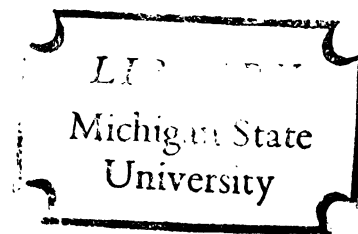


THE COLONIAL OFFICE AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE
NATIONAL CONGRESS OF BRITISH WEST AFRICA

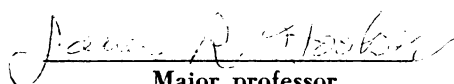
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Major professor

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ABSTRACT

THE COLONIAL OFFICE AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF BRITISH WEST AFRICA

by Gabriel Ihie Chinenye Eluwa

For the better part of the latter half of the nineteenth century Britain regarded the British West African elite as allies in the establishment of her new regime in West Africa. Opposition to alien encroachments came from the traditional elements although in some cases the educated aborigines joined forces with their traditional rulers in such oppositions. But by the turn of the century, Britain, for various reasons, chief of which were economic and political, had divested the educated elite of their privileged position and "dispossessed" them of their "inheritance." Those who had formerly been regarded as antagonists by the imperial master, namely, the traditional chiefs and potentates, were now taken into close partnership in the construction of the emergent British West African Empire. This reversal of policy the educated elite saw not only as a negation of their cherished dream of an inheritance of a modern, affluent and well-ordered state over which they were entitled to rule by their prescriptive right of education and economic wealth, but also as a threat to their immediate interests, economic, political and otherwise. In fact, it was the latter kind of frustration that gave an edge to

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nationalist reactions that culminated in the launching of the National Congress of British West Africa. Opposition to the colonial regime was not to that regime as such, but to the "unwelcome" aspects of it, to facets of it that worked to the detriment of the people. (It was later that nationalist agitation was to demand the root and branch extermination of alien authority.) To the present nationalists the most objectionable feature of the colonial regime that must be actively opposed and removed was its policy of excluding the educated elite not only from the higher appointments, administrative, judicial and technical, in the Colonial Civil Service, but also from significant roles in the political system of the emergent modern state. This is not to under-rate the importance of more general issues like the West African land question, which was most dear to the West African aborigine, and which could easily rally, not only the various elements in any one community but also all the various communities of all four British West African Colonies, against "the objectionable policy" of the Imperial master. For the moment, however, it was not as urgent as, to the Congress's leaders, the "exclusion policy" issue which affected the educated elite, and indirectly, their uneducated brethren as well.

To remove this major "disability" from which the educated elite suffered and also a multitude of others whose relative values varied greatly, this "handful" but articulate

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and influential group of educated West Africans sought political power as a surer means to their economic and related "liberties." Hence, the question of the franchise--of the introduction of the elective principle into the Colonial Legislatures--was paramount in the reform program of the Congress's leaders. The concession of the principle would be an admission by the powers that be, that they should be guided in their policy and government by what the people felt they wanted rather than what the Colonial Governments thought the people wanted. The paternalistic system of government would yield, if gradually, to a truly democratic system in which the elected member would be increasingly the chief "determining agent" of government policy and the focus of attention and influence. The winning of majority position, with or without executive responsibility, for the elected unofficial members in the colonial legislature would be another landmark, after the introduction of the elective principle in that legislature, in the constitutional progress of the colony, until responsible government ushered in the national independence of a modern democratic state. The National Congress of British West Africa sought for the meantime the twofold concession of the elective principle and unofficial majority control over finance in the British West African Colonial legislatures. For a while they were

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thwarted in their realization of the first, while the second
objective was to be the lot of their "progeny" to realize.

It was mainly the hostile denunciations of the
movement by the Colonial Governments that jeopardized the
chances of the success of the Congress's petition to the King.
In these denunciations, however, the Colonial Governments
were abetted by some aboriginal elements of British West
Africa and also by some foreign vested interests. The issue
of the "representativeness" of the movement was given a rel-
atively prominent place in the controversy that raged about
the movement. But it is clear on reflection, that a more
fundamental issue than the "indeterminate" one of represen-
tation was the place of the educated elite vis-à-vis the
traditional authorities in the new polity that was emerging.
It was the avowed policy of the Colonial Governments to
"enthroned" traditional authority even if it worked to the
detriment of the elite. It is probable that a still more
fundamental concern of the Imperial Master was what her
ultimate fate in her new imperial "estate" would be if the
demands of the articulate and "progressive" elite were pro-
gressively met.

The educated elite, however, saw themselves as
being worsted by the "unprogressive" policy of exclusion.
The opposition which they were able to offer to the Colonial
Governments proved distressing to those Governments and

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eventually productive of worthwhile results. Thus, there was a reassessment of the situation by the powers that be and a growing recognition of the true place of that elite in the new polity. Wise statesmanship might dictate limited and gradual concessions but the logical consequence of the recognition of and provision for the oncoming "wind of change" is clear, namely, a modification of colonial policy with the educated elite gradually "reinstated" and re-prepared as the major heirs of the new "inheritance"--the modern democratic nation once described by the Colonial Governments as a mere figment of the imagination.

There was, perhaps, enough of internal motive force to bring the idea of British West African Congress to fruition. There was the inspiration as well as the precedent of indigenous precursor movements, and there was the immediate impact of the "disabilities" from which the Congress's promoters felt they and their people suffered. Casely Hayford, the distinguished Gold Coast barrister, politician and dominant personality behind the Congress movement, had in his various works recounted these "disabilities" and argued the case of his people for a just place in the Empire. In his thinking and objective he was fairly representative of a group of influential and articulate elites who gladly cooperated with him in the move to realize the idea of a Congress of British West Africa. In this move they were further inspired and

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stimulated by a number of external forces, among which were Negro emancipationist movements, certain contemporary National Congress movements and the climate of idealism generated by World War I. Mooted in 1912, the idea was not realized until March, 1920, chiefly owing to the intervention of the war and the desire of the Congress's promoters not to "embarrass His Majesty's Government" in its time of trial.

Although the idea of a Congress of British West Africans was mooted by a Nigerian, Dr. Akiwande Savage, and almost immediately taken up by the Nigerian Press, and although Dr. Savage tried to realize his idea on his return to Nigeria from the Gold Coast, leadership of the movement to realize the idea soon passed on to the Gold Coast and remained there. This was, perhaps, due partially to the capable, magnetic and inspiring personality of Casely Hayford who turned out to be the "guiding genius" behind the Congress movement, and partially to the maturer experience of the Gold Coast vis-à-vis the other British West African Colonies in the organization of "national" movements. The Gold Coast leadership seemed to have been gladly accepted by her sister colonies which also took part in the preliminary activities that eventually led to the Accra Conference of 1920. This was attended by delegates from all four colonies. This historic gathering which represented a more widely based British West African nationalist movement than had hitherto been attempted

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justified its memorable first session of nearly three weeks by the production, on vital issues affecting the four colonies, of eighty-three resolutions which formed the basis and material for the Congress's petition to the King later in the year.

In their approach to the King, the Congress's leaders "by-passed" the Colonial Governors who took offence at what they regarded as an unprovoked and unwarranted insult from the Congress. Partly as a result of this tactical error of the Congress's leaders and partly as a result of what the Governors regarded as more serious objections to the Congress movement, these Governors, who were at first mildly sympathetic to the movement, now unleashed their devastating attacks against it. Probably there were apprehensions from these Governments as to what the ultimate objectives of the Congress were, but for the moment, however, they saw the movement as "diametrically opposed" to the Colonial Government's policy of indirect rule, which stood for "natural" and ordered development of the colonies. On their part, the Congress leaders claimed that they were only asking for "modest" concessions, while they saw no point in going through the slow and grinding process of official machinery for the removal of their grievances. In spite of its able presentation and defense of its case, however, the Congress's mission to London was successfully undermined by the hostility of the Colonial Governments.

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Although the Congress's London deputation had been thwarted, mainly by opposition from Colonial Governments, those Governments soon had second thoughts which resulted in a limited but significant concession to the legislative reforms advocated by the Congress. A few other relatively minor concessions also followed. But it was clear that only a small portion of the Congress's program had been realized before its demise soon after the death, in 1930, of its founder, Casely Hayford. Although, however, the Colonial Governments did not expressly own it, it was clear from official correspondence and timing of these concessions that, in spite of official antagonisms to the movement, the Congress was becoming a force to be reckoned with in official circles.

The Congress had little separate existence in each colony, and although it maintained a secretariat in Sekondi, it really came to life only during its general sessions in the colonial capitals. Various factors contributed to its lack of vitality and eventually its demise, chief of which were official antagonism, the movement's "exclusive base," and the great natural barriers and differences between the colonies.

During its ephemeral existence the Congress made a significant impact on the West African political scene, and it blazed a trail to be followed by later and in some cases more militant and radical nationalist movements. To the

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Congress's limited contemporary achievements must be added those of "descendant" movements of British West Africa, to which it at least provided an inspiration and a precedent.

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PREFACE

This dissertation, based on my research work in Britain, covers the history of the National Congress of British West Africa from 1912 to 1930. Its main objective is to show by documentary evidence the part played by the Colonial Office and the various Colonial Governments in West Africa in affecting the fortunes of the Congress, and also to estimate the apparent failure and the positive achievements of the movement. Hitherto, there have been speculations as to what part the British West African Colonial Governments played in the decision of the Secretary of State for the Colonies to reject the Congress's petition to the King in 1920. This work attempts to assess, on the basis of documentary evidence which has not, hitherto, been used by other scholars, the above and other related questions, such as the impact of the Congress movement on colonial policy in British West Africa. On these issues, the relevant primary sources, especially those of the Colonial Office located in the Public Record Office, London, which have been incorporated in this work, have cast a new light, and in this sense, this work, which is based mainly and centrally on these records, attempts a new contribution to knowledge in that area.

The materials I have not used are in West Africa, and they relate to the part played by Africans; these I hope, however, to consult after I have returned to Nsukka.

The Colonial Office documents used are for the years 1919 to 1923, and some for the year 1925. While these are usually located at the Public Record Office, a good number of printed primary sources are available not only in this Office but also at the Colonial Office Library recently renamed Commonwealth Office Library. (The former name will, however, be retained for convenience.)

I must not fail to remark that I was fortunate to have undertaken this work just at the time the vital Colonial Office documents for this study were officially released by the United Kingdom Government. Credit for the good fortune of utilizing this opportunity attaches mainly, if not solely, to my academic supervisor in London, Dr. J. E. Flint, who disclosed the opportunity to me, encouraged me to take it, and guided me in making the most of it. I must also express my immense gratitude to him for his securing for me official permission to consult the 1923 records, without which special permission, I could not have gone beyond the 1922 records. In this connection I must also express my gratitude to the Colonial Office Librarian, B. Cheeseman, who allowed me to take a "peep" into some relevant documents for the year 1925.

Outside the C. O. records referred to above, I have for my primary sources, drawn largely on the West African and British press, especially for the period before 1919 and after 1923. Needless to say, substantial use has also been made of printed official documents including debates of the various British West African colonial legislatures.

For the Introduction to this work I have largely drawn from Coleman's Nigeria: Background to Nationalism (California, 1963), Kimble's Political History of Ghana (Oxford, 1965), which also has been very useful for the period after 1923, from Flint's Nigeria and Ghana (New Jersey, 1966), Fyfe's History of Sierra Leone (Oxford, 1962), and Sierra Leone Inheritance (London, 1964), and finally, from McIntyre's Colonies into Commonwealth (London, 1966). To these authors I owe a debt of gratitude, as also to other authors from whose works I have drawn something of value for this chapter.

Valuable use has also been made of a multitude of secondary works for various parts of this work. It is, however, impossible to acknowledge individually the authors of these works. To them collectively, therefore, I would like to express my gratitude.

There is not, to my knowledge, any major secondary work on the National Congress of British West Africa, except Kimble's book which devotes the major part of a chapter to the subject, mostly in relation to Ghana. There is, however,

lodged at the University of Legon, Ghana, a recent M.A. thesis by one of the University's history students. This work I hope to consult on my return to West Africa.

An attempt has been made to sketch the life-history of Casely Hayford, the dominant personality in the Congress movement, and to relate his political thinking to the emergence and career of the movement. To the best of my knowledge, his biography is yet to be written. I am, however, indebted to M. J. Sampson's works, acknowledged in the text, for the biography of Casely Hayford, incorporated in this work. In this connection, I must also point out that the biographies of the various colonial governors who played such an important part in the affairs of the Congress, are yet to be written. A biography of Gordon Guggisberg by B. U. Wraith of the Institute of Local Government Studies, University of Birmingham, England is, however, in press.

To the Ford Foundation Grant I am heavily indebted for the realization of a project whose end product is this work. In this connection I owe a special debt of gratitude to my professor, Dr. J. R. Hooker, who drew my attention to that source of sponsorship. I am also grateful to Dr. Charles Hughes and his staff of Michigan State University's African Studies Center, through whose agency the Ford grant was made available to me.

I must not fail to record my appreciation of the cheerful and prompt services of various officials at the Public Record Office, the Colonial Office Library, the British Museum, and the British Museum Newspaper Library (Colindale) --all in London.

There are several learned friends and acquaintances of mine who have contributed in various ways to the production of this work. Two of these learned friends deserve special mention. They are Dr. J. E. Flint, Reader in History, King's College, London, who, as already mentioned, supervised the work in London. Another is Dr. J. R. Hooker, Associate Professor of History, Michigan State University, who was forthcoming with helpful suggestions and who also reviewed the final writing of the thesis. Were it not for these two, for whose personal interest and goodwill, wise counsel and constant encouragement I am profoundly grateful, this work would neither have been undertaken nor completed. The merits of this study I also owe to them, as also to all who helped with valuable criticisms and suggestions. All errors of fact and interpretation are, however, my sole responsibility.

Finally I must record my inestimable debt to my beloved wife, Grace Ada Eluwa, whose moral support, sacrifices, and untiring application to the task in hand made an invaluable contribution to the production of this work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A study of the background to the emergence of the National Congress of British West Africa reveals not only that the germ of the movement was rooted in a fairly distant past, but also that a variety of interesting forces of a fairly recent occurrence "conspired" to ensure its propitious birth. The incipient nationalism which the movement embodied reflects a link in a chain of reactions to the British advent into and "colonization" of West Africa. Britain's involvement in this area was chiefly the result of her need to safeguard her trading interests. On the whole, her early regimes in West Africa began with few preconceived notions, except those emanating from the policy of "legitimate commerce" which presupposed that the object of policy was abolition of slavery within the colonial area, the discouragement of slavery and the slave trade in neighboring African states, and the development of lawful commerce.

In this task it was natural that the educated elements among Africans should be regarded as allies by the colonial master, and from the 1840's to the 1880's Africans rose to high positions in the colonial service. Thus, in

Sierra Leone, for example, William Fergusson,¹ Afro-West Indian by origin, and a medical graduate of Edinburgh, was appointed its governor in 1844, while John Ezzidio, a Nupe ex-slave who had become a wealthy trader and a pillar of the colony's Wesleyan Church, was elected a member of the Sierra Leone Legislative Council in 1863.² Most notable in this respect was the case of Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a Yoruba ex-slave who after sojourning in England for a time returned to the colony to become the first student of Fourah Bay College in 1827. Later, he was to take part in the official British expeditions to the Niger in 1841, 1854 and 1857, and after founding the Anglican Niger mission on the latter trip was eventually to become the first African Bishop on the Niger, in 1864.

In the Gold Coast, James Bannerman was appointed Civil Commandant at Christianborg in 1850, while even as early as 1820 he had been a Justice of the Peace in the colony. In fact, the Governor of the Gold Coast had thought so highly

¹The early generation of educated Africans generally assumed European surnames, a practice not altogether extinct among West Africans. Notice that Casely Hayford, in spite of his "nativistic" tendencies, retained such a name although he tagged on to it his native surname Ekra-Agiman, usually written in brackets, while previously Rev. S.R.E. Attoh-Ahuma had been answering to Rev. S. R. B. Solomon.

²W. D. McIntyre, Colonies into Commonwealth, (London, 1966) pp. 155-156; Christopher Fyfe, A History of Sierra Leone (Oxford, 1962), pp. 229-232, passim.

of him that he had arranged for Bannerman to act in his absence in 1850, while on the death of the Governor at the end of the year Bannerman had become the Colony's Lieutenant-Governor.³ As late as 1883, of forty-three "higher posts" in the Gold Coast, nine were filled by Africans, including seven District Commissioners.⁴

In Nigeria several thousand "liberated" Africans who returned to their homeland in the old Yoruba Kingdom of Oyo became spearheads in the introduction of new Western European influences, and it is well-known that the most notable of these was Samuel Ajayi Crowther. In the problems of the war-torn Yoruba hinterland Governor Maloney of the Lagos Colony in the 1800's saw useful allies in two African clergymen, the Rev. S. Johnson and the Rev. C. Philips, whom he utilized as peacemaking delegates into the interior.⁵ More significant still was Governor MacGregor's attitude to the educated Africans. Thus, Sir William MacGregor, Governor of the Lagos Colony from 1899 to 1904, not only mixed freely with these educated Africans, but also admitted them to

³David Kimble, A Political History of Ghana, 1850-1928 (London, 1963) p. 65.

⁴Ibid., p. 94.

⁵J. E. Flint, Nigeria-the Colonial Experience 1880-1914 Typescript of a chapter to be published in the forthcoming Africa in the Colonial Era, edited by L. H. Gann and P. Duignan, Stanford University Press; p. 22.

positions of trust within the administration. Thus, in 1900 he appointed Henry Carr, a Nigerian graduate who was already Inspector of Schools, as Assistant Colonial Secretary with special responsibility for native affairs, and even though this appointment was not a success, Carr went on to become Director of Education in the Colony. MacGregor also appointed several Nigerians to the Legislative Council, "already regarded by the educated elements as an embryonic national parliament," even though there were no elected members. In 1901 the Nigerian doctor of medicine, O. Johnson, and the lawyer, C. Sapara Williams, joined the Legislative Council, while MacGregor later appointed C. J. George, an African trader, as one of its members.⁶

But these official "policies" were not destined to last, for by the 1880's British attitude towards the employment of educated Africans in the Administration had begun to change for a variety of reasons. In the first place, the growth of racial theories in Europe after 1860 had undermined the concept of a true imperial partnership, at least in its African context. Thus, even in the C. M. S. Niger Mission, the "brotherhood of man" had been disrupted by an ugly and debasing struggle along racial lines, between black and white clergy. If this was so in the missions, it was even more in evidence

⁶Ibid., pp. 35 and 36.

in secular life where racial conflict was intensified by the competitiveness of the educated Africans whose ambition was to show themselves as capable of doing jobs normally done by Europeans. In the second place, with improved medical conditions for Europeans by the 1890's, it had become easier to recruit Europeans for Colonial appointments in West Africa. Now these officers were able to bring out their wives and children, and soon began to build a separate and exclusive social life of their own. After 1880 it had become almost impossible for Africans in the colonial administration to rise to positions carrying decision-making authority.⁷

Kimble has observed that before the end of the 19th century "the doors of African opportunity were closing fast," while of two hundred and seventy-four officers listed in the Gold Coast Senior Civil service in 1908, only five of these were Africans, four of whom held appointments of "comparatively junior rank."⁸ The Gold Coast position may be taken to be fairly representative of British West Africa.⁹

⁷See J. E. Flint, Nigeria and Ghana, (New Jersey, 1966), p. 149.

⁸David Kimble, A Political History of Ghana, 1850-1928, (London, 1966), pp. 98-100.

⁹J. S. Coleman has observed that "despite the comparatively large number of Nigerian barristers, the Nigerian judiciary remained predominantly European until the 1940's" while "by 1939, there were only twenty-three educated Africans in the senior service." - Nigeria: Background to Nationalism (California, 1963), p. 154.

It was their exclusion from the administrative, judicial, and technical branches of the senior civil service which the educated African elements felt most keenly. In the Gold Coast, for example, the curtailment of opportunity for Africans aroused substantial and sustained adverse comments from the African unofficial members of the colony's Legislative Council, while even a European unofficial member had, in 1910, criticized the abolition of the post of "Native Commissioner."¹⁰ The decision in 1902 to exclude qualified Africans, even those with proven experience, from the West African Medical Service, later (1909) supported by a Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to enquire into the issue,¹¹ provoked scathing criticisms from the Sierra Leone Weekly News, amongst others. Thus, this paper in its editorials regretted the unwise and imprudent policy of the Colonial Governments in failing to consult, much less enlist, the services of "the best elements among the educated Africans" on matters affecting the general progress of British West Africa. It saw the current British colonial policy regarding West Africa as one of repression aimed at removing "forever all black or coloured men from the higher and more remunerative services of the State,"

¹⁰See Kimble, Op. Cit., p. 100.

¹¹Christopher Fyfe, Sierra Leone Inheritance (London, 1964), p. 299.

with¹ the unveiled determination . . . to keep the African down and mold him, perforce, for mere drudgery, helotry and despal." The paper finally proceeded to draw a warning parallel between the arrogant British Empire of the early twentieth century and the vanished empires of Rome and Assyria.¹²

Yet, as the complexities of government increased it had become necessary to raise the qualification requirements of incoming officers. In the Gold Coast, for example, African candidates for the post of District Commissioner had now to satisfy the "specialized" requirement of being either solicitors or barristers. The position was not improved by legally qualified Africans' preference for the higher rewards of private practice. Yet, after the 1880's it was noticeable that there was little or no enthusiasm in government circles to encourage those prepared to go "through the mill" of relatively junior appointments, while no attempt was made to create opportunities for them to gain the necessary experience or qualifications to take charge of government departments; thereafter, the number of Africans in senior posts was to drop, while no effort was made to find others to replace them.¹³

¹²The Sierra Leone Weekly News, 5 March, 1910, 22 July, 1911, 26 August, 1911, and 2nd November, 1912.

¹³See Kimble, Op. Cit., p. 99.

It is a strong contention to argue that the conflicting pulls of family and public loyalty often created difficulties in African appointments and tended to reinforce official fears and prejudices against such appointments, and the question of the efficiency of African officials seemed to depend on the eye of the beholder. In fact, the plea for "the maintenance of high standards" with regard to the latter point seemed to smack of sophistry when in certain cases African junior officials appeared to be doing much of the work and assuming a measure of the responsibility, while their white superiors had the power, the perquisites and the status. Discrimination in senior appointments which worked to the detriment of the African seems to have been based ultimately on the economic interests of the colonial master, which include, those of the European officials, although the question of power and control was an important determining factor also. In fact, as early as 1902, the Government had come out quite openly on the issue of discrimination. Thus, a pamphlet of that year drawn up for the new West African Medical Service stated that applicants must be of "European" parentage, while an unpublished note made it quite clear that this was designed to exclude Africans. Seven West African medical students at Edinburgh University, including F. V. Nanka-Bruce, had seen the pamphlet and had persuaded the Dean of their Faculty to take the matter up on their behalf. The Dean did not succeed in his efforts, but a letter from the Colonial

Office in reply, betrayed a highly revealing case of illogicality:

. . . There are special difficulties in the way of employing native doctors, even if fully qualified, to attend upon European officers, especially when stationed in the bush or at outstations. Qualified medical men of African parentage, however, although it is not proposed to employ them on the West African Medical Staff, are not excluded from public employment in West Africa.¹⁴

The growing antagonism of these frustrated educated Africans against their British masters was aggravated by the former's further exclusion from the field of local government, which was a practical expression of the policy of indirect rule. With the rapid occupation of the interior between 1880 and 1900, the British had had to face the immediate problem of how to administer these areas. To build an elaborate network of direct administration through district officers was out of the question; such a system would have been financially prohibitive and politically unfeasible. Consequently, the British had to resort to maintaining the traditional rulers as instruments of local government, although it was not necessary that those instruments should have been virtually confined to those traditional elements. It was the Lugardian policy in Nigeria, where indirect rule worked extremely well in the north, to exclude the educated elements from the native authority system. In the Gold Coast the British increasingly stressed, after 1910, their intention

¹⁴Letter of 5th of May, 1902, from Colonial Office to Professor Sir William Turner - cited in Kimble, Op. Cit., p. 98.

of preserving traditional authority, which the educated elements saw as a move to make "native authorities" the sole mode of African political expression or to downgrade the role of the Legislative Council. Here, "Native Jurisdiction" questions provided a field for battles between the Government and the educated elements, while on several occasions the former had to amend, or even drop proposed legislation on these issues.¹⁵ In fact, it was Lugard's policy in Nigeria not only to exclude the educated elements from the native authority system but also to prevent their contact with the masses.¹⁶ And, after creating a curious situation whereby the Government not only presumed that educated Africans were unrepresentative but also operated to keep them so, he advanced an argument which appears a curious rationalization in the context in which it was put forward:

It is a cardinal principle of British Colonial policy that the interests of a large native population shall not be subject to the will . . . of a small minority of educated and Europeanised natives who have nothing in common with them, and whose interests are often opposed to theirs.¹⁷

Educated Africans' opposition to indirect rule increased as they saw it as a very localized form of self-government unable

¹⁵See Flint, Op. Cit., pp. 149-155, passim.

¹⁶See Coleman, Op. Cit., p. 162.

¹⁷Lugard, Report on the Amalgamation of Southern and Northern Nigeria, and Administration, 1912-1919, Cmd. 468 (London H.M.S.O., 1920), p. 19.

to provide fully for their aspirations and as a form of rule *under* which their traditional rulers became increasingly docile and even subservient to an alien authority. On this authority these traditional rulers were seen to depend increasingly for their authority before the erosive influences of the new social, economic and educational forces of the new polity and the emasculating effects on native authority of the native ordinances of the colonial master. The situation was not improved by the attitude of the traditional authorities who were on the whole, hostile to educated Africans, and regarded them as lowborn, with dangerous ambitions, and foreign. Yet, while this was generally so in Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and probably in the Gambia also, significant exceptions could be found in the Gold Coast, especially before the 1920's, in the co-operation that existed between the educated elements and their chiefs in the Gold Coast Colony, a healthy phenomenon which the principle of election to Gold Coast Chieftaincy made possible.¹⁸

One should not be surprised, however, that the addition of so much territory in West Africa to Britain's initial acquisitions on the coast at once made the educated elements, which were almost entirely coastal and urban, no longer "representative" of Africans in the new and larger

¹⁸ Note, for example, the Fanti Confederation and the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, an association of the Gold Coast chiefs and the educated elements.

areas of the hinterland. But the British did little to improve their "representativeness" and to encourage cooperation between the educated and traditional elements. Rather, the British had called a halt to the development of Legislative Councils,¹⁹ and, to the educated and Christian elements, the new British policy appeared to be a negation of their aspirations, with this curious reversal of alliances in the Afro-British relationship. In its new policy, however, the British were regrettably failing to come to grips with the inevitable problem of where the educated elements would fit in the total picture of the Colonial Government, and of who would eventually control the superstructure holding the native authorities together in a modern political unit. The new educated elements had come to stay in the new polity that was emerging and a reconciliation of the two "opposing" forces--new and traditional--was a desideratum and even a sine qua non to the new society's healthy development and growth. In failing to see this and in pursuing a native policy that tended to create or aggravate tensions between the educated elements and their traditional rulers instead of reconciling both these elements, the British showed a remarkable lack of foresight and a curious power of self-deception. Time was to show that the policy of sharing "supreme" power with the educated Africans was the wiser policy for the British to follow, official

¹⁹See Flint, Op. Cit., p. 149.

predilections notwithstanding. The virtual exclusion of educated Africans from significant roles in the Colonial Government, which became an ever more serious grievance with the growth in the number of these educated Africans, had given an edge and an urgency to nationalist demands which were but a reflection of their frustrations administrative and otherwise.²⁰

Yet, in spite of the current conflicting interests between the educated and the traditional elements, some continuity is traceable in the nationalist struggle as the educated elements are seen to owe something of a precedent to their traditional authorities, at least in their opposition to the menacing encroachments of alien interest. In the beginning, African opposition to British expansion and authority had emanated from traditional rulers or ruling groups who in general fought for their independence and who were in certain cases crushed by military means. Thus, as early as the 1860's, King Aggrey of the Gold Coast had come into serious conflict with the British authorities on the issue of self-government, and although the Fanti Confederation of the

²⁰It is interesting that some European administrators, such as Sir John Rodger in the Gold Coast, early expressed apprehensions at the contradictions inherent in the British policy of turning out "black and brown Englishmen" by the score and then "cursing the finished article when the operation is complete" - The African Mail, 9th July, 1909.

1870's represented a union of the educated and traditional elements on the issue of internal self-government, it can be seen as a substantially traditional movement, though a "modernized" one at that.²¹ Another nationalist movement in the Gold Coast soon followed. This was the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, an association of "traditional" and "educated" elements. Although practically run by the educated elements, with the "Natural Rulers" as figureheads in the nationalist agitation, it was essentially a continuation of its precursor movements. Formed in 1897 to combat a new land law,²² the Aborigines' Society was perhaps the first organized protest on anything approaching a national scale in the Gold Coast, and perhaps, in the whole of British West Africa. The Society, a "precursor" to the National Congress of British West Africa, was later to be closely associated with the Gold Coast branch of the Congress when leading officers in the one also held offices in the other and when certain resolutions of the Congress were utilized in the Society's one-time petition to the King.²³

²¹For detailed accounts of these topics see Kimble, Op. Cit., pp. 192-221, 222-63.

²²In 1894 the colonial Government of the Gold Coast, which was alarmed when speculators tried to get mineral and timber right by doubtful means, sought to pass a Crown Lands Bill to vest control over waste lands, forests and minerals on the Crown; but this raised an outcry from the new elite to which the traditional elements rallied - See McIntyre, Op. Cit., p. 269, also Flint, Nigeria and Ghana p. 157.

²³See Kimble, Op. Cit., pp. 396-399 and 401-402.

In Nigeria traditional opponents to alien encroachment included King Kosoko of Lagos and Jaja of Opobo in the 19th century, and later, the Fulani emirs such as the Sultan of Sokoto.²⁴

Although later nationalists owed something of a precedent to their traditional rulers, it was to their educated forebears that they owed relatively greater inspiration in their nationalist cause. To Africanus Horton²⁵ belongs the credit of having been the first to voice nationalist aspirations in the Gold Coast and probably in the whole of British West Africa. Horton challenged seriously the widespread belief in the natural inferiority of Africans when he observed that the "European nations . . . in years long passed were themselves as barbarous and unenlightened as the negro Africans are at present." And proceeding, he recounted the ancient achievements of the "Negro Race" which even the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome admired.

²⁴See Coleman, Op. Cit., pp. 169-175; see also Flint's works cited above, and also McIntyre's, pp. 264-265.

²⁵James Africanus Beale Horton was the son of an Ibo recaptive later settled in Gloucester Village, Freetown. He was one of the first Creoles who qualified as medical doctors in Britain; Horton qualified in 1859 at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. He entered the Army in the same year and served for over twenty years, making the Gold Coast his home. He published several medical books. A notable political publication of his was West African Countries and Peoples, British and Native, with the Requirements necessary for Establishing that self Government recommended by the Committee of the House of Commons, 1865; and a Vindication of the African Race (London: W. J. Johnson, 1868).

Then he asked:

Why should not the same race who governed Egypt . . . who had her churches, her universities, and her repositories of learning and science, once more stand on their legs and endeavour to raise their characters in the scale of the civilised world?

He appealed to what he considered the law and cycle of change as a source of inspiration to his people. "Nations rise and fall," he wrote, and "such being the tendency of all national greatness, the nations of Western Africa must live in the hope, that in process of time their turn will come, when they will occupy a prominent position in the world's history, and when they will command a voice in the council of nations." Referring to the 1865 Select Committee's Report on West Africa, he remarked that "the House of Commons Committee has now set on foot by resolution (and we hope it will soon be by actual practice) that great principle of establishing independent African nationlities."²⁶

But while Dr. Horton gets the credit for being a pioneer in the field, the works of Dr. E. W. Blyden²⁷ from the 1870's onwards had a much greater influence on West African

²⁶J. A. B. Horton, West African Countries and Peoples . . . and a Vindication of the African Race (London, 1868) pp. 65-68 and 73-74.

²⁷Edward Wilmot Blyden was born in the West Indian island of St. Thomas in 1832, a descendant of slaves imported by the Danes, mainly from Christianborg in the Gold Coast. He subsequently became a teacher at the College of Liberia which he later adopted as his home. By 1865 he had become the Liberian Secretary of State, and later was appointed Ambassador to the Court of St. James. In 1885 he stood for the

nationalist thought. Blyden's major work is his Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race, published in 1887. This work contained vindications of African capability and appeals to the African of both hemispheres to take worthy possession of their homeland, making as they should, a unique contribution to humanity. This work, like Blyden's West Africa Before Europe, published in 1905, became the treasured property of several influential West Africans. In fact, Casely Hayford, who was later to play such a dominant role in the history of the National Congress of British West Africa, wrote an introduction to the latter work of Blyden's, paying tribute to Blyden's efforts "to reveal everywhere the African unto himself . . . to lead him back into self-respect," and to restore him to "his true place in creation upon natural and national lines."²⁸

Presidency of Liberia. At one time he was a minister in the Presbyterian Church of West Africa, and in 1890-91 he visited Lagos where he had a strong influence on the foundation of the United Native African Church. In 1901 he became Director of Mohammedan Education in Sierra Leone for whose Governor, John Pope Hennessy, he had produced in the 1870's some interesting schemes for a West African University. He censured missionary teaching for failing to foster African self-reliance and originality and felt a West African University would teach students not to copy European models but develop their own originality. Blyden's views on various issues were certainly influential among educated West Africans. He died in 1912. See Hollis B. Lynch's forthcoming Edward W. Blyden, Pan-Negro Patriot (London, 1966); also his "Edward W. Blyden: Pioneer West African Nationalist," Journal of African History, Vol. VI, No. 3.

²⁸ Casely Hayford, Ethiopia Unbound (London, 1911), pp. 161-166.

Another important early contributor to West African nationalism in general and Nigerian nationalism in particular was John Payne Jackson, a Liberian who later made Nigeria his home. Jackson was a close confidant of Blyden's, but for twenty-eight years, from 1890-1918, he lived and wrote in Lagos.²⁹ While Blyden emphasized the cultural aspects of nationalism, Jackson stressed the more political aspects of it. From 1891 to his death in 1918, and even beyond, the Lagos Weekly Record, which Jackson edited, was a determined agent in the propagation of racial consciousness. Its criticism of the government, usually expressed in lengthy editorials, was forthright, pungent and defiant:

One cannot refrain from speculating upon the bankruptcy of the New Imperialism and the apparent decay of British Imperial genius, so long as Great Britain continues to transcend the limits of political righteousness; to harbour the colour prejudice . . .; to legislate away the rights of her coloured subjects . . .; and to remain indifferent to the wishes of her subject dependencies.³⁰

Referring particularly to Nigeria, this paper warned that "if the Nigerian system is not scrapped within the next five years, the unfortunate experiences of the Indian agitation will be witnessed in West Africa."³¹ It further urged that

²⁹See Coleman, Op. Cit., p. 183.

³⁰The Lagos Weekly Record, Feb. 26, 1910.

³¹Ibid., June 11, 1919.

"every constitutional effort directed against the nullification of the Nigerian System is a consecrated duty, a moral duty and a national duty," nay, that "resistance to oppression is not only justifiable but necessary."³²

Early West African nationalism asserted itself in the religious sphere also, which undoubtedly left its impact on latter-day nationalism. Crowther's elevation to the Bishopric in 1864 had been opposed from the first by some of the white clergy, who from 1880 began mounting attacks on his Niger Mission. When he died in 1891 in the midst of the crisis resulting from the hostility between the white and black clergy, some of the black clergy broke away to form the United Native African Church. In fact, a similar break-away African Baptist Church had been formed for similar reasons in 1888. These break-away Churches began a movement of independence in religious matters which later resulted in the foundation of several new religious groups; they all stressed "independent Government" as their main aim.³³ Some of these sects had received encouragement from American Negro sects.³⁴ Directly or indirectly, trans-Atlantic contacts and influences contributed appreciably to African national consciousness, especially in the cultural sphere. It is interesting to note that Patriarch J. G. Campbell, organizer

³²Ibid., June 14, 1919.

³³See Flint, Nigeria and Ghana, pp. 157-158.

³⁴See Coleman, Op. Cit., p. 176.

of the West African Episcopal Church, was a prominent figure in pre-World War I Lagos politics and one of the leading personalities in the West African Congress movement of the 1920's.

Several other forces made their contribution to national consciousness in British West Africa. In 1911 the First Universal Races' Congress held in London was attended by several Negro American leaders. Also in attendance was Dr. Mojola Agbebi, African pastor of the Niger Delta Mission, who read a paper entitled "The West African Problem," which was published in the proceedings.³⁵ In the same year Booker T. Washington had convened the International Conference on the Negro, which was attended by representatives from many countries, including Casely Hayford, who contributed a paper entitled, "The Progress of the Gold Coast Native."³⁶ In the following year he was writing to Booker Washington, who was considering how far methods used in his institute might be appropriate for Africa.³⁷ Soon after, there was a growing interest in Pan-African and "Back to Africa" movements on both sides of the Atlantic.³⁸

³⁵See G. Spiller, ed., Papers on Inter-racial Problems Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress (London, 1911) As early as 1895, a Yoruba, Orishetukeh Faduma, had attended the Congress on Africa held at Atlanta, Georgia, and had contributed a paper to the theme "Africa and the American Negro". See Coleman, Op. Cit., p. 187.

³⁶Coleman, Loc. Cit.

³⁷Kimble, Op. Cit., p. 541.

³⁸See G. Shepperson, "Notes on Negro American Influences on the Emergence of African Nationalism," in the Journal of African History (London, 1960), Vol. I, No. 2.

Two developments among Negro groups in the early years of the twentieth century stimulated in a particularly significant way the growth of national consciousness in West Africa. One was the convening of the first Pan-African Congress in Paris in 1918-1919, by W. E. DuBois and Blaise Diagne, African deputy from Senegal to the French National Assembly. Dr. DuBois, who had founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples in 1910, organized, with the assistance of Diagne, his first Pan-African Congress "to try to impress upon the members of the Peace Conference . . . the importance of Africa in the future world."³⁹ The Congress and its resolutions which included the subject of self-determination were fully reported in the West African Press, and DuBois was known to have been in touch with Casely Hayford concerning his subsequent plans. Three similar Pan-African Congresses were held during the 1920's, meeting in one European capital after another to secure maximum support from their colonial subjects. The Congress movement stimulated among politically conscious West Africans an awareness of belonging to a wider cause, and it probably helped them to acquire wider techniques of organization. Later, West Africans were to take a prominent part in the Congress movement.

³⁹DuBois, The World and Africa (New York, 1947), p. 8.

The second external development, highly significant for the African nationalist cause, was the emergence of the militant and race-conscious Garvey movement. Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican Negro, was the most spectacular Negro leader of the post-war years. He had visited London from 1912 to 1914, and after learning there of alleged atrocities in Africa, had returned to Jamaica to found the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and its affiliate, the African Communities League, to unite "all Negro peoples of the world into one great body and to establish a country and government absolutely their own."⁴⁰ Receiving little support from his countrymen in Jamaica, he went to the United States in 1916 and within four years he was able to transform the Universal Negro Improvement Association into the largest Negro mass organization in modern times, and had also become its acknowledged leader. Between 1920 and 1925, Negro conventions in New York City, attended by delegates from many parts of Africa, had made elaborate plans for the establishment of a Negro state in Africa, had adopted declarations of independence and selected a flag and a national anthem, and had elected Garvey as the Provisional President of Africa. Although Garvey had sought to incorporate in his nationalist ideology the cultural, economic

⁴⁰Robert H. Brisbane, "His Excellency: The Provisional President of Africa," Phylon, X (Third Quarter, 1949) p. 259. See also Edmund D. Cronon's Black Moses (Madison, 1955).

and political aspects of Negro nationalism, he none the less stressed the overriding priority of political independence. Thus, he pointed out that "prejudice of the white race against the black race is not so much because of color as of condition; because as a race, to them, we have accomplished nothing; we have built no nation, no government," yet "nationhood is the only means by which modern civilization can completely protect itself;" since "every race must find a home," it had become imperative to raise "the great cry of . . . 'Africa for the Africans'."⁴¹

The ideas propagated by the Garveyite movement did make deep impressions on some West Africans, including those who would not embrace the movement openly. The Gold Coast Independent had drawn some encouraging parallels between the 1919 resolutions of the U.N.I.A. and those of the emerging West African Congress, and had remarked that "Negro peoples throughout the world are demanding, not as a favour but as of right, their place among the Nations of the Earth," and further warned that "anyone who stands aloof in order to buy the whiteman's favour, betrays his country."⁴² Two years later this paper hailed Garvey's U.N.I.A. as the "most potent organisation in the United States."⁴³ It is significant that

⁴¹Amy Jacques Garvey, ed., Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey (New York, 1923) p. 34, et passim.

