

SPEECH AT THE OPENING CEREMONY

by H.E. the Vice-President, the Hon. D.T.Arap Moi, EGH, EBS, MP.

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to begin by welcoming you all on behalf of my President and the people of Kenya to our lovely capital, Nairobi, in particular, and to the rest of country in general. You should feel free and very much at home during the time of your stay here.

The task you have before you is a most important one. The problems of education in a changing society are enormous and far ranging. They affect not just those communities concerned but also have their repercussions elsewhere.

In the olden days, they used to say if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. This obviously is true today as it was any time before. In those days little attention was given to the under-privileged peoples. Slavery and all manner of exploitation of the weaker peoples was the order of the day. It should also have been said that if you educate the under-developed or developing societies you ensure peace and stability which is so vital to the welfare of all mankind. These are problems which I believe underline the efforts that are being made by such bodies as this one and those that are organised through the various agencies of the United Nations Organisation.

I have seen on your agenda that you have many useful items that are very relevant to conditions prevailing in developing countries. There is the problem of non-formal education, which was in existence of course before education was introduced by the Europeans. This non-formal form of education worked very well in the pre-colonial days. Various societies developed systems of education that were most relevant to the young people to fit in the life of those societies. In this way non-formal education is not a new thing. However, the problem today in the developing world is that having gone through a colonial period which did not believe in anything other than European, it finds itself in a difficult position today. It has to reconcile modern needs which are dictated by scientific and technological changes with those of a subsistence economy to which the largest proportion of the population in the developing countries are accustomed. Thus we find that the people who have not gone to school are more and more finding the problems of adaptation to modern ways of living difficult to cope with; in most cases they have to augment their knowledge by attending adult literacy classes on different subjects where they are taught modern techniques and practices. This is the only way in which the masses can catch up. Despite this handicap, we have found in Kenya that our people are able to contribute substantially to our economic development efforts. Most of you must have heard of our 'harambee' slogan which was introduced by our President Mzee Jomo Kenyatta at the beginning of our independence. Through harambee effort our people have build various ambitious projects to such an extent that we now have numerous harambee schools, hospitals, roads and recreational centres which were built on this basis.

As far as formal education is concerned, we in Kenya are very much concerned with doing away as soon as it is practicable with the many

colonial relics that were left within our education system. Despite its many faults, the colonial education system had much to commend it while it lasted, but the problem is that it was geared to a certain type of thinking, a certain way of creating attitudes. It was ideally suited to a colony and not an independent state. In independent Kenya, we feel, we would not be doing justice to our people if we perpetuated trends of this kind. In the short period of time since independence, which is barely ten years, we have managed to broaden our educational system in order to cater for the needs of a modern society.

We have re-oriented our curriculum to try and make our system of education more meaningful and relevant to our children and needs of this country. This re-orientation is naturally not yet completed. It is a mammoth task needing not only the changing of curricula and syllabi but also, and more especially, the changing of the attitudes of people who were deliberately twisted into thinking that a foreign education was the key to success. They believed that once children spoke a few words in English and scribbled a few things on a piece of paper, they were thereby adequately educated. Thus one of the problems we have to grapple with is implanting in the minds of the people that education means learning how to live and not just learning a few spectacular things at school. The other things that we have to grapple with in changing our curricula are those of logistics. We need the money, teachers and expertise to get this implemented. We are therefore still a considerable way off our desired goals, but we are heartened by the fact that we know we have a problem and that we are sincerely tackling it and we shall never rest until we have achieved our desired ends.

I have no doubt at all that the rest of the developing countries are facing similar problems and are determined to see that the fruits of independence do not merely bring the facade of political independence but bring along with it all the most essential things that a nation needs, a good and proper education, a sound economy, an honourable heritage, and most of the important things that make life worth living in freedom and democracy.

The issues of today tend to revolve round education. Whether we are talking of economic or social development or even political maturity and international co-operation, the key factor is education. In brief, the better education we can impart to our people, the more progress we shall be able to generate. Education is the one commodity that, if properly geared, can never be considered a waste. In fact one might say that a school is a complete entity equipped with its own order of authority, rules and regulations which must be acknowledged and obeyed by its members, in this case the staff and the school children. In a small way, we have a complete prototype of a state and its government, which should be utilised to train the youth to acquire the basic concepts of decency, obedience, honesty and integrity.

Your presence here at this Conference on Teacher Education is a sign of the times, the growing consciousness that the enrichment and survival of human society will increasingly rest on international co-operation and interdependence. You have therefore a serious task before you. Serious because many established educational approaches are being questioned all over the world, and a conference of this magnitude cannot be considered a success until it comes up with some useful solutions to the many problems

confronting the young people in particular and society in general.

