

THE REJECTION OF THE MUNICIPAL
CORPORATIONS ORDINANCE OF 1924 AT ACCRA:
A REVIEW OF THE CAUSES

BY

S. S. QUARCOOPONG

In his address to the Gold Coast Legislative Council on 6th March, 1924, Governor F. G. Guggisberg declared:

Honourable members during the present session will have the important and exacting task of ~~examining~~ and passing the new Municipal Corporations Bill which will be put into effect in Accra during the coming year.¹

He added optimistically that:

The proposed legislation will....practically confer Municipal self-government on the citizens of Accra.²

Municipal administration was not an issue which very much interested the British in the Gold Coast. Towns, as Wraith points out, posed problems in politics and administration because by their nature, they could not fit in neatly into "the philosophical framework of indirect rule."³ The need, therefore, to make special arrangements for their administration necessitated the passing of the first Town Councils Ordinance in 1894, which was applied to only the ~~three~~ seaport towns of the Gold Coast, namely; Accra in 1898; Sekondi in 1904 and Cape Coast in 1906.⁴ By 1920 the need for its review was being expressed in the light of its unsatisfactory performance in these areas.

The reasons for these were; firstly, there developed a deep resentment of the levying of house rates and this remained a sore point between the townspeople and the Town Councils. Secondly, the idea of an official majority on the councils never went down well, particularly with the African educated elite because for among other reasons, control of revenue was the responsibility of the government officials who did not pay any tax themselves.⁵ Thirdly, the councils as constituted suffered from inherent problems which rendered them inefficient; their revenue was inadequate and their survival was largely due to grants made to them by the colonial government; and they had no responsible executive officers of their own and above all 'they commanded no local loyalty and inspired no local pride.'⁶ Fourthly a problem of dual control was created, in that, the Town Councils existed in towns where there were also in existence State Councils under traditional rulers. Relations between the two institutions became difficult with time, the feeling being that the Town Councils encroached upon the functions of the traditional state councils.⁷ Fifthly, by 1920 the Government was coming round to the view that the rapid growth of the seaport towns, and their great economic importance, added to the great influx into them of foreigners, who were not bound by local loyalties and customs, made it imperative to evolve a different and more progressive form of local government than could be provided by native administration and the Town Councils as then constituted.⁸

F. G. Guggisberg on assumption of office as Governor of the Gold Coast in 1919, consulted with all shades of opinion and in January 1921, set up a committee to examine the structure and functions of the existing Town Councils. The committee, consisting of Messrs. John Maxwell, Secretary for Native Affairs (Chairman), J. E. Casely-Hayford, T. Hutton Mills, E. J. P. Brown and J. Glover-Addo was to make recommendations as to how best the performances of the Town Councils could be improved for them to constitute 'educational establishments in administrative responsibility'⁹ for Africans.

The report which the committee presented on 26th May, 1922 contained far reaching and progressive recommendations. It recommended, inter alia, the drafting of a new Ordinance to give the Councils unofficial African majorities; an adult franchise based on property qualification, and that the majority of the African Councillors should be elected by wards or by the ratepayers as one body for the whole town as local circumstances dictated. The Governor was to appoint a third of the total number of elected members, while the local chamber of commerce - where it existed - was to appoint a sixth of that number. A Mayor was to be appointed by the Council from the African unofficial members.¹⁰

These major recommendations of the committee were the basis of the new Municipal Corporations Ordinance which was passed by the Legislative Council on 2nd July, 1924 and received the assent of the Acting Governor on 30th August, 1924.¹¹

By all standards, the new Ordinance was a progressive one. For one thing, unlike the 1894 Ordinance, there was to be a popular elections which no matter how limited in scope, was to introduce the people of the towns to modern political ideas and practices. On the vexed problem of rates, the Committee recommended, and this was accepted by the government, that it was inappropriate for the proposed Councils to impose a heavy burden of taxation on the inhabitants for the first few years of their operations, and that the Government should 'continue the....grants-in-aid to the Municipal Councils for a few more years after the proposed Ordinance comes into force'.¹² However, the grants-in-aid were to be reduced annually and withdrawn completely at the end of a fixed number of years, though it was to be provided from time to time for special purposes.