⁴²The Gold Coast Independent, 1-8 March, 1919.

⁴³Ibid., 22 Oct., 1921.

Casely Hayford himself considered that the U.N.I.A., with whose constitutional aspect he was in sympathy, had done more than any other agency to bring "to the notice of world opinion the disabilities of the African race."⁴⁴ A Lagos branch of the Garveyite movement established in the fall of 1920 included Patriarch J. G. Campbell,⁴⁵ who was also a prominent member of the National Congress of British West Africa. The effects of the movement on future West African leaders like Azikiwe and Nkrumah were considerable and it was reported that a portrait of Marcus Garvey hung over the entrance door to the study of late Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah.⁴⁶

By 1919 there had been two associations formed by Africans and persons of African descent living in the United Kingdom, which probably exerted some influence on West African nationalism. One was the Union of African Peoples and the other was the Society of Peoples of African Origin. In 1919 these two associations amalgamated to form the African Progress Union,⁴⁷ whose main object was to uphold the principle of equal treatment for all within the British Empire. In

⁴⁴Hayford, The Disabilities of Black Folk and their Treatment, with an Appeal to the Labour Party. (Accra, 1929).

⁴⁵Coleman, Op. Cit., p. 191.

⁴⁶See Coleman, Loc. Cit.

⁴⁷Kimble, Op. Cit., p. 549.

this objective the association was anticipatory of the National Congress of British West Africa whose policy was "to preserve strictly and inviolate the connection of the British West African Dependencies with the British Empire and to maintain unreservedly all and every right of free citizenship of the Empire . . ."⁴⁸ The African Progress Union was to play host in February, 1921, to the Congress's London delegation, and back in West Africa, Casely Hayford observed that "the African Progress Union forms a link in the heart of the Empire between the African at home and the African abroad."⁴⁹

In Britain, a sense of African solidarity had also been growing among the increasing number of African students there. These, with some West Indian Students, had founded the Union of Students of African Descent in 1917. Although the student organizations in Britain initially seemed to have shied away from "open" politics, they none the less did make some subtle impact on the nationalist cause, while with the formation of the West African Students Union in 1925, a definite and open attempt was made "to discuss all matters affecting West Africa 'educationally, commercially, economically and politically'; and in particular to cooperate with the National Congress of British West Africa."⁵⁰ Some mutually

⁴⁸See C. O. 98/33; The Congress Petition to the King.

⁴⁹Hayford, Presidential Address; Sampson West African Leadership, p. 75.

⁵⁰Kimble, Op. Cit., p. 549.

useful contact existed between Casely Hayford, the dominant figure of the National Congress of British West Africa, and Ladipo Solanke, "the moving spirit" behind the West African Students Union, while it is well-known that the Congress delegates made some contact with certain West African students in London during the former's mission to Britain on the Congress's petition to the King.

Far away in India something of inspirational value to the West African nationalists was taking place at this time. The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, had by 1919 achieved notable successes in its political struggle,⁵¹ and had produced eager admirers in West Africa. When India was invited to be represented in the War Cabinet in 1917, the West African nationalists asked why West Africa was not invited as well. When India and the Dominions were invited to the Peace Conference of 1919, the inchoate West African Congress, represented by its Gold Coast "steering" Committee

⁵¹These successes were reflected in the Government of India Act of 1919, by which the Viceroy's executive council was enlarged to include six members, three of whom were Indians. Although the central government still remained responsible to London, the central legislature became something of a bicameral colonial Parliament, with an upper house or Council of State composed of sixty-one members elected for five years and a Legislative Assembly with a majority of elected members. The franchise, based on property qualification, was extended to five million including women. Although the Government of India was not made responsible to the central legislature, some measure of responsible government was granted in the provinces. The Act took effect two years later.

sent resolutions to the Western Powers through the Imperial Government, so that "the voice of West Africa" could also be heard at the conference.⁵²

In Ceylon, the Ceylon National Congress had been formed the previous year, 1918, following the Indian precedent. Spurred on by the reforms of the India Act of 1919, the Ceylon Congress leaders had demanded reform in Ceylon, and by the 1920's Ceylon had begun to advance along the road of responsible government. A new constitution, announced in 1920, gave Ceylon representative government not unlike the system in white-settled colonies in the early Victorian age. After the Donoughmore Commission's Report of 1928, a notable advance towards parliamentary government was achieved in Ceylon.⁵³ Casely Hayford, in his 1929 Presidential Address, was to refer to "the proposed changes in the Ceylon Constitution" as a guide to future constitutional advance for

⁵²See C. O. 96/598; C. O. 98/33, Letter and enclosure of 24th Feb., 1919 from Nanka-Bruce and Woolhouse Bannerman to Governor's Private Secretary, Gold Coast.

⁵³The Donoughmore Report, implemented in the Ceylon Constitution of 1931, had proposed to "transfer to the elected representatives of the people complete control over the internal affairs of the Island." In practical terms, it had suggested universal adult suffrage and a system of partial responsible government with certain major ministries "reserved" for the British Officers-of-State, and other relatively minor ones "transferred" to Ceylonese ministers made responsible, by slightly indirect means, to the State Council. The three British Officers-of-State and seven Ceylonese elected ministers constituted the "Board of Ministers."

British West Africa. In an earlier address, in 1923, he had referred to the constitutional precedents "in the Indian and the recently proposed West Indian constitutions" as current "models . . . to go by."⁵⁴

Besides these movements, the effects of the 1914-1918 War on West Africans were politically significant. Many West Africans, as a result of their countries' participation in the war, had become conscious for the first time of international problems. The demand for equal status between the races was certainly encouraged by the sense of a common cause. As the Gold Coast Independent put it, "if they [the West Africans] were good enough to fight and die in the Empire's cause they were good enough . . . to have a share in the Government of their countries."⁵⁵ In fact, Sir Harry Johnston had even suggested in 1919 that the defeat of Germany had shaken European domination in Africa, arousing a dormant nationalism, and stimulating "the beginning of revolt against the white man's supremacy."⁵⁶ Besides, the

⁵⁴Sampson, West African Leadership, pp. 72 and 88.

⁵⁵The Gold Coast Independent, 22 Oct., 1921.

⁵⁶Johnston, Address to the African Society, 28th March, 1919; West Africa, 5th April, 1919. Sir Harry Johnston had earlier warned that the Imperial Government must "recognise and re-affirm" the rights of black citizens of the Empire as soon as the war was over. The Black Man's Part in the War (London, 1917).

statements of President Wilson and Prime Minister Lloyd George regarding self-determination strongly affected West African leaders of the time, despite General Smut's assertion that the African aborigines could not possibly govern themselves.

It was obvious that a small but growing number of articulate and politically conscious West Africans were feeling the impact of a variety of politically significant issues of the day. Thus, influenced by a number of international events, inspired by the examples of "precursor" nationalist movements, and stimulated by the climate of idealism generated by the war, a few educated and articulate Africans in the British West African colonies organized and formally launched, in March, 1920, the National Congress of British West Africa to ensure among other things, "the better and more effective representation of our people" in the affairs concerning them and also the promotion of unity among them.⁵⁷ Casely Hayford, a distinguished Gold Coast barrister and politician, turned out to be the chief moving spirit behind the Congress movement; a brief survey of his life and political thinking in relation to the movement seems pertinent and therefore follows.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Hayford, Inaugural Address; C. O. 98/33 - Correspondence relating to the N.C.B.W.A.

⁵⁸ Hayford's political philosophy as enunciated below may be taken to be representative of that of his group, who, with him as the leading personality, proceeded to launch the movement.

Although the genesis of the idea of a "congress of all natives of British West Africa" is traceable to Dr. Akiwande Savage of Nigeria,⁵⁹ it was chiefly Casely Hayford of the Gold Coast who utilized this idea and gave it birth in the National Congress of British West Africa. From Casely Hayford the congress movement received the inspiration that sustained it, and with his death followed its decline and, almost immediately afterwards, its demise.

Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford, fourth son of the Rev. and Mrs. Joseph de Graft Hayford, was born on September 29th, 1866. He belonged to Cape Coast in the Central Province of the Gold Coast Colony where, in the Wesleyan Boys' High School, he began his educational career. His early signs of promise encouraged his father to send him to Sierra Leone for the furtherance of his education, and there he became a student of the Fourah Bay College, Freetown. After a couple of years, he returned home to be the principal of the Accra Wesleyan High School. He subsequently took up a journalistic career, first working as sub-editor of the Gold Coast Echo. He was successively editor of the Gold Coast Chronicle, and joint-editor, with Rev. Atto-Ahuma, of the Wesleyan Methodist Times. After serving as an articled clerk to a European legal practitioner at Cape Coast, Mr. Eiolart, he

⁵⁹See below, p. 44.

proceeded to England and entered the Inner Temple as well as Peterhouse College, Cambridge. Called to the Bar on November 17th, 1896, he returned to practice in Cape Coast, Axim, Sekondi and Accra.

He seemed to have such a keen love of journalism that he never gave it up; he was editor of the Gold Coast Leader from 1915 till his death in 1930. He had assumed the editorship of that journal when Dr. Savage, then its editor, returned to Nigeria.

Casely Hayford made valuable contributions to the activities of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society; he was, for example, one of the members of its deputation to England in 1912, to make representations against the Gold Coast Forest Bill of 1911.⁶⁰ He was nominated a member of the Gold Coast Legislative Council for the first time in 1916, and, but for a short break, served continuously on that Council until his death in 1930. He was elected the Municipal Member for Sekondi in September, 1927. He was also a member of the Board of Education and Achimota Council. He served on several Government Commissions, such as those of the Takoradi Harbour Construction, Town Council Re-organization,

⁶⁰This Bill was chiefly concerned with forest preservation in the Gold Coast, but was interpreted by the Gold Coast A.R.P.S. as a clever move by the Government to deprive them of their lands. See Casely Hayford, The Truth About the West African Land Question (London, 1913) p. 80 et. sq.

Achimota Constitution, and African Officials' Salary Scheme among others. As a recognition of his public services he was awarded, in 1919, Membership of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.).⁶¹ In 1920, with the aid of his "colleagues," Hayford founded the National Congress of British West Africa to which he proved its main source of energy until his death in 1930.

Casely Hayford applied himself diligently not only to politics but also to literary productions, including such valuable works as Gold Coast Native Institutions (1903), Ethiopia Unbound (1911), The Truth About the West African Land Question (1913), and Gold Coast Land Tenure and Forest Bill (1911 and 1912), and United West Africa (1919). Other works, of relatively minor importance, are William Waddy Harris, the West African Reformer (1919) and The Disabilities of Black Folk and Their Treatment with an Appeal to the Labour Party (1929).

All these works give a valuable insight into his thinking generally, and into his political thinking in particular. His public utterances which supplement and reinforce these are equally valuable in this respect. A collection of the latter is found in M. J. Sampson's West African

⁶¹For valuable information on Hayford's life - history see M. J. Sampson, Gold Coast Men of Affairs, Past and Present, (London, 1937) pp. 160-173; also that author's West African Leadership (London, 1951).

Leadership (London, 1951). It is intended, in the present study, to give particular attention to Hayford's political thinking.

In his literary expositions, Casely Hayford argues, with regard to representative government for the aborigines of British West Africa, that the idea was inherent in the people since "it is the very essence of the Native State system." In this system the right of every adult member of the community to be represented in the "State Councils" was fully recognized and provided for. In the Gold Coast, for example, "you find already a system of self-government as perfect and efficient as the most forward nations of the earth can possibly conceive." Consequently, he argued, "a people who could indigenously and without a literature, evolve the orderly representative government which was obtained in Ashanti and the Gold Coast before the advent of the foreign interloper, are a people to be respected and shown consideration when they proceed to discuss questions of self-government." In the light of this fact, Imperial policy could not justifiably limit the operation of representative self-government to those British colonies whose peoples are "nearly or wholly white." On the contrary, he continued, "wherever a strong case has been made showing the capability and the right of any given community in free alliance and friendship with Great Britain . . . to manage its own internal affairs," Great Britain should "not be backward in extending to such a

community the blessing of free institutions." Only on such sound principles, he averred, could the Empire hope to survive. Casely Hayford, not content with this argument, appealed to imperial history to reinforce his case. The relations between Great Britain and the Gold Coast, he pointed out, "originated in friendship, mutual trust, and commercial alliance." Consequently the people of the Gold Coast "have a right to mold their institutions upon their lines, Great Britain being merely a protecting Power, . . . only concerned with their relations with the outside world." But, since Britain had failed to act on such a principle, he considered her policy as rather "retrogressive," discouraging the "national spirit," and destroying "every vestige of it in the breasts of the people." He envisaged and advocated as a sound imperial policy for British West Africa, the fostering of a healthy development of free native institutions. This would be the basis of the emergence of "Imperial West Africa." In such a healthy imperial edifice all the parties concerned stood to gain. It must, however, be recognized that the task could be better accomplished only by the educated native who would proceed on "aboriginal" lines, grafting on to the native system what is desirable and best in modern civilization. He then claimed that, in this "grandest conception of the twentieth century," the Gold Coast and Ashanti are destined by their innate qualities to lead and guide the rest of West

Africa, whose consent, however, would be forthcoming before its realization.⁶²

It was, however, later in his thinking that Casely Hayford revealed the implications of the self-government he had been envisaging for British West Africa. Thus, he pointed to the extension of the franchise, accompanied by a measure of responsibility on the Executive side of government for the people. This stage he considered as really marking the entry of his people into the threshold of self-government. From this would follow ultimate attainment of complete self-government and Dominion status. In fact, he went further to envisage a British West African Parliament, which would, among other things, be an embodiment of the contemplated West Africa Nation.⁶³

Hayford also stressed the importance of development along "original lines" with regard to the intellectual emancipation of the race. He cited the intellectual contributions of W.E. Burghardt DuBois and Edward Wilmot Blyden on this issue and was at pains to evaluate the relative value of their works.

⁶²Casely Hayford, Gold Coast Native Institutions (London, 1903) p. 246.

⁶³Hayford, Presidential Address, Freetown, Jan., 1923; Sampson, West African Leadership, p. 72; also, Hayford, The Disabilities of the Black Folk and Their Treatment with an Appeal to the Labour Party (Accra, 1929).

Thus he wrote:

In the Afro-American school of thought represented by Du Bois the black man is seeking intellectually and materially to show himself a man along the lines of progress of the white man. In the African school of thought, represented by Dr. Blyden, the black man is engaged upon a sublimer task, namely, the discovery of his true place in creation upon natural and national lines.⁶⁴

He then concluded that this message of Blyden, whereby he tries to get the African to see his true self and thereby retrieve his self-respect, was the true motivating force which should carry the race on "from victory to victory."

With reference to another wider issue of African nationality, he saw the white man, with all his exploitation of the African, as constituting a formidable obstacle to the latter's realization of his aspirations. He faced the issue courageously and asserted that in all the disabilities that confronted him, the African must recognize that ultimate responsibility for the amelioration of his condition devolved on him for, as he argued, "the experience of mankind shows . . . that reform never comes to a class or a people unless and until those concerned have worked out their own salvation."⁶⁵ If this were so, the African leader then asked justly for recognition of his right to struggle on equal terms with other peoples of the world, as well as that of

⁶⁴Hayford, Ethiopia Unbound (London, 1911), pp. 163-165.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 169.

his freedom to develop in his own way, according to his natural qualities and the peculiar idiosyncracies of the race.

Casely Hayford believed in the power of persuasion as an effective means of achieving the emancipation of his people. Thus, he asserted that their way to freedom "lies not at present so much in the exhibition of material force and power, as in the gentler art of persuasion by the logic of facts and of achievements before which all reasonable men must bow."⁶⁶ Behind this, however, lurked a sense of realism. Thus he asserted that "it is important that the African should take the line of least resistance in focussing public opinion upon African problems,"⁶⁷ and in meeting any combination of forces against him.⁶⁸

Casely Hayford also believed in practical measures and he was pragmatic in his philosophic attitude to life. What was good was what worked, what was useful, and what would bring the good things of life to his people. It is said that one of his well-known sayings was "take what you get, and get what you want."⁶⁹ It is because of this practical utilitarian

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 168.

⁶⁷Hayford, The Disabilities of Black Folk and Their Treatment.

⁶⁸Hayford, Ethiopia Unbound, p. 168.

⁶⁹See J. B. Danquah's Introduction to Sampson's Gold Coast Men of Affairs, p. 36.

spirit that his political actions were termed unprincipled or opportunist by his critics.⁷⁰

In the struggle for emancipation and eventual nationhood and national greatness, education was posited as a vital force, a crucial instrument of victory.

History tells us how other people have risen to nationhood, to economic security and power . . . that path is primarily educational. . . . There must be an educational awakening throughout West Africa greater than at any time in African history, and when this pentecost breaks in upon us, we shall begin to tread the sure path to national emancipation.⁷¹

But, although the potentialities of Western education were admired and cherished, care had to be taken, in the interest of the African, to rid it of elements that tended to "de-nationalise" him. In order to preserve in the African his national identity and the idiosyncracies of the race a "national University" established on African soil was advocated as a proper training ground for his educational upbringing.

Casely Hayford felt very strongly about his peoples' proprietary right with regard to their lands. In the face of what he considered a threat from the Government to deprive the people of their lands, he advanced arguments both legal and historical in defence of the latter's rights. He argued

⁷⁰Such, for example, is his conduct with regard to the municipal elections to the Gold Coast Legislative Council in 1927, which were initially boycotted by him and his colleagues.

⁷¹Presidential Address by Casely Hayford, Lagos, December, 1929. Sampson, West African Leadership, ch. v., p. 90.

that, at least as far as the Gold Coast was concerned, there were no Crown rights to lands which had at no time been acquired either by conquest, cession or purchase. It was his belief that the fundamental proposition, that there could be no land without an owner, namely, the aboriginal owner, applied to nearly all parts of West Africa.⁷² Whatever specious arguments might be advanced in defence of government encroachments, it was imperative, in the interest of all concerned, that the natives' "proprietary rights," should be respected. Otherwise, Britain would require military surveillance to rule over an unwilling and oppressed people.

In the gloomy clouds of the land controversy, however, he discerned a silver lining that promised to be a powerful ally in his cause for a United West Africa. Thus, he claimed that "One touch of nature has made all West Africa kin. The common danger to our ancestral lands has made us one--one in danger, one in safety. United we stand, divided we fall." And continuing, he asserted that "United West Africa . . . shall take her true part among the nations of the earth,"⁷³ pointing out that "entire West Africa has

⁷²Hayford, The Truth About the West African Land Question, (London, 1913) p. 70. See also his Gold Coast Land Tenure and Forest Bill (London, 1911 and 1912) for the legal exposition of the issue.

⁷³Hayford, The West African Land Question, pp. 99 and 112.

clasped hands over . . . a common constitutional demand . . . an effective voice in her affairs."⁷⁴

Hayford's realization of the economic value of British West Africa to the Empire made him more acutely aware of the injustices his people were subjected to. His mounting sense of these injustices led him to assert "in no uncertain terms" that taxation must go with effective representation, and that equality of opportunity for all must prevail in that part of the world. In this connection, however, he was realistic enough to appreciate that the political freedom which he advocated would be meaningless without economic freedom and in this way he forshadowed present-day sentiments of African leaders. Thus, he asserted that "if we want to be really free, we must aim at financial and economic independence." But "here as elsewhere, we ourselves must strike the blow that would loose our bonds."⁷⁵

In spite of his awareness of this state of apparent injustice, his loyalty to the Empire and his faith in Britain's sense of justice and fair play remained unshaken. His belief in the Empire, he declared, was founded on his knowledge of British traditions which are "honourable" and "based on fair-play" and which would ultimately prevail against the current unhappy state of affairs.⁷⁶

⁷⁴United West Africa (London, 1919), p. 44.

⁷⁵Hayford, Presidential Address, Freetown, Jan., 1923. Sampson, Ibid.

⁷⁶Hayford, The West African Land Question, pp. 12-13.

Neither was Casely Hayford a racist. His literary discourses and his public speeches never reflected any feeling of racial hatred. In fact, he dismissed racial antagonisms as unnecessary in view of the basic identity of the various racial classes of homo sapiens. With regard to British West Africa he even saw cooperation and fellow-feeling among the different races as a desideratum, if not a sine qua non, to its material and spiritual advancement.

He also advocated a patriotism that not only rose above petty jealousies and sectional loyalties, but also grew articulate in the current state of the world when "the weak must appeal in no uncertain voice" if he is to be heard by the strong. Needless to say, he urged on his movement the responsibility for counteracting the influences that worked to the detriment of those Africans in other parts of Africa who were so distracted by their peculiar economic circumstances "that they can scarcely be expected to command the constitutional solution of their immediate problems."⁷⁷

Casely Hayford, like a good number of the West African educated elite of his time, was influenced in his thinking by the liberal pronouncements of President Wilson and Prime Minister Lloyd George on the issue of subject peoples. Said he, "Today entire West Africa has clasped hands

⁷⁷Presidential Address, Lagos, Dec., 1929; Sampson, West African Leadership, ch. v., p. 89.

over . . . a common constitutional demand . . . She is asking for self-determination . . ."78 He also, as has been shown above, was sympathetic to "the constitutional aspect" of the activities of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and was obviously inspired by the aspirations and achievements of the Indian National Congress, as well as the constitutional developments in Ceylon and the British West Indies.

Finally, Casely Hayford expressed his view of the Colonial System and delineated the new order he envisaged. He thought the Crown Colony System "archaic and anachronic [sic]"because "it fails to take account of the will of the people." Furthermore, Crown Colony Government was plagued with administrative abuses and "invidious distinctions" in the Civil Service. Consequently, the system should be replaced by one, where the separation of powers was a recognized governmental principle, and where "equal rights and opportunities for all" prevailed.

These ideas and reflections of his were to provide the motive force for the realization of the idea of a Congress of British West Africans. In this, his task was facilitated by the presence of a sizeable and influential group of educated native West Africans who shared his sentiments and objectives.

⁷⁸Hayford, United West Africa (London, 1919), p. 44.

Casely Hayford was a man of unbounded confidence and of great faith in the potentialities of the race. He was also a man of astonishing courage and unruffled calmness in the face of difficulties. As a man of action he was not without practical suggestions for the realization of his ideas and a dogged application that saw their realization through. His patriotism seemed unquestionable to his admirers, while his powers of persuasion must have been inspiring and compelling.

Says a native African author:

He alone could stand in all parts of British West Africa and speak and compel respect and admiration by men of all shades of political thought.⁷⁹

From this impressive personality, however, certain shortcomings seem to present themselves. His unbounded confidence in himself seems to savour of intellectual arrogance by which he tended to ignore forces that would have proved a boon to his cause. When he came to recognize the value of the support of the masses and the bulk of the chiefs and to enlist the same, it was too late. He also seemed to have underrated some other formidable obstacles in the way.

This was curious in a man who prided himself on his being "a practical man." It is clear that little was done to create the circumstances in which the emergence of a "united West Africa" could become a feasible proposition, even in a limited sense of the term.

⁷⁹Sampson, West African Leadership, p. 25. This view was endorsed by Dr. J. B. Danquah in his Introduction to the author's other work, Gold Coast Men of Affairs.

The failure to consult all interested parties, or at least the bulk of them, at the local level, and to enlist an appreciable amount of much needed support before the despatch of the London delegation, reveals a tactical error and perhaps renders the motives of the leading organizers of the movement suspect.

Yet, in spite of all these criticisms, one must neither overlook nor underrate the admirable qualities of the personality that was Casely Hayford, and the merit per se of the cause he led. That cause was, essentially, one that, if halted for a while, could not be effectively smothered for a considerable time nor indefinitely ignored.

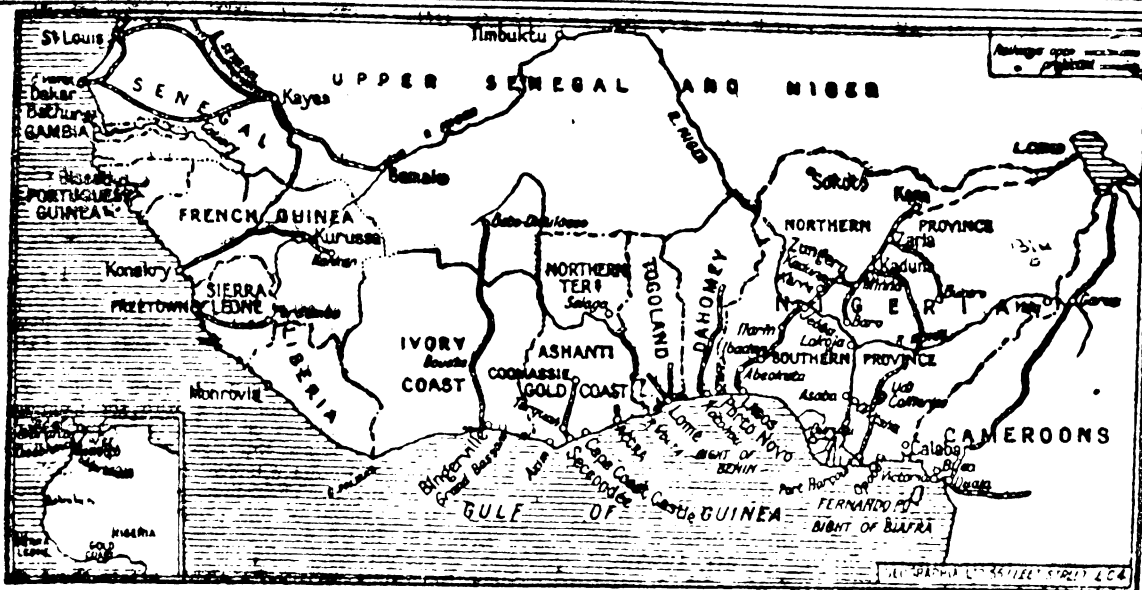
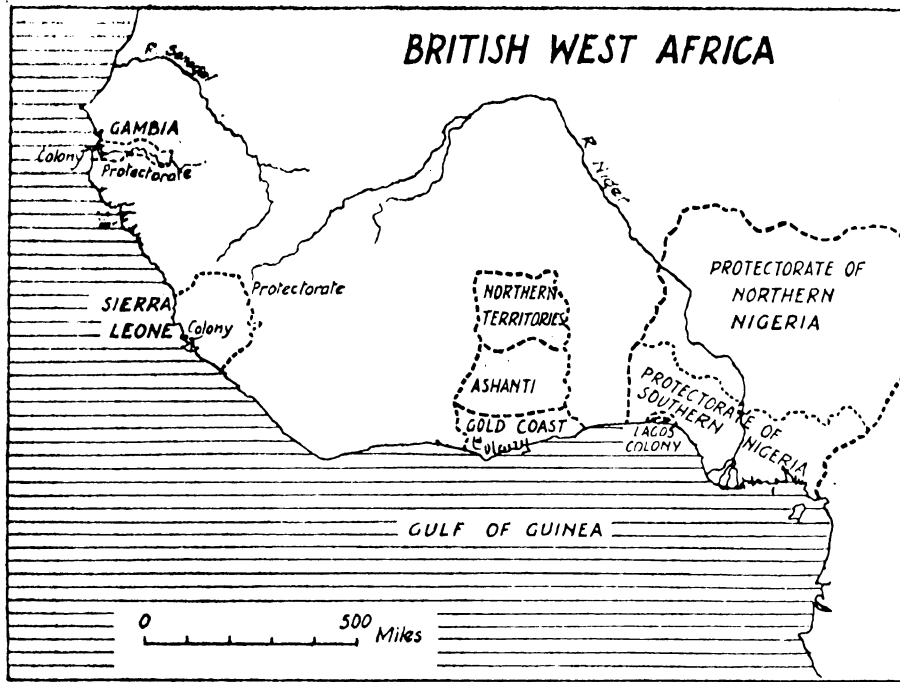
Says West Africa:

A quarter of a century ago the Indian National Congress was, relatively to India, no more representative, no more important, than the present Congress is to West Africa today. Many Englishmen connected with India wish now that greater consideration had been given to the requests and criticisms of the Indian organisation in those early days. Let us see to it that we do not have to repeat such regrets in regard to . . . Native West Africa . . .⁸⁰

It is to their credit that Sir High Clifford,⁸¹ Governor of Nigeria at the time, recognized the oncoming "wind of change" and led the way in an attempt to cooperate with it, and that Hayford blazed a trail that has been well followed by "his progeny."

⁸⁰March 6, 1926, p. 221. This paper was supposed to be well informed on West African affairs. It was based in Fleet Street, London, but last year saw the transfer of its headquarters to Lagos, Nigeria.

⁸¹See below for a short biography of his.



BRITISH WEST AFRICA IN THE 1920's

A. The Colonies in "bold relief."

B. The Colonies with surrounding territories.

CHAPTER II

PRELIMINARIES TO THE ACCRA CONFERENCE OF MARCH, 1920

As far back as June, 1912, Dr. R. Akiwande Savage¹ in the Gold Coast, had mooted the idea of "a congress of all natives of British West Africa . . . for the exchange of thoughts and the discussion of questions affecting the common interests of the race."² This idea was promptly taken up and given currency in Nigeria where suggestions were offered as to the launching of the project.³ But nothing concrete resulted from the proposal for some time, for although the idea was warmly taken up by some other papers in the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone the following year, and although Dr. Savage and Casely Hayford had written to some leading men in the various British West African colonies sounding their opinions on the issue and had apparently received

¹Dr. Savage was a Lagosian (Nigerian) living in the Gold Coast at the time. He later, in 1915, returned to Nigeria where he tried to organize in Lagos a local branch of the proposed congress. See The Lagos Weekly Record, June 26, 1920, see also Coleman, Op. Cit., p. 192.

²The Gold Coast Nation, June 13, 1912. This suggestion was made on the occasion of despatching a Gold Coast Deputation re the Forest Bill of 1911.

³The Nigerian Chronicle, June 28, 1912, and July 12, 1912.

encouraging replies, the war had intervened and led to a suspension of plans.⁴

Early in 1915, however, the subject was resuscitated in the Gold Coast and was once again supported in the sister colonies. The Nigerian papers even went so far as to suggest the place of the first British West African conference as well as the formation of local committees.⁵ Dr. Savage, who had by now returned from the Gold Coast, tried several times to launch the scheme in Nigeria but failed.

In November, 1918, however, Dr. Savage received a letter from Casely Hayford urging action on some serious public questions affecting British West Africa. On the strength of this, the former was able to summon a meeting of influential gentlemen⁶ in Lagos on January 17, 1919, to discuss the issues raised. The result of the deliberations

⁴The Lagos Weekly Record, July 10, 1920; C. O. 98/33, British West African Conference - Inaugural addresses.

⁵The Nigerian Chronicle, March 12 and 19, 1915; The Lagos Weekly Record, March 20, 1915.

⁶The following were in attendance: Dr. J. Randle (Chairman), P. J. C. Thomas, Dr. Obasa, Hon. Kitoyi Ajasa, Hon. S. H. Pearse (both the last mentioned were members of the Nigerian Legislative Council), David Taylor, J. H. Doherty, J. C. Vaughan, B. C. Vaughan, Hon. Eric Moore, A. W. Thomas, Adeoye Deniga, Patriarch J. G. Campbell, Dr. A. Savage, Sanni Adewale, Brimah Igbo, and Karimu Kotun. From among these, Dr. Randle, Hon. Kitoyi Ajasa, Hon. S. H. Pearse, Hon. E. C. Moore and Dr. Akiwande Savage were deputed to interview His Excellency the Acting Governor of Nigeria on Jan. 20, 1919. C. O. 96/598 and C. O. 98/33 - Correspondence relating to the National Congress of British West Africa.

of this meeting was the passage of certain resolutions⁷ which were forwarded through the Nigerian Government to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that same month. At this same meeting also Dr. Savage had proposed another meeting for the 24th of the current month for a projected conference of British West Africans. This meeting was attended by all who attended the previous meeting, except Hon. Kitoyi Ajasa⁸ and Brimah Igbo. Those present, however, resolved themselves into a local (Lagos) committee of the proposed conference, with Dr. Randle as the Chairman and Dr. Savage and Patriarch Campbell as joint-secretaries.⁹

By June of 1919, however, interest in the movement had begun to wane because of internal dissension in the local committee. Dr. Randle seemed to have found himself unable to

⁷These resolutions were protests against the return of any African colonies to Germany and against the return of Germany as a Government to any part of Africa, the asking for West Africa of an effective voice in her internal affairs by the granting of free institutions and the franchise, the recognition of the rights of the natives to their ancestral lands and the freedom of these lands from all interference or exploitation, and the abolition of the liquor traffic throughout West Africa. These resolutions were identical with those forwarded by the Gold Coast (Eastern Province) Committee of the Projected West African Conference to His Excellency, the Governor of the Gold Coast on 24th February, 1919.

⁸Hon. Kitoyi Ajasa was opposed to the Congress movement, although, ostensibly, to its methods only. He was later to support Governor Clifford's denunciation of the movement in the Nigerian Legislative Council in Dec. 29, 1920.

⁹In order, apparently, to popularize the movement among the Mohammedan elements of the Lagos community, one Mallam Karimu, an influential Mohammedan, was elected as Assistant Secretary of the Committee.

work with Dr. Savage. It was then thought desirable to form a completely new committee. This was done and interest in the movement was thereby revitalized. In addition, new branches were established in various localities, such as Ebute Metta, Ibadan, Calabar and Buguma. Interest in the movement within Lagos was not as much as it was in other areas in Nigeria, even though the Lagos Committee was the parent body of the Nigerian section of the movement.

Nigeria's lukewarmness¹⁰ was apparently attributable to the distractions of Lagos politics at this time, and its inability to produce delegates had the effect of holding up the first proposed Conference which had been scheduled for Accra in October, 1919. Eventually, the Nigerian section was able to produce delegates, including two from Lagos, for the Accra Conference of March, 1920.¹¹

Reaction in Sierra Leone to the projected Conference of British West Africa was favourable, and, in fact, more energetic than in Nigeria. The Sierra Leone Weekly News, which regarded the launching of the movement as "the inauguration of an epoch," had urged speedy action especially on

¹⁰The Lagos Weekly Record, July 10, 1920. The Lagos Standard had appealed several times for more energetic support of the movement. See particularly this paper's issues of July 24, 1918, July 30, 1919, October 15-22, 1919 and January 28, 1920.

¹¹See C. O. 98/33 - Conference of Africans of British West Africa.

the preliminaries of the projected conference. This paper had also appealed to the people to draw inspiration from similar movements like the Pan-African Conference, the South African Native Congress and the Indian Congress. By the end of April, 1918, a public meeting had been held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and the idea of the projected conference accepted as "not only feasible but highly necessary."¹² The meeting further urged action on the matter as early as possible and accordingly, proceeded to take steps to appoint a local committee, composed of twelve gentlemen who were charged with the duty of making arrangements for Sierra Leone's participation in the projected conference at Accra.¹³ This committee was apparently more successful in its task than its Nigerian counterpart and by December, 1918, it had produced a provisional program for the proposed conference

¹²The resolution read: "That this meeting of Sierra Leoneans welcomes the proposal of a West African Conference, in the belief that it will have the effect of bringing the peoples in the British West African Colonies into closer union, of stimulating interest in matters concerning their common welfare, and of giving increased weight to public opinion in West Africa; and further pledges itself to do all in its power to promote such a Conference at as early a date as circumstances will permit." The Sierra Leone Weekly News, May 4, 1918.

¹³See the Sierra Leone Weekly News, May 11, 1918. This assembly seemed to have felt a sense of urgency about the movement. The Committee which was soon formed was composed of the following members: Hon. J. H. Thomas, The Mayor of Freetown, S. Barlatt, C. May, A. S. Hebron, L. E. V. M. Carthy, S. J. Coker, R. O. R. Barlatt, J. A. Songo Davies, R. E. Tuboku Metsger, J. A. Fitzjohn, Dr. G. N. Metsger and Dr. O. Faduma.

at Accra. Encouraging activities, especially in the Gold Coast and the Gambia, led the committee to more vigorous exertions and even to its enlargement by the addition of twenty-two new members, apparently to be representative of wider interests and to facilitate its propaganda work. For the purpose of keeping the people abreast of the progress of the movement as a whole, it was proposed to establish subcommittees in various places. Thereafter, the parent committee held frequent meetings and by July, 1919, it was able to report favorably to a mass gathering on the prospect of the projected Accra Conference.¹⁴ Sierra Leone's participation in that Conference was assured, in conspicuous contrast to the situation in Nigeria.¹⁵

Not much is known of Gambian activities.¹⁶ By the latter part of 1919, however, the Gambian local Committee of the proposed conference had been formed. This had followed communications received from the Accra Central Committee which acted as a sort of steering and coordinating committee for all the British West African Local Committees. The

¹⁴The Sierra Leone Weekly News, July 12, 1919.

¹⁵Sierra Leone sent three delegates as against Nigeria's five, but one of its delegates was to act as the Secretary of the London Delegation Committee. This was Dr. Bankole Bright, a medical practitioner and Editor of the Aurora.

¹⁶The present writer was unable to find any Gambian papers on this period in the archives consulted.

Gambian Committee not only pledged support but also undertook "to raise a handsome contribution" in support of the movement, making at the same time a special appeal to Gambians both at home and "abroad."¹⁷ For the Accra Conference, Gambia was able to send a delegate in the person of Mr. E. F. Small, who later served as a Gambian member of the Congress's London delegation.¹⁸

It was clear by 1919 that the Gold Coast had become the center of the movement. Nigeria had taken the initiative in giving wide currency to Dr. Akiwande's idea, but later effective leadership in promoting it and bringing it to fruition was to pass on to the Gold Coast.¹⁹ From 1915 Casely Hayford, supported by the bulk of British West African papers, was persistently and energetically to nurture the preliminaries until their ultimate realization in the Accra Conference of March, 1920.²⁰ Thus, in 1915 the Gold Coast Leader, in support of Hayford's scheme, had declared that "the time has come for leading West African Publicists to promote the early meeting of the suggested West African Conference

¹⁷The Sierra Leone Weekly News, October 11, 1919; The Aurora, May 4, 1921.

¹⁸See C. O. 98/33 - Conference of Africans of British West Africa; C. O. 98/35 - The London Committee of the National Congress of British West Africa.

¹⁹See below pp. 12 and 15. See Also C. O. 98/33 and C. O. 554/54 - Congress Inaugural Speeches.

²⁰Ibid.

for the purpose of discussing and focussing public attention upon matters of common political interest to West Africa."²¹ In Nigeria the Nigerian Chronicle had come out in support, declaring that matters affecting "the natives of the different Colonies" were such that prompt and concerted action was imperative.²² This point of view was promptly reinforced by the Lagos Weekly Record. Support was forthcoming not only from the Gold Coast and Nigerian papers but also from the Sierra Leone papers. The Sierra Leone Weekly News of March 13, 1915, had remarked that the Gold Coast Leader had "indicated what, in our view, West Africa as a whole greatly needs," and that the questions proposed for discussion by the projected conference were those that "must interest every sensible and patriotic West African." Thus supported, Casely Hayford was encouraged to proceed with his scheme. He, however, did encounter some opposition.

In its issue of February 11, 1915, the editor of the Gold Coast Nation had remarked:

. . . I fail to see the utility of politicians of the different West African Colonies meeting together to discuss questions which, in so far as their respective countries are concerned, do not affect the same common ground as regards interests, conditions, and systems of administration. Perhaps some day when West Africa shall

²¹The Leader, Jan. 30, 1915. To the Leader at this time the land question was the most important issue facing the proposed Conference.