In the eyes of the veterans the values that mankind once had have dramatically depreciated. Society appears to lack accepted values now, and one of the tasks of education must be to find a way through the muddle and establish an accepted code of values to guide our own generation as well as future generations.

Thus in your deliberations at this conference, whether you are talking about pre-service, in-service or refresher courses for teachers, your attention should never waver from the purpose they should be geared to. In my view these approaches are not just to be aimed at improving classroom teaching as such, but to address themselves to solving the real challenges of modern living that are threatening the survival of the human society and its values.

We in Kenya believe in international co-operation, whether bilateral or multilateral, as an assured way of combatting the problems of mankind faster. The coming together of various nations to consider and offer suggestions and possible solutions to common problems goes a long way to imposing international understanding and peaceful co-existence in the world. We are grateful to be given many opportunities to play our humble part in making it possible for the nations of the world to hold some of their conferences in our country.

We are particularly grateful to all Commonwealth countries and the Commonwealth Secretariat for selecting Nairobi as the venue of this conference, and I would like to wish you much success and to hope that your findings will form a useful role in the new trends of education.

You should know that you enjoy the confidence of this country and that of the rest of the Commonwealth in your deliberations here.

I now have the pleasure of declaring the Commonwealth Specialist Conference on Teacher Education officially open.

SPEECH AT THE OPENING CEREMONY

by Dr. James A. Maraj, Assistant Commonwealth Secretary-General.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my privilege, as representative of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, to extend to you a most cordial welcome to this Conference. I do so in the name of the Secretary-General himself and on behalf of my colleagues in the Secretariat who, together with the Government of this vibrant and dynamic Republic, have been entrusted with the responsibility for the organisation and conduct of the meeting.

Mr. Chairman, assembled in this hall this morning are delegates and observers who have travelled many thousands of miles across the world. A conservative estimate indicates that they have travelled some 300,000 miles, a distance which is twelve times the circumference of the globe!

They have come from all corners of the world, from large countries and small ones, from the more prosperous and the less so. We have in our midst educators of considerable eminence and those who hold positions of great responsibility in their respective communities. We are gratified at their presence here and I should like to extend a special welcome to the observers from the International Organisations, to the delegates from the Associated States of the Eastern Caribbean, Papua New Guinea and the Bahamas - countries which in the near future are to achieve independence and the right to self-determination.

Mr. Chairman, I hope you will not consider it inappropriate if I take a few moments to put this meeting into perspective, for the number of international conferences which have been organised is not small and the subject of teacher education has certainly not lacked popularity. It would not be unreasonable to ask, "Why yet another conference on teacher education?" "How will this differ from the others?" "What real and positive outcomes can be expected?" It would be altogether premature to say what will emerge but by way of an answer I can at least try to explain how we got to this stage.

In the intervening period between Commonwealth Conferences of Ministers of Education, the practice has been established that there should be convened at least one specialist meeting at which professionals from Commonwealth countries can come together to examine in depth a particular aspect of education. Five such Commonwealth conferences have already been held - on Language and Communication (Uganda), The Teaching of Science (Ceylon), The Education and Training of Technicians (Britain), The Teaching of Mathematics (Trinidad) and Education in Rural Areas (Ghana). This, the sixth, which we are about to begin, is on Teacher Education, and what more delightful venue could we have found than this beautiful city of Nairobi. But while the venue did not pose problems, the choice of topics was not an easy one. You will recall, Mr. Chairman, that you and your Ministerial colleagues at your conference in Canberra identified no fewer than eleven specialist topics deserving close study and examination at the earliest possible opportunity. Later, following consultations with Commonwealth governments, this topic was finally agreed upon and the Secretariat was instructed to highlight teacher education in the changing

society. We were also asked to ensure that attention was given to the role of teachers in educational development, the 'making' of the teacher, and most important, yet in some ways a new and critical dimension for professional educators, the financing of recommended programmes.

Mr. Chairman, it should be noted that there has been a deliberate delimitation of such topics and from the annotated agenda it is clear that what is anticipated is not another talking-shop, nor a discursive and amorphous ramble, but a serious and systematic consideration of fundamental issues. Indeed, Mr. Chairman, so important is the whole exercise that in one of the Commonwealth countries which I visited just two weeks ago, a national conference of teacher educators resolved that all teacher training activities should be suspended for a full year, so that those engaged in this field might reappraise the direction and nature of their efforts. Not many countries will be courageous enough to take such a step, especially when it has a Faculty of Education, an inservice training institute, a secondary teacher training college and a college of education for primary teachers. And yet the reforms required cannot continue to be piecemeal or ad hoc if nation building is to be meaningfully carried on.

Indeed, Mr. Chairman, one wonders whether the reforms can even be contemplated until we have at least tried to find some answers to such questions as :-

Who determines the kind of society? Who determines the kind of educator? And even if they are 'determined', how are they in reality achieved?