It turned out that this forward-looking Ordinance for which Guggisberg had put in all his effort and energy to have enacted was never to be implemented anywhere in the Gold Coast and eventually had to be withdrawn altogether. This, as Guggisberg was to confess later, was his only real disappointment as a Governor in the Gold Coast.¹³ The withdrawal of the Ordinance was due to the violent opposition with which it was received by the people of Accra where it had been decided that the Ordinance was first to be put into effect.

The obvious question is, why should the townspeople of Accra give this progressive Ordinance that kind of reception? It would be useful to examine the views of some writers on the question. According to Bourret, the rejection of the Ordinance was due to the revision of rates and the possible compromising of the position and authority of the native institutions.

In his words:

The Municipal members of the Legislative Council approved of this Ordinance but when it was published there was an outburst of opposition centering on Accra, where the poorer classes feared the imposition of increased rates while others held that African institutions would be undermined by the power of the elected Mayor.¹⁴

Wraith shares Bourret's view that the opposition and rejection of the Ordinance by the towns people of Accra was due to rates.

He writes:

Opposition to the revision of rates became vocal as soon as the terms of the Bill were known and none of the advantages proposed carried any weight in comparison with this grievous affliction.¹⁵

He continues:

The blame did not rest with him [Guggisberg] entirely, for he was misled by the apparent enthusiasm of the members who represented Accra, Cape Coast and Sekondi on the Legislative Council: for they on their part being persuaded by the good sense of what was being proposed seem to have underrated the unpopularity of the rating revision... He and they alike were victims of the massive determination of the citizens of Accra never in any circumstances to be taxed.¹⁶

David Kimble agrees with Bourret and Wraith that Guggisberg 'had reckoned without the stock response of the people of Accra in particular to any proposal involving direct taxation'. Kimble traced the root cause to this opposition to taxation to the incidents following the enactment of the Poll Tax Ordinance of 1854 and the subsequent attempts by the Government to collect the tax during which many people in the Gold Coast Colony lost their lives in opposing the move. This experience, according to Kimble, was responsible for the people of Accra and Christianborg - whose town was bombarded by the British - to close 'their minds on the subject' of taxation.¹⁷

In the view of this writer, the attempt to explain the reaction of the people of Accra to the new Ordinance as due to opposition to taxation is, as it were, scratching the surface of a situation which was of a more complex nature. It is true that the terrible experience with the enforcement of the Poll Tax alienated them from tax payment. Indeed, as Kimble points out, even the Town Council Ordinance of 1894, under which the next attempt was made to collect taxes created problems. Given this circumstance, and the fact that the main thrust of the Opposition to the Ordinance was towards its tax provisions, it is not difficult to understand the view-points of these scholars.

Yet, the Town Councils Ordinance of 1894 had been applied to Accra in 1898 and the people, even if grudgingly, had been meeting their tax obligation under its provisions to the Accra Town Council. In fact it is reported that as a result of a bubonic plague which swept over Accra with devastating effect in 1907, the people themselves began to appreciate the importance of rate payment at least for the provision of sanitary amenities, and from then on the collection of rate continued to increase. By the 1920's the payment of rates could be said to have been accepted by the townspeople of Accra and the other seaport towns, Sekondi and Cape Coast; otherwise it is inconceivable that the colonial Government would think of introducing a more progressive Ordinance with a more elaborate procedure for the collection of basic rates to replace the 1894 Ordinance.

Research conducted by this writer has revealed that the Municipal Corporation Ordinance of 1924 was a victim of a massive conspiracy in a chieftaincy dispute in Accra in which the merits and demerits of its provision were of no consequence, but were deliberately distorted and misrepresented. This action, by a section of the people of Accra led by some divisional chiefs, was to make the Ordinance unpopular and then to associate its enactment with the Ga Mantse (the Paramount Chief of Accra) with whom they were engaged in a dispute. The idea was to get the people aroused and alienated from the Ga Mantse in order to smoothen the way for his eventual destoolment. It is this crucial point missed by the

authorities mentioned above,¹⁹ and the part it played in the rejection of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance of 1924 that is examined in this paper.