²²The Chronicle, February 26, 1915.

have acquired autonomous government and the necessary power to unify her diverse conditions, political interests and aspirations, a conference of leading men or politicians may be possible. At present it seems to me a remote possibility.²³

The papers in support of the movement, however, would not be deterred by this opposing view and they continued to give encouraging support for the project, often coming out with concrete proposals for the preliminary activities relative to the proposed conference. By early 1918 a more concrete and business-like proposal had come from the Gold Coast Leader in response to a prompting from the Sierra Leone Weekly News. Thus, it was suggested that Accra should be the venue of the proposed Conference of British West Africans, on account of its "most central" position for all the various colonies concerned. It also proposed the formation of local committees which "should go to work at once and materialize the grand object that is before West Africa." From these Committees delegates could be selected for the Conference.²⁴

The Gold Coast supporters of the movement now drew both encouragement and inspiration from the vigorous activities of Sierra Leoneans. By August, 1918, something promising had been achieved in the Gold Coast. Thus, at a Cape

²³The paper added that, for the moment, a more feasible way of cooperation would be "through the West African Press."

²⁴The Leader, February 9 - 23, 1918.

Coast Committee meeting held on August 9, 1918, at the residence of one Henry Van Hein, President of this Committee, Casely Hayford reported that the local committee had also been formed at Sekondi in the Western Province of the Gold Coast Colony.²⁵ Among the members of the latter committee were representatives of the chiefs of Shama and "Dutch" Sekondi. When, however, the Cape Coast Committee approached the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society,²⁶ an association of chiefs and educated elements, on the issue of the projected Conference of British West Africans, the Society refused to cooperate. It had, for various reasons, one of which was the dissimilarity of conditions in the various colonies, decided that "it would be impracticable to take part in the proposed . . . Conference."²⁷ The issue of how far the Conference movement was representative of traditional authority was one of the crucial factors affecting its fortunes.

²⁵Sekondi was Hayford's home town. Cape Coast was in the Central Province. Mr. Van Hein, President of the Cape Committee, was to be one of the Gold Coast delegates to the Accra Conference, and one of the members of the London delegation. He was also elected one of the joint-treasurers of the National Congress of British West Africa at the Accra inaugural meeting.

²⁶The Society originated from a Conference of the Rulers of the Divisions or States of the Colony, held in 1897 at Cape Coast after the successful mission to England of a Deputation sent by the paramount chiefs. The Conference then resolved itself into the said Society. Its educated elements were mostly officers and members of its Executive which was empowered to act in the chiefs' absence and to summon conferences as often as occasion demanded.

²⁷The Gold Coast Leader, August 24, 1918 and Sept. 28, 1918; The Gold Coast Nation, Dec. 6-13 and Dec. 20-27, 1919.

By November, 1918, however, an Accra²⁸ local committee of the projected West African Conference had also been formed. Hutton Mills was its President, while Dr. Nanka-Bruce and Woolhouse Bannerman were its joint-secretaries.²⁹

Nana Ofori Atta, the Paramount Chief of Akim Abuakwa in the Eastern Province of the Gold Coast Colony, had been present in the previous meeting that later resolved itself into this committee. At that meeting he had indicated his personally favorable disposition towards the movement, which he thought was of great importance to the interests of West Africa generally. He, however, would not commit his district until he had discussed the project with his councillors and people.³⁰ When this Committee later, in January, 1919, acquainted him with its resolutions, the Chief felt that the information was unduly delayed and that he had been thereby contemptuously treated by the Conference promoters. This treatment he considered rather unwise:

²⁸Accra was in the Eastern Province of the Gold Coast Colony. Thus, it can be seen that the three provinces of the Gold Coast Colony were all associated with the movement, although the extent of their several involvements differed.

²⁹Hutton Mills, ex-member of the Gold Coast Legislative Council, was also a barrister at law. For a fuller note on his life history, see below, p. 66. Dr. Nanka-Bruce was a medical doctor while Mr. Bannerman was a barrister at law. The former was also to be Secretary of the Gold Coast "Steering Committee" and also one of the Gold Coast delegates to the Accra Conference.

³⁰The Gold Coast Leader, Nov. 16, 1918.

The movement is one which should unreservedly claim the warmest support of every native of the Colony, and I should personally do everything that would help to further the aims and objects of the proposed West African Conference. But as we are looked upon as unessential elements who could be spoken to after almost everything had been accomplished, we all feel now that the position is unfortunate.³¹

Apparently, nothing was done by the Conference promoters to conciliate the Chief and win his support for the movement.

The Accra Local Committee played a vital part in the materialization of the projected Conference. Thus, with Casely Hayford as the brain behind its special activities, it coordinated the activities of the various local committees not only in the Gold Coast but also in the sister colonies. Eventually, this Committee was to play host to the delegates to the Accra Conference of March, 1920. Interestingly enough, one of its members, Hutton Mills, became the first President of the resulting National Congress of British West Africa, and also led the Congress's delegation to London in 1920-21.³²

³¹The Gold Coast Nation, July 24-31, 1920. Correspondence between Nana Ofori Atta and the Accra Committee of the projected British West African Conference. Nana's subsequent denunciation of the movement in the Gold Coast Legislative Council was supported by other African members of the council present. His denunciation came only a day after Sir Hugh Clifford's at the Nigerian Legislative Council and led the Congress's promoters to suspect some collusion between the two, who were apparently good friends.

³²See C. O. 98/33, C. O. 98/35 and C. O. 554/54 - The National Congress of British West Africa.

In the meantime the Sekondi local Committee in the Western Province had been making impressive progress. Not only was it receiving the enthusiastic support of a good number of people, but it was also commanding the zealous support of the women of the area, who lost no time in constituting themselves into a Ladies' Auxiliary of the local Committee, and pledging themselves "to do all in our power to support the Committee in its efforts to promote the Conference at the earliest possible date."³³

In the Central Province some influential and "enlightened" members of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society like Van Hein and Prince Atta Amonu had come out in support of the movement, in spite of the Society's official position to the contrary. But more "significant" support was to come from the Western Province of the Gold Coast Colony.

A meeting which was arranged by the Executive Committee of the Axim Section of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Society and which met on December 18, 1919, in Axim, in the Axim-Appolonia District of the Western Province seemed to contain an impressive number of the chiefly element. This is noteworthy also in view of the controversy on the representative character of the movement in relation to the traditional elements. One of the resolutions of this gathering

³³Gold Coast Leader, Jan. 25, 1919. Later, in 1923, a Ladies' Section of the Congress Movement was founded in Accra.

is highly interesting and it reads as follows:

That this Meeting of the Ahinfu and Chiefs and people of Axim; The Representatives of the Amanhin of Attuabu with the Ahinfu and sub-Chiefs of Eastern Appolonia; The Regent and Representatives of the Stool of Beyin with the Ahinfu and sub-Chiefs of Western Appolonia; The Representative of the Omanhin of Barmiankor, now assembled in conference with the Executive Committee of the Axim Section of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society and other Educated Natives and Residents of Axim, is fully convinced that the time is ripe for a United West Africa and that the objects sought to be attained by the British West African Conference now about to sit at Accra, are calculated and will be conducive to, the true progress of West Africa as a whole and the Gold Coast in particular and therefore associates itself with the British West African Conference Movement and offers to support, to uphold, and advance the same.³⁴

The assembly further endorsed all that had been done so far by the several Committees on the Gold Coast and in the sister colonies and then directed that a local Committee for the Axim area be constituted before the break up of the assembly. Accordingly, a local Committee was set up, comprising among its members, members of the Executive Committee of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Society, Axim Section, and some representatives of the chiefs.³⁵ It was also enjoined that a copy of the assembly's resolutions be sent to the Inaugural Conference at Accra.

³⁴The Gold Coast Leader, March 6 - 13, 1920; C. O. 98/33. The Inaugural Conference of Africans of British West Africa.

³⁵The Committee consisted of 32 members, six of whom were members of the Executive Committee of the Axim Section of the Aborigines' Society. All the six were also some of the officers of this local Committee. S. R. Wood who was

The close cooperation between Casely Hayford, President of the Sekondi local Committee, and Hutton Mills, President of the Accra local Committee, in furtherance of the Conference schemes had led to both committees being known in official circles in the Gold Coast by the early part of 1919 as the Gold Coast Section of the projected West African Conference.³⁶ This Gold Coast "Steering Committee" had kept in close touch with the various major Committees in the sister colonies as early as the previous year, although Casely Hayford himself had made earlier contacts on his own initiative. It will be recalled that as early as January, 1919, the Lagos Committee had acted on what apparently was a joint decision of the various committees. By February of the same year the Gold Coast Committee had requested an audience with the Governor of that colony. The purpose of this interview was to hand in its resolutions on certain public issues, for transmission to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and through him to the Prime Minister, who would convey its purport ultimately to the forthcoming Peace

Secretary of the Axim Aborigines' Society, was also Secretary of this local Committee as well as one of the delegates to the Accra Conference. Two other members of the Committee attended that Conference, namely, W. G. Essien, and S. D. Bervell (representing the Omanhin of Atuabo, Appolonia).

³⁶The promoters themselves referred to it as the Gold Coast Committee of the projected Conference.

Conference. These resolutions, like their Lagos (Nigerian) counterpart, protested against the return of any African colonies to Germany and against a German come-back to any part of Africa. They also asked for West Africa an effective voice in her internal affairs, and further requested that the rights of the natives "to their ancestral lands" be recognized and made secure from all interference and exploitation, and that the liquor traffic be abolished throughout West Africa.³⁷

The first set of resolutions, which hinted at a direct appeal to the Peace Conference, "bypassing His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies" and requesting that copies of the resolutions be sent to President Wilson and each of the Allied Powers,³⁸ was withdrawn and substituted by one devoid of these features. This is significant, in that it underlines the West African Congress's leaders' intention and declared policy of being "constitutional" in their methods. When thwarted by officials, they still remained "constitutional" in renewing and pressing further their demands.

³⁷C. O. 96/598; C. O. 98/33 - Letter and enclosure of Feb. 24, 1919, from the Gold Coast Committee to the Governor of the Gold Coast.

³⁸C. O. 96/598; C. O. 98/33 - Letter and enclosure of 17th February, 1919, from Nanka-Bruce to the Governor's Private Secretary, Gold Coast.

Before granting the audience, however, the Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford,³⁹ asked to be clarified on the locus standi of the Gold Coast Section of the projected West African Conference. They replied that the Committees forming the Gold Coast Section were composed of a good number of the "enlightened and educated" elements of the Gold Coast, as well as some of the principal chiefs, appointed at public meetings sufficiently representative of the communities concerned. Further, it was argued, in reply to the question on mandate, that it was not necessary to have the mandate of all the chiefs, since the educated classes were a substantial, influential and integral part of the people of the Gold Coast. To the issue of how it could be possible to have the resolutions in question when apparently the "projected" Conference had not had the opportunity of discussing and endorsing the same, it was pointed out that there had been communications between the various local Committees concerned on the matters raised, which the Lagos resolutions substantiated.

Apparently satisfied with these replies, the Governor met the Gold Coast Committee's deputation led by

³⁹Sir Hugh Charles Clifford (1866-1941), colonial administrator; son of Sir H. H. Clifford; joined Malay Civil Service, 1883; British Resident, Pahang, 1896-9, 1901-3; Colonial Secretary, Trinidad and Tobago, 1903-7; Ceylon 1907-12; K. C. M. G. 1909; Governor, Gold Coast, 1912-19; Nigeria, 1919-25; G. C. M. G., 1921; Governor Ceylon, 1925-27; Straits Settlements, 1927-29.

Hutton Mills, who until recently had been a member of the Gold Coast Legislative Council. On the deputation were also two James Town chiefs and eight "native gentlemen" resident in Accra, mostly barristers and medical men. After this meeting, the Governor informed the Secretary of State of the resolutions received from "a body of influential, educated natives."⁴⁰

It was obvious from the rapport established between this "Steering Committee" at Accra and the other local Committees in the sister colonies, and from the enthusiastic activities going on especially in the Gold Coast that the materialization of the projected Conference was a foregone conclusion. From now on, events moved steadily and progressively until their culmination in the memorable Conference at Accra in March, 1920. Clifford's questionings, however, turned out to be ominous of the rough sailing ahead.

It is significant that the Gold Coast emerged to be the leader of the movement. This seems to be attributable to the fact that it was first in the field of organized political agitation on a "national" scale against certain acts and policies of the Colonial Government. Its comparatively greater experience in such organizations, as witness the Fanti Confederation and the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, placed the Conference's organizers in the Gold Coast in good stead vis-à-vis their relatively less mature counterparts in the other colonies. Furthermore, between the Gold Coast and Nigeria, two of the four British

⁴⁰C.O. 96/598; C. O. 98/33 - Telegram and Dispatch of 7th March, 1919, from Clifford to Milner.

West African colonies that might claim leadership over the others because of their comparatively greater "size" and economic development, the Gold Coast turned out to be the one to achieve a more coherent and efficient organization at home and to offer guidance and present effective leadership abroad, namely, to the other colonies, because of her further advantage of being, relative to Nigeria, more compact and less exposed to internal communication difficulties. Nigeria had the further disadvantage of witnessing at this time in Lagos, its capital and the headquarters of its own branch of the movement, the unfortunate and disorganizing experience of Lagos politics as represented by the Eleko question.⁴¹

It seemed natural that with such an effective and "inspiring" leadership the Gold Coast should have been honored with the first and historic meeting of the projected West African Conference.

⁴¹The Eleko (king) of Lagos, and head of the ruling House of Docemo, was, on the annexation of Lagos in 1861 and its creation as a crown colony, given a pension on the condition that he would renounce kingship. But although deprived of political power he was ordered in 1915 to urge his people to pay a new water rate. When he refused, the governor deprived him and his chiefs of their salaries for more than a year. Again, in 1919 recognition of the Eleko was withdrawn for a month because he sided with a Muslim faction that opposed the water rate. Finally, in 1920, the Government published a notice "ceasing to recognise" the Eleko, and subsequently deported him, because he refused to repudiate certain misleading statements allegedly made by Herbert Macaulay in London on the cession issue. The deposition and deportation of the Eleko unleashed a wave of popular agitation which disturbed and distracted Lagos for the next decade and monopolized attention that might have been otherwise directed to such broader issues as "self-determination."

CHAPTER III

THE ACCRA CONFERENCE AND ITS RECEPTION IN BRITISH WEST AFRICA

It is clear from the foregoing account that much preparatory work went into the launching of the West African Conference. The Gold Coast Committee had successfully coordinated the efforts of the local committees in the various colonies. The successful interviews with the Colonial Governments on public issues concerning British West Africa had boosted the morale of the promoters of the conference movement, and might have been intended by these promoters as an inspiring act to their sympathizers, pointing to the potentialities of the movement. In March, 1920, the projected Conference of British West Africa became an accomplished fact.

In that month six representatives from Nigeria, three from Sierra Leone, and one from the Gambia, with a relatively impressive number of forty-two from the Gold Coast assembled in Accra for the first and historic session of the Conference.¹ While the representative nature of the

¹Nigeria was represented by Prince Bassey Orok, Edem Duke Ephraim, Essien E. Offiong, Adeniji Olugbile, Rev. J. G. Campbell, and Professor Adeoye Deniga; Sierra Leone by Fred W. Dove, Dr. H. C. Bankole-Bright and Leslie E. V. M'Carthy; Gambia by E. F. Small. Of the Gold Coast

delegations from the other colonies seemed doubtful, that of the Gold Coast appeared to have been fairly reasonable. It should, however, be noted that in all the four colonies the claim of "representativeness" could be made strongly only with regard to the coastal areas. The justifiability of the claim of an enlightened intelligentsia to speak and act on behalf of their less enlightened brethren who might not as yet be aware of the issues touching them is another matter. However, an analysis of the Gold Coast contingent shows that it was composed of four chiefs, seventeen lawyers, three clerics, two medical men and two journalists, with the rest conveniently classed as "nonprofessional" but "independent gentlemen." Casely Hayford, the main founder of this movement, in his inaugural address, was at pains to analyze in detail the extent of his support. He claimed the support of Nana Amonoo, the Paramount Chief of Anomabu who "practically represents the whole of the Fanti Tribes in the Legislative

contingent the following leading figures from various parts of the colony were present as follows:

Axim: S. R. Wood (representing that section of the A. R. P. S.), S. D. Bervell (representing the paramount Chief of Atuabo, Appolonia), and W. G. Essien (representing the District of Axim). Cape Coast: H. Van Hein, Prince Atta Amonu, W. Ward Brew, and W. E. G. Sekyi, Chief Densel (representing Chief Biney of Salt Pond).

The Gold Coast Leader of Oct. 30, 1920, claimed that many other chiefs favored the new movement, but were deterred from open support because of the attitude of the current office-holders of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Society at Cape Coast.

Council of the Gold Coast." He even cited Nana Ofori Atta, the paramount Chief of Eastern Akim and a member of the Gold Coast Legislative Council as having "not very long ago" spoken "strongly in favour of the movement." He also mentioned the active support of some paramount Chiefs in the Gold Coast, that is of a sizeable portion of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society. He further proceeded to indicate concrete gestures outside the Gold Coast in support of the movement and cited the activities of Professor Adeoye Deniga and Dr. Savage in Lagos, in promotion of the project. Having done this, however, Casely Hayford proceeded to emphasize the exclusive nature of the movement. Thus he claimed that this was a movement of "the intelligentsia", of the educated classes of British West Africa. But he pointed out amidst applause that it would never be possible "to dissociate the educated African from his uneducated brother."

It was natural to expect that, as advances were made in education, the former would become the leader of his people.²

This certainly was a clear break with tradition, for previous organizations had relied on support from the Chiefs or else used them as intermediaries. Hutton Mills went even further to develop a novel claim to leadership, which Nana Ofori Atta later described as a new and dangerous doctrine.

²C. O. 98/33 - Conference of British West Africans: Inaugural Addresses.

Thus Hutton Mills, claimed that since each delegate belonged to a "Distinctive African Family," with rights of property, they were the natural leaders of the people, and had in themselves the right to appeal to His Majesty's Government for "such constitutional reforms as in their judgement are necessary."³

The Conference which had started on the 11th of March lasted till the 29th. Its first business was the appointment of Officers, who included the following:

President: T. Hutton Mills,⁴ Barrister-at-law.

Vice President: Casely Hayford, M. B. E., M. L. C., Barrister-at-law.

Joint-Secretaries:⁵ Dr. Nanka-Bruce, M. B., CH. B., L. E. V. M'Carthy, Barrister-at-law.

Joint-Treasurers: A. B. Quartey-Papafio, Barrister-at-law, H. Van Hein.⁶

All these officers, except one of the Joint-Secretaries, namely L. E. V. M'Carthy, from Sierra Leone, came from

³Ibid., p. 43.

⁴T. Hutton Mills (1865-1931): Educated Wesleyan Schools, Accra and Cape Coast, Gold Coast, Wesleyan High School, Freetown, Sierra Leone; proceeded to England, 1891 and called to the Bar (Middle Temple), 1894; Barrister-at-law, Accra, and Solicitor, Supreme Courts of the Gambia, the Gold Coast and Nigeria; unofficial Member, Gold Coast Legislative Council, on and off, 1898-1919.

⁵Soon after the Conference, S. R. Wood of Axim took over the office of Secretary of the permanent Secretariat at Sekondi.

⁶Henry Van Hein, a layman, was a prosperous merchant of the Gold Coast.

the Gold Coast. It seems, however, that delegates from the other colonies had gladly accepted the result of the elections and the leadership it implied.⁷ At the second and third session of the Congress held in Sierra Leone and the Gambia respectively, where the Gold Coast delegates were much fewer than those of those colonies, the results of the Congress elections were very similar to that of the Accra elections with the President, Secretary and one of the Joint-Treasurers of the Congress still coming from the Gold Coast. It was clear after the Bathurst (Gambia) elections that the Gold Coast had become the acknowledged headquarters of the movement. However, at this Accra session, six additional Vice-Presidents were appointed to give some voice to the other West African colonies.⁸

This memorable conference was also attended by prominent officials of the Gold Coast Government. These included the Deputy Governor, the Acting Chief Justice, the Secretary for Native Affairs and the Inspector General of

⁷West Africa of April 3, 1920, had commented; "The first West African Conference has commenced well. The two greatest Africans in the Gold Coast are to lead it."

⁸These were the following: Hon. J. P. Thomas, J. P. (Sierra Leone), Prince Bassey Orok, Edem Duke Ephraim and Rev. Patriarch J. G. Campbell (Nigeria), Hon. S. J. Forster and E. F. Small (Gambia).

Police. Governor Guggisberg himself confessed that he would personally have attended every meeting if he had not been away from Accra on tour.⁹

A few interested unofficial Europeans were also present. There was, however, no attempt to encourage them to collaborate, although Casely Hayford, recognizing the contribution to the progress of British West Africa from this group, advocated in his inaugural speech, "that the capitalist should be given a voice in the affairs of the country" in addition to "an effective representation" of the indigenes in the affairs of their own country. In fact, the Gold Coast Leader later merely asked for their sympathy, but not their participation, and denied that there was any exclusiveness in trying to secure a voice in legislation for "ourselves" in "our own country."¹⁰ The following year, however, Casely Hayford, apparently more sensitive to criticism on this account, protested that they had been appealing for the representation of the whole community, European as well as African. He thought that those who provided the capital of the country should "have their place in any scheme of electoral representation."¹¹

⁹C. O. 98/33 - The National Congress of British West Africa and related Correspondence.

¹⁰The Leader, Oct. 30, 1920. Casely Hayford was also Editor of the Gold Coast Leader although he was in London on the delegation at this time.

¹¹Hayford, Legislative Council Debates, 25 April, 1921.

This comparatively long session of the Congress had eleven major subjects on its agenda for discussion. These were, however, preceded by a Presidential Address by T. Hutton Mills, followed by some supporting speeches, including that of Casely Hayford himself, and those of some delegates from the other colonies.¹² The speeches had as their main purport the reform of the Legislative Councils on some electoral basis, and equality of opportunity for all. The speeches were characterized by extreme moderation of tone while the speakers stressed the wisdom of being "constitutional" in their methods. The appreciation of the benefits of British rule and the sentiments of loyalty which were given expression to in these speeches were obviously genuine, and, in fact, received enthusiastic applause from the audience. These features were to be clearly evident in the subsequent formulations of the Congress's policy and procedural methods.

The aims of the movement were publicly summarized by Casely Hayford, its main founder, and certainly its dominant figure. These included better and "more effective representation" of the people, a clear distinction between the functions of the executive and the judiciary, "equal opportunities for all without consideration of creed or colour,"

¹²The speeches from Nigeria were delivered by Rev. Patriarch J. G. Campbell, and Essien Offiong; that from Sierra Leone by F. W. Dove; and that from the Gambia by E. F. Small.

the people's own control of their lands, and finally the establishment of an articulate yet impartial West African Press "to enable the powers that be to know what are our wants and . . . aspirations."¹³ He emphasized that these aims required publicity before they could be realized:

We do not believe in subterranean grumblings. We believe in open explanation of our wants, because our experience teaches us that when these wants are fairly placed before the executive, generally they are attended to, if not today, the next day or the day after.

Casely Hayford also pointed out that among these aims, and basic to the realization of the others, was the promotion of British West African unity.

Next the Conference proceeded to discuss the topics on its agenda. All the eleven major subjects, each introduced by a different speaker, were discussed. From the Gold Coast came the following speakers with their respective topics:

J. E. Casely Hayford	Legislative (including municipal) and administrative reforms
W. E. G. Sekyi	Education, with particular reference to a West African University
A. A. Sawyerr.	Judicial reforms with particular reference to an Appellate Court
Dr. F. V. Nanka-Bruce	West African Press Union
H. Van Hein	The inauguration of the congress of Africans of British West Africa

¹³Hayford, Inaugural Address.

Prince Atta Amonu Representation of West
African views in London

The following speakers and subjects came from Sierra Leone:

F. V. Dove. Alien problems

L. E. V. M'Carthy Commercial enterprise

Dr. H. C. Bankole-Bright Sanitary and medical re-
forms

From Nigeria and Gambia came the following:

Nigeria:

Patriarch J. G. Campbell. The policy of the Govern-
ment in relation to the
land question

Gambia:

E. F. Small The right of the people to
self-determination

Each and every one of the subjects was discussed at great length, after which a set of resolutions was formulated from the conclusions of the debate. These several resolutions constituted the final resolutions of the Accra Conference.¹⁴

The number of resolutions passed reached the impressive total of eighty-three; a Colonial Office official was to remark that they "cover pretty well the whole field of African administration." A few of them, however, which are significant as well as representative of the major subjects around which the resolutions revolve, merit notice.

¹⁴See C. O. 98/33 or C. O. 554/49 - Resolutions of the Conference of Africans of British West Africa, Accra, Gold Coast, March, 1920.

The first and foremost of these both in place and importance, put forward requests for constitutional reforms, both in central and local government, "to give the people an effective voice in their affairs." Thus, it was resolved that half the members of the Legislative Council should be elected and half nominated, while a new House of Assembly, with special financial powers, should be created. The Executive Council, however, was to remain as it was. The new House of Assembly was to consist of all the members of the Legislative Council together with six other elected representatives, and in this way there would be an elected majority for controlling finance. The methods of election were to be through "such local groups as may be found most convenient and expedient." But where indigenous institutions did not provide a ready means of ascertaining the will of the people, property or educational qualifications would be necessary. For municipal affairs, corporations with full powers of local government should be established in each principal town of each of the colonies. The members of such municipal corporations should be four-fifths elected and one-fifth nominated, who in turn would elect from the elected members the Mayor of the Corporation.

A close analysis of the Congress's demands and recommendations on legislative reforms reveals that their requests were far-reaching. The constitution of the new House of Assembly with control over finance meant a major and vital

change in the status quo, which Casely Hayford himself recognized as a "radical change," and which the Colonial Office saw as a "disastrous" concession to make. Although control over finance seems to have been a standard first step towards responsible government in the colonies, both the Congress and the Colonial Office seemed to have lacked the bold vision of deviating from the accustomed part of constitutional development and launching on the new course of combining this financial control by unofficials with a measure of executive responsibility for these unofficials. This bold move could have helped to remove some cause of apprehensions at the Colonial Office about the wisdom of conceding the financial control prayed for by the Congress, while it would have shown the Congress petitioners as making requests whose concession would be utilized most responsibly; on either side, the "chastening" and sobering function of executive responsibility would have been recognized and provided for. It seems, however, tempting to excuse the Congress's failing on this line of action, since they might have thought it more expedient to make "modest" demands and to go by "instalments," especially in the face of what appeared to be determined official policy of excluding Africans from the higher executive sphere of government.¹⁵ It was, however, best for all

¹⁵See Kimble, Ghana, p. 65, et. seq.

concerned to recognize not only that a share in the Executive function of government by the African unofficial Legislative members was a necessary training for the responsibility that was bound to come some day, but also that such a sharing was desirable for the avoidance of the usual colonial "feuds" and stalemates between the Executive on the one hand, and on the other, that "controlling" portion of the Legislature which does not share in executive responsibility. A more serious contention from the official side would be how far the franchise, if conceded, would go, in view of the need for educating the people more fully on the issues involved and of safeguarding all interests, including those of the chiefs. The concession of the elective principle in the Colonial Legislatures by "installments", seems the wise course to take rather than the dismissal of the Congress's demand on this matter on the ground that the Congress was not representative of all the people of British West Africa for whom it claimed to speak. No political movement or organization is or can be fully representative or satisfactorily representative of all interests. It is the character of true and wise statesmanship to decide how far demands from any group of the community can be met without unduly sacrificing other interests, and without also causing unnecessary frustrations whose incidence might be deeper than appears at first sight, and whose consequences might be disastrous. Hence, it

was to his credit that Governor Clifford of Nigeria observed more than the superficial on the elective issue and took a bold and wise initiative to meet it.

The Congress's resolutions on municipal government seems to point to some serious shortcomings in the Colonial Government's policy. If the intention was to train for responsibility from the local level, it seems curious that the municipalities or town councils should be controlled by an official majority and be virtually run by those officials, thereby damping the interest of the indigines in municipal government and by implication in local self-government.¹⁶ It is idle and futile to contend that the people are too "slack" to be entrusted with responsibility, which in any case was bound to come some day. It is interesting to note Governor Guggisberg's observation on the issue:

The Councils . . . have not been able to give to Africans a real interest in municipal administration. The disadvantages of the present system are in my opinion obvious, and though the African members who have served on the Councils cannot fail to have benefited thereby, I consider that Town Councils if properly organised would provide a valuable training school for the development of the sense of leadership and responsibility among educated Africans in administrative matters.

He then proceeded to suggest that the newly proposed Town Councils be "freed from the immediate control of Government by means of an official majority" thereby also removing "the

¹⁶See C. O. 96/641 - Draft Municipal Corporations Bill, Letter of Oct. 17, 1923, from Guggisberg to Devonshire.

charge that they are merely minor Government Departments."

As a plea for his bold proposal he went on:

It is admitted that the principle of elective control is new to West Africa and, to that extent, the proposed legislation may be regarded as an experiment . . . I have however no doubt that the experiment will be a success and will satisfy to some extent the existing desire and capacity for self government which so far has had no opportunity for development.¹⁷

It is fair, however, to observe that the people seemed reluctant to tax themselves for the necessary expenses which their new responsibility would entail. Yet with the growth of "greater powers in the management and control" of their own "local affairs" and the educative and sobering experience gained thereby, and with the realization of the potentialities of the new responsibility this opposition to direct taxation in the form of Municipal rates would gradually have disappeared. Guggisberg's new scheme was a step in the right direction, which was thwarted by the people's suspicion that it was intended by the government as a substitute for self-government at the center instead of as a step to that self-government.

Next in importance to the legislative reforms advocated by the Congress, were administrative and judicial reforms. While in certain respects the administrative and judicial issues were closely allied, points on them were not very orderly set out in the Congress's resolutions. This was probably due to the fact that the Congress members were

¹⁷Ibid.

thinking of the abuses involved in the joint exercise of administrative and judicial functions by the Colonial Officials while at the same time considering the abuses implicit in African exclusion from the higher posts in the Civil Service, administrative and judicial. However, the Congress members decried "the invidious distinctions in the Civil Service . . . by reason of colour." The Congress in particular deplored "the Trades Union spirit of the West African Medical Staff, which attempts to exclude qualified African citizens of British West Africa from entering the Medical Service of their country" and urged that "duly qualified African Medical Practitioners" should be allowed "free entry in the service and be treated according to merit as to emoluments, rank, promotion and leave." It suggested that "all future entries should be based on merit by competitive examinations." It was also pointed out that "the time has come to open definitely to African practitioners of experience all Judicial appointments."

It is clear on reflection that the exclusion of the educated African elite from the higher appointments in the Colonial Civil Service was one of the major causes of this "elitist" movement. The frustrations caused by this exclusion provided a potent motive force which conspired with other forces to effect the birth of the movement. It is doubtful whether the removal of the policy of exclusion was not the paramount element among the factors that provided the

raison d'être of the movement. Congress seems to have had a strong case. As is obvious in the introduction to this study, the policy of excluding qualified Africans from the higher posts in the Civil Service, seems to have been dictated on the whole by the vested interests, economic or otherwise, of the colonial master. It is an irrelevant rejoinder by the Colonial Office to argue that "it is the desire of all governments to appoint natives to whatever posts they are fit for, and beyond that no government either can or ought to go." It is interesting to note that fairly soon after the Congress's agitation on the issue a number of significant appointments of Africans to posts previously held by Europeans were made.¹⁸ Casely Hayford was to observe, perhaps with some truth, that "in the matter of openings in the higher branches of the Colonial Service, the Congress had not been more than a few months old when we were able to report progress by concessions to men of our own race in the several Colonies."¹⁹

On the allied subject of administrative and judicial reforms, the Conference condemned the joint exercise of executive and judicial functions by officials of the Colonial Government. It pointed out that "the exercise by the

¹⁸See particularly C. O. 87/219; C. O. 96/641; C. O. 267/600; C. O. 583/120.

¹⁹Hayford, Presidential address, Freetown, Jan., 1923; Sampson, West African Leadership, p. 72.

Executive of Judicial functions in the West African Administrations is inimical to the best interests of the people." Further it urged that only "duly qualified and experienced legal men should hold Judicial appointments" which should be made on the same lines "as those of His Majesty's Judges in England." On the specific issue of an Appellate Court, the Conference recommended "an early arrangement by which experienced Judges outside the British West African Judiciary might be appointed to form an Appellate Court for British West Africa" while the attempt should be made to bring the "Aboriginal Courts" into line with the Supreme Court on the issue of appeals, and also to modernize those courts. The employment of counsel in the courts, including the native courts, was urged. Various "obnoxious" ordinances²⁰ were deplored and their repeal urged, while "the barbarous practice of flogging African women for any offence whatsoever" was deprecated.

²⁰These were the Assessors Ordinance (Sierra Leone), the Unsettled Districts Ordinance, the Collective Fines Ordinance and the Provincial Courts Ordinance (Nigeria). In brief:

The Assessors Ordinance stipulated the trial of cases by a learned Judge with the help of laymen judges known as assessors. But while the Judge might base his judgment on the verdict of these assessors, he had the power to overrule that verdict, and give a judgment that was contrary to it.

By the Unsettled Districts Ordinance restriction was placed on the movement of "outsiders" into certain areas judged by the government to be dangerous particularly to non-inhabitants of those areas because inhabited by head-hunting cannibals. The Ordinance was intended to protect "innocent"

The plea for the separation of judicial from executive functions was well urged, for some of the European Executive Officials were men who had no legal, if some military, training. Yet these officials tended to administer English law or modifications imposed by special local ordinances. The serious implications become obvious when it is realized that the utmost precaution was necessary to prevent an innocent man from being wrongly condemned, and that in practically all the courts where these officials presided the aid of counsel was lacking. Furthermore, these "Political Officers" might not absolutely have been as independent of the control of the Executive as they ought to have been in the interests of strict justice. The Supreme Courts in all their grades were an exception, as they "independently" administered the law with the aid of legal practitioners. Yet the objection against the political officers could not

adventurers into these areas and to reduce the temptation to crimes practiced by their savage inhabitants.

The Collective Fines Ordinance sought also to reduce the incidence of crime in these "savage" and "uncivilized" areas. By that Ordinance a whole community was made to pay a fine for failure to produce a wanted criminal or help to find one where it was believed by the government that the community could have been helpful if they had wanted to be. The imposition of such a fine also was calculated to improve the community's moral sense as it came to learn that what it condoned was in fact objectionable and punishable.

By the Provincial Courts Ordinance "Political Officers" were empowered to preside over courts known as Provincial Courts or District Courts where they, though usually not legally qualified men, acted as Judges without the aid of jury or learned counsel. The employment of counsel or legal practitioners in those courts was not allowed.

be seriously urged where the officers were experienced men, well-versed in the customs of the people, a qualification which is a desideratum, if not a sine qua non for an equitable settlement of local and "native" disputes. In fact, it seems that these experienced and fair minded officials commanded the confidence of the illiterate masses.²¹ Neither can the issue of the appearance of counsel in the courts be strongly urged at this time except in serious criminal cases prosecuted strictly according to English law. It is doubtful whether the bulk of the common people wanted the appearance of counsel in their native courts and highly dubious that it was in their interest to permit it in the majority of those courts at this time.

It was a sound contention of the Congress that judicial appointments should be accorded to African practitioners of ability and experience. The Colonial Office admitted that such appointments had been made in the past and would, "no doubt, be done again in the future" provided these African practitioners were prepared to work their way up from the lower appointments.²² The case advanced against the operation of the Assessors Ordinance by which an accused

²¹The early recollections of the present writer are not without words of praise his father, uncle and elders had for the impartiality of "white man's justice," the District Officer's justice.

²²See C. O. 554/49 - C. O. Memorandum on the Congress's Petition.

person could be convicted by a sole "judge" notwithstanding the opinion of the assessors to the contrary was sound. But when it is realized that in some of those cases of apparently outrageous judgments the native assessors were known to have delivered an opinion dictated by corrupt influence, the argument loses much of its force and calls for second thoughts. The case for an Appellate Court for British West Africa so constituted as to prevent a judge sitting "on his own decision" was another good Congress resolution. In fact, the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone was later to advance arguments in support of such a scheme which would "remove what--I think--is a great reproach to the present system."²³ The modernization of the native courts might be validly urged if the intention was to eliminate corruption and improve their efficiency, while, however, providing against unwarranted encroachments of English law and English legal practice. But while the practice of flogging women is repugnant to English or even some native law, it is fair to add that the flogging seemed to have been confined to the Mohammedan courts of Northern Nigeria, where apparently it was not considered an "obnoxious practice." Other so-called "obnoxious" ordinances of Nigeria condemned by the Congress seemed to have been justified by their intended corrective and moralizing effects.

²³C. O. 554/50 - Letter of March 17, 1921, from Chief Justice Purcell to Governor Wilkinson of Sierra Leone.

The Conference next disapproved of the segregation policy in the British West African colonies and went on to recommend that in future more attention should be paid by the sanitary authorities to the improvement of the general conditions of the community than to the "fanciful theory" of European segregation in cantonments. David Kimble observes in his History of Ghana²⁴ that the segregation principle, advanced by a conference of Principal Medical Officers of all British West Africa in 1912, was never enforced in the Gold Coast by Governor Clifford, but the principle seemed to have worked itself out in a less offensive way in Nigeria. Seen as a subtle attempt at racial discrimination it deserved the opposition it received from the Congress's leaders, in spite of Dr. Majola Agbebi's observation that "the fad of segregation is not distasteful to the un-Europeanised African."²⁵

The Conference resolved that "the time has come to found" a university "on such lines as would preserve in the students a sense of African Nationality." The introduction of compulsory education in the four colonies and the raising of both Primary and Secondary education standards to meet the educational requirements of the proposed university were

²⁴Kimble, Ghana, p. 384 (footnote).

²⁵Agbebi, "The West African Problem," in Papers on Inter-racial Problems Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress (London, 1911), p. 344.

also urged. The Conference also resolved to promote a National Education Fund supported by Government subsidies to implement the new educational policy advocated.

The Congress's resolutions on education deserved serious consideration. The vital role which education was bound to play, not only in the success of most of the remainder of the Congress's program but also in the implementation of a healthy imperial policy, could not be disputed. While all the parties seemed to agree on the need for improving both primary and secondary education, there was disagreement on the issue of university education, that is, on the establishment of a British West African University. Officialdom might argue that British West Africa was not yet ripe for one, while "enlightened" West African opinion would emphasize pithily that their resolution on this point "indicates the present educational status of British West Africa." It is tempting to argue in support of the former view that, inter alia, secondary education was not advanced far enough to ensure an adequate supply of students for a university, that the requisite staff would not be available and that sufficient funds would not be forthcoming. It is, however, instructive to point out that similar arguments were used later to oppose the establishment of the University of Nigeria, whose creation has indicated the bold imagination and daring courage of its founders. It is interesting that on the question of a university for British West Africa, a Colonial Office

official remarked that he did "not regard it as premature if private generosity were prepared to find the money or a large part of it" and that "after all there were Universities in England, and in every other European country, so far as I know, centuries before there was any talk of educating the masses."²⁶ In either proposal for the establishment of a university, what was vitally needed for its implementation were men who could see the possibilities of the venture, who had the confidence and courage to launch it, and who could command, directly or indirectly, the resources that would see the venture through until it became safely self-supporting.

The Conference resolved that the Colonial Office should be asked to consider whether the Syrians in British West Africa "are not undesirables and a menace to the good government of the land and consequently should not be repatriated from the West African Colonies." The introduction of Immigration laws throughout British West Africa "so as to

²⁶C. O. 554/50 - Minute of 7/6/21, from Ellis to Sir H. J. Read. In his confidential letter of 5/1/23 to Read, Mr. Ormsby Gote, Parliamentary Under Secretary for the Colonies, intimated that "the British merchants, Grey, Batty and Co. would put up a large sum, and that . . . Harris could get a very considerable sum out of West African natives if the Government at home and the West African Governments would back it, cooperate, and take the initiative" and that "personally I was favourable to the idea and would do what I could to explore the ground."; C. O. 554/60 - The Congress's proposal had been "unanimously condemned by the Governors as hopelessly premature," C. O. 554/60 - Minute of 1/2/23 from Calder to Harding.

keep out undesirable aliens" was urged, while the "avoidance of all discriminatory ordinances" against aboriginal emigrants of the various colonies was advocated and the repeal of existing ones prayed for.

