harvest of goodwill. Democracy is a system of harmonizing different points of view by discussion and by respect for majority opinion, it is not the organized sabotage by a minority of all the rights of choice of the majority.

I am very pleased to hear that the Regional Houses under the new Constitution are already making their presence felt, and have already given evidence of an active, constructive interest in affairs and a determination to take their place in shaping them. May their stature continue to grow.

Personally, I leave Nigeria in the *Accra* about the middle of October, and I shall leave some portion of myself behind. I have found the work as head of this Government of absorbing interest. My mistakes have been, I hope, of the head but not of the heart. It is so difficult to build

and so easy to pull down. To some extent every Governor has some pulling down to do and some replanning. Much depends upon the spirit in which it is undertaken. I have tried not to be arrogant and to remember that the work of this generation will perhaps become but the raw material of the next. I think we should give to the past and to its aspirations the same respect that will, we hope, be given by the future to ours—and in all our rebuilding remember the lines:—

“Yet I despised not nor gloried; yet as we wrenched them apart,
I read in the razed foundations the heart of that builder's heart.
As he had risen and pleaded, so did I understand
The form of the dream he had followed in the face of the thing
he had planned.”

The time must come to all would-be builders when they have to leave their unfinished work to the faith of the faithless years and to repeat the refrain:—

“Only I cut on the timber — only I carved on the stone —
After me cometh a builder. Tell him I too have known.”

I should like to conclude, still, if you will forgive me, on a personal note, with a farewell message to the Government Service of Nigeria. At the end of a career in the Colonial Service it is natural to look back and to reflect on its aims and ideals. Its principles are clear enough—to do justice to all men without fear or favour and to help them to help themselves. I hope the Service will never lose its ideals. Men talk of their life-work and the most vivid word-artist of us all wrote about his—

“My new-cut ashlar takes the light
Where crimson blank the windows flare,
By my own work, before the night
Great Overseer, I make my prayer.”

It has been my good fortune to finish as the head of the best service in the world, and it is fitting that my last official words should be an acknowledgment to them and an expression of admiring gratitude. The Nigerian Service has a task of growing complexity and difficulty before it — probably the most difficult in the Empire and therefore the most worth doing. I am confident that if sympathy with the people of this country, and determination to understand them and to help them in the light of that understanding, continues to inspire the work of this Service there need be no fears about the future peaceful progress of Nigeria towards self-government and full partnership in the British Commonwealth of Nations. So long as the Service remembers that human sympathy is the most powerful solvent of all misunderstanding, it will be beyond the reach of malice.

“I cannot turn from any fire
On any man's hearth stone;
I know the wonder and desire
That went to build my own.”

It is in that spirit that I ask the Nigerian Service — European and African alike — to face a future of brilliant achievement in helping an increasing number of Africans to find practical expression for their patriotism in the service of their fellow countrymen.

There is no other way for Africa. The price of progress must be paid in the currency of hard work. There is much glib talk about dying for Nigeria, but what Nigeria needs is men who will live for her — a far harder and more exacting test. A nation fed on words must inevitably suffer from spiritual malnutrition. I have said before that I think this country, given the opportunities, can produce the public-spirited leaders it requires, and it is the duty and the privilege of us all to accelerate that process, by encouraging and giving an example of clear and right thinking in our public life.

I thank you, gentlemen.