In 1919, Nii Tackie Yaoboi was enstooled the Ga Mantse. Soon after coming to the stool he antagonized an influential section of his sub-chiefs and subjects. The cause of the dispute was that in June 1920, a European businessman, Mr. W. J. Blaker²⁰ approached the Ga Mantse and the fetish priest of the Korle Lagoon - the Korle Wulomo - about leasing out the lagoon in order to deepen and convert it into a deep water harbour. The Ga Mantse accordingly summoned a meeting of all his Divisional chiefs to discuss the issue. At the meeting, Blaker's proposals were discussed and accepted unanimously. It was however decided that the news should be withheld from the people pending the outcome of a final agreement on the issue with Mr. Blaker.

In the meantime, one of the Divisional chiefs, the Asere Mantse, had applied to the District Commissioner for Accra for a permit to display certain 'company' (Asafo) flags in public, and also to pay a ceremonial visit to Ayawaso, the Pre-1680 capital of the Ga state, to perform certain customary rites at the burial site of Mantse Okaikoi, the last Ga king to rule at Ayawaso.

The Ga Mantse, Tackie Yaoboi, took exception to two of the flags the Asere Mantse wanted to exhibit in public. In his view, they contained symbols offensive to the other quarters of the town.

He therefore applied to the District Commissioner to stop the display of the flags. He also requested that the Asere Mantse be prevented from entering Accra with a procession on his return from Ayawaso since this constituted a usurpation of a privilege solely reserved for him in his capacity as the paramount ruler of Accra. The district Commissioner upheld the objections and accordingly informed the Asere Mantse.

This development infuriated the Asere Mantse and he decided to seek revenge against the Ga Mantse. To this end, he decided to exploit his not being notified in writing of the final agreement with Mr. Blaker to make the Ga Mantse unpopular; bring him into disrepute and eventually seek his destoolment. In October 1920, he addressed a letter to the Korle Wulomo calling on him to nullify the agreement. He threatened that if his demand was not complied with, he would lay the matter before the people of Accra, or alternatively, he would seek a judicial cancellation of it in the courts. When he received no reply to his letter, he on 11th November, 1920, filed the necessary papers at the Divisional court at Accra. Notwithstanding this, he on 25th November, summoned a meeting and demanded the attendance of the Ga Mantse and all the parties to the agreement with Mr. Blaker, which however could not come on apparently, due to the ill-health of the Korle Wulomo.

By this time, the whole issue of the leasing of the sacred Lagoon²¹ had become public knowledge, and many of the people of Accra became appalled and angry at the sacrilege. In this tense and

explosive atmosphere, some members of the Accra educated elite, who were partisans of the Ga Mantse in the dispute approached Mr. Furley, the Secretary for Native Affairs, to do something to ease the tension in the town. Accordingly, Mr. Furley instructed the District Commissioner for Accra to advise the Asere Mantse that the dispute about the Lagoon should not be discussed at public meetings or dealt with in any Native Tribunal, until the courts had given a decision on the matter. The Asere Mantse ignored this advise and on 20th December, he and his supporters summoned a meeting on the matter. Naturally he wanted to cash in on the massive support that he was then enjoying among the people. The outcome of the meeting was that the Ga Mantse was said to have been tried according to custom and destooled.

The Government, however, doubtful as to the validity of the procedure as well as the destoolment itself set up a commission of Enquiry on 19th February, 1921 under Mr. C. W. Welman. Mr. Welman commenced work on 24th February, 1921, and submitted his report on 21st July, 1921. In his report, Mr. Welman submitted that the destoolment was contrary to native custom and should be declared null and void. The Asere Mantse also lost his suit at the Divisional court with costs awarded against him and his supporters. 22

Thanks to the findings of the Commission and the favourable ruling of the courts, the government overruled the destoolment and continued to recognise Nii Tackie Yaoboi as the Ga Mantse. The rebuff stiffened the determination of his detractors to have him

removed. From now on, they and their numerous supporters decided to exploit every opportunity to achieve their aim. Such an opportunity was created by the enactment of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance of 1924.