The Congress's resolution on the Syrian question was vague, as it failed to specify to which colony the issue applied. Surely the cause for that resolution was confined to Sierra Leone and perhaps, to a lesser extent, to Nigeria, and the Congress's failure to make some differentiation in this respect exposed them to ridicule from various quarters, and even to the charge of being irresponsible. This error, however, does not dispose of the genuineness of the charge as it applied to Sierra Leone. Yet it is doubtful whether the delegates had sufficiently considered the full implications of the course of action they seemed to recommend. If, however, the Congress's complaint still sounded fictitious in some quarters, after allowance had been made for its vagueness, it would be well to remember that Captain Armitage, Governor of the Gambia, later admitted the presence of undesirables in his territory, although these happened to be "the scum of French Senegal, who flock into the Colony and Protectorate."²⁷ Also, the Congress does not seem to have considered the full implications of unimpeded flow in both directions between aborigines of the various colonies. If

²⁷C. O. 554/50 - Confidential letter of 7th May, 1921, from Gov. Armitage to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

their resolution on this issue sounded noble, it did not follow that it could work out in such a grand way in practice. This is not, however, to condone too paternal a restriction of the movement of the people within the colonies or between them, as was the case of such a restriction within Nigeria, namely, between Northern and Southern Nigeria.

There were also resolutions on economic questions and these resolutions emphasized the Conference's disapproval of the activities of the Empire Resources Development Committee, which aimed at "the exploitation" of "the natural resources of the British West African Dependencies."²⁸ Further, the Conference strongly deplored the restriction of trade in these colonies and urged its removal--while at the same time it recommended the promotion of indigenous cooperative enterprise in British West Africa.²⁹

²⁸In 1917 the Empire Resources Development Committee launched its agitation for the exploitation of Great Britain's Imperial "Estate": The Committee promised profits large enough to pay off the whole war debt and give to the British workers increased wages and shorter working hours. Its propaganda laid special stress on the great profits which could be amassed from the African section of Britain's "estate." This greedy and grossly materialistic conception of the Empire was at its height in 1920. But the British West African administrators were determined to prevent it from penetrating the territories for which they were responsible, and this they eventually succeeded in doing. See Sir William Keith Hancock, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs (London, 1937), Vol. II, Part 2, p. 190 et. seq.

²⁹It is curious that the resolutions on the Liquor traffic, which featured in the earlier resolutions of the Congress's promoters and were forwarded through the Colonial Governments to the Imperial Government, were absent from the entire body of the present resolutions.

The Congress's resolution on the activities of the Empire Resources Development Committee pointed to the genuine fears of the people on the issue of the proposed exploitation by alien interests. These fears were there in spite of official dismissal of the E. R. D. C.'s program as a dead issue.³⁰ The Congress's resolution on the restriction of trade was, interestingly enough, reinforced by Britain's Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society's opposition to that policy. It is curious, however, that the Congress's leaders, amongst all their resolutions, left out the Liquor Traffic question, thereby laying themselves open to charges of overlooking those objectionable practices that benefited some or all of their members. It is no convincing rejoinder to plead that they had already dealt with this issue in their previous resolutions for they had also dealt with some of the current resolutions. The Congress's recommendations for the promotion of indigenous cooperative enterprise was a highly "constructive" and thoughtful one, pointing to the imperative need of economic independence if political independence was to mean anything.

On the Land question the Conference pointed out that "the principle of Trusteeship with respect to the lands of the people of British West Africa by Government has been overdone,

³⁰ See, for example, Letter of 16th March, 1921, from Clifford to Winston Churchill - C. O. 554/50.

and that . . . the average British West African is quite capable of controlling and looking after his own interests in the land." The Conference then proceeded to recommend that the existing objectionable ordinances in this respect be "modified" or "repealed" as the case may be.

The Land question was one about which British West Africa had felt very strongly all along. Controversies in the local press on this issue, especially before the Congress's resolutions, were impressive; it is difficult to remember any of the local papers that did not join in the struggle against what appeared to them as the Government's dangerous encroachments on the "proprietary rights" of the people. Needless to say, Casely Hayford himself had advanced able defense in his various works, while there had been deputations to England on the issue before this memorable Conference, both from the Gold Coast and Nigeria. The right of the people to their lands had been recognized, but there remained the fear aroused by Government's right to compulsory land acquisitions in the public interest. This could be removed by an independent tribunal for the determination of compensation.

As regards the right of the people to self-determination, the Conference resolved that it "views with alarm the right assumed by the European powers of exchanging or partitioning Countries between them without reference to, or regard for, the wishes of the people, and . . . that such

course is tantamount to a species of slavery."³¹ The Conference condemned specifically the partitioning of Togoland and the handing over of the Cameroons to Britain and France, and it requested to be assured by His Majesty's Government that "under no circumstances whatsoever" would that Government consent "to the integrity of the four British West African Colonies being disturbed."

The resolutions on the self-determination of Togoland and the handing over of the Cameroons, expressed genuine grievances, especially as regards the forceful disruption of kinship relationships. In fact, the attitude of the Gold Coast Government on the Togoland question buttressed the Congress's sentiment on the issue.³² It is tempting to point to the magnitude of the problem with its international implications, but if the mandate principle were a genuine one, the priority of the interests of the inhabitants of those territories would seem to justify the Congress's stand on the issue. Although their case seemed a hopeless one, Casely Hayford and his colleagues saw a new hope for British West Africa, and even for Africa as a whole.

³¹Dr. J. B. Danquah recalled that President Wilson's doctrine of self-determination, which was being "pronounced from high places and from low in the chancellories of the world powers" raised immediate echoes in West Africa, and was quickly adopted and adapted by the Congress leaders. See his Introduction to Sampson's Gold Coast Men of Affairs, p. 27.

³²C. O. 554/50 - Confidential letter of 10th May, 1921, from Guggisberg to Winston Churchill.

"Today," Casely Hayford wrote after the war, "entire West Africa has clasped hands over . . . a common constitutional demand . . . She is asking for self-determination and we believe she will not ask in vain."³³

The Conference also passed resolutions on the subject of a West African Press Union. Thus, it recommended that a committee of experienced journalists should be appointed to investigate the best means of promoting greater cooperation in the British West African Press. It was also resolved that the Congress should publish its own quarterly magazine to be known as the British West African National Review, which was to be edited by Casely Hayford. The project did not, however, materialize. The Conference also deprecated and asked for the repeal of laws in the British West African colonies that threatened "the liberty of the Press."

Resolutions also were passed on the "representation of West African views in London." Thus, it was directed by the Conference that "not more than two representatives from each of the four Dependencies be sent to London at the earliest possible date this year"³⁴ to take legal advice on the best method to secure the franchise and the other reforms advocated; their case was to be prepared "in the light of the resolutions passed." In the meantime steps were to be taken to augment a

³³Hayford, United West Africa (London, 1919), p. 44.

³⁴The Gold Coast Colony produced three delegates to the London deputation.

Congress inaugural fund of £100,000, out of which the expenses of the London deputation would be met. This was a fabulous sum in 1920 to expect of the inaugural conference. In fact, it proved to be a wildly optimistic figure,³⁵ although Hutton Mills had contributed a thousand guineas to the fund.

Finally, the Conference, "fully convinced of the importance of continuing and perpetuating its work," resolved itself into a permanent National Congress of British West Africa.³⁶ The Congress was to be composed of the several committees already established; its headquarters would be in Sekondi, the home of Casely Hayford at the time, while the next session would be held in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

This newly constituted Congress then resolved "to maintain strictly and inviolate the connection of the British West African Dependencies with the British Empire, and to maintain unreservedly all and every right of free citizenship of the Empire and the fundamental principle that taxation goes with effective representation." Thus, to leave no doubts in the official circles as to its loyal intentions, in spite

³⁵The Conference could collect only a little over twelve thousand pounds at this session, while in 1930 the Treasurer of the movement, Van Hein, was complaining that the Congress could not boast of twenty thousand pounds in the bank. See The Gold Coast Independent, Feb. 1, 1930.

³⁶The resolutions embodying this decision was originally headed "The Inauguration of the Congress of Africans of British West Africa," but later the term "Africans" seems to have been quietly dropped. The whole list of this Conference's resolutions was, however, captioned: "Resolutions of the Conference of Africans of British West Africa."

of what might look like a "radical" and revolutionary program, the Congress had reaffirmed its loyalty to the Empire, while, however, striving to uphold justice and fair-play that was the corner-stone of that Empire.³⁷

The Congress's momentous deliberations and the equally memorable resolutions had justified its historic first session of nearly three weeks. The resolutions were dispatched to the Imperial Government through the various Colonial Governments, some of which apparently entertained no misgivings about the spirit that motivated them or even about the content of the resolutions themselves. Thus, the Governor of the Gold Coast observed that there was scarcely any one of the more important resolutions on which he had not previously invited the cooperation of the African members of the Legislative Council and other leading citizens.³⁸ The Congress's resolutions might impress one as having attempted too much. But the very numerical strength of the issues raised would appear to point to the existence of some genuine and serious grievances somewhere, to some real frustrations which must be removed if some unwelcome

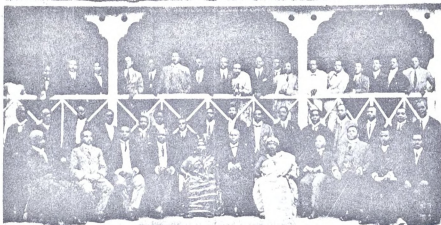
³⁷ Although it was the intention of the Congress to remain loyal, its main preoccupation in this profession of loyalty was "the fundamental principle that taxation goes with effective representation," which absolute preservation of all the rights pertaining to free citizenship of the Empire should ensure.

³⁸ C. O. 98/35 - Further correspondence relating to the National Congress of British West Africa: The Governor's Address.

consequences were to be averted. Later, however, the issue of the representative nature of the Congress movement was to emerge prominent to jeopardize the chances of these resolutions, as embodied in the Congress's petition to the King, receiving sympathetic attention for a time. The genesis and merit of that issue will be examined later on in this discourse.

The inauguration of the first Conference of Africans of British West Africa met with enthusiastic reception from a good number of people. Even from official quarters the reception was favorable or at least mildly sympathetic. The Governor of Nigeria, Sir Hugh Clifford, wished the Conference well, while remarking that "the names of the President and Vice-President are the best guarantee that counsels of loyalty, prudence, and moderation will characterise your deliberations." The Governor of the Gold Coast, who had been away from Accra on tour, was represented at the Conference by his deputy,³⁹ who was impressed by the extreme moderation of tone and sentiments of loyalty that characterized the speeches. The Governor himself sent his goodwill message to the delegates from Coomassie, while expressing the hope "that their wise and well-considered counsels will prove beneficial to the cause of progress." The Governor of Sierra Leone, while

³⁹The Governor said that he would have attended every meeting but for his unavoidable absence from the capital due to his tour.



a. The 1920 Inaugural Conference at the Rodger Club, Accra, of the National Congress of British West Africa

From left to right, seated: A. B. Quartey-Papah, H. Van Hein, Dr. H. C. Bankole-Bright, F. W. Dove, G. Manche, T. Hutton Mills, Manche Kojo Ababio, J. E. Casely Hayford, Prince Bassey, Duke Ephraim, Patriarch J. G. Campbell.

Standing: F. E. Oluang, Rev. M. C. Hayford, A. Newdon, I. Ofori, S. R. Wood, W. G. Fosu, C. J. Bannerman, S. A. Quagrain, Adeniji Oluhile, Adesoye Deniga, N. D. Bervell, J. B. Nelson, W. Ward Brew, Akilaga Sawyerr, J. F. Emissang, I. Arkhurst.

Balony: J. Kitson Mills, I. E. V. McCarthy, J. H. Coursey, J. M. de Santana, C. A. Barnes, Dr. I. V. Nanka, Bruce, J. T. Adly, C. J. Reindorf, W. I. G. Sekyi, H. Quarrey Papah, A. Vanderpyke, Dr. C. I. Reindorf, Prince K. Alta Amom, K. Quartey-Papah, H. R. Roberts, J. Glover Adilo, I. M. Opon, R. N. Sackey.



b. The 1920 London Deputation of the National Congress

From left to right, seated: Dr. H. C. Bankole-Bright (President of the Congress and of the London Committee), Chief Oluwa (Nigeria), J. E. Casely Hayford (Gold Coast), H. Van Hein (Gold Coast).

Standing: J. Egerton Strong (Nigeria), H. M. Jones (Gambia), Herbert Macaulay (Chief Oluwa's Private Secretary), I. M. Oluwa (son of Chief Oluwa), I. W. Dove (Nigeria), I. J. Small (Gambia).

sending similar messages of goodwill further remarked as follows:

In attempting to develop the interests common to the inhabitants of the British West African Dependencies, interests not merely material but intellectual and spiritual, and to bring into more complete sympathy with each other the many races of which these Dependencies are comprised, the Congress has a difficult task, but one which will have the fullest sympathy from all who are interested in and believe in the future progress of the West African peoples.

The Gambian Government, however, merely acknowledged the Conference's notification of its inauguration.⁴⁰

West Africa, a journal representative of informed British opinion, had something favorable to say initially. In its issue of March 27, 1920, it described the Conference as "a great step in the progress of West Africa" and further observed that when the united front of British West Africa, of which it was an embodiment, spoke, it would be "with no uncertain voice," and it would be a voice which would compel attention from those it was intended for. It even cast aspersions at the view held until recently especially by Europeans that the peoples of British West Africa were incapable of uniting. Later this paper found highly promising and gratifying the fact that this first great movement of British West Africans had begun well, with "the two greatest Africans in the Gold Coast" leading it.⁴¹

⁴⁰For these messages, see The Gold Coast Leader, March 20-27, 1920; April 3-17, 1920. See Also C. O. 98/33 - Petition of the National Congress of British West Africa.

⁴¹West Africa, April 3, 1920.

Back home in British West Africa, the jubilant approbation with which the bulk of the local papers received the successful launching of the movement was unmistakable. The Gold Coast Leader regarded it as "the greatest event in West African history" and saw in this "miniature parliament" a highly promising future for the peoples of British West Africa, both black and white. It is pertinent to note also that an impressive gathering in the Western Province of the Gold Coast Colony had anticipated this memorable event and had recorded its enthusiastic approval. This meeting had included not only the educated elements and the illiterate masses but also paramount chiefs, chiefs and sub-chiefs of the area concerned, not to mention that section of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society. This gathering was duly represented at the Accra Conference that soon followed. In Accra itself the continued presence of the Gã Mantse lent a significant support from the traditional elements of the community. A significant portion of the Cape Coast Section of the Aborigines' Society, a section that had officially opposed the movement, also had lent its support. In addition to all this, the inaugural Conference was duly attended by the Editors of the Gold Coast Independent, ^{and} the Eastern Star and the Akwapem Chronicle.

In Nigeria the Lagos Weekly Record referred to the Accra event as "another land mark" in "the history of West Africa;" "the spirit of striving for a better world has caught

the Negro, and he has awakened to his responsibilities, not only to himself but to the whole world." This view it claimed, was abundantly supported by "the fact that representatives of different West African Colonies have for the first time in our history met at a congress at Accra to discuss matters affecting the race."⁴² The Times of Nigeria, had a comparatively "localized" view and saw the Accra Conference as "an achievement that must inspire every native with great hopes of the future" as it marked the passage of "the regrettable old order" and the dawn of "a glorious new." Thus, while the Conference had ushered in an era of cooperation and fellow-feeling, it had also initiated a force that would compel a radical change in Imperial policy towards British West Africa in the interest of the latter also.⁴³

Almost the entire Sierra Leone Press had been in support of the Conference movement. Its inauguration the Sierra Leone Weekly News saw as an achievement that "must be set down" as a thing of progress "on our part" as it had grown "out of pure native thought and initiative." It further was "a fact of West African history to which posterity will point with reasonable pride."⁴⁴ In addition, the West African

⁴²The Record, April 3, 1920.

⁴³The Times of Nigeria, March 22, 1920; April 12-19, 1920.

⁴⁴The Weekly News, March 20, 1920.

Mail urged that "all who complain of injustice . . . must support this movement."⁴⁵

The position in the Gambia with regard to press reactions is not very clear⁴⁶ but it seems that there had been some favorable official notice of the local committee which included well known public men. The Gambia was duly represented at the London delegation which followed.

In addition to favorable press reactions, public meetings were held to express appreciation of the achievement of the Congress's promoters. In Sierra Leone, for example, a mass meeting, approximately five hundred strong, gathered in the Wilberforce Memorial Hall on April 19, 1920, to welcome the delegates and to register their appropriation and support for the movement. This big gathering which included "students, workmen, ministers, barristers . . . and others," subscribed over a thousand pounds to the cause of the movement.⁴⁷ Ladies were also present at the meeting and seem to have participated actively both in the discussions and in the enthusiastic subscriptions that followed. Later, a ladies'

⁴⁵The Mail, May 1, 1920.

⁴⁶The defective and imperfect nature of the Gambian collections in the archives consulted has been noted elsewhere.

⁴⁷See The Sierra Leone Weekly News, April 24, 1920, July 31, 1920; West African Mail, May 1, 1920; The Times of Nigeria, May 10, 1920.

branch of the Congress was formed in Sierra Leone under the Joint-Presidentship of Madam E. J. Scotland and a Mrs. Rose Palmer.

In the Gold Coast expressions of approbation were forthcoming not only from those known already to be supporting the movement but also from such groups as the "Optimism Club," the "Akwapim Educated Community," and the "Cape Coast Literary and Social Club." Furthermore, subscriptions from this colony in support of the movement were comparatively substantial.⁴⁸ Thus, of over twelve thousand pounds collected at the inaugural Conference, the Gold Coast contributed well over ten thousand pounds.⁴⁹

In the Gambia subsequent meetings in respect of the movement were held while subscriptions in support of the movement were forthcoming.⁵⁰ In Nigeria mass support seemed to be comparatively limited although a belated mass meeting of 16th October, 1920, seemed to have been reasonably well attended, lively in its deliberations and enthusiastic in its support.⁵¹ Before this, however, a meeting seemed to have

⁴⁸The Gold Coast Leader, April 3-17, 1920.

⁴⁹R. E. Dennet, West African Congress and Government on Native Fines (London, n.d.), p. 6.

⁵⁰The Sierra Leone Weekly News, October, 1920.

⁵¹The Nigerian Pioneer, Oct. 29, 1920.

been held in Lagos on the 21st June, 1920, at which it was resolved to establish a new branch of the Congress at Lokoja in the Lokoja Province of Nigeria.⁵²

The inauguration of the British West African Conference, however, met with opposition in certain quarters. It is clear that the parent body of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society⁵³ had as early as 1918 opposed the idea of launching such a movement. Its opposition was consistently maintained through its official organ, the Gold Coast Nation. A more formidable and, in fact, devastating opposition in the Gold Coast came from the highly influential and forceful Paramount Chief of Akim Abuakwa, Nana Ofori Atta.⁵⁴ He had cut himself and his people from the movement since its leading promoters had failed, in what seemed to him a rather contemptuous manner, to enlist his cooperation and help. A few months after the inauguration of the Conference, he

⁵²The Lagos Weekly Record, July 10, 1920. No disclosures seemed to have been forthcoming with regard to the size of Nigeria's contributions to the Congress fund.

⁵³Its headquarters was at Cape Coast in the Central Province of the Gold Coast Colony.

⁵⁴Ofori Atta (1881-1943): Educated at the Akim Abuakwa Grammar School; solicitor's Clerk to T. Hutton Mills; clerk, Customs Dept.; Sergeant, Gold Coast Volunteer Corps, 1900; clerk, Governor's Office, Christianborg Castle; secretary and judge, Omanhin's Office, Kibbi; Paramount Chief, Akim Abuakwa State, 1912-1943; member, Gold Coast Legislative Council, 1916-1943; C. B. E., 1918; King's Medal for African Chiefs, 1921; first President, Eastern Provincial Council, 1926; K. B. E., 1927.

caused to be published in the Gold Coast Nation⁵⁵ his and his people's attitude towards the Conference movement. His opposition at this time was to grow in strength until it attained damaging proportions in his memorable denunciation of the movement in the Gold Coast Legislative Council in December, 1920.

In Nigeria opposition to the Conference seemed to be directed against the methods of the local promoters of the movement. Thus the Nigerian Pioneer was later to point out that "it is this gross mismanagement and a reckless assumption of powers not granted that has alienated the bulk of the public of Lagos from" the movement.⁵⁶

Even in Sierra Leone, where the enthusiastic support of both the promoters and sympathizers of the movement was an inspiration to the sister colonies, some opposition was not lacking. Thus a correspondent in the Sierra Leone Weekly News was at a loss to see "how such a united body of representatives of men of Nigeria, the Gold Coast, the Gambia and Sierra Leone can effect the centralisation of native thought and native interest, when, not only is there such a distance between them, but when our complaints are so divergent; and our relative positions to the Government are so uncommon." This correspondent goes on to point to differences

⁵⁵The Gold Coast Nation, July 24-31, 1920.

⁵⁶The Pioneer, Oct. 29, 1920.

of race, and religion as further impediments to mere confederation, let alone unity. He, therefore, would recommend "the alternative step of acting independently of the other races and colonies in presenting our social grievances." He goes further to observe that "internal and local Union" will make for easier and more effective concentration of efforts "by narrowing the distance of communication between Colony and Colony" and will further "eliminate all appearance of intended political revolution and rebellion against lawful authority which traducers may be inclined to saddle on the combination of the Native Races."⁵⁷

Opposition was forthcoming from some other quarters, but this was directed against the methods of the local leading promoters of the movement. Thus the West African Mail complained that the bulk of "the common people of Sierra Leone" had not been sufficiently consulted while it pointed out that "there is some talk that all that is intended in the great movement so far as Sierra Leone is concerned is to benefit professional men, to better the condition of traders and men of means, leave out the common class, and snub the aborigines."⁵⁸

⁵⁷The Sierra Leone Weekly News, May 29, 1920.

⁵⁸West African Mail, April 10, 1920. Subsequent events in Sierra Leone were to prove that these fears and the reactions resulting from them were not wholly unjustified.

But apart from these dissenting voices it was clear that the successful launching of the movement enjoyed popular support among the bulk of those who had sufficient knowledge of the movement. The impressive note of approbation which greeted it was re-echoed in Britain not only by West Africa but also by a notable dignitary, the Bishop of Accra, who, for his part, declared the movement deserving of the greatest respect, and its resolutions wise and prudent.⁵⁹

⁵⁹The Gold Coast Independent, Dec. 18-25, 1920. Letter of 20th Sept., 1920, from Rt. Rev. M. S. O'Rorke (in England) to Wood, cited in Kimble, Ghana, p. 385 (footnote).

CHAPTER IV

THE LONDON DEPUTATION AND COLONIAL OFFICE REACTION

One of the Accra resolutions had directed that propaganda and other "necessary and expedient" actions be undertaken to represent British West African views in London. For this, the several local committees were to enlist further support in their various communities for the cause of the movement, especially in the augmentation of the Congress's fund. In addition, the major local committees were each to appoint "no more than two" delegates to represent their various countries on the London delegation that was scheduled for that same year. A special fund was opened at the Inaugural Conference for the delegation's expenses, with an appeal for a Congress inaugural fund of a hundred thousand pounds, of which the former would form a part. To this fund T. Huttom Mills, President of the Congress, contributed a thousand guineas, and, by the end of the Conference, subscriptions had reached the handsome total of twelve thousand pounds, ten thousand of which came from the Gold Coast. Later, Sierra Leone was to provide an additional contribution of a thousand pounds, while the

Gambia produced over five hundred pounds.¹ The initial target of a hundred thousand pounds seemed to have proved a wildly optimistic figure.

The deputation did not wait for all the necessary funds to be subscribed. The leaders managed to assemble a small group who were able to contribute to the cost of their passage and residence, or who wished to visit London for personal reasons. It was apparent from the various complaints raised that the delegation had been unduly hasty and the choice of delegates objectionable in some quarters, and there was doubt whether the propaganda work which had been enjoined by the Congress had been properly conducted before the despatch of the mission. In Sierra Leone some correspondents complained bitterly in the local papers of how "the mass of the people have been severely neglected by the Committee" while the selection of the Sierra Leone delegates had been "done" in camera." The President and Secretary of the local Committee replied, giving some account of the activities of the local Committee so far and attributing the "non-calling of the meetings" to bad weather. But it was clear from the rejoinders that a

¹See The Sierra Leone Weekly News, March 27, 1920, and Oct. 16, 1920; The Gold Coast Leader, April 3-17, 1920; also Kimble, Op. Cit., p. 386. No definite statement of its contribution to the fund seemed to have been forthcoming from Nigeria, in spite of a mass meeting summoned by the local Committee and held in October, 1920, in which it was resolved to help meet the Committee's financial needs and commitments.

section of the people were being antagonized and alienated by what appeared to them an "undemocratic act," nay, "a veritable insult on the good will of the people."² Similar criticisms and resentments were not lacking in the Gambia either.³

In Nigeria there were complaints in Lagos that the formation of its local Committee had been made without public knowledge, while for Nigeria's representation on the London deputation "some people who happened to be in London were . . . appointed by cablegram to represent" it. Such "gross mismanagement and . . . reckless assumption of powers not granted" were strongly deprecated and put forward as responsible for "alienating the bulk of the public of Lagos" from the movement.⁴

In the Gold Coast such complaints and criticisms seemed to be minimal though its three delegates (maximum of two for each colony was enjoined in the Congress's resolutions) probably caused some murmurings. In any case, the "rush" tactics of the Congress leaders were criticized by West Africa,⁵ and it must have been objectionable to those

²The Sierra Leone Weekly News, July 24 and July 31, 1920; The West African Mail, August 7 and August 21, 1920.

³The Sierra Leone Weekly News, Oct. 2, 1920.

⁴The Nigerian Pioneer, Oct. 29, 1920.

⁵Kimble suspects that "several of the members of the deputation had heavy commitments in the cocoa market and were anxious to get to London as soon as possible owing

West African aborigines who had been criticizing the methods of the Congress's leaders. Nana Ofori Atta, apparently expressing a different fear, observed that if the Congress's leaders of the Gold Coast had "any good intention, if there was an honesty of purpose, there would have been little or no difficulty in getting the chiefs to discuss their suggestions and proposals and to arrive at a decision." Since, however, "they have undoubtedly some ulterior motive they absolutely ignored the chiefs of the country."

As to the representativeness of the delegation, it would be recalled that some Gold Coast chiefs had objected to the movement, an objection kept up through their medium, the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, or at least a section of it, and also through the Society's organ, the Gold Coast Nation. In addition, Chief Nana was to denounce in a most vigorous way in the Gold Coast Legislative Council the unrepresentative nature of the Congress movement in general and of the London delegation in particular. In his denunciation, he was supported by Nana Amonoo V., Paramount Chief of Anamabu, and such educated elements as Dr. Quartey Papafio of Accra, and E. J. P. Brown, a legal practitioner of Cape Coast.

to the onset of the slump of 1920-21." He concludes that "this would account for the haste with which they left." A Political History of Ghana, p. 386 (footnote). A Sierra Leonean correspondent doubted the wisdom of selecting Mr. Dove as one of the delegates, since his interests in the "Koko" trade would interfere with his propaganda work in England. The Sierra Leone Weekly News, July 24, 1920.

Although complaints and criticisms as to the methods of the local Committees in Sierra Leone and the Gambia might merely cast doubts as to the representative quality of their respective delegates, an influential and "enlightened" group of the Lagos community came out unequivocally against the unrepresentative character of the Nigerian delegation. In their communication to the President of the London Congress Committee, these educated elements intimated that while "the idea of the British West African Conference and its aim and objective have their hearty and unalloyed support and sympathy, . . . they strongly protest against the methods adopted to represent Nigeria on that Conference, as in their opinion, such representation should, on all occasions, be worthy the dignity and importance of the Colony and Protectorate."⁶ It is interesting that none of these protesting gentlemen had attended the Accra Conference, important though they were in the Lagos community. If this technical point should appear of minor significance, it is well to remember that many a noble cause has foundered on wrong procedural methods, or, at best, been bogged down in inexpedient ones. The Nigerian Pioneer,

⁶C. O. 98/35, Letter of 5th Sept., 1920, from Dr. Obassa to Hutton Mills: Further correspondence relating to the National Congress of British West Africa. These educated gentlemen were Hon. Kitoyi Ajasa, Member of the Nigerian Council, Dr. John Randle, ex-Member of the Council, Hon. E. C. Moore, Member of the Council, Hon. S. H. Pearce, Member of the Council, Dr. Magnus Macaulay, J. H. Doherty, P. J. C. Thomas, J. W. Vaughan, J. T. Cole, Andrew Thomas, and Dr. Obassa.

while recognizing the merits of the movement, stressed the need for proper representation, while correspondents of the Sierra Leone Weekly News and the West African Mail pointed out that if the support of the mass of the people was to be forthcoming the local committees would have to take the former into their confidence and keep them well-informed of the progress of the movement. Such a course of action was imperative if the success of that "noble cause" was to be ensured.

By September 1920, the delegates were in London. Nigeria was represented by Chief Oluwa, who was already in London on personal business. Another Nigerian delegate was Egerton Shyngle, who probably was also in London on the same business and seemed to be similarly appointed by cable.⁷ The Gold Coast delegates were T. Hutton Mills, J. E. Casely Hayford, and H. Van Hein, with Hutton Mills acting as the President of the entire delegation. Sierra Leone was represented by Dr. H. C. Bankole-Bright and F. W. Dove, while the Gambian delegates were E. F. Small and H. M. Jones.⁸

⁷See The Nigerian Pioneer, Oct. 29, 1920.

⁸A short sketch on the personality of each of the delegates might be useful: To Hutton Mills, of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-law, and Solicitor, Supreme Courts of the Gambia, the Gold Coast and Nigeria; retired un-official Member, Gold Coast Legislative Council; President of the National Congress of British West Africa, and also of its London delegation (or Committee). Casely Hayford, M.B.E., Barrister-at-law; Member of the Gold Coast Legislative Council; Editor, The Gold Coast Leader; Vice-President of the

Of these nine delegates, three were barristers-at-law, three merchants, one a medical practitioner, while of the remaining two, one belonged to the chiefly class and the other to the category of "public men." On their arrival in London, T. Hutton Mills of the Gold Coast, the President of the Congress, was appointed President of the Congress's London committee while Dr. Bankole-Bright of Sierra Leone was appointed its Secretary.

The members of the delegation took what opportunity they could to canvass their case in London. Contacts were made with the League of Nations Union, the Bureau International pour la Défense des Indigènes, the Welfare Committee for Africans in Europe, the African Progress Union, West African students resident in London, various interested members of Parliament, and such prominent Afrophiles as Sir Sydney Olivier, J. H. Harris and Sir Harry Johnston. Considerable importance seemed to have been attached to their meeting with the League of Nations Union, which was presided over by

N.C.B.W.A. H. Van Hein, Merchant, Cape Coast; member of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society; Joint-Treasurer, N.C.B.W.A. Chief Oluwa of Lagos, member of the Lagos Central Native Council. J. Egerton Shyngle, of the Inner Temple, Barrister-at-law, and Solicitor, Supreme Courts of the Gambia and the Gold Coast, and leader of the Nigerian Practising Bar. H. C. Bankole-Bright, Physician and Surgeon of Edinburgh University and Sierra Leone Senior Native Medical Practitioner; Editor, Aurora; Secretary of the Congress London Committee. F. W. Dove, Councilor, Freetown, 1895-1917; Deputy Mayor, Freetown, 1914-15; Merchant. E. F. Small, Secretary of the Local Committee of N.C.B.W.A. H. M. Jones, Merchant.

Professor Gilbert Murray, the Vice-President of the Union.⁹ Possibly, the delegates were under a misapprehension as to the relationship of the League of Nations Union to the League itself. However, the meeting was an interesting one and, in fact, one that apparently proved "rather distressing" to the Colonial Office.¹⁰

Professor Murray, in his introductory remarks, pointed out that the Union stood for "the carrying out in the letter and spirit . . . the general principles defined in the Covenant of the League of Nations." Under Article 22 of the Covenant, which dealt specifically with African Mandated Territories, it was enjoined that "the stronger Powers . . . are specifically bound to regard themselves as trustees for civilization in undertaking the duties of government" for those territories "which are . . . 'not yet

⁹The President, Lord Robert Cecil, was unavailable to receive the delegation.

¹⁰See C. O. 554/49. Report of the Meeting with the League of Nations Union. The Meeting was held on October 8, 1920. Those present were as follows: League of Nations Union: Professor Gilbert Murray, D. Litt, Vice-President of the Union; Sir Willoughby Dickinson, K. B. E., Late M. P. for St. Pancras; John H. Harris, organizing Secretary to the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society; Charles Roberts, ex-M.P. for Norwich and one-time under-Secretary of State for India; Dr. Maxwell Garnett C.B.E., General Secretary of the League of Nations Union; and Col. D. Borden Turner, O.B.E., Secretary for the International Policy and Overseas Committee for the League of Nations Union.

All the members of the Congress London delegation plus Herbert Macaulay and Mormodu Oluwa, Chief Oluwa's Private Secretary, and son, respectively.

able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.'" He further stressed that "the Mandatary, among other things, is debarred from making any profit out of his trust." He completely agreed with the Congress's protest resolution on "the way in which territories were handed over" at the end of the war, an act that "was a disappointment to all those . . . concerned in the League of Nations." He did not think, however, that self-government came under the special work to which his Union was pledged, but he thought there was a general presumption in favor of the constitutional demand the Congress was making. Dr. Bankole-Bright, Secretary to the delegation, introduced the delegates, indicated the object of the mission and summarized the history of the Congress movement. He, curiously enough, pointed to impending "political unrest in West Africa" which the Congress was "disarming" by acting as a constitutional safety-valve, and which British statesmanship would do well to avert by meeting the people's legitimate requests. Casely Hayford, the spokesman of the delegation, took great care to establish the credentials of the delegates and to explain their resolutions. He pointed out that the promoters of the West African Conference were all men of responsibility, some of them public men who had served on Legislative Councils. They were representative of British West African intelligentsia without, however, claiming a "monopoly of the intelligence of British West Africa." Further, it was

erroneous to think that because they had received a foreign culture they were, in consequence, "divorced from the institutions and customs of our people," with whom they, in fact, claimed identical interests. In asking for constitutional reforms, they were giving expression to the will of "the whole community" to whom representative government was indigenous. He expatiated on the evils of the current "disabilities" of the British West Africans, constitutional and otherwise. Hutton Mills appealed to that section of the Covenant according to which members of the League of Nations undertook to secure just treatment of the native inhabitants of territories under their control.

Sir Willoughby Dickinson, a member of the Union, did not hesitate to disclose his high impression of the delegates, two of whom, Dr. Bankole-Bright and Casely Hayford, he described as "fair representatives of the native races" of West Africa and of "equal mental calibre to the inhabitants of European countries." He would advise the British Government "to make the fullest use of the high intellect and character which undoubtedly exists among these races whom Europeans are apt to regard as incapable of self-government." He thought education of ignorant public opinion to the conditions in the colonies was desirable, although Charles Roberts, while agreeing with this view, stressed the wisdom of proper timing in doing so. Members of the Union stressed the importance of maintaining the contact already

established, and even of extending it, and while drawing attention to the limited scope of the Union's task and authority, promised their support.

After these preliminary contacts, the deputation got down to its main business, namely, the addressing of a petition to the King. This petition, in thirty parts, was accompanied by a voluminous memorandum, in sixty-two parts, with other supporting documents such as the Congress's resolutions, the inaugural speeches, and various other "exhibits" including a credential from the Mayor of Freetown.¹¹ Matters in the petition were not set out in a very orderly manner; but these significant points emerge from it.

The petitioners claimed to be "the accredited representatives of the National Congress of British West Africa," a permanent offspring of the first Conference of Africans of British West Africa. They next claimed that the Congress represented "the intelligentsia and the advanced thought" of British West Africa and that it stood for the fundamental principles "that have always actuated communities that have arrived at the stage of national consciousness." Further, they claimed that the Congress represented also the bulk of the indigenous inhabitants, on whose behalf they claimed the right to submit complaints and propose reforms.

¹¹C. O. 98/33; C. O. 554/49—Congress's Petition, and Memorandum of the Case.

The petitioners then prayed for the reconstitution of the Legislative Councils so that half of the members could be elected and half nominated. There should also be new Houses of Assembly, consisting, in each case, of all the members of the Legislative Council, together with six other elected representatives, thereby producing an elected majority for controlling finance.¹² Elections should be held through the existing indigenous methods, but where indigenous institutions did not provide a ready means of ascertaining the will of the people, property or educational qualifications could "be resorted to." This was an attempt to reconcile the traditional and modern elements in the new polity that was emerging. It was argued that "in asking for the franchise the people of British West Africa are not seeking to copy a foreign institution," but that, on the contrary, the principle of elective representation was indigenous to, and inherent in, all their political systems, a contention supported by "standard works on the subject."¹³ Consequently, the existing system of nomination in the Crown Colonies was, to the people, "a great anomaly," and

¹²It was also prayed "that the advantage of the reform herein advocated be extended to both the European and African members of the various British West African Communities." See Section 15 of the Petition.

¹³While, however, the contention that the elective principle was inherent in all their political systems was true in the Gold Coast, such a statement needed some qualification in the other colonies, especially in the emirates of Northern Nigeria.

constituted "a grievance and a disability" which had already operated to the detriment of the people and had been deplored by the people's press and the unofficial members of the Legislative Council. It was further pointed out that as early as 1898 and again in 1912 appeals had been made to the Imperial Government for the reconstitution of the Gold Coast Legislative Council on some electoral basis. Attention was also drawn to the Imperial Government's declared policy of 1865 which was "to encourage in the Natives the exercise of those qualities which may render it possible for us more and more to transfer to them the administration of all the Governments," on the strength of which "British West African Kings and Chiefs and other representative men had prepared their sons," besides a large class of well-educated men that had prepared themselves, for the eventual takeover. Finally, reforms in municipal government were also prayed for.

The petitioners further pointed to the disability the people suffered owing to the "invidious distinctions to appointments" in His Majesty's British West African Civil Service, especially in the West African Medical Service, points which were further elaborated on in the Memorandum.

Judicial reforms were also prayed for, attention being drawn specifically to those ordinances that constituted "a grievance," such as the Unsettled District Ordinance, the Collective Fines Ordinance and the Assessor's

Ordinance amongst others. The petitioners also asked for the coordination of the Aboriginal Courts and the Supreme Courts "so as to allow of an appeal from the highest Aboriginal Court¹⁴ to the Divisional Court of the Supreme Court" and ultimately to the Privy Council. Discontinuance of "the dangerous practice of trying without a jury persons charged with offences, particularly capital offences" was prayed for, as well as the abolition of "the practice of appeals to any officer exercising executive functions," while definite separation of judicial and executive functions was urged. Further, the petitioners prayed for an early reconstitution of the Appeal Court of British West Africa with a West African Appellate Court composed of experienced Judges outside the British West African judiciary, and appointed on lines identical with those existing in England.

The introduction of emigration laws "to keep out undesirables" was requested, and the Syrians were cited for special consideration as belonging to this category.

The establishment of a British West African University was also requested, and the petitioners were "prepared to promote the necessary funds . . . supported by Government subsidies."

¹⁴This is their term for what would be known today, in Nigeria for example, as a Native or Customary Court.

Further, the scheme of the Empire Resources Development Committee, which aimed at "the exploitation" of the people's lands "under state control," was deplored, and the people's indubitable and absolute right to their lands claimed. Modification of the Public Lands Acquisition Ordinances, so that compensation for necessary and compulsory acquisition by Government could be determined by "independent appraisement," also was demanded.

