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No.20406/4

Government Lodge,
ENUGU.

SECRET

3rd June, 1947

Dear (all Residents),

I am writing confidentially to give you the background to the second and fourth paragraphs of the Secretariat letter No.21273/22 of the 5th of May, Item 17 and Appendix 'J' of the minutes attached thereto, and Secretariat letter No.20406/4 of the 27th of May and its enclosure.

2. You will remember the secret demi-official letter No. A.19200/1/305 of the 8th of March, in which Sir Bernard Carr expressed his fear that the Native Authorities are in general failing to keep contact with the progressive elements so largely represented in the "Unions", and invited comments on a suggestion for a new approach to the latter in the hope of bringing the educated classes more fully into the Native Authority organisation.

3. The well-considered replies to that letter which Residents have furnished deserve to speak for themselves, and a digest of the various views expressed will be circulated in due course. It is enough to say here that Sir Bernard's anxiety over the situation was found to be generally shared, partly on account of the growing gap between the Native Authorities and the District Officers on the one hand and the "Unions" and the more impatiently progressive elements on the other; partly on account of the growing estrangement, caused by administrative difficulties, of the District Officers from the people of their districts generally. In general the replies were stronger in analysis of these evils than in concrete proposals for removing them, but it was generally agreed that some movement on the part of Government to regain the confidence of the educated classes, both within and outside the "Unions", and gain for the Native Authorities the service and support of the educated classes, is immediately necessary. Opinion was divided as to the wisdom of ^{entrusting} an approach to the "Unions" to a single Administrative Officer detached for the purpose.

4. While these replies were coming in, however, and before Sir Bernard Carr went on leave, the outlook was completely altered by the arrival of the Secretary of State's despatch No.64 of the 22nd of February, circulated as Appendix 'J' under cover of our Secretariat letter No.21273/22 of the 5th of May. This despatch, raising as it does issues which are quite vital to the Eastern Provinces, was seen at once as providing matter for practical and constructive discussion in which the progressive elements and the representatives of the Native Authorities could be brought together in a natural way, which would not arouse the suspicions that might follow an obviously political move, but which would provide the Provincial Administration with the opportunity of bringing about the necessary rapprochement. It was therefore decided to abandon the proposal to employ a selected

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officer on making an individual study of the "Unions", and to adopt the policy described in the following extract from a letter which has been addressed to the Chief Secretary:-

"Perhaps even more important is the opportunity it (the Secretary of State's despatch) offers for a drive to close the growing gap between the educated classes and the Native Authorities which, as you know, was already causing Sir Bernard grave concern. You will remember the papers on this subject which Sir Bernard sent you under cover of his secret demi-official letter No. A.19200/1/308 of the 10th of March. Those papers were of course issued before the Despatch No.64 reached us. The replies that came in from Residents showed that all of them shared Sir Bernard's anxiety over the situation but that none was very certain about how to make a successful approach to the progressive elements who are drifting away from the Native Authority organisation. While these replies were coming in the Despatch arrived and was seen at once as providing matter for practical and constructive discussion in which the progressives and the Native Authorities could be brought together in a natural way, free from the dangers which would attend an obviously political move. We are therefore, as Sir Bernard wished, arranging for Residents to secure discussion of the vital issues raised in the Despatch between Provincial Meeting members and the progressive elements at present tending to stand aloof from the Native Authorities. Besides constructive proposals on the economic problems, which Sir Bernard hoped would be coming in from the Provinces in July, a further result may well be a general and spontaneous movement to strengthen the Native Authorities by increased representation of the educated classes. We are telling Residents to keep this in mind in conducting their enquiries."

5. I have accordingly to ask you to ensure that this policy is consistently, though unobtrusively followed, in directing the discussions referred to in the Secretariat circular letter No.20406/4 of the 27th of May. You will observe that a possible reform of the Native Authorities is specifically mentioned in paragraph 8 of the pamphlet "Social and Economic Development" of which a supply for distribution was forwarded with that letter. Administrative Officers should avoid giving any impression that this issue is regarded as having any greater importance than the others dealt with in the pamphlet: they should, however, foster any movement which may emerge for reforming the Native Authorities by reinforcement from the educated classes.