In order to apply the Ordinance to Accra as was proposed, section 186 of part IX was invoked. This empowered the Governor, subject to a resolution of the Legislative Council, to apply the Ordinance to any town of the colony, with the proviso that a notice of such a resolution was issued. This was published in Gazette No. 71 dated 13th September, 1924 and again in the issue of 23rd September, 1924. It authorized the Governor to apply by proclamation the Ordinance to Accra and Christianborg as one administrative unit. The notice also invited the Ga Mantse or any interested parties to lodge by written notification any objection to the proposed application of the Ordinance to Accra, specifying clearly the grounds of such objections, not later than one month after the appearance of the notice in the Gazette.

The publication of the notice immediately led to a highly charged and confused atmosphere in Accra and Christianborg. For a strange reason and contrary to the normal practice with all Ordinances, the Municipal Corporations Ordinance was not properly gazetted.²³ Indeed it appeared to the townspeople of Accra and Christianborg like a bomb suddenly dropped on them from nowhere. The educated elite and their representative in the Legislative Council did not take the trouble to prepare the minds of the mass

of the people on the implications of the Ordinance. In view of the widespread poverty at the time, it was inexcussable on their part, and that of the Government, not to take steps beforehand to educate the people about the Bill with particular reference to its tax provisions knowing quite well the explosive nature of the issue.

The potential of the general anger and resentment as a weapon to use in their struggle against the Ga Mantse and his supporters, the educated elite and the local branch of the Aborigines Rights Protection Society was quickly grasped by his detractors. They quickly held a meeting at which the new Ordinance was discussed and condemned. The meeting was of the view that it was the duty of the Ga Mantse to tell his subjects of laws affecting them proposed by the Government; failure to do so, could only mean that the Ga Mantse was a party to the enactment of the Ordinance. They appointed one Mr. Garshong as their spokesman and resolved not only to discredit the Ga Mantse and the Ordinance, but also to fight them both.²⁴

On 12th September, 1924, this group despatched a telegram to London, signed by their leaders on behalf of the aboriginal inhabitants, the Ratepayers including the Wulomei²⁵ and Asafoatsamei²⁶ of Accra and Christifanborg; and stating that the people had unanimously resolved that the Ordinance be not put into operation; that his Majesty's assent be withheld pending receipt of the People's petition.²⁷ Subsequently, two petitions were despatched and received in London on 10th October and 28th October, respectively, asking

that the Ordinance be not applied to Accra.²⁸

Meanwhile a mass meeting²⁹ was convened at the instance of this group on 30th August which was presided over by the Ga Mantse. At this meeting, it is significant to observe that the group led by the Asere and Sempe Mantsemei sat apart from the rest of the gathering. Mr. Garshong, their spokesman proceeded to read and explain the Ordinance in the vernacular³⁰ to the crowd, drawing attention mostly to its various 'harsh and oppressive' provisions, and so well did he do this that he in the end succeeded in turning the minds of the people against the Ordinance.

The Ga Mantse, not pleased with the way the Ordinance had been twisted and misinterpreted, asked for an adjournment so that he could consult the lawyers and educated men of the Aborigines Rights Protection Society to have the Ordinance explained to him more fully and correctly. He promised to reconvene the meeting at which the members of the Society would be invited to give their views. The opposition vehemently objected to this and argued that the educated elite had known of the Bill from its inception but failed to bring it to their notice, and, so should be left out of any discussion of it. They proposed that a petition be sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and that to this end all the Mantsemei should pay a levy of £10. The Ga Mantse, thinking that this would be an overreaction, did not favour the idea and insisted on going ahead to seek advice on the issue.

The Opposition, realising that they had the majority of the people on their side decided to ignore the Ga Mantse and to act on their own. With the support of an overwhelming majority of the Divisional chiefs they despatched a cable to London in which they requested that the application of the Municipal Corporation Ordinance of 1924 be withheld pending the receipt of a petition that they were preparing on it.

From then on, the Ga Mantse was openly accused of being behind the enactment of the 'Obnoxious' Ordinance and the subsequent attempt to apply it Accra. This, as it was meant to do, increased the hard feelings of the people against him.