The petitioners expressed their apprehension at "the right assumed by the European Powers of exchanging or partitioning African countries between them without regard to the wishes of the people," and they prayed for the reconsideration of the partitioning of Togoland between the English and French. As they contended, the partition had meant that certain members of a tribe had been separated from their kinsmen and placed under a new alien rule without reference to the wishes of the people; it was their opinion that "such a course is tantamount to a species of slavery."

In addition to these points, however, the petitioners recorded the formal acknowledgments returned by the West African Governors to the Conference greetings, thereby naïvely, or perhaps imprudently, suggesting that they had received official recognition. The memorandum, as was to be expected, expatiated on the issues prayed for in the petition. But it interwove some trivial details with

important issues and the discussion of fundamental principles. It further anticipated important arguments which it tried to meet. Thus, in answer to the expected argument that they were not united and that there were too many factions and feuds for election purposes, it recalled that unfriendly chiefs had often met on common ground for united action in the past. In elaborating their case, the petitioners also endeavored to have it "documented."

The Colonial Office took a long time to consider this extensive material, which was submitted for transmission "to His Majesty the King" on 30th October, 1920.¹⁵ This was due mainly to the fact that it had to refer back to the four Governors for their detailed comments. Copies of these documents were also dispatched "to each of the Governors of British West Africa" by the London Committee, apparently on the same date.¹⁶

The deputation next sought an interview with the Prime Minister to discuss the petition, but Lloyd George rejected the request, advising that any petition regarding the government of the British West African Colonies should properly be addressed to His Majesty through the Governors

¹⁵C. O. 554/49, Letter and Enclosures of 30th Oct., 1920, from the N.C.B.W.A. London Committee to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

¹⁶See C. O. 98/33, Letter of 30th Oct., 1920, from the London Committee to the Colonial Secretary, Gold Coast.

of the various Colonies concerned, and the Secretary of State for the Colonies.¹⁷

The Colonial Office in its observations first doubted the truly representative character of the petitioners. Thus, it was pointed out that the London Committee did "not represent anybody except the "intellectual natives of the barrister and trader class." It was further contended that "the position of a body in London submitting petitions to this Office on the subject of the affairs of West Africa, and claiming to represent the various peoples in West Africa, is rather anomalous," and hence, the Office should not "go any distance towards recognizing the existence of the London Committee." On second thought, however, it was decided to recognize it so as not "to give these people any needless cause for offence." But it was, however, pointed out that the petition "is a hopeless jumble of matters affecting different colonies and that it is impossible to deal with West African Colonies as a whole, their circumstances being so different."

On the question of the franchise, it was contended that a nominated member would provide a better representation of the views of the people than any kind of election could produce. Governor Guggisberg of the Gold Coast had rightly pointed out that the people of West Africa were not yet ripe

¹⁷C. O. 554/49, Letter of Dec., 1920, from Kerr to Bankole-Bright.

for representative institutions, and hence, it would be a very cruel kindness to any West African colony to grant any such constitution as the Congress advocated. It was further pointed out that the native elections to which reference was made in the petition were very different from British elections, since the former simply meant that the elders of the community met together and chose chiefs. It was further argued that the granting of the constitutional reforms prayed for in the petition would mean the abandonment of financial control to the people in the West African Colonies, which would surely be a disastrous step to take.

To the complaint that the Government has "wrested the sanitary department from the functions" of the Freetown Corporation, and thus, by implication, stifled the people's initiative and enthusiasm in municipal self-government, it was replied that Government's intervention was dictated by the people's slackness, and therefore, "in order to get anything done, sanitation had to be removed to the Central Government, which incidentally has to pay for it." It was further observed that Municipal Government by West African natives could never be "anything of a success for some time to come," and that for the meantime the people should be satisfied with the existing ones.

With regard to the judicial reforms advocated, especially in relation to the separation of judicial and executive functions, attention was drawn to the fact that

the judiciary in the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone was already constituted by men with legal training. It was, however, admitted that "District Officers have magisterial jurisdiction in summary cases" and that "in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, the Chief Commissioner is also a Judge" but that the issue raised "merely deals with the state of Affairs in Nigeria," with its Provincial Courts system. The Unsettled Districts and Collective Fines Ordinances were seen as valuable in diminishing court cases.

The appointment of natives to the Bench would be done as soon as the natives showed interest in taking up legal work under the government. However, experience had shown that the appointment of a native barrister as Crown Counsel was unsatisfactory simply because this official was not trusted by his people, while the official found his position so awkward that he had to resign his appointment. It was, however, the policy of the Office to appoint judges from officers who had gone "through the mill in lower judicial capacities," and Africans who wanted to be judges would have to comply with this requirement.

The plea for an Appeal Court on the line suggested by the petitioners was rejected as not likely to serve any useful purpose, while that for allowing Counsel in all cases was dismissed as being intended to serve the selfish interest of the lawyers who dominated "the African Congress." It was further pointed out, with regard to the appearance

of counsels in native courts that "the great majority of the native population would much prefer no Counsel." The expulsion of barristers from the native and the provincial courts was upheld on the ground that it diminished court cases.

The question of "invidious distinctions to appointments" in the Civil Service was rebutted with the answer that the natives were not yet fit for appointments and that until they showed themselves fit, the arrangements then current would have to continue. It was further pointed out that native medical practitioners could be and were appointed to Government posts, but that it would be absurd to suggest that they should be paid the same as Europeans, or that they should proceed to the control of Europeans in the West African Medical Staff, which could happen if Africans gained access to that exclusive establishment.

With regard to the Syrian question, it was admitted that the Syrian was "not an altogether desirable person." It was, however, remarked that his chief fault was that he undersold the Creole of Freetown, and as a result had got a large quantity of the small trade in his own hands; complaints against them were regarded, in most cases, as highly dubious.

The subject of the Empire Resources Development Committee was dismissed as a dead issue, but no plea was entered against the attack on the partitioning of Togoland except that it represented the Gold Coast point of view.

It was concluded that the claim of the petitioners to speak for the non-European native was unjustified as was obvious "whenever their interests diverge." Thus, the petitioners "want native barristers to be allowed to prey on the unsophisticated natives in the native and provincial courts and in land disputes." Further, "they make no reference to the suppression of the liquor traffic, as the educated coast Negroes wish to exploit the others by distilling and importing spirits." It was further concluded that even if one were in sympathy with their aims, it was impossible to deny that none of the British West African Colonies were ripe for an elective franchise or an unofficial majority in the Legislative Council, while the legal reforms suggested were seen as "designed almost solely to benefit the native barrister, not to further the cause of justice or to protect the aboriginal native."¹⁸

It was decided tentatively that submission should be made to the King by the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the issues raised in the petition. The Secretary would recommend that the time had not yet come for the introduction into any of the British West African Colonies and Protectorates of the principles of election to the Legislative Councils or of unofficial majorities on those Councils. With regard to the legal changes, the recommendation would be

¹⁸C. O. 554/49, Colonial Office Memorandum of 6/11/20 and Minutes of 19/11.20.

that the changes suggested would neither improve the administration of justice nor be in the interests of the great bulk of the population. As to the other points raised in the petition, it should be noted that some applied to all the West African Colonies, some to only one or two, while their relative importance varied a great deal. On these latter points it would be advisable to consult the Governors and determine regarding each particular point what action, if any, was possible or desirable.¹⁹

Earlier than this,²⁰ however, the Governor of the Gold Coast, Governor Guggisberg,²¹ had communicated to the Colonial Office on the character, objective, and method of the London delegation, and also his views on affairs relating to the Congress movement. The Governor intimated that the Gold Coast delegates did not represent the chiefs but merely the "literates" in the sea coast towns, who were but a fraction of the whole population. The objective of the

¹⁹C. O. 554/49, C. O. Minutes of 19/11/20 on the petition.

²⁰See C. O. 554/46, Telegram of 23rd October, 1920, from Guggisberg to Colonial Office. Note reference to Guggisberg on the elective representation issues in the C. O. observations cited above.

²¹Sir Frederick Gordon Guggisberg (1869-1930), soldier and administrator; born at Toronto; commissioned officer, Royal Engineers, 1889; employed by Colonial Office on special survey of Gold Coast Colony and Ashanti, 1902; Director of Surveys there, 1905; in Southern Nigeria, 1910; served in France, 1914-1918; Governor of the Gold Coast, 1919-1927; K.C.M.G., 1922; Governor of British Guiana, 1928-1929.

delegates was to obtain what practically would amount to self-government, and for this they would try to influence public opinion in England. He felt that self-government would be "fatal" to the progress of the native races and to the development of the colony which was not yet ready for it. In fact, he continued, he had privately learned from the chiefs that they were resentful of the attempts of the so-called literates to govern them, while the reforms desired by the Congress tended to impugn indigenous institutions which, however, it was the policy of the Government to uphold.

He further observed that except for the usual discontented element in the colony, the rest were happy under existing conditions. In fact, the current government schemes for town councils offered opportunities for local self-government and the employment of Africans in more responsible posts, a situation unprecedented in the history of the colony. The "native civil service" was, however, being jeopardized by an unhealthy comparison with India and Egypt. He had suspicions that a bad influence was being exercised by the Congress over semi-literate young men, with the result that the formation of a trade union was in progress and strikes imminent, although the situation was for the moment under control.

In conclusion, he personally deprecated any direct communication between the Colonial Office and the London delegates without reference to the local government,

and, therefore, suggested that, should an interview be considered necessary, the greatest caution should be exercised, while His Majesty's Government should not be committed in any way, except to the extent of promising to refer any memorial to him for his observations after consultation with representatives of the various communities.²²

Soon after the Colonial Office observations on the petition, a telegram from the Governor of Nigeria arrived.²³ In this telegram, Sir Hugh Clifford stated that the National Congress of British West Africa was in no way representative of Nigeria, and that its methods had been formally repudiated by a number of the natives of Lagos, who represented the best educated exponents of African opinion in the more Europeanized areas near the coast. He further asserted that none of the "soi-disant" Nigerian delegates then in England had any personal knowledge of more than insignificant portions of Nigeria, or of more than a small fraction of the various native states and tribal divisions of which Nigeria was composed. He then warned that the published program of the Conference, even if it were possible of realization, would be subversive

²²Earlier still, the Governor had had conversations on the issue, apparently expressing views only reiterated here, with the Secretary and the Under Secretary of State. See C. O. 554/46, Ibid.

²³C. O. 554/46, Telegram of 25 November, 1920, from Governor Clifford to the Secretary of State for the colonies; received at the Colonial Office the following day.

²⁴The Governor meant that the Congress's scheme was opposed to the principle and policy of indirect rule which his Government was committed to uphold.

of all the native governments and of the indigenous political and social institutions by which the Nigerian "kingdoms" and tribal areas were ruled and, hence, would deal a death-blow to genuine native local and national self-government. Consequently, the Nigerian Government definitely regarded the doings of the Nigerian delegates as "diametrically opposed" to the interests of the African population of Nigeria,²⁴ and the delegates themselves as totally unrepresentative of that population.

Sir Hugh was not content with this private dispatch; he was to continue his opposition to the Congress in an open and public way. Thus, in his memorable address to the Nigerian Council on December 29, 1920, the Governor launched a most vigorous and disparaging attack against the Congress movement in general and the Nigerian delegation in particular. Referring scornfully to the Congress movement he said:

There has during the last few months been a great deal of loose and gaseous talk on the subject of popular election . . . talk which has for the most part emanated from a self-selected and self-appointed congregation of educated African gentlemen who collectively style themselves the "West African National Conference" For it can only be described as farcical to suppose that . . . continental Nigeria can be represented by a handful of gentlemen drawn from a half dozen Coast tribes--men born and bred in British administered towns situated on the sea-shore, who in the safety of British protection, have peacefully pursued their studies under British teachers, in British schools, in order to enable them to become Ministers of the Christian religion or learned in the laws of England; whose eyes are fixed, not upon African native history or tradition or policy, nor upon their own

tribal obligations and the duties to their Natural Rulers which immemorable custom should impose on them, but upon political theories evolved by Europeans to fit a wholly different set of circumstances, arising out of a wholly different environment, from the government of peoples who have arrived at a wholly different stage of civilization.

Sir Hugh emphasized the unrepresentativeness of the delegates with regard to the Nigerian peoples, by pointing out that "these self-appointed spokesmen . . . , have never penetrated into the interior at all, and when they have done so have never strayed a dozen miles from the tracks beaten out for them by European energy and enterprise, and in many localities, only rendered safe for such alien intruders by the authority exercised and the protection afforded by a British Administration." He continued most graphically:

I will leave Honourable Members to imagine what these gentlemen's experience would be if, instead of travelling peacefully to Liverpool in a British ship, a Deputation of the "West African National Conference" could be . . . deposited . . . among . . . the cannibals of the Mama Hills of Nassarawa . . . the determinedly unsocial Mumuyes of the Muri Province or the equally naked warriors of the inner Ibo country, and there left to explain their claims to be recognized as the accredited representatives of these, their "fellow nationals."

He would further be interested to know whether the reception accorded to these gentlemen would be much to their taste if it were possible for them, in similar conditions of loneliness and unprotection, to visit the Sarkin Musulmi of Sokoto, the Shehu of Bornu or the Emir of Katsina, in order to convince these potentates of the soundness of their claim to political leadership over the latter.

Sir Hugh next proceeded to dismiss as dangerous and ridiculous the idea of a "Nigerian" nation:

Assuming . . . for the moment, that the impossible were feasible--that this collection of self-contained and mutually independent Native States, separated from one another, as many of them are, by great distances, by differences of history and traditions, and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers, were indeed capable of being welded into a single homogeneous nation--a deadly blow would thereby be struck at the very root of national self-government in Nigeria, which secures to each separate people the right to maintain its identity, its individuality and its nationality, its political and social institutions which have been evolved for it by the wisdom and by the accumulated experience of generations of its forebears.

On the wider issue of a British West African nation, he observed that the peoples of these Colonies and Protectorates had no more pretension to common nationality than had the peoples of Europe, while the two terminologies were "mere geographical expressions." The peoples of West Africa did not belong to the same stock and were not of common descent. They were bound together by no common language or community of religious belief. He further observed the absence of physical unity of British West Africa, and the concomitant lack of easy communication between the peoples. Continuing he declaimed:

. . . That there is or can be in the visible future such a thing as a "West African Nation" is as manifest an absurdity as that there is or can be, an "European Nation"--at all events until the arrival of the Millennium, when we may hope to see . . . a Burra highlander of Biu,²⁵ disembarassing himself of his poisoned arrows the more cordially to embrace a Fanti barrister from Cape Coast.

²⁵Biu is in the eastern part of the central highlands of Northern Nigeria while Cape Coast is in the southern

Turning to what he thought the more serious mis-
chief of according recognition to the claims and activities
of the Congress with special reference to Nigeria, he said:

I am convinced that any advancement or recognition of
their claims is mischievous, because they are incom-
patible with that natural development of real National
self-Government which all true patriots in Nigeria,
and all honest men concerned in the Administration of
the country, should combine to secure and maintain.

To leave no doubt this time as to the true meaning
of his courteous acknowledgments of the Congress's communi-
cations, he emphatically declared that no official recogni-
tion from the Nigerian Government had been or would be
accorded to the Congress movement.²⁶

Ajasa, an African Member of the Legislative Coun-
cil, followed to endorse the Governor's pronouncements on
the Congress movement, and decried the temerity of the
Nigerian delegates in arrogating to themselves the right
to represent "this vast Dominion" of Nigeria. He criticized
their hasty approach to the issue of "popular representation"
which he believed Nigeria was destined to have some day.
But for the moment, it was "not good for her nor desired by
the thinking and best majority of the people." Concluding,
he denounced the delegates for attempting "to go behind the

part of present-day Ghana, on the coast. Cape Coast was
in the Central Province of the former Gold Coast Colony.

²⁶C. O. 657/19, Governor's Address to the Niger-
ian Council, Lagos, 29, December, 1920.

Administration," in their current moves. The other African member present, Chief Henshaw of Calabar, said nothing, however, on the issue.

Like Sir Hugh Clifford of Nigeria, the Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Gordon Guggisberg, reinforced his opposition to the Congress by summarizing and dispatching without delay African members' denunciations of the movement in the Gold Coast Legislative Council.²⁷ In his speech of December 30, 1920, a day after Sir Hugh's address on the same theme,²⁸ Nana Ofori Atta, the Paramount Chief of Akim Abuakwa, in the Gold Coast Colony, vigorously attacked the Congress as entirely unrepresentative of, and repudiated by, practically all the chiefs in the Gold Coast. This fact was proved by the refusal of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, which consisted of the chiefs of the Western and Central Provinces, to countenance the movement when approached prior to the formation of the Congress. In view of the fact that British rule in the Gold Coast rested on the treaties made by Queen Victoria with the Chiefs, nobody who was not truly representative of them had a right of approach to His Majesty with a view to changing

²⁷C. O. 554/50, Telegram of 2nd January, 1921, from the Governor Guggisberg to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. This was received at the Colonial Office the following day.

²⁸Some collusion between Chief Nana and the Governor of Nigeria was suspected by the Congress's leaders at the time, as well as the possibility of official prompting in the Gold Coast.

the Constitution. He personally deplored further the action of that unrepresentative body, on the grounds that it had dealt a crushing blow to the cause of education in the Gold Coast by giving illiterate natives a just cause for complaint that education led to the belittling and ignoring of their native rulers, thus tending to the people's opposition to education, which in consequence would retard progress. There was further the reasonable fear of the chiefs of the disintegrating effect on native institutions caused among the young men by unconstitutional speeches by and the attitude of an educated but unrepresentative minority. He was also critical of the action of the Gold Coast members in associating themselves with natives of other colonies where the native constitutions were totally different. But, even turning to the main plank of the Congress's platform, he continued, it would be noted that the Gold Coast chiefs had for some time been preparing a full scheme for more effective representation of native and other interests on the Legislative Council, for submission to the Colonial Government; he disagreed with the Congress's scheme.

In his denunciation of the Congress, this Paramount Chief was supported by another Paramount Chief in the Council, namely, Nana Amonoo of Anomabu. In addition, two other African members then present lent their support. These were Dr. Quartey Papafio of Accra, and E. J. P. Brown of Cape Coast. All three members objected especially to

the manner in which the Congress's leaders had arrogated to themselves the right to speak for the Gold Coast people, while all the four African members strongly denounced the procedure of the Congress in petitioning the King directly, without first giving the local government the opportunity of considering its proposals. Yet, both Clifford in 1918 and Guggisberg in 1919 had stated definitely in Council that they would like to see a scheme on elective representation put forward for discussion.

As a commentary to his summary of the African members' pronouncements on the issue, Guggisberg remarked that the opposition of Dr. Papafio and Brown showed that the Congress could not completely represent even the educated community of the coast towns of the Gold Coast. His personal conclusion was that the speeches of the African members showed that the vast majority of the Gold Coast people would bitterly resent the claims of a few self-elected individuals to represent a country in which the elective system was such a strong feature of the constitution of tribal rule and which was certainly "one of the finest types of democratic Government extant." The Governor then requested that his summary of the speeches be laid before His Majesty, as was expressly asked by Ofori Atta, to show His Majesty the true feeling of the vast majority of his loyal Gold Coast subjects on the issue.



In the Gambia, Governor Armitage²⁹ expressed full support for Sir Hugh's denunciation of the Congress and said that it applied "with equal force" to his Colony, and, for that matter, to all British West African Colonies. Hinting at the pernicious implications of the Congress's demands, he continued:

I am well aware that there are men among us who, for motives of self-advancement or notoriety, would sacrifice the peace and prosperity of the West African Colonies in order to satisfy their inordinate ambitions, but I have every confidence that the common sense of the people of Gambia will convince them that they can safely leave their just aspirations in the hands of the British Government and not in those of an irresponsible "clique of educated African gentlemen."³⁰

S. J. Forster, an African member of the Council, completely endorsed the Governor's anti-Congress sentiments. He was indebted to His Excellency for rendering much needed and timely service by forewarning the people against the dangers that threatened them. He remarked, however, that those in Bathurst who had given their support to the movement could not be said to represent the people of the Colony and Protectorate. Another African member, Dr. T.

²⁹Captain Sir Cecil Hamilton Armitage (1869-1933), soldier, and administrator; served in Ashanti Expedition, Gold Coast, 1895 -6 -7; Ashanti Campaign, 1900; D.S.O. 1901; Chief Commissioner, Northern Territories, Gold Coast, 1910-20; C.M.G., 1911; Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Gambia, 1920-27; K.B.E., 1926.

³⁰C. O. 89/14, Governor's Address to the Legislative Council, January 10, 1921.

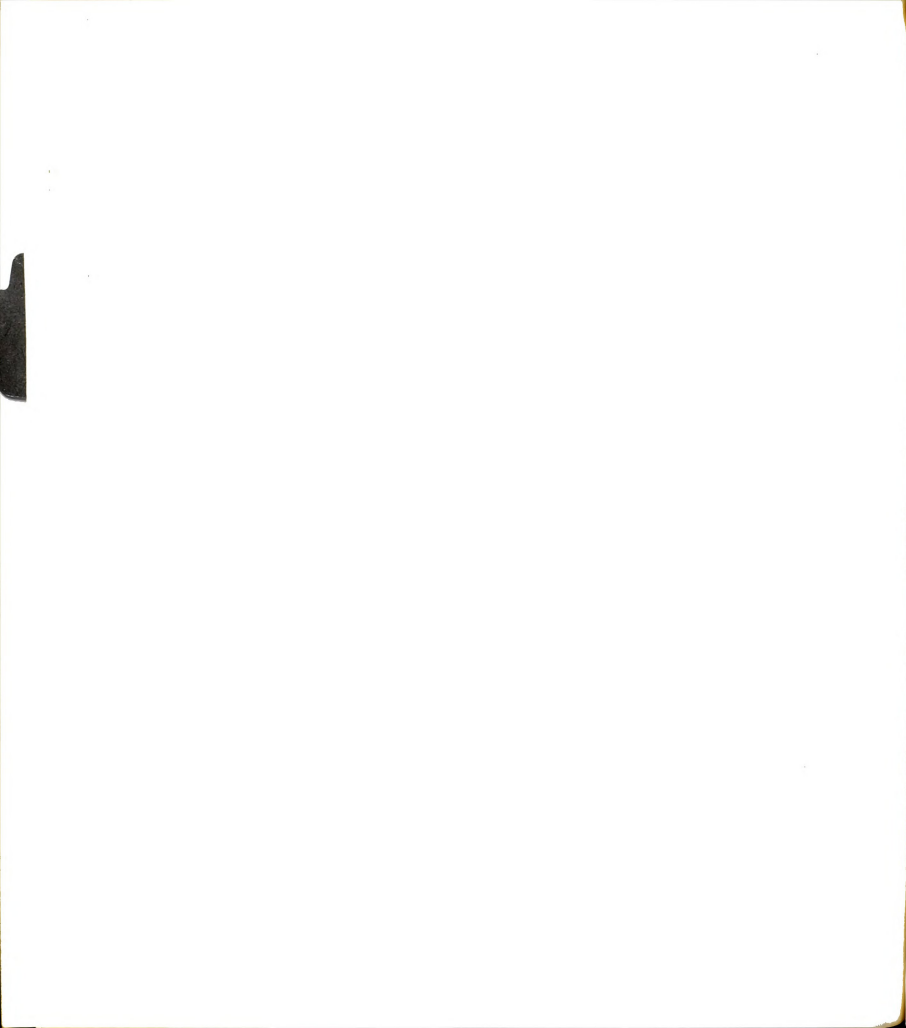


Bishop, was reported as expressing himself in entire agreement with his native colleague's reply on the issue.³¹

West Africa, which had already given the London delegates a sympathetic welcome, had, however, certain criticisms to offer. It observed that the lists of delegates, while containing "names of men respected in their communities," left out others which one would expect "in any list of leaders of a truly national West African movement." It expected to be clarified on the attitude to the movement "of the dozens, possibly hundreds of Chiefs in the four countries to whose steady loyalty Great Britain owes so much." Furthermore, the apparent absence of "the views and desires of the Mohammadan races" outside "the relatively small number of them . . . in certain of the coast towns" was also criticized. Also criticized was the fact "that both the Congress and the delegation are too exclusively African especially in relation to "the numerous Britons living and working in West Africa . . . a community with claims not likely to be set aside."³² Subsequent issues

³¹Ibid. These two gentlemen were said to be members of the Congress Gambia Committee, while S. J. Forster whom E. Small, the Gambian London delegate, later denounced for endorsing the Governor's denunciations without first resigning his membership of the Gambia Committee, had been elected, in absentia, as one of the Vice-Presidents of the N.C.B.W.A. at the Inaugural Conference at Accra the previous year. The present writer could not find any Governor's address on this issue in Sierra Leone at this time.

³²West Africa, 25th Sept., 1920.



of this paper were critical of the Congress's course in "petitioning the King direct" without first submitting its case to the local Governments, while its suggestions with regard to the partition of Togoland and the "deportation of the Syrians" were seen as "drastic." Continuing, it warned that the deputation could only be of importance if it had behind it "the nation in West Africa--or rather, the several powerful and numerous smaller nations"--but there were, to its knowledge, no pronouncements in favor of the Congress from the chiefs, "the people's natural organs of expression." In fact, their only public statement appeared to have been made at a gathering of some Gold Coast chiefs, who had come to the conclusion that, at present, they did not associate themselves with the Congress.³³

Later, West Africa criticized the Congress for raising the issue of "a root-and-branch change of system" in most unpropitious circumstances, when Europe had just emerged from a most terrible war, and was desperately engaged in the task of reconstruction. Further, on the issue of representation, that of Nigeria could be described as "a farce or something much worse." Moreover, the use made of the Governors, in obtaining messages from them at the conference and then failing to take them into confidence before coming to London, and while in London, quoting their

³³West Africa, 6 Nov. and 11 Dec. 1920.

formal messages in the petition as if these meant their approval of the full program of the Congress, was unfair and contemptible. Concluding it affirmed that "it is now plain to all that neither the conference nor the Congress has ever had the right to say that it represented Nigeria or the great bulk of the Chiefs of British West Africa."³⁴ When later it received denunciations against the Congress from African members of the Gold Coast Legislative Council which went to reinforce the Governor's onslaughts on the Congress, the paper pithily remarked that "the present London delegation may for all practical purposes be written off."³⁵

Back in West Africa the papers which had, all along, supported the Congress movement launched a counter-attack. In the Gold Coast almost all the papers were pro-Congress, while the Congress's opponent, the Gold Coast Nation, was in financial difficulties. In this counter-offensive, the Gold Coast Independent vigorously rebutted Clifford's remarks about the absence of unity and uniformity among the people of West Africa, "which he says is not a 'Nation' but fails to tell us what it is." This paper cited the Indian National Congress, which had been established in a country with two hundred and twenty vernacular dialects,

³⁴Ibid., Jan 22, 1921.

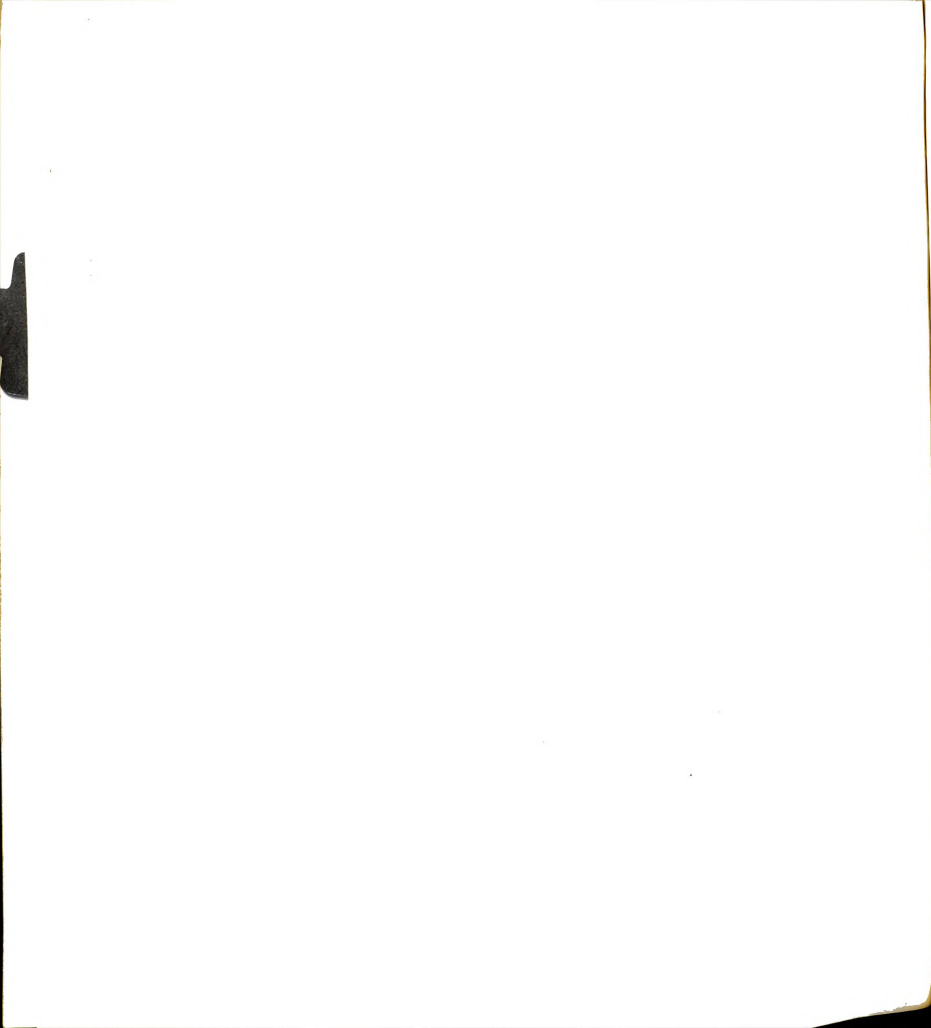
³⁵West Africa, Feb. 12, 1921.

whose people showed great diversity of race, religious belief, degree of civilization and political and social institutions. Referring to the sarcastic remarks which daubed the Congress leaders as "Europeanized" and "detribalized," the paper recalled the Roman occupation of Britain and also the Norman-French cultural influences that followed, and claimed that a similar process of assimilation must take place in West Africa before "civilization of the masses" was possible. The British were, simultaneously, accused of deliberately neglecting the education of chiefs, in unfavorable contrast with the French process of civilization while an educated African brought up in the Christian religion was expected to submit to "the enlightened decisions of an uneducated and illiterate fetish ruler."³⁶

The Gold Coast Leader had led the field by answering West Africa's objections and criticisms. Referring to the grounds for criticizing the Congress, it wondered why West Africa was not forthcoming with "the names which one would look for in any list of leaders of a truly national West African movement," adding that "it is very easy to sit at great distance and gather information respecting men and movements in West Africa, but certainly difficult to extract 'the whole truth, and nothing but the truth' from such secondhand information," especially for one "who is . . .

³⁶The Gold Coast Independent, Jan. 29, 1921.

not an African." With regard to "the second large omission," namely, the attitude of the chiefs to the Congress movement, chiefs to whose steady loyalty Great Britain "owes so much," the paper pointed out that the steady loyalty of those chiefs "is no more nor less than the steady loyalty of the people," whom the "natural rulers are bound to follow," and the most enlightened sections of whom were represented by the Congress's members. It added that while in Nigeria the Congress promoters had, through no fault of theirs, found it impossible to reach the Chiefs out of Lagos and Calabar, on the Gold Coast, the chiefs were in sympathy with the movement, although some were deterred by the current office-holders of the Gold Coast Aboriginies' Rights Protection Society from declaring openly for the movement. As regards the omission of the bulk of the Mohammedan races in British West Africa, the paper referred West Africa to "strictly confidential official rules" which restricted the activities of "West Africans educated on the coast" to "certain well-defined areas." Finally, in answer to the criticism that the "Congress and the delegation are too exclusively African," it argued that the grievances, which it was the objective of the Congress to remove, affected the Africans only. The European non-officials had "more voice in legislation and a better place in administration" than the Africans. Besides, the European non-official had the option of quitting the country for his home if he found the conditions in the

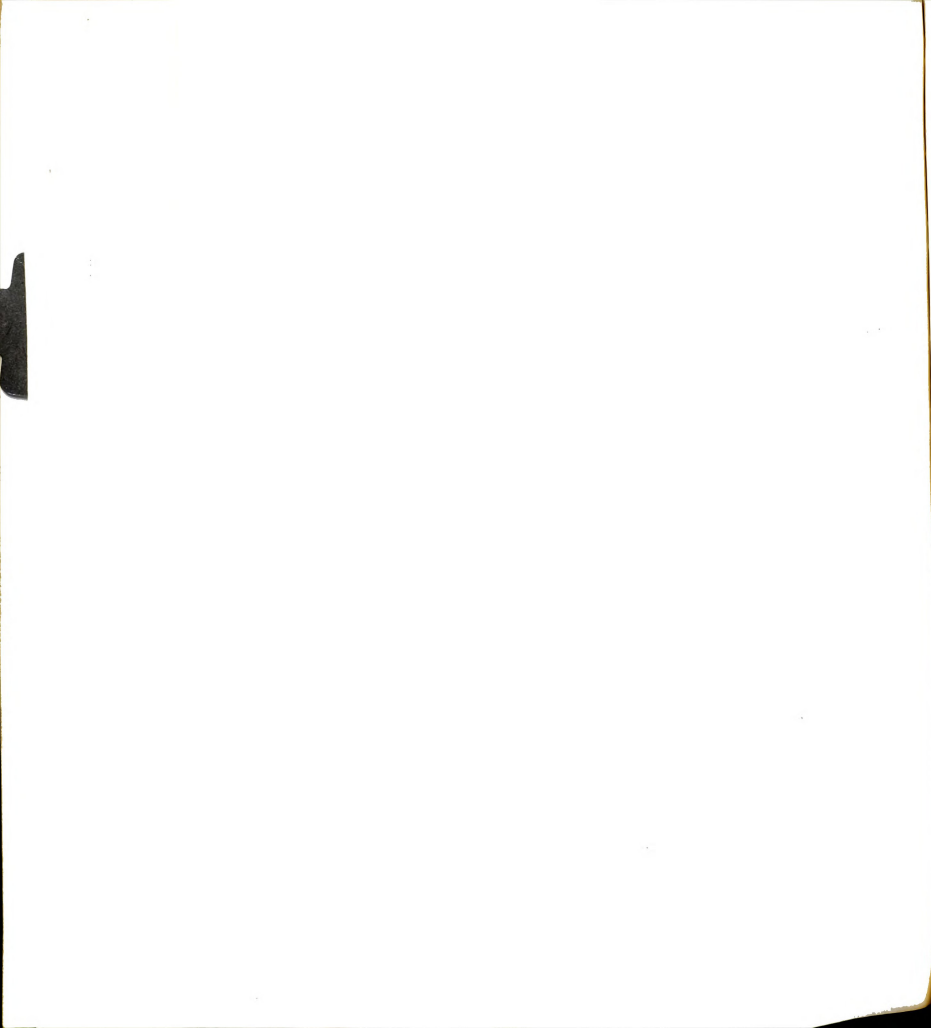


former intolerable while "the African native of the soil" could not, in the final analysis, reasonably take that course of action. In any case, continued the Leader, British West Africans were "entitled to approach the authorities in England and the British public without seeking the aid of intermediaries of another race who may, with the very best of intentions, unconsciously mistake our desires and misinterpret our aspirations." Furthermore, it was desirable that "we should demonstrate to Europe our ability to organize and our fitness for responsible participation in the administration of our country."³⁷

Later, this paper attacked West Africa for seizing only on procedural methods for criticism, "instead of going into the details and merits of the petition and showing, if it can, that we are asking for the granting of impossibilities" or that the demands were not modest compared with what obtained in the "white" colonies of the Empire.³⁸ To Sir Hugh's denunciation of the Congress's claim to lead and speak for the bulk of the un-Europeanized indigenous inhabitants, it retorted that "if the Intelligentsia of British West Africa cannot rightly claim to be the true interpreters of the mind of our own people and to be their natural guides, in the same way as the

³⁷The Gold Coast Leader, Oct. 30, 1920.

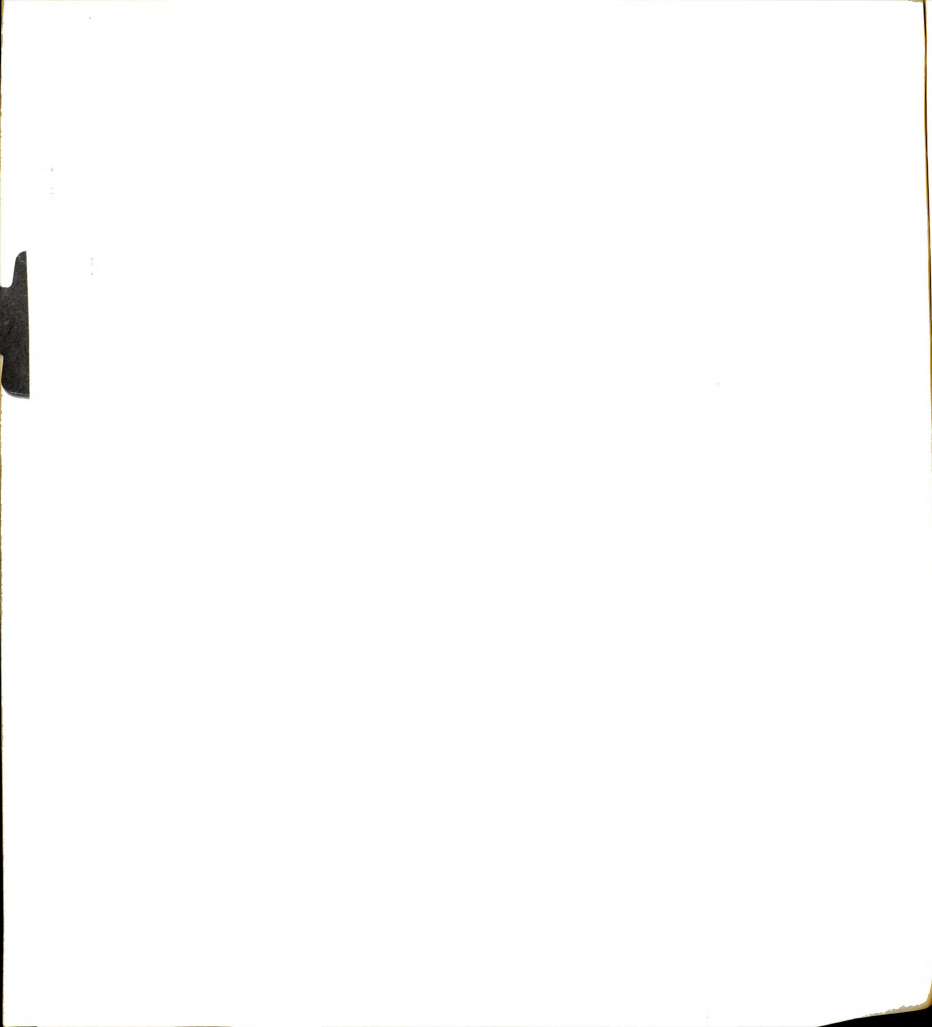
³⁸Ibid., Jan. 8, 1921.



telligentsia in Great Britain . . . America and Japan are the natural leaders of their people, then we cannot, for a moment, admit the claim of Sir Hugh Clifford, . . . or any other white man, with alien ideas and . . . outlook, to that position, and they might as well go back and tear out the pages of their own history." Then, reverting to the question of indigenous institutions, the paper especially observed that "the newborn love exhibited by the West African Governments for our 'tribal institutions' . . . is rather extraordinary," for "having divested these . . . institutions, of their former powers and having reduced them to a state of servility and incapacity" by various emasculating ordinances, "we are blandly asked to be content with these . . . 'institutions.'" Rejecting this brand of justice," it declared that "we want an effective voice in the higher administrations which overrides the 'tribal institutions'" and in this demand right would surely triumph over might or diplomacy.³⁹

In Nigeria the Lagos Weekly Record reinforced the counter-offensive against Sir Hugh, and ridiculing his terminological hair-splitting, asked why, if the term "Nation" could be applied to India with its diversity of race, language and religion, British West Africa should not lay claim to such a nomenclature. Further, if the Indian National

³⁹Ibid., Feb. 26, 1921.



