
Monsieur Appollos O. Nwauwa

Résumé


La demande de création d'universités, que les Africains commencèrent à exprimer en 1865, ne rencontra pas d'écho favorable de la part des Britanniques avant les années 1940. Alors que le Colonial Office ignorait cette exigence, arguant des implications financières que ce projet aurait pour le trésor britannique, les gouvernements des colonies s'opposaient à l'implantation d'universités. Ils craignaient qu'une élite africaine lettrée se développe, revendique les postes élevés de l'administration et constitue une résistance vis-à-vis du système de gouvernement indirect mis en place avec l'appui des chefs illétris. Etant donné que les universités anglaises n'accueillaient que quelques Africains, ceux qui étaient refoulés se tournaient alors vers les institutions américaines plus libérales. Cependant, la découverte du racisme américain, l'expérience de la tutelle coloniale et l'acquisition d'une culture politique conduisirent ces étudiants à prendre conscience de la domination coloniale et de l'impérialisme britanniques. De retour chez eux, ces Africains formés aux États-Unis, et dotés pour la plupart de diplômes, se virent refuser des postes dans l'administration et, de ce fait, s'opposèrent progressivement au gouvernement anglais. Cet article tente de montrer que la crainte de l'influence américaine joua un rôle majeur dans la décision prise par les Britanniques, entre 1940 et 1948, de créer des universités en Afrique tropicale.

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The British Establishment of Universities in Tropical Africa, 1920-1948

A Reaction against the Spread of American 'Radical' Influence*

British decision to establish universities in colonial Africa in 1945 has usually been presented, historiographically, as solely the outcome of the exigencies of the Second World War, and the resultant Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 (Wise 1956, Adewoye 1973, Pearce 1982, Lee & Petter 1982). The success of the reform policies initiated by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Malcolm MacDonald, in 1938 to improve the political, social, and economic conditions of the colonies, needed a well-educated class of African leaders. Thus to produce these leaders, it was argued, Britain decided to establish universities (Pearce 1982: 64-65, 165-166). Furthermore it has been asserted that the colonial reforms of the 1940s, including the establishment of universities in Africa, were a British gesture 'for the loyalty displayed by the colonial peoples during the crisis of that war' (Wise 1956: 111). In so far as the foregoing views are true their major defect is the sheer neglect of a long-standing factor—the American influence—in the ultimate British decision to push colonial reforms.1 Granted that the colonial reforms of 1938-1945 provided a turning point, it is wrong to disregard other related con-

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1. Although AJAYI (1988) drew attention to the issue of American influence in his paper, he did not place the matter within the framework of British apprehension. Nevertheless, he noted that 'for all the continued rhetoric about the need for adaptation, the need to keep control of higher education in specifically British hands was the priority' (ibid.: 10) in British consideration.

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siderations which culminated in the war-time change in imperial attitudes towards the colonies.

The foundation of universities in tropical Africa between 1943 and 1948 was neither a sudden affair nor did it emanate solely from British concern for the social and political welfare of Africans. Rather Britain embarked upon the project in reaction to certain feelings of nostalgia that unless Britain could develop the economic and social welfare of the colonial peoples, which in turn demanded political devolution, the empire might be lost. The activity of American-educated Africans, colonial officials feared, could be a major factor in the possible disintegration of the empire. It is therefore the purpose of this paper to address this interesting, but often ignored, question of the American influence in the British subsequent establishment of colonial universities in Africa between 1920 and 1948. An attempt also will be made to correlate the 'radical' influence of American-educated Africans with the colonial reforms of the World War II era.

Despite the age-old demand for the creation of an indigenous university by African intellectuals which began in 1865 with James Horton, followed by Edward Blyden, Casely Hayford and, more recently, Nnamdi Azikiwe the British systematically ignored it down to 1920. Consequently, from the late 1920s many Africans amongst whom were Azikiwe and Eyo Ita, and in the late 1930s Kwameh Nkrumah, Nwafor Orizu, Mbonu Ojike and K. O. Mbadiwe, proceeded to the United States of America for advanced education. Since British universities could admit only a handful of Africans depending on the estimated number of vacancies in the colonial service of their territories of origins, and because local facilities were almost non-existent, the American institutions presented much attractions. However, American race problem and colonial experience inculcated in these Africans a kind of consciousness strongly opposed to British colonial rule and imperial interest in Africa.