Nii Tackie Yaaboi was unperturbed. On 3rd September, 1924, he summoned a meeting of the local Aborigines Rights Protection Society in his capacity as its local President. Needless to say, the invitation sent to his opponents to attend was turned down. The meeting, however, came on and it decided that a committee made up of some members of the society and two representatives each from all the quarters of Accra should be appointed to examine the Ordinance and make appropriate recommendations.

When his opponents heard of this they prevailed upon the 'Mantsemei' (plural of Mantse) of all the various quarters not to participate in the work of the committee. Instead they requested that the Ga Mantse should convene a mass meeting to do the work, which he refused to do. They then decided to take matters into

their own hands. Customarily, a mass meeting is properly summoned when the Ga Mantse authorizes a gong-gong to be beaten in all the quarters of Accra to that effect. The opposition ignored this and caused a gong-gong to be beaten to summon the people to a meeting which they scheduled for 5th September, 1924, also asking the people not to attend any meeting summoned by the Ga Mantse.

On realising that the situation in Accra was about to get out of hand, the Secretary for Native Affairs and the District Commissioner for Accra decided to intervene. They held separate meetings with all the parties in the dispute. The outcome was that, the Ga Mantse agreed to do all he could to reach a rapprochement with his opponents. As a compromise measure, he addressed a letter to the Colonial Secretary dated 12th September, 1924, not to submit the Bill to London for his Majesty's Assent until he and his people had submitted their views on it. In reply, he was informed that he had only up to 30th October for the receipt of his objections. To this end, he summoned a meeting of the Mantsemei and the Committee of the local A.R.P.S. This meeting which was well attended - far from harmonious. Acrimonious exchanges took place between the opposition and the members of the A.R.P.S. led by Dr. F. V. Nanka-Bruce, Vice-President of the Eastern Province branch. Eventually the meeting achieved some composure for some discussion, and agreed that the Ordinance was rather severe on its demands on the people, and that a combined committee of the A.R.P.S. the Mantsemei and

Asafoatsamei be appointed to come out with a compromise recommendation on it.

This arrangement, as could have been predicted, was doomed to failure. On the one hand, was the Opposition who rejected the Ordinance outright in an uncompromising manner, and on the other hand, were the Ga Mantse and the A.R.P.S. who in principle, at least, accepted it. In the circumstances, it was decided that each party must prepare a separate petition to be considered at a later joint meeting.

The Opposition was the first to finish with its petition while for some reason on which the records are silent, the A.R.P.S. did not come up with one. In the event, only the petition of the Opposition was considered at the meeting convened on 3rd October, presided over by the Ga Mantse, and characterized by tension. When the petition was read it was found to contain the wording of the cable which the Ga Mantse had earlier refused to sign. It read:

The Wulomei (or local Priests) namely Sakumo Nai and Korle, as well as the Mantsemei of all the quarters of Accra, excepting the Ga Mantse, most emphatically and categorically deny that they or any of them were ever present at any mass meeting at Accra or elsewhere at which the Resolution set forth at Page 9 of the Report of the Town Council Committee and alleged to have been moved by the Ga Mantse was either moved or carried.

This statement is untrue. It is on record that there was such a meeting at which a resolution which was seconded by

C. J. Bannerman and the three Wulomei (emphasis mine) of Accra and approved unanimously by the people' was moved by the Ga Mantse.³² No doubt, this false statement was inserted to make it impossible for Nii Tackie Yaaboi to sign and therefore alienate him further from the people and smoothen things for his destoolment, which was the end to which all the misrepresentation of the Ordinance was geared.

All the Mantsemei of the various quarters of Accra duly signed the petition amidst cheers from the people. When it came to the turn of Nii Tackie Yaaboi, he refused to sign upon advice from his councillors because he considered the petition to have been irresponsibly written. At this juncture, a riot broke out. Harsh words were used against the Ga Mantse and the members of the A.R.P.S. present. When the situation started to deteriorate, he decided to leave and when this became obvious the crowd threw missiles at him and he was injured on the wrist. The meeting therefore ended in a total confusion.