Congress which was composed of "'self-styled and self-
 elected educated' Indians" who represented only a small
 fraction "of the entire population of India" could re-
 ceive recognition from the British Government as "the
 accredited spokesmen and mouthpiece" of the people, why
 should the National Congress of British West Africa not
 be accorded that same recognition? The paper also asked
 why the culture assimilated by the educated African he
 so absurdly ridiculed should be a disqualification in-
 stead of an asset to his claim "to represent his less
 enlightened brethren." Further, it asked whether the
 Member of Parliament for Whitechapel, twenty years pre-
 viously, "is disqualified from representing that district
 because there are cut-throats in Whitechapel who would
 make short work of him if he visited there in the dusk"
 just as some of the delegates would, if they visited
 some savage and unfamiliar tribes of British West Africa.
 Finally, it dismissed the Governor's assertion that the
 unification "of mutually independent Native States" of
 Nigeria would be "a deadly blow struck at the very root
 of national self-government" by pointing to the case of
 the British Nation" which grew out of "such fusion of
 mutually independent native states."⁴⁰

⁴⁰The Lagos Weekly Record, Feb. 19, 1921.

Obviously, these replies are, on the whole, well argued, forceful and thought provoking. To what extent they had impact on official circles is another matter, but it seems safe to assume that they led to some rethinking of the Congress's case. Later developments were to show that, although that impact was not explicitly admitted by those Governments, their policies were being significantly affected by it.

Following the Colonial Governors' observations at the Congress, Lord Milner,⁴¹ the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, made his submission to the King regarding the Congress's petition. In it, the Secretary pointed out that "the claim of this Congress to represent native opinion in West Africa is expressly repudiated by those best qualified to speak on their behalf, and that the policy advocated by the Congress is regarded by them as inimical to native interests." Consequently, he "is unable to advise Your Majesty that the time has yet come for the introduction into any of the West African Colonies and Protectorates of the

⁴¹Alfred Viscount Milner (1854-1925), statesman; educated at Tübingen, Germany, King's College, London, and Balliol College, Oxford, won first class honors classical; Fellow of New College, Oxford; barrister Inner Temple, 1881; mainly engaged in journalism and joined staff of Pall Mall Gazette, 1882-5; Private Secretary to Mr. Goschen who was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1887-1899; Under-Secretary for Finance in Egypt, 1890-92; Chairman, Board of Inland Revenue, 1892-1897; High Commissioner for South Africa, 1897-1905; Baron, 1901; Viscount, 1902; Member of Lloyd George's small War Cabinet, 1916-18; Secretary of State for War 1918; Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1918-21; K.G., 1921.



principles of election to the Legislative Councils and of unofficial majorities on those Councils; nor does he consider that the legal changes suggested would improve the administration of justice and be in the interest of the great bulk of the native populations," and he would advise that "he be authorized to reply to the petitioners accordingly." On many other matters referred to in the petition, the Secretary observed that some of these applied to all the West African Colonies and Protectorates, some to only one or two, and that, while some touched on important and difficult problems, some were "matters of minor detail." With regard to these matters, he proposed to consult the Governors of the several colonies and to request them to report what action, if any, was possible and desirable.⁴²

On the 26th of January, 1921, that is, nearly three weeks after Viscount Milner's submission to the King, a reply was returned to the Congress's delegates on their petition. In it the delegates were told that their petition was duly laid before the King, who had ordered the Secretary to reply to it. They were informed that the Secretary of State had found himself unable to advise the King to grant the petitioners' requests on legislative and judicial reforms. On "the other matters referred to in the petition" reference would be made to the Colonial Governors

⁴²C. O. 554/50, Letter of Jan. 8, 1921, from Milner to His Majesty, the King.

for their recommendations of "what action, if any, is in their opinion possible and desirable." In addition, it was, however, pointed out that the Secretary of State had received from the Governors of Nigeria and the Gold Coast information which showed that the Congress was in no way representative of the native communities on whose behalf it claimed to speak; that its pretensions in that respect were expressly repudiated by "the most authoritative exponents of native public opinion (including practically all the chiefs in the Gold Coast), and that the scheme put forward by the Congress would in their opinion be inimical to the best interests of the community," and, further, that the Secretary had no reason to suppose that any different opinion was held in Sierra Leone or the Gambia. Finally, it was indicated that the Secretary had no intention of meeting the delegates' additional request for an interview.⁴³

The delegates, who must have been extremely disappointed by this reply, which the Sierra Leone Weekly News later described as "a bolt from the blue,"⁴⁴ did not, however, give up so easily. In a lengthy 44-point reply they labored most painstakingly to restate their case. The delegates first tried to explain "more fully" the personnel of the Congress. It pointed out that its President, T. Hutton

⁴³C. O. 554/50; C. O. 98/35, Letter of Jan. 26, 1921, from Sir H. J. Read to Bankole-Bright.

⁴⁴The Weekly News, March 5, 1921.

ills, was, "for two successive terms of five years," an unofficial member of the Legislative Council of the Gold Coast, "highly respected by all classes of the community, both European and African, . . . and accepted as one of the foremost leaders of the country," while the Vice-President of the Congress, Casely Hayford, was currently a member of the Gold Coast Council, a Member of the Order of the British Empire, and of whom both Clifford and Guggisberg had spoken favorably in the Council as well fitted to represent the interests of his people. The latter was also author of authoritative works on Native Institutions, and "it would appear strange" that both President and Vice-President of the Congress could, "according to the Government estimation," express competently and authoritatively African public opinion on other matters "save and except 'the principles of election to the Legislative Councils, and of unofficial majorities on those Councils.'" An attempt was also made to sketch briefly the life-history of the other members of the Congress delegation and to indicate their high public standing, at least in their several localities. Furthermore, it was pointed out that not only the educated elements but also some paramount chiefs were active members of the Congress. See Yaoboi, the Paramount Chief of Accra, the Headquarters of the Gold Coast Government, and the chiefs and sub-chiefs of Axim-Appolonia District in the Western Province were cited as examples for the Gold Coast in addition to some

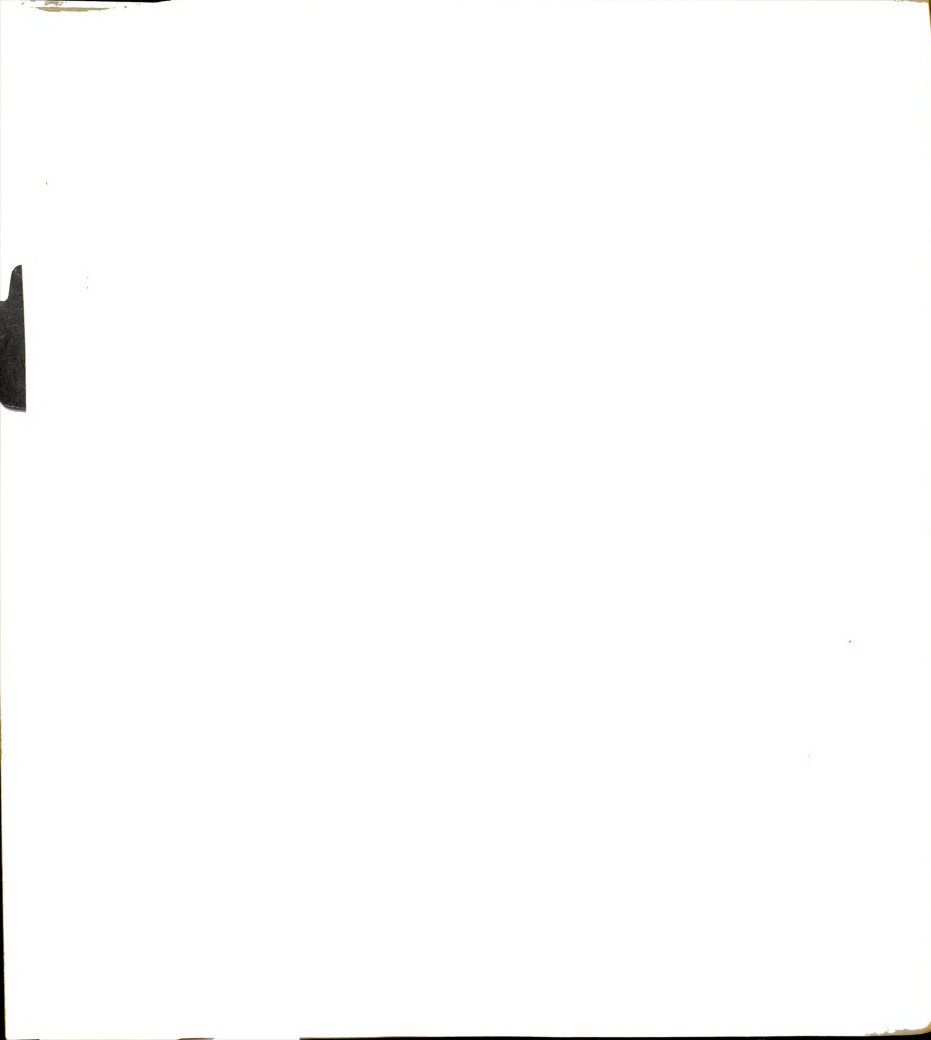


portions of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, mainly an association of the chiefly class. For Nigeria, Chief Oluwa of Lagos, a member of the London delegation, was cited, while for Sierra Leone, it was pointed out that not only was an ex-Mayor the President of its local Committee, but that the current Mayor of the Freetown Corporation had signified his undoubted support by issuing "credential" to the London delegation.

As to public attitude to the Congress movement, the delegates pointed out that not only its active supporters, and sympathizers, but "almost the entire press of British West Africa" had come out eloquently in support of the movement.

The delegates then reiterated their claim that the Congress represented not only the intelligentsia and enlightened opinion of British West Africa but also the bulk of the indigenes of those territories, with whom it claimed the inherent right to submit complaints and propose reforms. Furthermore, it was submitted that in an African system it was not likely that by reason of a man's education he could exploit the members of his own tribe or family, since, according to that system, "he sinks or swims with them."

On the all-important point of elective representation which the Congress was advocating, the delegates pointed to impressive backing on the issue. As far back as 1898, the chiefs of the Gold Coast had petitioned the



Imperial Government for an elective system, a prayer that was repeated in the year 1912, while as late as 1918 the chiefs had caused a petition to be prepared on the issue by Casely Hayford and E. J. P. Brown, and on Governor Guggisberg's first visit to Cape Coast he had been requested by the Gold Coast Aborigines' Society to reconsider the old question of elective representation. It was a fact supported by documentary evidence that almost every "aboriginal non-official" member of the Gold Coast Legislative Council had at one time or another subscribed to the principle of elective representation. In Nigeria it was significant to note that a body of educated and influential members of the Lagos community, who might be presumed to be among the "exponents of native public opinion," had expressed "their hearty and unalloyed support and sympathy" for the "aim and object" of the Congress movement even though they protested against "the methods adopted to represent Nigeria on the Conference." While it could not be denied that there were some persons who might have been expected to join the Congress movement but had not yet done so, it would be well to note that "these in some cases stood out from personal differences with organising Committees and not from any inherent difference in opinion as to the principle of elective representation." It was further significant to note that Major-General Grey⁴⁵

⁴⁵He was a European unofficial member of the Gold Coast Legislative Council, who had commercial interests in that colony.

had in the Gold Coast Legislative Council in 1919 spoken in support of elective representation in that colony, while as late as December, 1920, Sir William Nevill Geary, one time Attorney-General of the Gold Coast Colony, had spoken in favor of the Congress's delegates receiving "a sympathetic hearing and . . . , at all events, an instalment of their requests."

On the merit of the case for elective representation the delegates recalled that as early as 1865 it had been declared by the Imperial Government "that the object of our policy should be to encourage in the natives the exercise of those qualities which may render it possible for us more and more to transfer to them the administration of all the Governments." The declaration meant "that His Majesty's British West African subjects should be trained for self-government." It would, therefore, be a "curious commentary on British administration . . . if it could be seriously urged that after fifty-six years' practice in the exercises which this policy adumbrated, the peoples of British West Africa are even now unable to benefit by the small measure of elective representation prayed for while their neighbours on the French border can today send Senators to represent them in the French Chamber." Yet, an honest appraisal of the situation would surely admit the impressive accomplishments of British West Africans in the field of education and the aborigines' "fitness for the elective



system," which was supported strongly by Sir Hugh Clifford's observations on "the essentially democratic" nature of the indigenous institutions.

With regard to the legal changes advocated, the Congress expressed the hope that His Lordship would, on further consideration, admit that "in these enlightened days it is undesirable . . . that persons should be tried for their lives by men having no legal training and without the aid of a jury or Counsel," while it would be conceded that "it were preferable that judges should not sit on their own judgments on appeal." As regards the appointment of African legal men of experience to the judicial bench, that would be but the restoration of a lapsed policy which once worked "admirably" and to which "worthy Africans" were entitled.

Finally, the delegates repeated their request for an interview, which, it was further urged, would offer them the opportunity of further elucidating their case.⁴⁶

But as far as the Colonial Office was concerned the case was closed, at least in its present form. Thus, in spite of the Labour Party's last minute intervention on behalf of the delegation,⁴⁷ Winston Churchill, who had now

⁴⁶C. O. 554/54; C. O. 98/35, Undated letter from Casely Hayford and Bankole-Bright to Viscount Milner. This reply was submitted while the delegates were still in England.

⁴⁷C. O. 554/54, Letter of February 16, 1921, from J. R. Clynes to Winston Churchill.

succeeded Viscount Milner as Secretary of State, replied, on February 17, 1921, that he saw no reason to change his predecessor's decision on the issue.⁴⁸

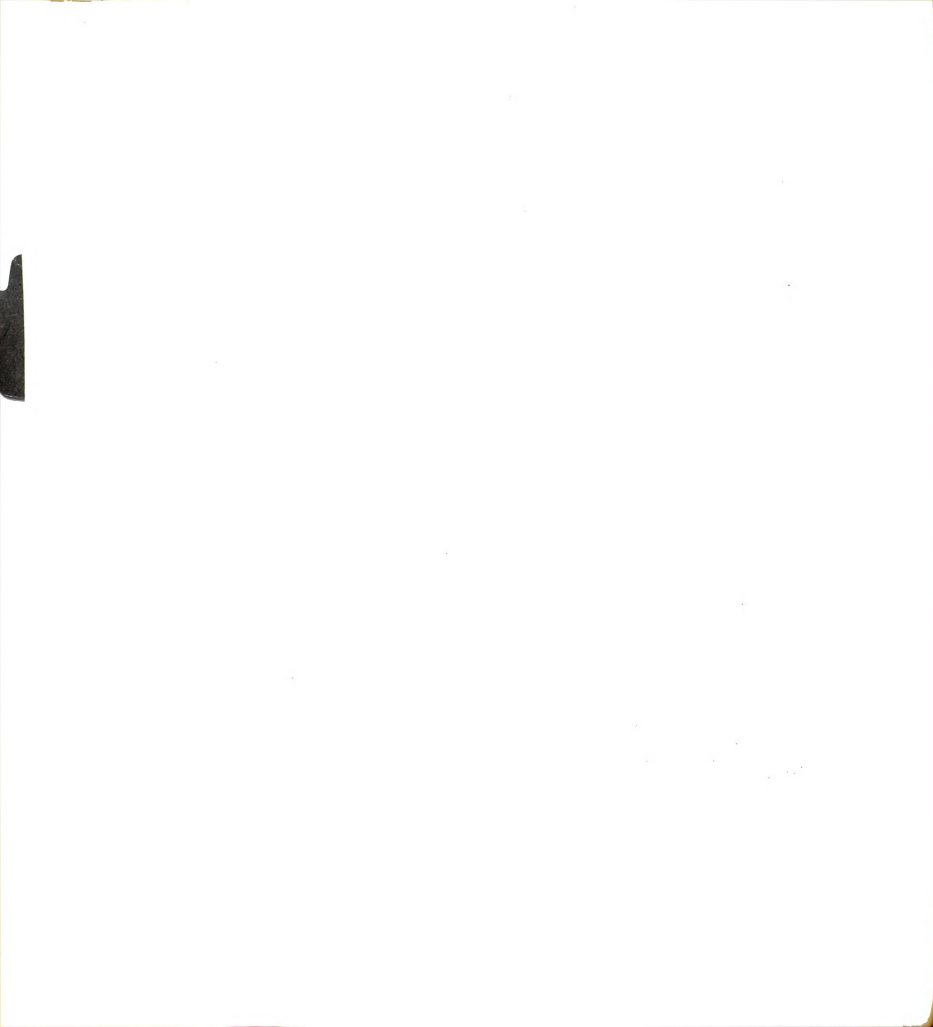
It seems curious that the issue of the representativeness of the Congress should have been given such a prominent place among the factors that determined the outcome of the Congress's London deputation. If the contention was that the Congress should represent all British West Africa before it could claim to be representative of the native communities on whose behalf it claimed to speak, then such a contention smacked of the absurd. It is a well-known fact that political movements are usually sectional, including "national" or "nationalist" parties. To demand a truly national movement before a favorable hearing could be forthcoming from the Imperial Government seems like asking for a united opposition from the subject peoples. A more fundamental question seems to be that of indirect rule and its relation to Legislative Councils. The discussion of this question is incorporated, along with other issues, in the chapter that follows.

⁴⁸Ibid., Letter of February 17, 1921, from H. Read to Bankole-Bright.



Governors of the four British West African Colonies,
in the 1920's - at home on leave.

From left to right: Captain Armitage of the Gambia,
Sir P.G. Guggisberg of the Gold Coast, Sir Hugh
Clifford of Nigeria, and A.R. Slater of Sierra Leone.



CHAPTER V

THE CONGRESS'S CAREER AFTER THE LONDON DEPUTATION

By March 1921, practically all the delegates had returned home. In the face of the "stunning" disappointment in London an attempt was made by the Congress's supporters and sympathizers to encourage the Congress's leaders to fight on. In Freetown, Sierra Leone, both the Sierra Leone and Gold Coast delegates were given enthusiastic welcome as soon as their ship arrived in port,¹ though owing to the brief time the boat had to stay in the harbor, the Gold Coast delegates were compelled to retire almost immediately. Later, on April 4, 1921, a more impressive gathering, under the chairmanship of the Honorable J. H. Thomas, J. P., met at the Wilberforce Memorial Hall, Freetown, to accord the Sierra Leone delegates a more honorable welcome and to receive a formal report of the latter's mission.

¹The Gambian delegates probably had disembarked earlier at Bathurst, but it is not unreasonable to presume that a similar welcome awaited them; later an enthusiastic "rally" against the London set-back was also recorded in the Gambia. The reception accorded the Nigerian delegates much later seemed to be attributable exclusively to Chief Oluwa's successful prosecution of his case in England.



The meeting seemed impressed by the efforts of the delegation while in London, which it seemed to have highly appreciated.

Back in the Gold Coast, its delegates received an equally enthusiastic welcome as soon as they landed at Sekondi. Later, on March 23, 1921, a big mass meeting presided over by J. Mercer, a Town Councillor, met at Sekondi to welcome the delegates. Subsequent receptions were accorded them, also at Sekondi, under the auspices of the "Wanderers Club," the "Optimism Club," and the "Sekondi Literary and Social Club." An impressive meeting under the chairmanship of Rev. Attoh-Ahuma was also held at the Varick Memorial Hall, Cape Coast, on April 14, 1921. This gathering expressed its appreciation of the work of the delegates in London and pledged support. Similar meetings, though apparently on a smaller scale, were also held, in honor of the delegates and their cause.

It was thus clear that the Congress's leaders, supporters and sympathizers were not daunted by the London set-back. In fact, the Sierra Leone Weekly News, referring to this "bolt from the blue," had remarked that its "stunning effect will only be but temporary." Such a stern reply from the Colonial Office, it continued, must be made "an occasion for a Rally" for it was merely "a postponement" of an attainment which, because it had divine backing, was "as certain as certainty itself."²

²The Weekly News, March 5, 1921.



The Aurora, which endorsed this sentiment, reminded the people that "life would be a cumbersome thing if it knows no freedom," and that the people's right to inherent "liberty must suffer no insidious encroachment," because of their "dark pigment."³

In the Gold Coast the Leader had observed that the people of British West Africa had never before in their history "been so thoroughly stirred as over this great movement," and then appealed to the people "to make resolves and stand by them" in furtherance of their ultimate victory. The paper, however, took hope and comfort in the realization that the "fortress" of hostile officialdom "is after all manned by men with human hearts, human consciences." In the renewed struggle that lay ahead and that was also imperative, the Congress would do well to recognize the need "to perfect our organizations," and educate the people in their true interests, which had been falsely represented as separate from those of "the educated class."⁴ In Nigeria the Lagos Weekly Record, which had also been launching a counter-offensive against Sir Hugh, finally endorsed the views of its colleagues. It, however, gave a useful reminder to all in the dispute, saying that "if the leaders of the Congress supposed that their first attempts would have met with the success they had anticipated then they

³The Aurora, April 23, 1921.

⁴The Gold Coast Leader, April 16, 1921.



had reposed too much faith upon human nature, especially when such nature had been developed under the intoxicating atmosphere of imperial domination; whilst on the other hand if the forces of bureaucracy should persuade themselves that having surreptitiously disappointed the maiden efforts of the Congress they had chilled the enthusiasm of its leaders and they could now rest in fancied security, then they had failed to read aright the lessons of History."⁵

However, a dissentient voice amongst the local papers was not lacking. In its issue of March 11, 1921, the Nigerian Pioneer saw the outcome of the London delegation as nothing of a "surprise to us nor to any one who has followed closely the history and development of the movement," which was characterized by factional tendencies, reckless assumption of power, and other gross irregularities. Concluding, it described the movement as "premature in conception, hopeless in execution and badly wanting in organization," and therefore, deserving to be "written off" at least for "the present."⁶

But Casely Hayford and his close associates launched a new counter-offensive to retrieve what apparently was becoming a lost cause.⁷ As soon as he returned from London he

⁵The Lagos Weekly Record, July 2-16, 1921.

⁶The Nigerian Pioneer, March 11 and 18, 1921.

⁷Nigeria seems to have been an exception in this.



wrote to a number of chiefs in the Gold Coast, and received enough favorable replies to show that Nana Ofori Atta had given only one side of the picture; or at least that some of the chiefs were coming round towards the Congress movement.⁸ The Chiefs of Big Addah disowned any collusion with Nana Ofori Atta in his opposition to the Congress movement. The Omanhene of New Juaben stated that Nana Ofori Atta had had no authority from him "either by writing, by parole or by inference to make those heinous statements against the National Congress." The Konor of Manya Krobo said that he had never discussed the objects and aims of the Congress with Nana, while the Konor of Yilo Krobo denied having authorized the Paramount Chief to protest on his behalf against the reforms advocated by the Congress. All these letters came from the Eastern Province, which included Chief Nana's division.

From the Central Province also came a significant reply from one of the chiefs. The Omanhene of Akim-Kotoku disclaimed any knowledge of what had been said in the Legislative Council on the issue, and declared himself in sympathy with the Congress.

In the Western Province the views of Nana Ofori Atta were denounced in telegrams of protest sent to the Secretary of State from both the Axim and Sekondi sections

⁸See C. O. 544/51, Letter and enclosures of June 27, 1921, from S. R. Wood to Winston Churchill. Some of these letters, however, suggest that Casely Hayford might have initiated them.

of the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society. Similar telegrams of protest were also sent from a group at Cape Coast in the Central Province and another at Accra in the Eastern Province. These protest meetings were mass gatherings that included not only the chiefs but also the educated elements and the bulk of the illiterate masses. In a typical telegraphic message the people not only repudiated Nana Ofori Atta's statements as unauthorized by them, but also endorsed the reforms advocated by the Congress and pledged their support for the movement. Further, the Secretary of State was requested to reconsider the Congress's petition in the light of the new information provided. Later, documents in the form of "declarations" and letters were despatched to the Colonial Office from various sections of these Provinces in order to reinforce the representations of the National Rulers and the people on the issue, and to provide further testamentary evidence of the representative character of the movement.

Armed with the letters and declarations he had received,⁹ and fortified by the rising feeling against Nana Ofori Atta, Casely Hayford proceeded to launch a vigorous attack against the chief, in the Legislative Council at its April meeting. He assailed Nana Ofori Atta's position there as a chief nominated by the Government, who had no right to

⁹See Gold Coast Legislative Council Debates, April 25, 1921.



present even the views of his own people. Still more objectionable was his claim to speak for the chiefs of the country. On the first count, Casely Hayford observed that the chief's nomination had been unpopular, and the chief himself knew very well that he could not speak for the people in that Council. Had he ventured to appear before a public meeting to oppose the Congress, Casely Hayford asked? As regards his relation with the chiefs, it was abundantly clear that he did not have their mandate. Casely Hayford then expressed his profound surprise at Nana's inconsistency, at one time arguing publicly in favor of the movement, and at another turning round to denounce it in the Council. Such inconsistency demanded extreme caution on the part of those having any dealings with him. Casely Hayford even proceeded to attribute the chief's volte face to "wounded pride."

He next turned to the question of the position of the educated classes in the body politic. He defended their right to an "independent voice" in the Legislative Council as warranted by their economic status.

After all who buys the motor cars, the patent boots, the high collars, the fine shirts, builds the fine houses? . . . We contribute largely to the taxation, and I am asking very respectfully, if we do this, have we not the right to ask that we may have a voice in the disbursement of the money that is derived from taxation?

Yet, all this did not imply the educated man's loss of identity with his people, nor did his adoption of European



ways in the process of his education. The claim of the educated leaders, "as sons of the soil," to represent both the "intelligentsia" and the bulk of the inhabitants was repeated and the idea of separate interests for educated and uneducated West Africans repudiated. He reiterated most emphatically that the reforms prayed for by the Congress were in the interest of all.

With mounting vehemence Casely Hayford attacked Nana Ofori Atta for opposing supporters of the Congress in his locality and trying to stifle freedom of expression. He attacked the "very dangerous principle" implied in Nana's speech "that no body of men within his district can say or express an opinion upon a question common to the whole of the Gold Coast without his consent." Casely Hayford contended that while private individuals had the right to express their opinions in matters of common interest, the Chief, as chief, had not that right. The Chief could not express an opinion except through the Linguist; what he said represented the wishes of the people who elected him, and to whom he was responsible.

Casely Hayford wound up with increasing bitterness, alleging that Nana Ofori Atta had rendered himself liable to impeachment under customary law, for making unauthorized statements, and for communicating in his capacity as chief with "the head of a Government outside our own," on national matters. He regretted his inability to impeach him before the Legislative Council, and went on:

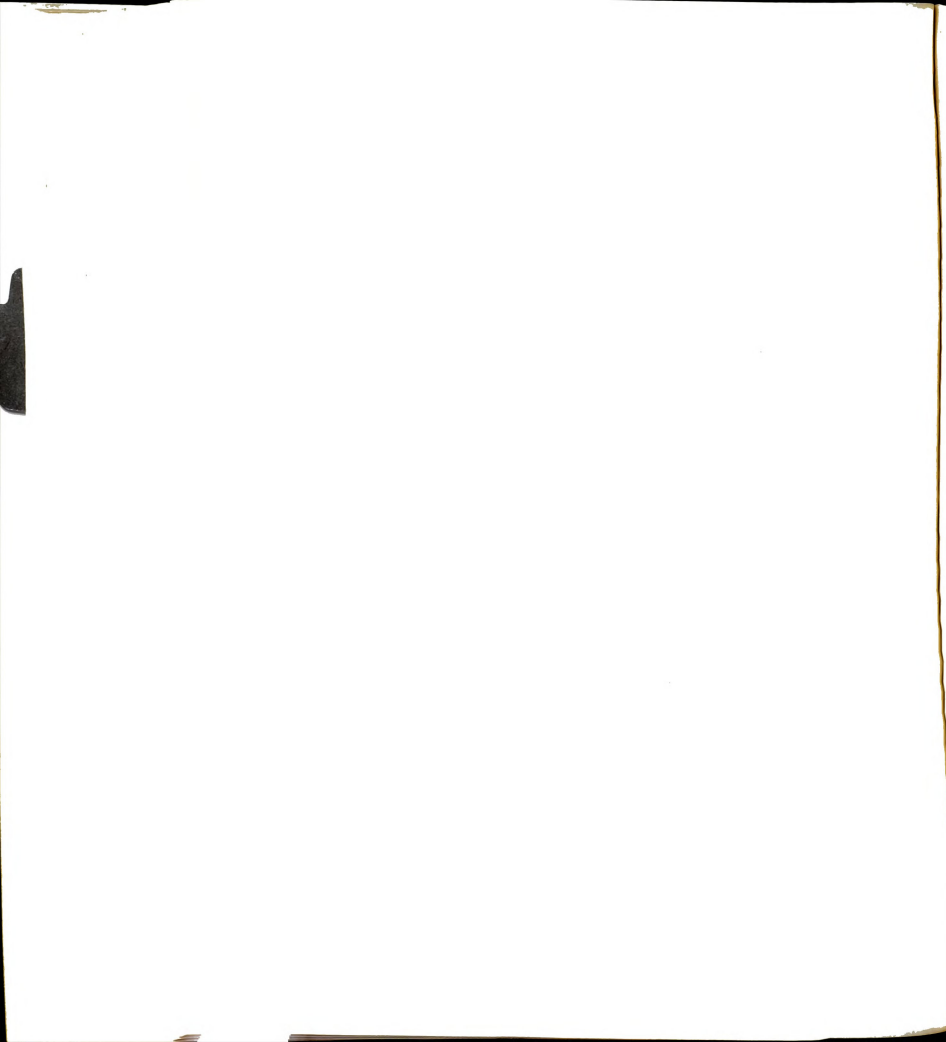


But I impeach you before the bar of your own conscience, and in the silence of the night, in your beds, you and your supporters will acknowledge to yourselves that you have proved traitors to the cause of British West Africa.¹⁰

Nana Ofori Atta, who was now on the defensive, answered in detail most of the points, without yielding an iota on the main issue of "this bosh that an ordinary native simply because he is educated becomes the natural leader of the State to which he belongs." This novel view of the educated he described as "a wrong doctrine; a very wrong one indeed." He agreed that the educated man belonged to a definite African family, but that family had its head in the form of a sub-chief or a Paramount Chief of the State, and until the educated man was deputed by his family or State, he could not assume the role of a natural ruler or the representative of his people. The trouble they were then having could have been averted if the self-styled leaders had observed that simple native custom. He then challenged the claim of the educated few to special representation in the community, arguing that the illiterates were just as much entitled to such rights and that the educated man's conspicuous consumption was made possible by the work of the cocoa farmer.

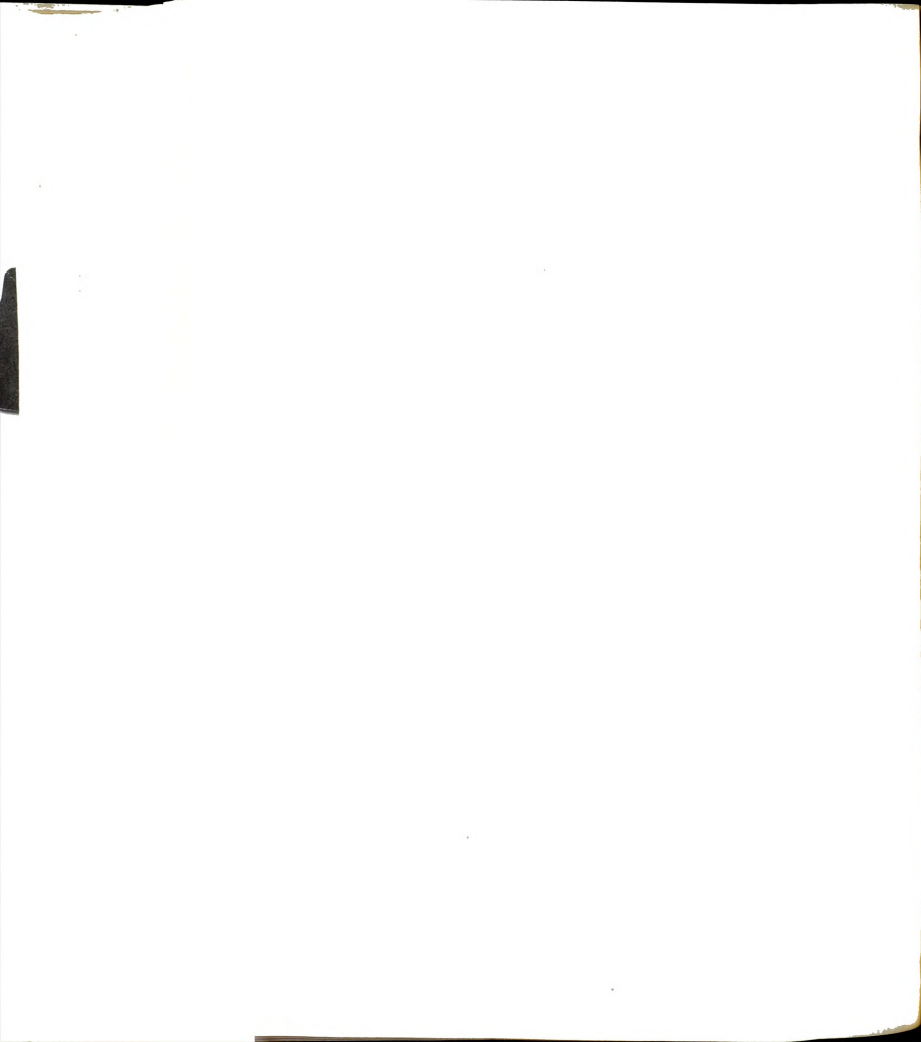
As a Paramount Chief, Nana Ofori Atta emphasized that he spoke, not for himself, but for his people, with whom he had discussed in advance the matters raised at the

¹⁰Casely Hayford, Legislative Council Debates, April 25, 1921.



previous Legislative Council meeting. While he had consulted with the chiefs on the Conference issue, the so-called "leaders" had ignored them, and while personally he had expressed himself in favor of the movement, his change of attitude had been dictated by his chiefs after the Conference leaders had persisted in their "wrong course." The Chief added that in order to comply with native custom, he always took a linguist and an elder with him to the Council. This time he was even accompanied by a literate counsellor, the Vice-President of the Akim Abuakwa Scholars' Union, as he was determined that in his State there should be no separation of interests between the literate and illiterate communities, and that "our good and worthy institutions should suffer no undue or radical change." His speaking to the Governor direct in the Council was also proper by native custom, as by that custom an inferior chief spoke to the superior one direct, being merely "supported by his linguists." His contention that the "support and authority of the Chiefs was essential" to any scheme concerning the State had been supported by Casely Hayford's own belated attempt to solicit the backing of "certain of the Chiefs."

Concluding, he dismissed Casely Hayford's imputation to him of responsibility for the failure of the Congress's London delegation, arguing that the delegates had



inevitably invited this failure by going about "doing things in the wrong way."¹¹

The Governor, Gordon Guggisberg, in his summary remarks welcomed the claim of the educated African to take a part in government, but made it clear that this had to be fitted into the traditional framework. It was not, in his opinion, "a fair thing for the people of the stools to be approached by a political party on any big public question in any other way than through the Chief and his councillors." Such an attempt would naturally evoke "enormous opposition from those who support the maintenance of natural institutions," the upholding of traditional authority. The Governor attributed the Congress members' "absolute neglect" to cooperate with the Government to the inherent weakness of trying to represent all four colonies at once. More serious, he thought, was the bitterness expressed in the newspapers, which had been growing since the formation of the Congress, and especially since Nana Ofori Atta's December speech in the Legislative Council. Such attitudes were widening the gap between black and white and thereby aggravating racial feeling. In such circumstances progress was being jeopardized; and hence, cooperation between the races had become imperative.

The Governor then pointed out that the main difference of opinion in the Legislative Council had been on

¹¹Nana Ofori Atta, Ibid., April 27, 1921.



a technical point, although a very important one, namely, was the Congress representative or not? There had been "good reasoned addresses on both sides" on this point and it was well "to bury the hatchet." He emphasized his own major criticisms, viz, that the despatch of the London delegation had been unduly hasty, and that the Government, in spite of its desire to help, had been ignored. He, however, hoped that "cooperation between the Government and the people which is absolutely essential to success" would be forthcoming from all sides.¹²

When Nana Ofori Atta left the Legislative Council after this debate, he was loudly hooted by the crowd outside, an unusual incident that led the Government to announce publicly that he had been fully justified in raising such an important constitutional issue. With a little official prompting, Nana Ofori Atta complained to the Paramount Chief of Accra about his treatment. The latter returned an evasive reply for which the Secretary for Native Affairs reprimanded him.¹³ It was obvious that there was a close relationship between Nana Ofori Atta and the Government at this time.

In Sierra Leone a protest similar to the Gold Coast's was forthcoming. Thus, at a mass meeting held at the Public Hall Freetown, on April 8, 1921, and composed,

¹²Guggisberg, Ibid.

¹³Kimble, Ghana, p. 395.



among others, of Church dignitaries, Mohammedan Princes and tribal Chiefs, it was resolved that His Majesty be told that he had been erroneously informed on the scheme of the Congress movement, that the Congress petition had their "unemployed support" and that he be asked to reconsider the major issue of "elective representation."¹⁴

In the Gambia a similar protest meeting was held at the Box Bar Race Course, Bathurst, on June 18, 1921, where it was resolved, inter alia, that the policy of the Congress had the meeting's loyal support, that it ratified all the various acts of the London delegation, and that it had pledged its further support in the interest of the movement. The content of the Resolutions was despatched by cable to the Secretary of State for the Colonies while copies of them were simultaneously forwarded to the Governor.¹⁵

Similar protest was forthcoming from Nigeria also,¹⁶ although the Nigerian branch of the movement languished rather rapidly.

¹⁴C. O. 554/54, Telegram of April 20, 1921, from Sierra Leone Local Congress Committee to Winston Churchill. A copy of this telegram was sent to the Governor, who in his confidential letter of April 23, 1921, alleged that the agitation was conducted in a "fraudulent way" while, however, admitting that the protest was signed also by a Member of the Legislative Council and a tribal ruler, Alimany Forfanna.

¹⁵The Aurora, July 16, 1921.

¹⁶See The Gold Coast Leader, April 16, 1921.