Is it really true that education contributes in a significant way to the kind of society? Assuming it does, how is this contribution effected?

Is it reasonable to expect so much of education? and of teachers? Are teachers really that influential as a group? as a profession? or as individuals?

Perhaps there are no answers, certainly no clear-cut ones, but unless we analyse such issues, we shall continue to grope aimlessly or grasp at every new approach hoping for the eternal panacea. Fortunately, perhaps, education's ailments are resistant to miracle drugs!

Mr. Chairman, I have referred to the need for a serious and systematic consideration of fundamental issues but I hope that we shall go beyond mere consideration and examination to identify specific programmes of action at national, regional and pan-Commonwealth levels so that in addition to the increase in wisdom and the greater enlightenment which we may experience as participants, we may be better able to help our countries to move forward realistically, drawing wherever possible on the experience, goodwill and assistance of others who might have travelled on the road before or those who are fellow journeymen on the new highways.

Mr. Chairman, this Conference takes place at a time when some doubts are being expressed about the future of the Commonwealth itself. Some of these doubts, while understandable, are derived from misconceptions about the Commonwealth which need to be corrected urgently. It is quite clear that motivations based on history and sentiment alone will not be sufficient

to sustain the organisation. Today's Commonwealth, comprising 32 independent sovereign states, freely associated with each other, derives its motive power from a variety of bases that have nothing to do with history and sentiment. The new motivations recognise the validity of such concepts as interdependence and they are based much more firmly on functionality and usefulness. In this new era, Mr. Chairman, it behoves us all to 'bear the witness' as it were, that in such areas as the educational, legal, scientific, medical and youth fields, there is considerable advantage in the Commonwealth association. Indeed, the present Conference is no small testimony to that fact, and the pattern is repeated in each of the spheres I have just mentioned, not only at a pan-Commonwealth level but at the regional level as well.

Mr. Chairman, I come from a part of the world where regional co-operation is vital for our salvation. I subscribe wholeheartedly to regionality as a concept because I know from hard experience that for far too long we have shunned our next-door neighbours while looking to the metropolitan cities. For me, then, regionality is important and essential, but let us remember that no man is an island, and regionality is not the end of the line. In the same way that communities within a nation must not isolate themselves from the country at large and look only inwards, so too for the healthy growth of nations, it is necessary to transcend national, continental and regional borders. In my view the Commonwealth is an instrument which can be admirably used for this purpose. It is not by any means the only one, but it has particular advantages in enabling us to avoid being caught in narrow blocks based on race or colour or wealth or geography.

Its future rests to a significant extent on the use made of it by its members for co-operation and consultation and it is most reassuring to observe the demands made on our new multilateral Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation specially established for promoting development activities. This has put new muscle into Commonwealth co-operative scheme, particularly multilateral ones, for while it may be more blessed to give than to receive, most of us prefer to receive with dignity.

Mr. Chairman, in making the preparatory arrangements for this Conference, we have had very valuable help from a large number of people at various stages and I would now like to record the Secretariat's appreciation to them all.

Several members of the original working party, which was headed by Mr. Doug Hood of Australia, are with us today and for their assistance in defining the shape and scope of this meeting we are most grateful.

Dr. Arthur Porter, the Vice-Chancellor Designate of the University of Sierra Leone has graciously agreed to deliver a keynote address and to him as well as to our distinguished lead speakers we remain very heavily indebted.

To the Government and people of the Republic we should like to convey our warmest thanks for the many, many ways in which they have made us feel welcome and for the tremendous support afforded us by the officers who have been seconded.

We are grateful too, to the University authorities for their kindnesses

and in particular to Professor Indire and his staff for their untiring efforts in accommodating us even at their personal inconvenience.

Mr. Chairman, on occasions such as this the spotlight does not always reach those who carry the heaviest burdens and for this reason I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate in public Dr. S.J. Cooke, who recently succeeded me as Director of our Education Division. Those of you who have seen him at work or who know of his achievements in the Nigerian Federal Service and with UNESCO will no doubt share with me my pleasure at his elevation. He serves as Secretary to this Conference and will be responsible for the day-to-day operations. I am indeed fortunate in having him at my side on this occasion.

Mr. Chairman, it has been said that those who can, do, while those who cannot, teach; and those who cannot teach, teach teachers. Within recent times the quip has been updated and I understand that those who cannot teach teachers join the international organisations as advisers and administrators. You would not expect me, Mr. Chairman, to support the beliefs implied in that argument, having myself been engaged in teaching at various levels, but it is significant that the argument presupposes that the individual has a definite awareness and acceptance of his increasing inadequacies as he moves from the primary classroom to other rungs of the professional ladder. Small consolation perhaps, but being mindful of my increasing inadequacies, I must go no further than express the hope that we shall all find this Conference an enriching, rewarding and altogether worthwhile experience.