On 6th October, a deputation of Asafoatsemei called on the Ga Mantse at his palace not to find out how he was, but to pressurize him to sign the petition, and again he refused. They therefore decided to suspend the Ga Mantse from his duties and asked the Gbese Mantse to sign the petition as the Acting Ga Mantse. The petition having been signed by all the Mantsemei except the Ga Mantse and the James Town Mantse, Nii Kojo Ababio, was sent with a covering letter to the Government. In the letter it was stated

that the Ga Mantse had been suspended from his duties by the decision of the Mantsemei, Wulomei, Asafoatsemei and 'Manbii'³³ of Accra and Christianborg. Furthermore, the letter requested that as a consequence of this development, from then on 'all official and other communication should be addressed to the Acting Ga Mantse',³⁴ and that the relevant charges preferred against Nii Taackie Yaoboi would be furnished him to answer.

In the meantime the Government, realising the gravity of the situation, again intervened and tried to bring peace and understanding among the factions. The Secretary for Native Affairs once again arranged a series of meetings separately with the various factions and the result was that on 16th October, the Ga Mantse informed him that he, on the advice of his 'Gyase',³⁵ had decided to sign the petition. He asked the Secretary to ask the Mantsemei, Asafoatsemei and Manbii to attend a meeting he was convening the next day at 2.00p.m. for the purpose. But when he invited the Opposition and informed them of the Ga Mantse's decision, he realised that they were not prepared to co-operate with the Ga Mantse but were rather bent on destooling him. Consequently he cautioned that in the event of their proceeding to extremes, 'the Government would request to be satisfied that everything had been done in accordance with native custom'.³⁶

In the night of 16th October, a gong-gong was caused to be beaten by the Opposition throughout the town of Accra informing

the people of the suspension of the Ga Mantse from his duties and the appointment of the Gbese Mantse as the Acting Ga Mantse. The next morning, they held a meeting in their numbers to draw up destoolment charges to be served on the Ga Mantse at the meeting which the latter had summoned at 2.00p.m. that afternoon. When the Ga Mantse got wind of this, he immediately consulted his lawyers who advised him to take prompt action. On his behalf, they filed the necessary papers at the Divisional court, and as a result, Mr. Philip Gromton-Smyly, the chief Justice issued summons to be served on Nii Ayi Bonte, the Gbese Mantse; Asafoats'e C. S. Nettey and Mr. J. D. Garshong, as leaders of the Opposition to appear in court to answer a suit by Nii Tackie Yaoboi and 'certain representatives of his Gyase' who were claiming £500 jointly and severally from them for falsely and maliciously publishing that Tackie Yaoboi had been destooled. The writ also sought an injunction restraining the defendants, their followers and agents from interfering with the position of the Ga Mantse, as they were not the right persons under customary law to destool him.

An interim injunction was also issued strictly enjoining and restraining the defendants, their followers and agents under the penalty of £500 (Five hundred pounds) to be levied upon their land, goods and chattels for falsely and maliciously speaking and publishing anything against the Ga Mantse pending the hearing and determination of the motion for the injunction.

The writs were served on the defendants that afternoon at where they had gathered for the meeting summoned by the Ga Mantse. When their supporters were intimated with this development, they concluded that the meeting was a trap set by the Ga Mantse so that in the event of serving the writs they decided on resistance or riot, soldiers would be let loose on them. This, to them was the last straw. They quickly drew up destoolment charges and upon swearing a sacred oath, declared Nii Tackie Yaaboi destooled.

On 18th October they wrote to the Secretary for Native Affairs to formally inform him of their decision and also of the appointment of the Gbese Mantse as the Acting Ga Mantse. Furthermore, they asked that the People's Petition be now transmitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London at the earliest convenience, and that a complete report would be sent later. At the beginning of February, 1925 they notified the Government that Nii Tackie Yaaboi's predecessor, Nii Tackie Oblie³⁷ who was destooled in 1918 had been re-instated.

Meanwhile, Nii Tackie Yaaboi's court action was on at the Divisional court in Accra, which under the Chiefs' Ordinance of 1904 referred the question as to whether or not Nii Tackie Yaaboi had been properly destooled to the Governor who ordered an enquiry to ascertain whether the procedure adopted for the destoolment was in conformity with native custom. The colonial Secretary therefore wrote to all the disputants that until the Governor confirmed Nii Tackie Yaaboi's destoolment, the Governor would continue to

recognise him as the Ga Mantse.