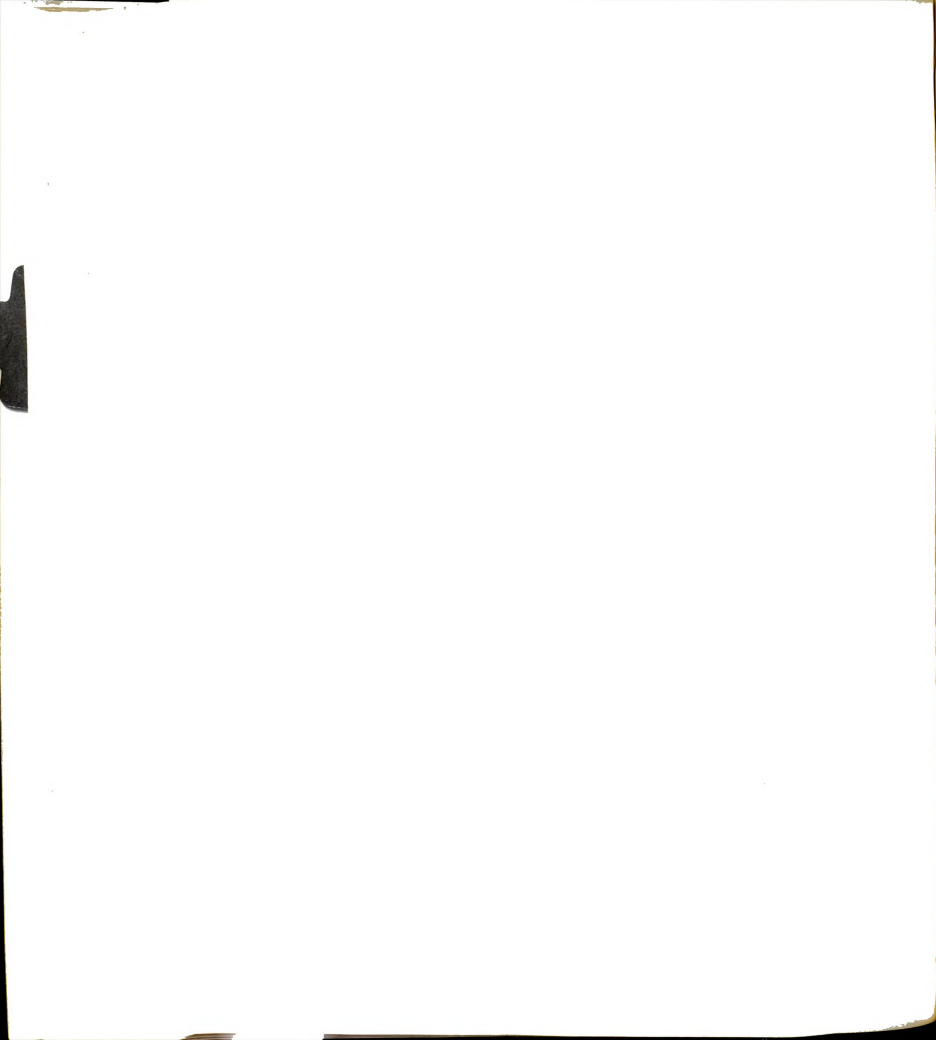


The immediate post-delegation protest activities which were calculated to influence the Secretary of State to revise his decision on the Congress petition produced no such effect. Meanwhile, however, the Colonial Governors who had been requested by the Colonial Office to submit their observations and recommendations on certain points in the petition,¹⁷ were complying with this request, and by May, 1921, they had done so.¹⁸

On the question of "invidious distinctions" in the West African Civil Service, all the Governors denied there were any such discriminations and cited instances of free and fair appointments to substantiate their case. Africans would continue to hold high appointments so long as they continued to prove themselves competent, impartial and incorruptible. With regard to the West African Medical Service, however, Sir Hugh Clifford of Nigeria observed that, while he saw no reason why Africans should not serve on it, their appointment would be "very distasteful to the members of that Staff" which "would probably increase the difficulties . . . already experienced in obtaining eligible recruits

¹⁷C. O. 554/40, Letter of Feb. 2, 1921, from Milner to the Governors of Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia.

¹⁸The present writer could not find the Sierra Leone Governor's reply among the documents. In his reply of April 23, 1921, however, the Governor refers to his "despatch No. 133 of the 11th March, regarding . . . the National Congress of British West Africa." His observations on education which were reproduced in C. O. 554/60 is, however, incorporated below.



for it." Governor Guggisberg of the Cold Coast, however, took the trouble to differentiate between the West African Medical Service and the West African Medical Staff. The former, he pointed out, was open to all "without distinction of colour" while the latter was "confined to 'British subjects of European parentage'" for reasons already discussed. What distinctions existed as to salary scales were dictated by the fact that "Europeans serving in West Africa are subject to certain expenses from which Africans are exempt."

Some of the Governors, however, chose to say something also on the legal issue. Governor Clifford specifically referred to the Unsettled Districts Ordinance and Collective Punishment Ordinance and pointed out that the petitioners' representations on these legislations betrayed "their bewildering ignorance of local conditions." Of the two ordinances, the former was intended to protect would-be intruders into these "savage" districts, and to curb the "head-hunting" and cannibalistic inhabitants, while the latter legislation ensured efficient control and moral improvement of those primitive people whom Clifford described as having "little if any moral sense." Captain Armitage of the Gambia observed that if counsel were allowed to appear in the West African Courts as advocated by the native lawyers, it "would lead to endless litigation and unrest among the natives for the benefit of the former at the expense of the latter."



With reference to municipal institutions, the Governor of Nigeria did not think they should be encouraged, owing to the people's unwillingness to subject themselves to the necessary taxation, and, therefore, it would be unwise to grant these natives uncontrolled power to expend public funds, the bulk of which would not be provided by local taxation. The Gambian Governor felt his people did not want municipal Government which the diverging interests of the community "would foredoom to failure." The Governor of the Gold Coast, however, strongly favored municipal "self government" for the larger towns of his territory. He even indicated that a special Committee was already studying the matter and formulating proposals.

On the issue of a British West African University, the Governors (except the Gambia) thought the idea premature. Captain Armitage of the Gambia merely drew attention to the new educational scheme in the Gambia which would be submitted to the Colonial Office in due course. Governor Wilkinson of Sierra Leone¹⁹ thought the University College of Fourah Bay, Freetown, "is adequate for our present needs" while he, Clifford and Guggisberg pointed to the more urgent need of improving primary and secondary education, thereby

¹⁹Richard James Wilkinson (1867-1941), educated Trinity College, Cambridge; cadet, Straits Settlements, 1889; District Officer, Dindings, 1902; Inspector of Schools, Federated Malay States, 1903; Resident, Negri Sembilan, 1911; Colonial Secretary, Straits Settlements, 1911-1916; C.M.G., 1912; Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Sierra Leone, 1916-22.



also laying a sound foundation for a British West African University. Both Clifford and Guggisberg reposed no confidence in the Congress undertaking the provision of funds for their new educational scheme.

On the Syrian question, the Governors remarked that the agitation against the Syrians only applied to Sierra Leone. The Governor of the Gambia, however, felt that "the scum of French Senegal" who flocked into his territory constituted enough menace to warrant the introduction of Emigration Laws as prayed for by the Congress.

Both Clifford and Guggisberg dismissed the program of the Empire Resources Development Committee as a dead issue, while, on the partition question, Guggisberg remarked that his government "did in fact, take up the same lines as the petitioners, in deprecating" the partition.

With regard to the Lands Aquisition Ordinance, Sir Hugh pointed out that the question of compensation, where it arose, was decided by the "independent appraisal" of the Supreme Court, beyond which it was difficult to find a better remedy. Both he and Guggisberg subscribed to the view that lands acquired by the Government but subsequently found to be unnecessary, should be restored to their original owners, although it was difficult, they pointed out, to determine when such reversion should take place. Captain Armitage observed that the Ordinance was working satisfactorily in his territory.



By June, 1921, all the despatches from the Colonial Governors had been acknowledged by the Secretary of State, while at the Colonial Office some interesting remarks had been minuted on some of the points made by the Governors. The Nigeria Governor's despatch was regarded as "conclusive" except on the two points of municipal institutions and lands purchased by the Government. On the former point, it was felt that "municipal" institutions and municipal taxation in such a town as Lagos should be encouraged, not discouraged." On the latter point, it was remarked that the term "original owners of land" was erroneous, since in the real sense of the word "'ownership' of land is alien to native law and custom."²⁰

With regard to Governor Giggisberg's remark that the establishment of a British West African University was "mischievously premature," it was pointed out that "there were Universities in England, and in every other European country . . . centuries before there was any talk of educating the masses." The proposal should not be regarded as premature "if private generosity were prepared to find the money or a large portion of it." On the whole, however, the Governor's remarks were regarded as "very sound," while the Gambia Governor's despatch receive no significant comments.²¹

²⁰C. O. 554/40, C. O. Minutes on the Governors' observations.

²¹Ibid., See note above on the "missing" Sierra Leone despatch on these issues.

On March 26, 1921, that is, ten days after his dispatch to the Colonial Office,²² the Governor of Nigeria submitted to the Secretary of State a proposal for the re-constitution of the Nigerian Council.²³ In a lengthy 41-point confidential letter, Sir Hugh Clifford discussed "the inadequacy of the machinery at present in existence in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria" for the criticism and passage of legislation, for the scrutiny, by those whose interests are affected, of the financial affairs of the country, for the authoritative communication of the actions of the Government to the local public, and for enabling the latter to follow and understand these actions. It was inevitable that a Council whose deliberations were limited by such prerogatives of the Governors as were then current,²⁴ and upon which the Government had "a preponderating official

²²See above--the Colonial Governors' despatches on the Congress's petition.

²³This should not be confused with the Legislative Council of the Colony of Southern Nigerian (strictly speaking the Colony of Lagos), which the Governor alleged was even worse in "impotency and insignificance" than the Nigerian Council.

²⁴With regard to the Nigerian Council the Governor had the "discretionary power to exclude from debate any Resolution or Question if, in his opinion, discussion of the matter would tend to promote or encourage racial prejudice or would otherwise be detrimental to the well-being of Nigeria," and secondly, "'No resolution passed by the Council shall have any legislative or executive authority, and the Governor shall not be required to give effect to any such resolution unless he thinks fit and is authorised to do so.'"--The Governor's Confidential Letter referred to above.

majority," should be regarded by the public as "little more than a debating society." Moreover, as matters stood, almost the only criticism of the actions of the Government which had any degree of influence with it came from various English Commercial interests. But these Bodies concentrated their scrutiny almost exclusively upon matters that affected or were believed to be likely to affect commercial interests.

The Governor further drew attention to the fact that "there is growing up among the more educated classes a feeling that the machinery in existence for the discussion of local affairs is wholly inadequate and that the Government occupies a position of untrammelled autocracy which is without a counterpart in the other West African Colonies." He added more significantly that this was a fact that could not "be gainsaid." He continued:

I question whether it would be possible, for instance, in any other Dependency in the Empire for such a question as the revision of the salaries of the European and native staff to be dealt with from first to last by correspondence between the Secretary of State and the Governor, without once being made the subject of any public discussion by representatives of the taxpayers from whose funds the increased emoluments are to be defrayed.

He added that it was rather unfortunate that the Government should have been released from the restraining influence of "a strong and vigilant Legislative Council" when that of the Supreme Court over the Executive had been greatly reduced by the narrowing of its jurisdiction to a few selected areas. He warned that "sooner or later the position must be



recognised as intolerable by the more advanced sections of the indigenous population." An attempt should be made to find a remedy and he would prefer that the initiative be taken by the Government.

Although it was extremely difficult to devise a scheme that might meet the needs of a vast and heterogeneous Nigeria, he was submitting a proposal that would be "a step in the direction of securing a fuller representation of local interests and of giving a larger share in the discussion and management of public affairs to articulate members of the various Nigerian communities than are provided by existing institutions." He recognized that the scheme was "inevitably imperfect," and might at first "prove not very effective," but he realized that it, at any rate, represented "a recognition of the principle that the local public has a right to obtain full information on questions affecting its interests, and that the actions of the Government are a legitimate object of scrutiny and criticism."

For his "new Council," the Governor made the novel and highly notable suggestion of having on it four elected members, three for the Colony of Lagos and one for Calabar. Although the number of nominated Africans was increased, the old feature of official non-Nigerian majority was maintained.²⁵

²⁵The Governor regarded it "as necessary . . . for a good many years to come, that the Government should possess an official majority on the Council."

Referring specifically to the point of elective representation, Sir Hugh remarked that "the privilege of electing their own representatives is much sought after by politically minded persons in West Africa." And in spite of the practical difficulties involved in the exercise of the franchise, he was of the opinion that the opportunity offered by elective representation "would tend to imbue" the newly elected elements in the Council "with a sense of responsibility which they do not feel" otherwise.

Finally, the legislative powers of the new Council would be restricted to legislation that applied exclusively to the Colony and the Southern Provinces. But as regards financial matters, the Council would be accorded a voice in all expenditure which was defrayed directly from the public Treasury, and in all taxation that was collected otherwise than by a Native Administration.²⁶

Sir Hugh's proposal was, after some correspondence between him and the Colonial Office, accepted almost as it stood. In his letter of December 12, 1922, the new Secretary of State, the Duke of Devonshire,²⁷ indicated to the

²⁶C. O. 583/100, The Confidential letter from Governor Clifford to Winston Churchill.

²⁷Victor Christian William Cavendish, ninth Duke of Devonshire (1868-1938), educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge; unionist M. P., West Derbyshire, 1891-1908; whip, 1901; Financial Secretary to Treasury, 1903-5; P.C., 1905; succeeded uncle as Duke, 1908; K.G., 1916; Governor General of Canada, 1916-21; Colonial Secretary, 1922-4.



Governor that his scheme had received royal approval, with only a few alterations. The novel and significant feature of the election of four Africans to the council was preserved while, in addition, there were to be "eight members to represent African Interests," which in effect meant the nomination of eight African unofficial members.²⁸ While the new Legislative Council was to legislate for the Colony and the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, it was proscribed from touching many Northern Province affairs.²⁹ The New Nigerian Legislative Council first met in October, 1923.³⁰

Not long after Sir Hugh's proposal, a similar one was forthcoming from Sierra Leone. In their address of welcome the Sierra Leone Branch of the National Congress of British West Africa had prayed the new Governor for a new Legislative Council having some elected elements in it, and his reply on that occasion seemed to have delighted the Congress members including those outside the colony. In his confidential despatch of September 27, 1922, the new

²⁸See also C. O. 583/23, Confidential letter of July 19, 1923, from Acting Governor Cameron to the Duke of Devonshire. Six seemed to have been ultimately decided upon, while five only were available for the first session of the Council.

²⁹C. O. 583/111, The Letter of December 12, 1922, from Devonshire to Clifford.

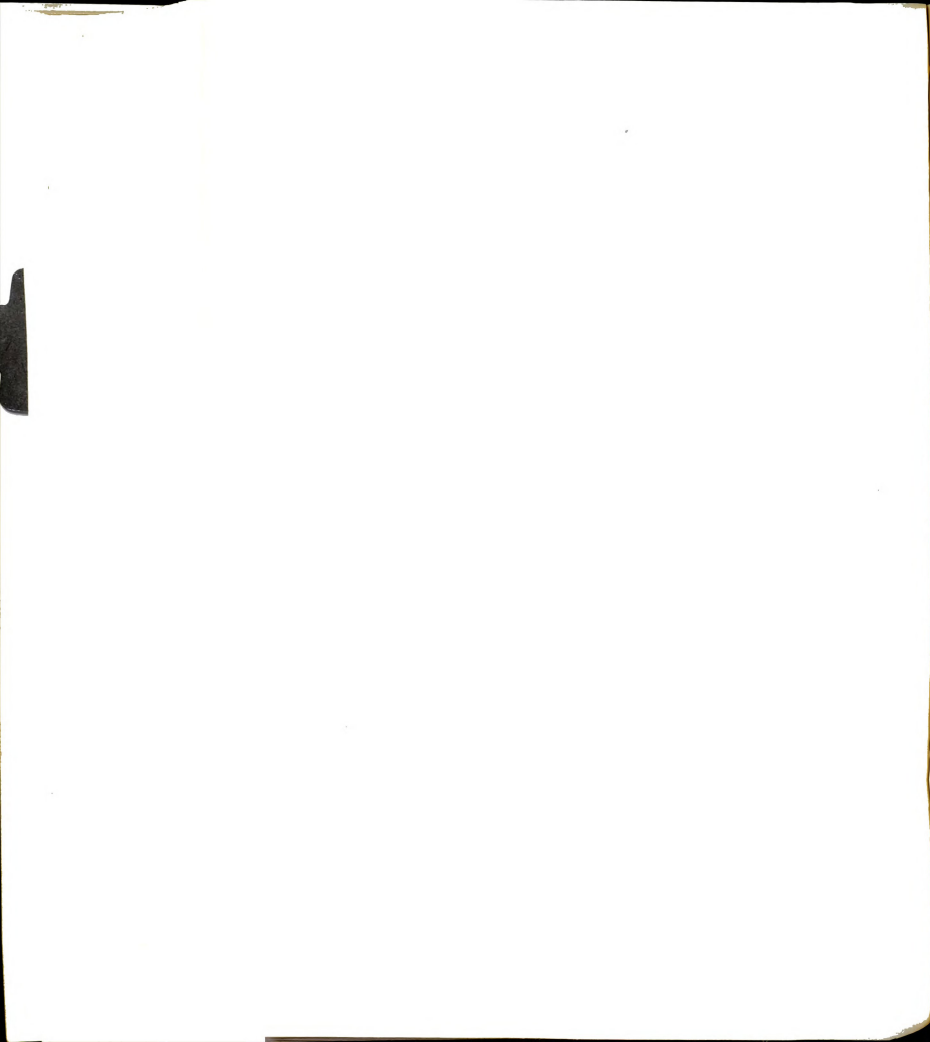
³⁰Constituted by an Order in Council of November, 1922, it was to consist of 46 members, 19 of whom were to be unofficial members including the four elected Africans.

Governor, Alexander Slater,³¹ asked for the reconstitution of the Executive and Legislative Councils of Sierra Leone with, among other things, some elected elements in the latter. The result was the creation of a new Legislative Council with the two novel features of three elected African unofficial members, and direct representation by nomination of Protectorate interests. The Council membership was enlarged equally on both the official and unofficial side, but the old official majority of one was preserved.³² The new Council, established by an Order in Council of January, 1924, first met in November, 1924, and it operated essentially on the same lines as those of the new Nigerian Council.

The Governor of the Gold Coast, however, showed greater reluctance, and expressed doubts as to the wisdom of introducing elective representation into the Colony's Legislature at the time. Said he:

³¹Sir Alexander Ransford Slater (1874-1940), colonial administrator; entered Ceylon Civil Service, 1893; Assistant Colonial Secretary, 1901-5; Principal Assistant Colonial Secretary, 1912; Colonial Secretary, Gold Coast, 1914-22; C.M.G., 1916; C.B.E., 1918; Acting Governor, 1915, 1916-17, 1919, 1920; Governor of Sierra Leone, 1922-27; K.C.M.G., 1924; Governor, Gold Coast, 1927-32; Captain General and Governor-in-Chief, Jamaica, 1932-34; G.C.M.G., 1933.

³²The Council was composed of 21 members, ten of whom were unofficials including the three elected Africans. Of the seven nominated members two were Africans representing the Colony while three were paramount chiefs representing the provinces of the Protectorate.



In principle I am not at all, nor are my advisers against, elective representation; but . . . we have got to be perfectly certain that any system of elective representation that we adopt here will support the power of the oman,³³ and not lead to the oman being over-run by the young educated people of the coast towns, such as are commonly styled the intelligentsia. If we can get a system of representation that does not impair the power of the paramount chiefs, I am ready to recommend it wholeheartedly to the Secretary of State, but I think it would be an exceedingly mischievous thing for the Government to plunge rashly into any change in the constitution of this Council unless they are perfectly certain that such changes are to the benefit of the paramount chiefs of this country.³⁴

In spite of agitations in the Gold Coast press, the Governor declined to make any recommendations as to the elective principle. He, however, turned his attention to the field of municipal self-government as "a valuable training school for the development of the sense of leadership and responsibility among educated Africans." Thus, by October, 1923, the Governor had submitted to the Secretary of State "a copy of the Draft Bill dealing with the reconstitution of the Municipal Corporations in the Towns of the Colony" for the latter's "consideration and approval." The Governor argued that "a radical change in the constitution of the Municipal bodies" based on "the principle of elective control" was desirable. Conferring on the people "greater powers in the management and control of local affairs" it

³³The Governor meant "Omanhin" or "Omanhene" which means Chief. The word "Oman" means State or Territory over which an Omanhin or Omanhene rules.

³⁴Governor's address to the Gold Coast Legislative Council, March 21, 1923.

would "satisfy to some extent the existing desire and capacity for self government which so far has had no opportunity for development."³⁵

In 1924 a Municipal Corporations Bill, designed to grant local self-government to the natives of Accra and other cities, was introduced in the Legislative Council, and by an Ordinance of that year new municipal corporations were set up at Accra, Cape Coast, and Sekondi. Although strong native opposition to the scheme, on the grounds that the new Corporation taxes would mean increased financial burden, was forthcoming and was to frustrate the plan,³⁶ it was clear that the influential educated natives had their eyes on what they considered the real repository of authority and political power. Said the Cold Coast Leader of April, 22, 1922:

Indeed, we are not thinking seriously of municipal institutions but of the larger question of Elective Representation in the Legislature. That is to us what matters. That is the key to the whole situation, and that secured all the other things will follow.

Eventually, however, the Governor conceded the demand, when he had felt that the principle of elective representation would not work to the detriment of "the rule of the oman"

³⁵C. O. 96/641, Letter and enclosure of Oct. 17, 1923, from Guggisberg to Devonshire.

³⁶Guggisberg confessed that the failure to make municipal self-government for the Coast towns a "stepping-stone" to elective representation on the Legislative Council had been his only real disappointment as Governor. Legislative Council Debates, March 3, 1927.



or chief, whose authority the Government was committed to uphold.

Accordingly, by the end of 1925, the new constitution for the Colony had been published in the Gold Coast Gazette, and it had been announced that the old Legislative Council would cease to exist in April, 1926. The new Council, which was established by an order in Council of April, 1925, was to consist of thirty members, sixteen of whom would be officials, with the Governor as President. Of the fourteen unofficials, nine would be African elected members while the rest would be nominated Europeans. Traditional authority was comparatively well catered to in the elected African membership, out of whom six were to be chiefs, elected by the Provincial Councils of Chiefs, who represented Provincial interests. The new Council which met for the first time in August, 1926, operated essentially on the lines of its sister councils of Nigeria and Sierra Leone.³⁷

Earlier, however, Governor Guggisberg had made strong representations at the Colonial Office for the establishment of a new "secondary school" in the Colony, which would serve as a nucleus for a Gold Coast or British West African university. This University College, the Achimota College, "will, in fact, be a stepping stone towards that University . . . which it is the ardent desire of the

³⁷ Not until 1946 did an elected member appear on the Gambian Legislative Council.



Africans to have and which it is the undoubted duty of the Government to give as soon as . . . the time is ripe."³⁸ By the end of April, 1923, the Governor had submitted a detailed plan for his proposed scheme. The eventual outcome was the foundation and functioning of Achimota College by the year 1926.³⁹

As early as December, 1920, the establishment of a West African Court of Appeal had been urged by the Sierra Leone Government.⁴⁰ In spite of repeated appeals especially from this quarter, this proposal was apparently not realized until 1930, although "the ideal of an Appeal Court presided over by British, not Colonial Judges" was still to be attained.⁴¹ By 1923, however, a number of posts in the Civil Service, which formerly had been held by Europeans were thrown open to Africans at the recommendation of the Colonial Governments.⁴²

³⁸C. O. 554/60, Letter of April 30, 1923, from Guggisberg to Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies.

³⁹Its foundation stone was laid in 1924.

⁴⁰See C. O. 554/50, West African Court of Appeal.

⁴¹J. B. Danquah's Introduction to Sampson's Gold Coast Men of Affairs, p. 29. At the fourth session of the Congress, in Lagos, Nigeria, Hayford, himself, in his Presidential address, claimed that "the establishment of the West African Appeal Court with criminal jurisdiction is now an accomplished fact, although Nigeria has yet to come into line."

⁴²See particularly C. O. 583/120; C. O. 267/600; C. O. 87/219. As regards African Appointments Casely Hayford claimed that "the Congress had not been more than a



Whatever view one might have about the impact of the Congress movement on official circles, it was obvious that there were now in progress some new and salutary developments in those quarters as regards their relationship with indigenous British West Africans. However, in his confidential letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies regarding the reconstruction of the "Nigerian Legislative Council," the Governor of Nigeria pointed out that "there is ~~a~~ growing up among the more educated classes, a feeling that the machinery in existence for the discussion of local affairs is wholly inadequate and that the Government occupies a position of untrammelled authority." He then went on to warn that "sooner or later the position must be recognised as intolerable by the more advanced sections of the indigenous population" and then he suggested that "it is preferable that the initiative in the matter of reform should be taken by the Government."⁴³ It is thus apparent that the Governor was influenced by the political agitation of the educated and "enlightened" elements who, if not active Congress members, were none the less sympathetic to it. It does not seem far-fetched to suggest that the Governor, although he had

few months old when we were able to report progress by concessions to men of our race in the several Colonies" with regard to "openings in the higher branches of the Colonial Service."--Presidential Address, Freetown, Jan., 1923; Sampson, West African Leadership, p. 72.

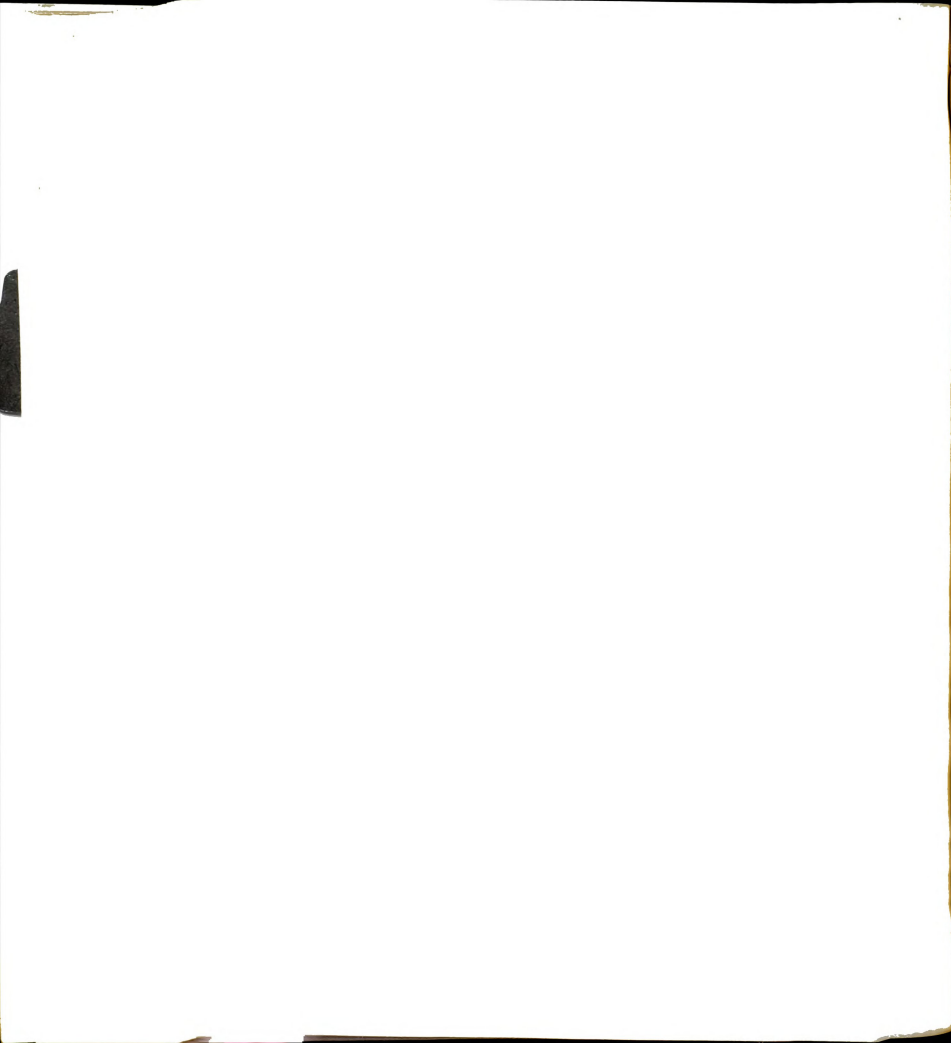
⁴³C. O. 583/100, Confidential letter of March 26, 1921, from Clifford to Winston Churchill.



denounced the Congress movement, had had second thoughts on its program of reform, and had been influenced by the merits of that cause. The Governor did not, at this time, refer specifically to the Congress as one of the factors influencing his new move, but it was neither necessary for the favorable reception of his new proposal nor good for official prestige that he should do so. Nevertheless, the Congress, in its various manifestations, must have been one of the factors that had influenced him in his new move. It seems reasonable to assume also that the impact of the Congress was felt in other official circles. It was Clifford, Governor of Nigeria, who took the initiative in reacting to this impact. The precedent he set was to be followed in due course by his fellow governors.

The concession of the elective principle to the Legislative Councils of the Colonies was a highly significant one. This concession marked the beginning of the process that would bring a change in the colonial relationship until its culmination in the attainment of the national independence of a modern democratic state.

Although there were some activities of the Congress between the sessions, including that of its Secretariat at Sekondi, it was quite clear that it really came to life only when in joint session, and that it had little separate existence in each colony. Casely Hayford had been so preoccupied with his personal struggles for political leadership



in the Gold Coast that he had scarcely paid any attention to branch activities and organization there let alone in the other three colonies. There was little support in Nigeria because of the alienation of many actual and potential supporters of the movement by unwise leadership, the disintegrating effects of Lagos politics and the highly effective opposition, open or otherwise, of the Nigerian Government to the movement. In Sierra Leone there was only a handful of enthusiasts, while in the Gambia there was hardly any scope for politics.

They had intended to meet annually⁴⁴ in each capital in turn, but this did not work out. Although all the capitals witnessed a Congress session, years intervened between the sessions. Thus, it was not until January, 1923 that the next session, scheduled to be held in Freetown, met. Next, the Congress met in Bathurst at the turn of the year 1925-1926, and finally in Lagos in 1929-1930. On each occasion, the same pattern was followed, namely, platform addresses followed by a discussion of a number of topics, followed eventually by a long list of resolutions. As the years passed, the opening speeches claimed more and more achievements by the Congress. Also, the Congress's resolutions grew slightly in number, though the main subjects of

⁴⁴It was later decided at the Freetown session to meet biennially. See the Congress Constitution, C. O. 554/65.



interest, namely, constitutional and judicial reform, education, the press, Africanization of Civil Service--remained constant. Attention was also drawn to "the growing consciousness of our race the world over" and "its growing articulateness."

The Freetown session, which made some notable contributions to the cause, was not, however, well-attended. The twenty-five delegates included only four from the Gold Coast and none from Nigeria. From the latter, however, a number of African gentlemen and groups sent messages expressing their sympathy with the aims of the Congress.⁴⁵ The President of the Congress, Hutton Mills, was "unavoidably" absent and it naturally fell to Casely Hayford to preside. This session was notable for the production of a formal constitution for the Congress and for the election of Casely Hayford as President of the movement.

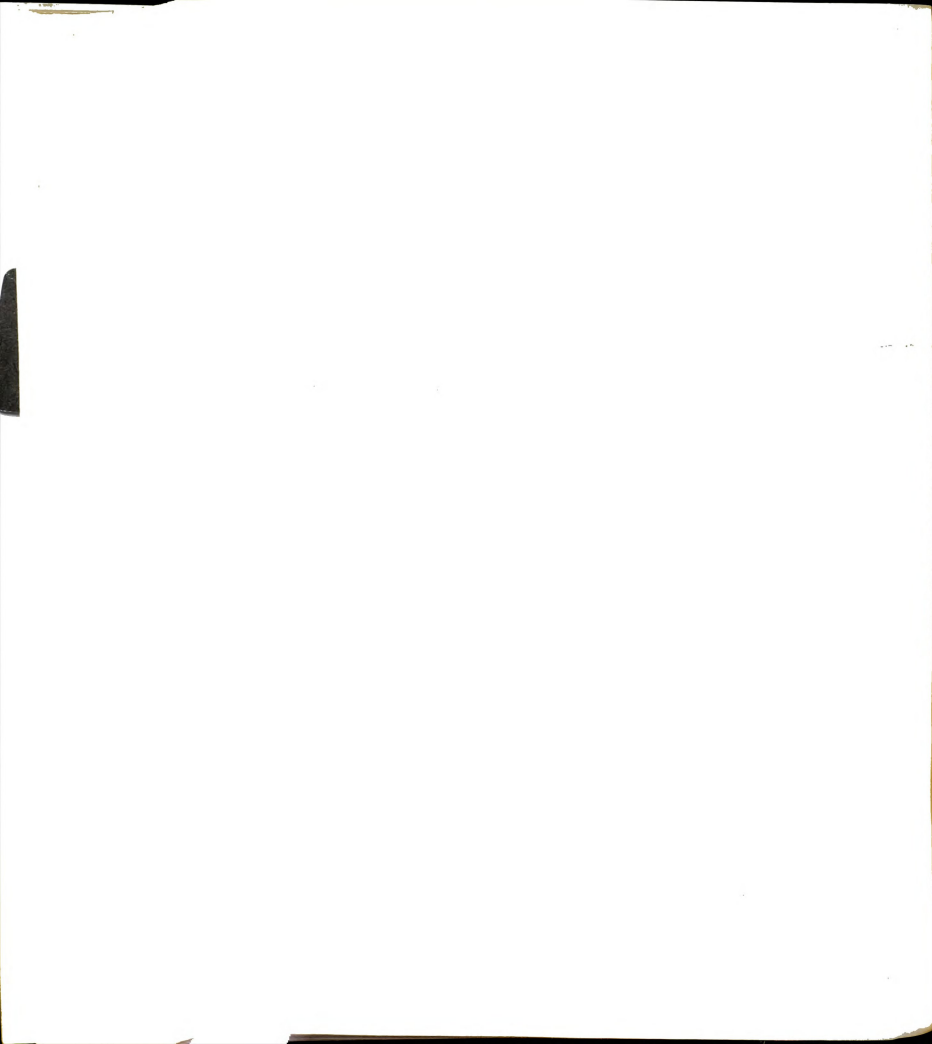
The constitution, consisting of fifty-four items, outlined, principally, the policy, aims and objectives of the organization, its membership, laws and functions. The policy reiterated the oft-repeated one of maintaining "strictly and inviolate the connection of the British West African dependencies with the British Empire, and . . . unreservedly all and every right of free citizenship of the Empire and the fundamental principle that taxation goes with

⁴⁵West Africa, May 19, 1923.



effective representation." It would be the aims of the Congress "to aid in the development of the political institutions of British West Africa under the Union Jack" with the ultimate aim of ensuring "within her borders the Government of the people by the people for the people," of securing equality of opportunity for all, and of preserving "the lands of the people for the people," saving them from all manner of exploitation. It would be the Congress's objectives "to promote and effect unity of purpose and of action" among the British West African Dependencies, "politically, economically, socially, and otherwise." Specific objectives would be the establishment of educational institutions, especially those of higher learning, and the promotion of commercial and industrial cooperative enterprise. Membership of the Congress would be open to all British West Africans by right and on application to other persons of African descent, "as honorary members." It was also stipulated in the constitution that the Congress would have absolute authority in the determination of its own affairs while one of its major functions would be the education of public opinion in the needs and aspirations of British West Africans and in the ways and means of realizing their legitimate objectives.⁴⁶ If, as seems implicit in the statement on Congress

⁴⁶See C. O. 554/65, Letter and enclosure of Oct. 30, 1925, from O.A.G., Gold Coast, to the Colonial Office, London.



membership, the intention was to exclude whites from joining the movement, criticism of the movement on the grounds of its "exclusiveness" was justified.⁴⁷ Whether Hayford's reply that the movement stood for all interests, both European and African, was sincere or not, it is quite clear that the Congress's promoters erred in failing to enlist the active or moral support of influential Europeans. The Indian National Congress, on the other hand, had a good number of Europeans in its membership, a fact that probably contributed significantly to the success of that movement.

Special attention also was paid to the educational problem. Dr. Faduma's contribution was especially informed with good sense; he stressed the need for development at all levels, and the desirability of a truly "African" content in the people's education.⁴⁸ Casely Hayford indicated the Congress's stand on the issue when he said:

We do not subscribe to the proposition that a peculiar kind of education is desirable for the African per se. But we believe in the African being trained by the African with an African outlook, which is a very different thing. Experience has thought that it is oftener than not the half-educated African who is de-Africanised rather than the thoroughly educated African.

For these reasons, he would, of necessity, urge upon the attention of the colonial Governments the early foundation of

⁴⁷ See Casely Hayford, Legislative Council Debates, April 25, 1921, for Hayford's reply to the charge of "exclusiveness."

⁴⁸ West Africa, March 17, 1923.



a British West African university,⁴⁹ a view embodied also in this sessions's resolutions.

As before, telegrams of greetings had been dispatched to the King and to the West African Governors. This time, however, Governor Clifford was determined that no one should be able to misunderstand his reply. While finding himself unable to regard "this self-appointed Congress as in any sense representative of African interests or public opinion in Nigeria," His Excellency looked forward to reading the report of their deliberations, "which cannot fail to be of interest as an example of the opinions held on a variety of public questions by a number of educated African gentlemen." The Congress, on its part, decided not to let the implications of this message go unchallenged, and proceeded to repeat once again that they represented not only the intelligentsia but also "the bulk of the inhabitants of the various indigenous communities" of British West Africa, but they declined to quarrel with His Excellency since "the status of the Congress . . . and the scope of its work" had been assured already.⁵⁰

Another significant feature of this session was the moving appeal of Rev. J. C. O. During. This West African cleric compared the supporters of the Congress

⁴⁹Ibid., March 31, 1923; Sampson, West African Leadership, ch. iii--Hayford, Presidential Address, Free-town, Jan. 1923.

⁵⁰C. O. 554/60, Enclosure of March 13, 1923, from O.A.G., Gold Coast, to Devonshire.



movement to the early Christians who had suffered from a change of attitude of Imperial Rome, namely, from one of friendliness and fair play to one of antagonism and hatred as a result of some calumny and misrepresentation from some quarter. And like St. Paul, he declared "the people of British West Africa are making . . . an appeal to Caesar, to the King-~~Emperor~~, as representative of the great English people, to the English sense of justice and fair play."

He continued:

. . . we are not asking for the supreme control of the affairs of our country, but for freedom to develop our God-appointed destiny within the British Empire. We plead . . . for taxation with representation, for scope to those who show ability and character, and colour no bar to high positions of our land.

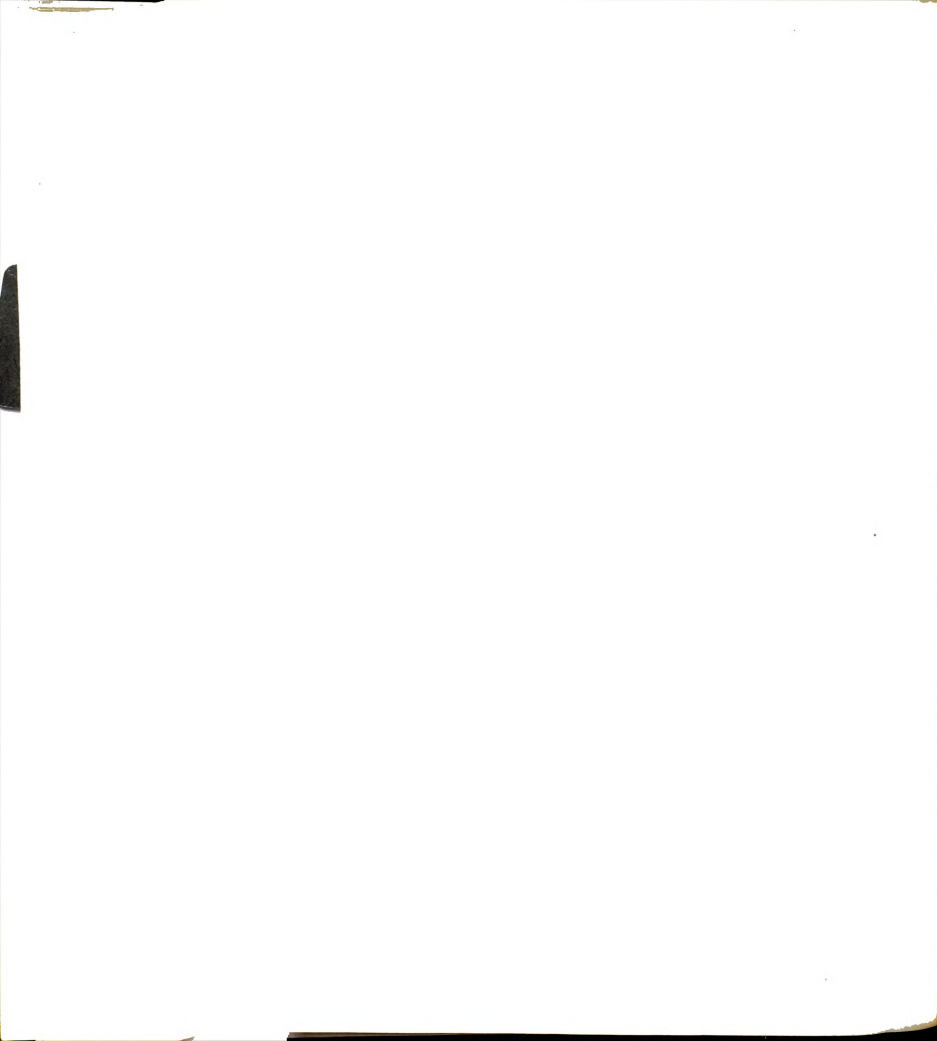
Concluding he asked:

Shall not present-day Gamaliels exclaim, "Take heed! Beware of this movement! If it be of men it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, least haply, ye be found even to fight against God!"⁵¹

A copy of the Congress's resolutions at this session was despatched through the Gold Coast Government to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.⁵² At the Colonial Office a number of observations were made on the resolutions, some of which are of additional interest. Thus, it was remarked that some of the Congress's resolutions on constitutional reforms implied that its members "will not be satisfied

⁵¹West Africa, February 24, 1923.