6. Suggestions for improving the structure of local government would be no less interesting or acceptable than suggestions for reinforcing its personnel. If there is a feeling among educated Africans that some of our existing Native Administrations are uneconomically small and too parochial to be efficient, then these discussions should offer an opportunity for voicing it and for putting forward alternative proposals. For example, if a demand should arise for the modernisation of Native Authorities it would not be surprising for it to be coupled with a demand for the

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creation of more Divisional Native Authorities, by federation or amalgamation of existing Clan organisations, (a tendency of which there is already, happily, some evidence). Incidentally, might not the Divisional Council turn out to be the most suitable level at which to weld together the representatives of the educated classes with those of the traditional elders who generally predominate in the Clan and Village Councils ?

7. In the foregoing paragraphs I have said so much about the political developments which may arise from these discussions that perhaps I should repeat that they are not by any means to be regarded as the primary objective. The main purpose of the discussions is, of course, to seek the views and suggestions of the public regarding the agrarian and industrial revolution in which the Secretary of State is inviting them to engage. The improvement of local government, important as it is, is only one of the things necessary for social and economic development on the scale envisaged.

8. It will be obvious to you that these discussions will not lead to any positive achievement unless the imagination of the public, or at least the more progressive part of it, can be seized. ~~We need to mobilize for a constructive effort the somewhat vague African aspirations which at present tend to find no positive achievement unless the imagination of the public, or at least the more progressive part of it, can be seized.~~ We need to mobilize for a constructive effort the somewhat vague African aspirations which at present tend to find no positive expression except in discontent with things as they are, impatience with the methods of Government and distrust of the bona fides of Great Britain. To do this we have to make a lot of people feel that they are joining in some kind of adventure that is their own. I suggest that two things which may appeal to the public in the present enquiry are that the initiative is that of the Secretary of State in the Labour Government in England and that it is an African plan and an African effort that is called for.

9. In this connection I wish to draw attention to a phrase which was deliberately inserted, in the pamphlet circulated with Secretariat letter No. 20406/4 of the 27th of May, on account of its potential publicity value as a slogan. This is the phrase "People's Development Plan" which appears in paragraphs 5 and 8 of that pamphlet. I believe that this phrase might carry a valuable appeal if it were taken up and used on the initiative of members of the public. With this in view we deliberately avoided using it as the title of the pamphlet. What is hoped is that, in discussing the pamphlet, administrative officers will, by indirect suggestion, lead people to pick out the phrase and adopt it as a short description of what they are considering.

10. The Public Relations Officer is being kept informed of the progress of these discussions in case it may prove necessary or desirable at a later stage for his organisation to give them publicity. I have therefore to ask you to inform me at once of the plans you have made for the holding of enlarged Provincial Meetings, and other forms of discussion and to keep me advised without delay, as discussions develop, of any features which can be given news value if necessary. I should add that, unless further directions are

given later, all communications with the Public Relations Officer on this subject will be made by the Eastern Provinces Secretariat.

11. This is all I have to say at present about the papers referred to in the first paragraph above, but I think this is an appropriate place in which to introduce a confidential Secretary of State's despatch on cognate subjects which will be circulated to all administrative officers when a supply of printed copies, which has been promised, is received. This is Confidential Despatch No.69 of the 25th of February of which I attach a copy. For your comments on paragraphs 1 to 6 of this Despatch you will no doubt wish to wait for the outcome of the discussions referred to above. But I shall be grateful for your views on the remainder of the Despatch as early as possible. You will observe that paragraphs 14 to 17 deal with a problem of which much was rightly made in the letters from Residents referred to in paragraph 3 above, namely the problem of how to relieve the administrative officer from excessive routine work in order that he may give adequate attention to his most important task of developing African local government. I wish to assure you that any constructive proposals you can offer on this subject will receive the most careful and sympathetic consideration.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) E. J. Gibbons

To: All Residents,
Eastern Provinces.