The Governor decided to set up two commissions. The first with Mr. E. S. Newlands, the Deputy Commissioner for the Eastern Province as the sole commissioner was to inquire into the objections against the application of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance to Accra. The second commission with Mr. C. W. Welman, the Secretary for Native Affairs as chairman and Mr. J. W. de Graft Johnson, his Assistant as member and Mr. R. A. B. Mingle as interpreter, was to inquire into whether or not the destoolment of Nii Tackie Yacobi conformed to custom.

The Newlands Commission began its work on 20th November, 1924 and submitted his Report on 25th November, 1924. In his findings, he agreed with the submission that the people were too poor to pay their rates. He observed; 'it appears to be a fact that at present there is among the residents of Accra, considerable financial strigency'. In his view the poverty of the people was, among other things, due to the collapse of the building boom, which started in 1919, and the revolution in transportation brought about by the recent development in mechanical transport whereby railways and vehicles had enabled the Europeans to go to the cocoa producing areas, therefore making redundant the middleman role of the people of Accra and thus rendering many jobless.³⁸

It is very significant to note here that the people did not submit that they were against tax payment 'per se' as Wraith, Bourret and Kimble have it. But the commission found that they

were too poor to pay the rates envisaged by the Municipal Corporation Ordinance.

Mr. Newlands' considered view on the matter was that the Ordinance had not been properly explained to the people, and he made it quite clear that public opinion in Accra was emphatically against the application of the Ordinance to the Town.

It was on the strength of this finding that the Government decided to suspend and eventually withdrew the Ordinance completely.

The second commission began work on 6th March, 1925 and submitted its report in April 1925. In its report, it found that:

.... the manner in which the alleged destoolment was carried out was irregular and not in accordance with native law and custom. No charges were framed and presented to the Ga Mantse, he was given no opportunity of replying to the accusation against him. The proceedings were not initiated in the proper manner and destoolment was not consummated in the proper way. There was nothing but unconsidered declaration by a mob in a state of excitement and delusion after which a gong-gong was beaten and destoolment proclaimed.³⁹

The Governor accepted the finding and accordingly overruled the decision destooling Nii Tackie Yaaboi.

In the light of the foregoing, it is clear that the rejection of the Municipal Corporation Ordinance of 1924 was not due so much to the revision of basic rates as Bourret and Wraith would let us have it, nor the refusal to be taxed as Kimble observed. Primarily, the Ordinance was used as a tool in a chieftaincy dispute. It was deliberately misrepresented and made unpopular and then its enactment

was associated with the Ga Mantse and his supporters, a strategy which was to have the effect of alienating the Ga Mantse from the people in order to have him destooled. We have seen that in opposing the Ordinance, there was to be no compromise, but a persistent and consistent attempt to make it unpopular. When this was achieved they turned to their main objective which was frustrated by the Government.

In fact the strategy adopted was simply to support whatever measures the Government would introduce that were opposed by Nii Tackie Yaoboi and the educated elite, and to oppose what they supported. In 1925 when Nii Tackie Yaoboi and his supporters opposed the 1925 Constitution, they gave it their whole hearted support.⁴⁰ Again, in 1927, when the A.R.P.S. advised the chiefs not to have anything to do with the preparation of the Native Administration Ordinance, Nii Tackie Yaoboi was the only paramount chief in the Eastern Province who complied. His opponents immediately mobilized their supporters and marshalled a massive support for the Ordinance.⁴¹ In supporting these measures, as was the case with the Municipal Corporations Ordinance, the merits or demerits were not taken into consideration. By 1929, Nii Tackie Yaoboi was sufficiently alienated to be destooled by this group this time with the approval of the Government.⁴² It is therefore in the light of this general strategy adopted by the opponents of Nii Tackie Yaoboi that the primary cause for the rejection of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance of 1924 must be seen.