⁵²C. O. 554/58, Letter and enclosure of March 13, 1923, from Guggisberg to Devonshire.



until the representatives of the Europeanised Negroes are given control of finance." It was next pointed out that "change in the Gold Coast constitution is under consideration." With reference to the resolutions on judicial reforms it was pointed out that "as regards the Appeal Court we have recently met their views to a certain extent by amending the Supreme Court Ordinances, so that a judge who has tried a case will not often be a member of the Appeal Court."⁵³

Back in Accra, Casely Hayford held a "mass meeting" at the Native Club Hall, where he gave a glowing account of the Freetown session, which was interpreted into Gã. An attempt, however, to enlist "the active support of the plebeian masses" and to extend the movement to the rural areas did not prove very successful. Although a ladies' section was founded at Accra, its plan to extend the association to illiterate women apparently did not materialize. By 1924, however, Congress had become almost an institution with the 28th of March, the last full day of the inaugural conference, set aside as Congress Day.⁵⁴

Difficulties of organization in the Gambia caused the third session of the Congress to be postponed several times during 1925. Besides, Casely Hayford and his colleagues had been anxiously awaiting the outcome of the Gold

⁵³C. O. 554/58, Colonial Office Minutes of 6/4/23.

⁵⁴Kimble, Ghana, pp. 400-401.



Coast constitutional discussions. It was not, therefore, until December that the full session eventually opened in Bathurst.⁵⁵ There were altogether twenty-nine delegates with a few Mohammedan elements, but once again Nigeria was unrepresented. Casely Hayford was elected President with C. May, the Mayor of Freetown, as the Vice-President. S. R. Wood was re-elected Secretary, with J. Glover-Addo, and J. Kilson-Mills as joint Financial Secretaries, and H. Van Hein and S. O. Akiwumi as joint Treasurers.⁵⁶ Since all of these officials, except the Vice-President, came from the Gold Coast, it was clear that the colony was still the fountain-head of the movement.

This time the delegates devoted much attention to a constitutional memorandum which was later incorporated in the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society's petition of 1926 against the new Gold Coast constitution.⁵⁷ Considerable attention seems to have been devoted also to the discussion of "the position, and education of womanhood in West Africa." One interesting feature of this session was the attendance of female delegates, who actively and usefully participated in the discussion. A "Women's Auxiliary Committee"⁵⁸ of the Gambian Branch of the Congress had been

⁵⁶West Africa, March 6, 1926.

⁵⁷Kimble, Op. Cit., pp. 402 and 449.

⁵⁸Its Chief officers were: Mrs. C. M. Roberts, President; Mrs. H. N. Davis, Vice-President; and Mrs. Hannah E. Forster, Secretary.



founded in Bathurst, where these ladies came from. Eventually, the Congress's fourth session took place in Lagos, Nigeria, with the support of the Nigerian Democratic Party.⁵⁹ Casely Hayford reviewed the ten year's progress of the Congress and summarized its achievements. These, he claimed, included the extension of the franchise in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and the Gold Coast; the foundation of Achimota College as "a direct response to the resolution of Congress"; the establishment of a West African Appeal Court, "although Nigeria has yet to come into line:" and "repeated assurances" from official quarters as to the security of the people's rights to their ancestral lands. He felt that elective representation did not go far enough, and he was of the opinion that the principle of an official majority could not remain undisturbed if British West Africa were to have an effective voice in her own affairs. He referred specifically to the proposed constitutional changes in Ceylon as useful precedents.⁶⁰

⁵⁹The first experience of the delegates from the other colonies in which "not a single soul of the Nigerian Branch of the Congress was on the wharf to welcome them," was most depressing. But Casely Hayford's courageous initiative and resourceful moves seemed to have saved the situation in a most impressive way. See The Gold Coast Independent, Feb. 1, 1930. The session lasted from December, 1929 to January, 1930.

⁶⁰"The Donoughmore Report (implemented in the Ceylon constitution of 1931) had proposed to 'transfer to the elected representatives of the people complete control over the internal affairs of the Island.' Ceylon. Report of the Special Commission on the Constitution (London, 1929)."
--Kimble, Ghana, p. 402 (footnote).

Casely Hayford, who had become increasingly aware of the difficulties, stressed the need for his people to be prepared to accept, when the time came, the responsibilities of initiating policy, and carrying it out effectively. While retaining his faith in the potentialities of his people and in the liberating power of education, he was conscious of and distressed by their lack of unity; this was a major obstacle to be overcome. Said he:

. . . I appeal to all Africans everywhere to smoke the peace pipe together whatever the sacrifice that may involve, for the African God is weary of your wranglings, weary of your vain disputations, weary of your everlasting quarrels which are a drag upon progress and which keep from you, as people, the good that is intended for you.⁶¹

This was virtually the last session of the Congress. Casely Hayford, who had founded it, and who had been its main source of energy died in August, 1930. Although a fifth session was later suggested, this never materialized, and the movement ceased to have any influence even in the Gold Coast from where it had always drawn its main vitality. The growing divergences in the direction of political development in each territory were making it more and more difficult to present unified demands for reform, with the result that the leading African politicians had become increasingly preoccupied with their own local problems, at

⁶¹Casely Hayford, Presidential Address, Lagos, Dec., 1929; Sampson, Ibid., p. 91.

the expense of the Congress as a whole. The attempt at West African unity had proved premature, but incipient nationalism was not wholly unproductive of worthwhile results.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Influenced by a number of international events, inspired by the examples of "precursor" nationalist activities, among which was that of the Indian National Congress, and stimulated by the climate of idealism generated by the war, Casely Hayford and his colleagues in the British West African Colonies had proceeded to create a Pan-West African political organization as a constitutional weapon for the ultimate achievement of self-government for their people. Not even qualifications, from some quarters, of the immediate post-War pronouncements on self-determination from the eminent statesmen of the day could damp the enthusiasm of nationalist aspirations or stem the tide of nationalist activities of "politically" conscious West Africans. As Dr. J. B. Danquah had remarked, "the doctrine of self-determination" proclaimed "in the chancellories of the world powers" had offered Casely Hayford "an opportunity which he did not throw away."¹

¹See Danquah's Introduction to Sampson's Gold Coast Men of Affairs, p. 27.



The main and immediate impelling force behind Casely Hayford's Congress activities was undoubtedly his acute awareness of the "disabilities" of his people for which "this archaic system" of Crown Colony Government was responsible. His feelings and objectives were shared by a number of "colleagues"² with whom he proceeded to realize the dream of "a congress of all natives of British West Africa." Theirs was an inchoate nationalism characterized by loyalty, moderation and "constitutionality" of procedure. Their movement aimed initially at the sharing of powers with the Colonial Governments while, however, keeping in view the ultimate attainment of complete self-government and dominion status within the Empire.

The idea of a Congress of British West Africans had been mooted as far back as 1912, and was seriously discussed and accepted before the outbreak of the war, though shelved in order not to "embarrass His Majesty's Government." But the idea was kept alive in the West African Press and by 1919 preliminary activities towards the inauguration of the Conference at Accra were well under way. By the turn of the year the realization of the project had become a foregone conclusion.

²This clique may be said to represent the new elite of British West Africa largely identifiable by their educative and comparative economic wealth. The group claimed to represent "substantially the intelligentsia and the advanced thought of British West Africa," and "the bulk of the inhabitants of the various indigenous communities."



The inaugural Conference which was held at Accra in March, 1920, was attended not only by delegates from all the four British West African Colonies but also by some important officials of the Gold Coast Government; the event was, on the whole, favorably received in British West Africa. Even a London-based paper, West Africa, had described the event as "the beginning of a new era" which "has commenced well" because led by "the two greatest Africans in the Gold Coast." The Conference which lasted nearly three weeks discussed a number of constitutional, judicial, administrative and educational reforms, later embodied in eighty-three resolutions. At the close of the Conference it resolved itself into a permanent National Congress of British West Africa, to be composed of the several committees already established in the four colonies, with headquarters in Sekondi, the home of Casely Hayford, who was elected Vice-President of the organization.³

Before the Conference rose, it resolved that representatives from each colony should be sent to London to seek legal advice on the best method to secure the reforms advocated, chief of which was the franchise. To a Congress inaugural fund which would among other things defray the expenses, Hutton Mills, the Congress President, had contributed a thousand guineas, while the Gold Coast, the headquarters of the

³Although founder of the movement, Casely Hayford had conceded the office of President to T. Hutton Mills his elder compatriot and politician.

movement, had contributed over ten thousand of the twelve thousand pound total. While in London from September, 1920, to March, 1921, the deputation had done some propaganda work, including a meeting with the League of Nations Union, and had eventually presented a petition to the King, based on the Accra resolutions. Owing chiefly to adverse representations from the Colonial Governments, reinforced by protests from some aboriginal elements, the Congress's petition was rejected by the Secretary of State with His Majesty's approval. Soon, however, there was some rethinking in official circles and with the strong recommendations of the Colonial Governments some concessions were made, the first of which was the granting of elective representation to the Nigerian Legislative Council.

It was clear, however, that in spite of the enthusiastic and wider support which greeted the "stunning" and "galling" disappointment of the London delegation, and the occasional spouts of enthusiasm and activity as exhibited in subsequent full sessions of the Congress, the movement was destined to languish. With the death of its founder in 1930, it became extinct. The attempt at a West African unity had proved a premature experiment.

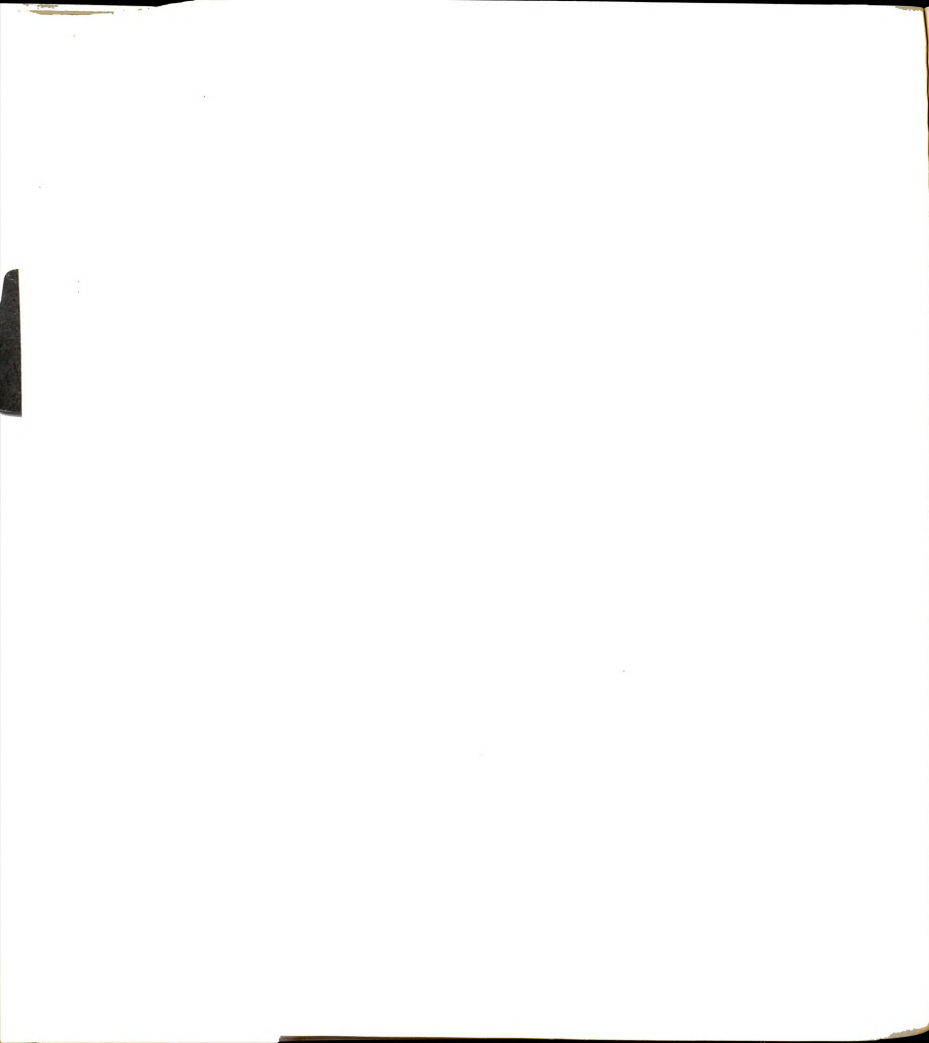
But what is there in the main charge of unrepresentativeness levelled against the Congress promoters? The Congress's petitioners had claimed that "apart from the fact that the National Congress of British West Africa represents



substantially the intelligentsia and the advanced thought of British West Africa . . . it also represents the bulk of the inhabitants of the various indigenous communities and with them claims, as sons of the soil, the inherent right to make representations [as] to existing disabilities, and to submit recommendations for the necessary reforms."⁴ With the first of these two claims, there is not much to quarrel about, although a number of dissenting voices were forthcoming, even from the educated and "enlightened" elements. The second claim is highly dubious, whether in terms of explicit mandate or in those of identity of views and objectives. The claim to represent the bulk of the chiefs and the masses would be seen to be doubtfully tenable in view of protestations from those quarters against the Congress; the claim appears ludicrous with reference to those chiefs and masses in the hinterland. It would seem curious that the later claim was made when Casely Hayford himself had definitely and "proudly" affirmed the exclusiveness of the movement, asserting that "this is a movement of the educated classes of British West Africa."⁵ Yet having said that, he had proceeded to assert the community of interest between "the untutored native" and "the educated

⁴The Congress Petition to His Majesty the King - See references cited above.

⁵Hayford, Inaugural Address.



African." Thus he averred that "the time will never be when it will be possible to dissociate the educated African from his uneducated brother," a statement that elicited spontaneous applause from his audience. It seems idle to argue the point that the uneducated, including the illiterate chiefs, cherished the advice and guidance of their educated men and accorded them an enviable esteem and recognition. But beyond the limited circle of tribal and kinship allegiance, it becomes desirable, if not imperative, to educate the illiterate "outsider" on the issues, to empathize with him and to win his confidence. It was not without some justification that one of Nigeria's eminent politicians asserted that "given a choice from among white officials, Chiefs, and educated Nigerians, as the principal rulers of the country, the illiterate man today, would exercise his preference for the three in the order in which they are named."⁶

But it was well to recognize that the educated African who had been compelled by the nature of his education to repair to the town to make a living, had not necessarily cast off all tribal allegiance or kinship obligations and that, in fact, a good number of the leading educated natives did identify themselves with the interests of their people, although there might be instances of the exceptional behaviours of a few "scoundrels."

⁶Obafemi Awolowo, Path to Nigerian Freedom (London, 1947), p. 32.

Yet it seems unconvincing to contend that an Ibo lawyer or a Yoruba schoolmaster of the 1920's could "represent" the wishes of the Hausa farmer or the Fulani pastoralist. No doubt the educated Nigerian was qualified to represent the views of the illiterates of his own town. Beyond that, his claim to representation of the masses apply only to an ideal nation or state which did not yet exist. But, in creating the mass sense of nationality as a prerequisite to the achievement of the goal of an independent nation, the Congress was carrying on a legitimate piece of political activity which should not be thwarted by a short-sighted policy of the powers that be. The Indian National Congress represented such an ideal nation until an actual one was realized. The educated and enlightened West African, representing the "advanced thought" of his people, can legitimately "anticipate" the wishes and aspirations of the latter, formulate those wishes and aspirations in a most articulate way, and urge reforms on his people's behalf and thus fulfill their role of taking "the lead in the forward march of progress." It is left to the wise alien administrator to know at what pace the advocated reforms can be conceded without causing unnecessary frustrations that might bring disastrous consequences. It was to his credit that the Governor of Nigeria espied the threatening and inevitable "wind of change" and urged a timely but

"regulated" concession that averted "the gathering storm."⁷

A more fundamental issue in the controversy between the Congress and its antagonists seems, however, to be the place of the educated elite in the new polity that was emerging. Nana Ofori Atta, the most formidable single opponent from the indigenous elements, recognized the issues at stake. He was sympathetic to the progressive ideas of the movement, but he felt that this must be realized within the limits of traditional framework. He was not willing that the chiefs should relinquish their claim to leadership, even if it meant sacrificing a wider national unity to the cumbersome kalaidascope of numerous "independent" States. The claim of the new elite who owed their position of influence to education and private property, to a position of political leadership, provided a new and dangerous challenge that must be met. In Nana's counter-offensive he was encouraged, if not prompted, by the Colonial Authority which was committed to the maintenance of traditional authority and which disliked and probably feared the claim of the new elite to leadership. Official

⁷On the issue of representation, Edward Francis Small, one of the Gambian delegates on the London deputation, referred and remarked wittily thus: "I have yet to know . . . that these gentlemen, who participate in legislating for both the Colony and Protectorate are known 'in the flesh' to the overwhelming masses of the people."

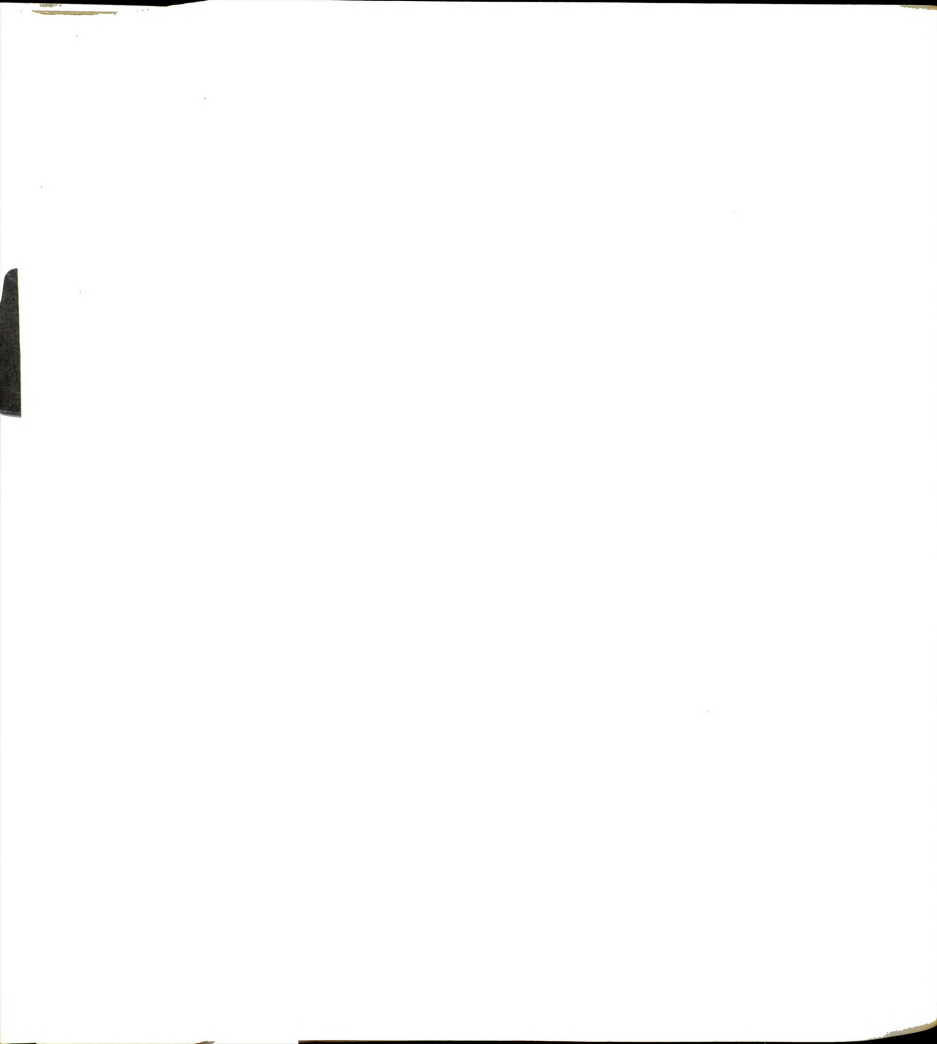
"Every day brings fresh evidence of the anomalous position of the nominated member as would be spokesman of the people in the Council. Undoubtedly, the Congress crystallises a striking paradox, every retort it receives being applicable in its own case." The Aurora, May 14, 1921, Letter of April 12, 1921, from Small to the Editor of The African World.



patronage of traditional authority sounded hollow, however, in the face of those Central Government regulations that tended to diminish rather than enhance the prestige and power of that authority. The knowledgeable, however, knew where the center of real authority in the State lay, and the educated leaders foresaw an inheritance that would be theirs by the prescriptive right of education, and worked sedulously towards its realization. The circumstances, however, proved unpropitious, and Congress leaders did not do much to improve them by enlisting the support of the illiterate and semi-literate masses.

The argument on nationality and nation should be accorded a subsidiary place in the whole issue. It had been dragged in by Sir Hugh to reinforce his denunciation of the new challenge offered by the Congress movement, which was working towards a fundamental change in the colonial relationship. It is obvious that even the concept of a "united West Africa" was an artificial one, and that the attempt at unity, except in the limited sense of some cooperation between the colonies, was unrealistic. But it is equally unacceptable to argue, for example, that the idea of a Nigerian or Gold Coast nation is a fiction when it is recalled that the present United Kingdom or France seemed at one time a figment of the imagination. Thus, in his St. Joan, Bernard Shaw makes the Earl of Warwick say to De Stogumber.

A Frenchman! Where did you pick up that expression?
Are these Burgundians and Bretons and Picards and Gascons

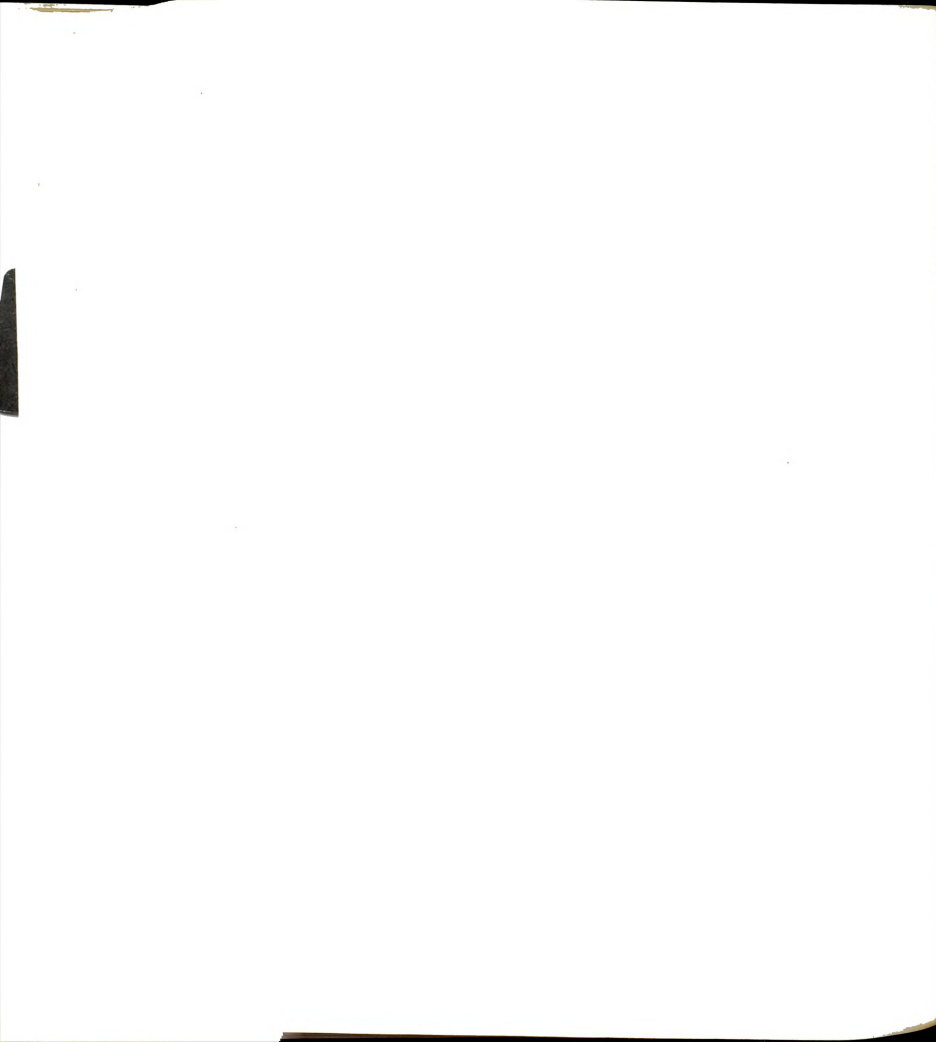


beginning to call themselves Frenchmen, just as our fellows are beginning to call themselves Englishmen. They actually talk of France and England as their own countries. Theirs, if you please! What is to become of me and you if that way of thinking comes into fashion?⁸

Yet opposition from the Colonial Governments proved highly effective. Governor Clifford's disparaging remarks and hostile attacks against the Congress succeeded in producing devastating results. Dr. T. O. Elias referring to the Governor's hostile reaction to the Congress's London deputation and its activities observes that "for sarcasm and derision," Clifford's onslaught "can hardly be bettered in the annals of gubernatorial pronouncements on the political ambitions of a subject people" and that "so authoritative and instantaneous was the effect of this douche thrown onto the flickering fire of would-be sympathizers with the African cause in the British Parliament that nothing came of the struggle." But he added that "having thus effectively thwarted their cherished ambition in Britain, Clifford was quick to sense the gathering storm on the political horizon" and "accordingly proceeded to dismantle Lugard's edifice of the Nigerian Council which, together with the old Legislative Council, he finally abolished in 1922, replacing both by a single Legislative . . . Council."⁹

⁸Cited in Thomas L. Hodgkin's "Toward Self-Government in British West Africa" in Basil Davidson and Adenekan Ademola, eds., The New West Africa (London, 1953), p. 91.

⁹T. O. Elias, "Makers of Nigerian Law," West Africa, May 5, 1956.



Whatever is the correct estimate of the effect of Governor Clifford's onslaught, there is no doubting the fact that when to it are added the adverse representations at the Colonial Office from Governor Guggisberg, and the repudiation of the Congress by Africans and West Africa the effect was decisive with that Office in its final attitude to the Congress deputation. A close study of the exchanges between the Colonial Office and the Colonial Governments and the influences of these exchanges on policy reveals the immense influence of the Colonial Governments in the determination and revision of colonial policies, a situation that would appear natural because of the importance attached to the views of "the man on the spot." Yet this is not to deny the independence of the Colonial Office in its appraisal of any colonial issues before it. But more often than not, in the determination of colonial policy decisions, it would seem to be a case of the Colonial Governments leading the way instead of the other way round. In any case, as regards the result of the Congress's petition, the Colonial Governments played a major role. The almost immediate reversal of the Secretary of State's decision, that "the time has not yet come for the introduction into any of the West African Colonies and Protectorates of the principle of election to the Legislative Councils," is also attributable, in the first place, to the Nigerian Colonial Government and Sir Hugh's initiative.

Before the end of the decade, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast had joined Nigeria in this bold and imaginative change of front.

Although the Colonial Governors, especially Clifford, deserved ample credit for this novel and healthy move, some credit, however, attaches to the Congress's efforts for reform. It seems correct to assume that the Colonial Governments were acutely aware of the influence and "capabilities" of the movement. In Sierra Leone, the Congress constitutional proposals seemed to have had some influence with the Colony's new Governor, Alaxander Slater. Even in Nigeria, where the Congress attracted little support from the people, it did serve to stimulate the growing and eventually effective demand¹⁰ of the Lagos community for more effective representation in the Legislative Council. And it would probably be correct to conclude that although the Congress representations produced "no direct effect" at the Colonial Office, its impact there had prepared that office for concessions that might be urged through the proper channels. In fact, Colonial Office minutes on the Congress strongly suggest that conclusion.

¹⁰ Sir Hugh Clifford writes:

"I feel strongly . . . that the action which you have accorded to me permission to take, is right in principle; that the creation of the new Council will tend to satisfy legitimate aspirations and ambitions; that it will fulfil useful and practical purposes . . . and that it will help to produce a healthier political atmosphere throughout the principal centres in the Southern Provinces." Confidential letter of 7th July, 1922, from Clifford to Winston S. Churchill, C. O. 583/111.

In spite of the growing concessions from the Colonial Power, which included the foundation of Achimota College, the reconstitution of the West African Appeal Court, and new higher Civil Service appointments for Africans, credit for which it could, with some justice, partially claim, the movement seemed destined to an increasing diminution of its vitality, and eventually to total extinction. Various factors contributed to this fortune of the Congress. Official hostility, or at best, calculated discouragement played its part. Added to this was the insurmountable barrier of the separate location of the Colonial territories. The disparity of conditions within the various territories, and even between the various units within each territory, were factors to be reckoned with. This limiting situation was not improved by the apparent disinclination on the part of the different territories to associate, except perhaps in a very loose way. When to all this is added the failure of the Congress's leaders and promoters to enlist the support of would-be adherents of the movement and to give it a mass and popular base, its dismal fate had become predictable.¹¹ Certainly, the attempt at a West African unity,

¹¹George Padmore, referring to the cause of the demise of the Congress, observed that "unlike men of the type of Ghandi and Nehru and Kwame Nkumah, he [Casely Hayford] failed to realize that without the active support of the plebeian masses . . . who form the bulk of the population, the middle class intellectuals were ineffective." The Gold Coast Revolution (London, 1953), p. 52.



except in the sense of a loose cooperation, had been a premature experiment, which an independent West Africa¹² might be fortunate to realize.

Outside those concessions for which the Congress might claim partial credit, there were other developments, perhaps less obvious, that might be entered to the credit of the Congress movement. Thomas Hodgkin has remarked that "even the most tentative discussion of African political parties must involve some account of the more primitive forms of association from which they have sprung," and then goes on to cite the National Congress of British West Africa as one of those parent associations.¹³ In the same way later brands of British West African nationalism owe something, by way of inspiration at least, to this incipient nationalism of the Congress movement. George Padmore has observed that Dr. Kwame Nkrumah founded the Convention People's Party not only "to advance the cause of self-government" in the Gold Coast but also "to revive the conception of a West African Federation started by the West African National Congress nearly thirty years before."¹⁴ Some connection in program is also traceable

¹²This would include the former colonial possessions of the other European powers.

¹³Hodgkin, Nationalism in Colonial Africa (London, 1956), p. 139.

¹⁴Padmore, Pan Africanism or Communism (London, 1956), p. 129. Padmore goes on to say that Dr. Nkrumah, the first African Prime Minister, "appointed Mr. J. Casely Hayford's son, Mr. Archie Casely Hayford, a Cabinet Minister in the first Gold Coast African Government," apparently in recognition of the former's services to the African cause.

between the National Congress of British West Africa and the Nigerian National Democratic Party which later allied with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons.¹⁵

It is clear that only a small portion of the Congress's program had been realized before its demise soon after the death in 1930 of its founder and main moving spirit, Casely Hayford. But if the Congress's relatively "modest" contemporary achievements should incline one to minimize those achievements, it would be well to remember that even the limited concession on the franchise alone, partially attributable to the influence of the Congress, was a really significant contemporary achievement of the movement.

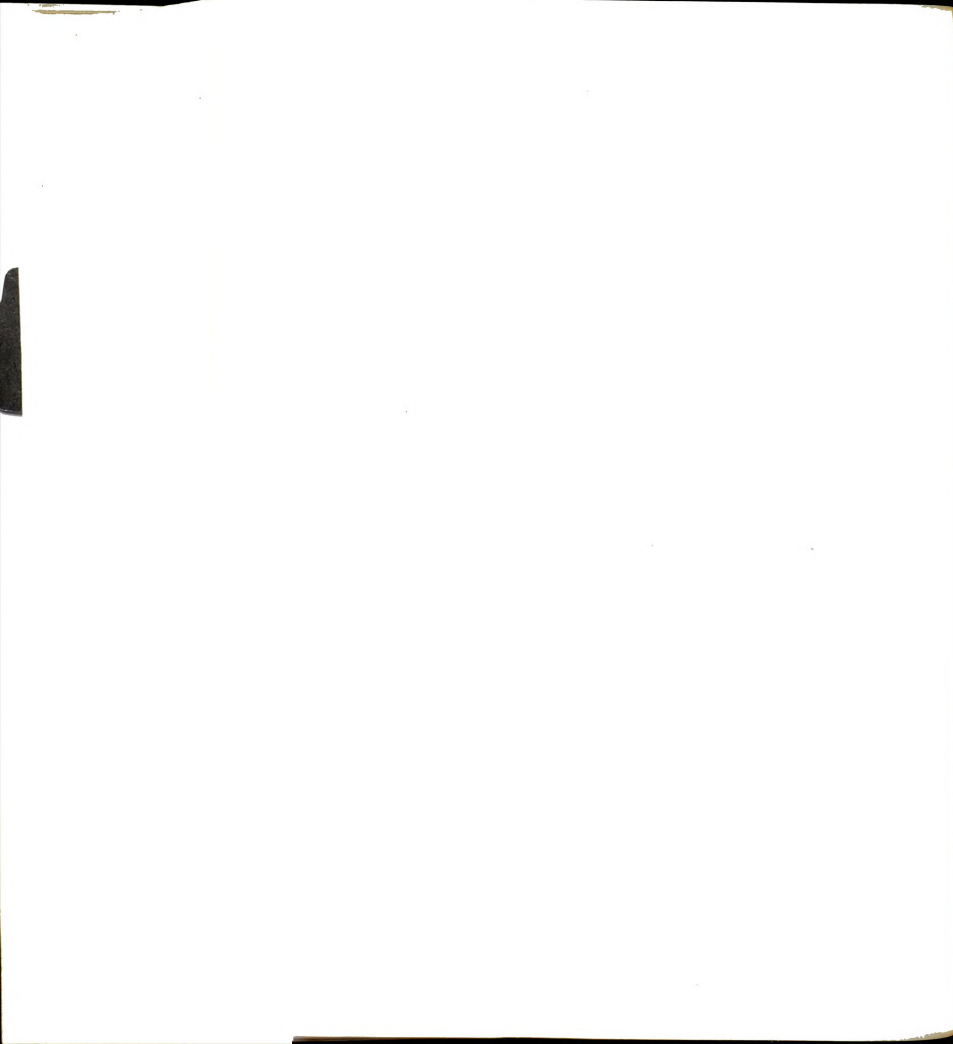
The concession of the elective principle to the Legislative Councils of the Colonies was a highly significant one, for it introduced a new and radical change in the constitution and ideals hitherto ruling those Councils. The concession of that principle was an admission by the powers that they should be guided in their policy and government by what the people felt they wanted, rather than what the Colonial Governments thought the people wanted. The paternalistic ideal of government would yield, if gradually, to a truly democratic ideal by

¹⁵See Nnamdi Azikiwe, The Development of Political Parties in Nigeria (London, 1957), pp. 5 and 23. This N.N.D.P. must not, however, be confused with Akintola's N.N.D.P.

which the elected member would be increasingly the chief "determining agent" of government policy and the focus of attention and political influence. In its implications, the concession marked the beginning of the policy that recognized the realities of the new emergent state and cooperated with the forces that brought that change in the colonial relationship that culminated in the attainment of the national independence of a modern democratic state.

The precedent set by the Congress's own role in the significant achievement of the elective principle was not lost on future nationalists.

Furthermore, if it is conceded that the Congress was, in some sense, unrepresentative of the bulk of the indigenous community, it should also be conceded that it none the less represented substantially an "enlightened", influential and articulate section of it. All this was a significant fact, later necessarily recognized by nationalist movements. Because of their awareness of the importance of this fact, the Congress's leaders were to rest confident that their setback was merely a "postponement" of a realization that was bound to be. It was left to posterity to honor them with the fulfillment of a cherished "dream" partially realized.



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This dissertation is substantially based on such primary sources as Colonial Office documents, including manuscripts and related printed matter, and such Colonial Governments' publications as Legislative Council Debates--including the Governors' addresses to the Legislative Councils. Included also in the primary sources are newspapers, local and foreign, and also some books which substantially contain first-hand "material" on the subject of this study. The secondary sources comprise books other than those specified above as well as learned or otherwise valuable articles. For both categories of sources only a selective listing has been attempted in the compilation of this bibliography.

A. PRIMARY

The primary materials used in this study can be found in such public archives in London as the Public Record Library (P. R. O.), the British Museum, the Colonial Office Library (C. O. L.), and the British Museum Newspaper Library (Colindale). (The Colonial Office Library has been renamed the Commonwealth Office Library, but the former name will be retained for convenience.) The Colonial Office documents have the additional value of containing that Office's confidential minutes and memoranda. The C. O. documents are a

massive material to wade through, but the following selective list with the accompanying brief description of each group of documents should prove a handy guide to one wanting to consult those records. The groups of documents (volumes) are officially referred to by the letters C. O. (for Colonial Office), followed by serial numbers. There are volumes on West Africa as a "unit" as distinct from volumes on each of the four British West African Colonies. The C. O. serial numbering also applies to the published Sessional Papers of the various colonies except publications of the Legislative Council Debates of those colonies.

DOCUMENTARY:

WEST AFRICA (1920-23, 1925) - C. O. 554/46-65

These Contain:

C. O. 554/46:

Telegrams of Governor Guggisberg and Governor Clifford to the Colonial Office on the "unrepresentativeness" of the National Congress of British West Africa and the evil implications of its program and activities.

C. O. 554/49:

The Congress's Resolutions and Petition with related correspondence; Colonial Office Memorandum and Minutes.

C. O. 554/50:

Further telegram communication from Governor Guggisberg conveying "aboriginal" opinion of the Congress movement. Colonial Office reaction to the Congress's Petition.

Colonial Office communications to the Colonial Governors on the Petition and their observations on it.

C. O. 554/54:

The London Delegation's attempt to re-establish their case and Colonial Office's rejection. Efforts in British West Africa to rally round the Congress's cause: protest telegrams and declarations from certain indigenous elements, including chiefs.

C. O. 554/58:

The Congress Second Session's Resolutions and Colonial Office Memorandum.

C. O. 554/60:

Colonial Office Memoranda and Minutes on the subject of a West African University; Guggisberg's proposal for a Gold Coast University College.

C. O. 554/65:

The Congress Constitution.

Of Additional Interest

C. O. 554/49-61:

Correspondence on Appeal Court for British West Africa, and Colonial Office Conference on Education in Africa with related correspondence.

The Congress's Correspondence to the Foreign Minister, Earl Curzon of Kedleston; its report to the Colonial Office on its meeting with the League of Nations Union.

NIGERIA (1919-1923) - C. O. 583/94-123

C. O. 583/94:

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C. O. 583/100, 106 and 111:

The Governor's correspondence on the reconstitution of the Nigerian Legislative Council and Colonial Office reaction.

C. O. 583/118, 120 and 123:

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C. O. 96/598:

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(b) Between the Gold Coast Government and the Colonial Office.

C. O. 96/637:

The Governor's proposal for the reconstitution of Municipal Corporations in the Towns of the Colony.

C. O. 96/641 and 643:

Correspondence on the appointment of Africans as Medical Officers and Crown Counsels; on the proposed Achimota Secondary School or University College.

SIERRA LEONE (1919-1923) - C. O. 267/582-602

C. O. 267/582-585:

Correspondence on the Syrian Problem.

C. O. 267/596 and 600:

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C. O. 267/600 and 602:

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2. Gold Coast Sessional Papers:

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3. Sierra Leone Sessional Papers:

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chiefly concerned as they are with particular territories of that region. Coleman's is highly useful as providing a thoughtful and stimulating background study to "African" nationalism, while Kimble's makes some highly valuable contributions to the particular subject of the National Congress of British West Africa. Needless to say, the rest of the following list have made valuable contributions to the subject of this study.

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