FOOTNOTES

1. Governor's sessional Address to the Legislative Council, 6th March, 1924.
2. Ibid.
3. Wraith, R. E. Guggisberg (London: O.U.P., 1967) p.207..
4. Wraith Op. Cit. p.207.
5. Wraith Op. Cit. p.208.
6. Wraith Op. Cit. p.209.
7. Ribero, M.A. et al Quo Vadimus? or Gold Coast future (Achimota) p.14.
8. Guggisberg, F. G. The Gold Coast: A Review of Events of 1924-25, And Prospects of 1925-1926, p.135.
9. Wraith Op. Cit. p.209.
10. Report of the Town Council Committee, Accra, 26th May, 1922.
11. Guggisberg was then on leave in England.
12. Report of the Town Council Committee, Accra, 26th May, 1922.
13. Guggisberg's last Annual Message at the Budget Session of the Legislative Council, 3rd March, 1927..
14. Bourret, F. M. The Gold Coast, 1919-46 (Stanford University Press; Stanford, California; 1949), p.45.
15. Wraith Op. Cit. p.211.
16. Wraith Op. Cit. p.212.
17. Kimble, David, A Political History of Ghana: 1850-1928, (London, O.U.P., 1963) p.447.
18. Acquah, Ione, Accra Survey (London, University of London Press: 1958) p.26.
19. Kimble, to be sure mentions the considerable unrest in Accra during this period, including a campaign against the Ga Mantse for not leading the Opposition to the Ordinance. He however

fails to elaborate on this, furthermore he does not appreciate the significance of the deliberate misrepresentation of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance on the part of the detractors of the Ga Mantse. See Kimble, D. Ibid.

20. See Report on the Destoolment of the Ga Mantse, 1921, ADM 11/1756, Ghana National Archives, Accra.
21. The Korle Lagoon is very sacred to the Ga Mashie people. It is held to be the abode of Korle, one of the three main deities of the Ga Mashie people.
22. See the Report of the Destoolment of the Ga Mantse, 1921, Op. Cit.
23. The Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the objection against The Application of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance of 1924 to Accra ADM 11/889, Ghana National Archives, Accra.
24. Op. Cit.
25. These are the Nai, Korle and Sakumo Wulomei who are the principal traditional priests of the central Accra people.
26. The Asafoatsemei are the War Captains.
27. Asafoatse Mettey and others to Secretary of State, 12th September, 1924, ADM 11/889, Ghana National Archives, Accra.
28. On 7th October, 1924, Nii Dowuona, The Osu (Christianborg) Mantse submitted a petition also asking that the Ordinance be not applied to Christianborg. The Ga Mantse himself sent his petition on 12th September, asking that further action on the Ordinance be postponed.
29. Report of the Commission into Objection against the Application, Op. Cit.
30. That is, in the Ga language.
31. See Report into the Destoolment of Ga Mantse, 26th February, 1925, Ghana National Archives, Accra.
32. Op. Cit.

33. Manbii is a Ga word meaning townspeople.
34. See Letter from Asafoatsemei and Mantsemei to S.N.A. dated 6th October, 1924, ADM 11/889, Ghana National Archives, Accra. Gyase means Royal Household.
35. Report into Destoolment of Ga Mantse, 26th February, 1925, Ghana National Archives, Accra.
36. Nii Tackie Oblie was the predecessor of Nii Tackie Oblie, he was destooled in 1918. See J. C. Okai and others. Letter to S. of S. dated 9th May, 1925, ADM 11/1088, Ghana National Archives, Accra.
37. See the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the objection against the Application of the Municipal Corporations Ordinance of 1924 to Accra, ADM 11/889, Ghana National Archives, Accra.
38. See Report of Commission of Enquiry into the Destoolment of Ga Mantse, 26th February, 1925, Ghana National Archives, Accra.
39. See letter from Nii Tackie Yaoboi to Provincial Commissioner: Eastern Province dated 14th May, 1926, ADM 11/925, Ghana National Archives, Accra.

Also Report of the Native Affairs Department; Eastern Province 1926-27.

Also see Resolution of Mantsemei of Accra, Gbese, etc. dated 28th August, 1926, ADM 22/925, Ghana National Archives, Accra.

40. Ibid.
41. See letter from Nii Ayi Bonte, Ag. Ga Mantse to D. C. dated 12th September, 1929, ADM 11/1089, Ghana National Archives, Accra.
42. See also letter from D.C. to S.N.A. dated 16th September, 1929, ADM 11/1089, Ghana National Archives, Accra.