From the 1930s some of these Africans returned home from the United States to seek entry into the colonial structure (their only employment option) only to discover that the British had no role for them under the indirect rule system which the African 'traditional' chiefs served 'well'. Consequently they became antagonized by the racism that rejected them hence began to oppose British rule strongly. To some extent, it could be safely argued that it was mainly British rejection of the educated Africans which drove them into 'radical' nationalist camp. Predictably, however, colonial officials began to conceive the

2 While the principle of indirect rule was supposed to use the African traditional rulers, most of the chiefs appointed by the British lacked traditional legitimacy. For these types of chiefs, their authority issued from the 'warrants' given to them by the British. This was one of the undoings of the system in Southern Nigeria. For details, see AFIGBO 1972, IKBARI 1968, IGBAFE 1967.
American-educated Africans as 'revolutionaries' and non-conformists, and the American educational system began to be indicted for imparting to the Africans ideas which were inimical to British interests. But this is not to suggest that there were not a few British-trained Africans who exhibited similar 'radical' tendencies. Nevertheless, it can be argued that it was partly to address the increasing influence of the United States in the education of Africans, and to ensure that Africans were moulded 'wisely' to reinforce the educated elite which was to become the class upon which the new British colonial reforms of the 1940s would have to rest that persuaded Britain to establish universities in Africa.

**African Demand for a University**

As early as 1860, the West African educated elite began to show concern over the plight of the Africans as a result of the growing race-consciousness not only in Africa but also among Blacks in the diaspora. The question of appropriate education for Africans began to occupy a prominent position in their thought. In 1865, for instance, a Sierra Leonean of Nigerian descent, James Africanus Horton, called for the establishment of a university in West Africa, with Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone as its nucleus.\(^3\) His demand was informed by the resolution of the House of Commons to encourage in the Africans '. . . the exercise of those qualities which may render it possible more and more to transfer to them the administration of all the Governments, with a view to our ultimate withdrawal from all, except probably Sierra Leone'.\(^4\)

Horton, therefore, felt that if the British really meant to pull out of Africa, it would be necessary to prepare the people for self government through university education. But the British did not actually withdraw, instead, they later became embroiled in the scramble for and partition of Africa. Hence Horton’s demand became stillborn.

In 1872, Edward Blyden\(^5\) also pleaded for a West African University. His effort became more significant than Horton’s because he was

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3. See Horton (1970: 69, 201). Horton was a Sierra Leonean creole who qualified in 1859 as one of the first African medical doctors from the University of London and Edinburgh. The cultural shock, harsh weather, racism, and, above all, the irrelevant nature of English syllabi to Africa convinced Horton that it was better for Africans to be educated at home.


5. Edward Blyden was born in the West Indies in 1832. Refused admission in American colleges, Blyden emigrated to Liberia in 1851 where he later naturalized. He became a Professor of Latin and Greek at Liberian College, as well as the editor of the Liberian Herald. As a result of some political problems Blyden left Liberia and resettled in Sierra Leone in 1871.
able to enter into some serious correspondence with the Sierra Leonean government and the Colonial Office over the necessity for a university in West Africa (Blyden 1872). In his letter of December 6, 1872 to Pope Hennessy, the Governor of Sierra Leone, Blyden (ibid.: 8) remarked that: ‘To give the people the opportunity and power of a free and healthy development—to bring out that individuality and originality of character which is one of the sure results of advancing civilization and culture, the University is most important’.

Furthermore he reminded Hennessy that: ‘... it would be the crown and glory of all the beneficent acts, which it had been his ‘good fortune to be instrumental in conferring upon the inhabitants of this coast and their interior neighbours’, if the university was organized under his administration. In a follow-up letter Blyden (ibid.: 11) further stressed that the university he envisaged should be ‘in keeping with advancing the spirit of the age and [should be] adapted to the inherent necessities of the [African] race...’ Although Hennessy agreed with Blyden that the failure of British education of Africans was ‘mainly owing to the idea that the Negro should be Europeanized to be educated’, he contended that the foundation of a university in Africa ‘must be the work of the Africans themselves’ although ‘a reasonable claim for some State support might be made, when the Promoters could show that their scheme possessed the real elements of success’ (ibid.: 12-13). Meanwhile Hennessy accordingly transmitted Blyden’s request to the Colonial Office. But the Office disagreed with the idea of a West African University on account of the possible huge financial implications. Although Blyden’s effort failed in its immediate purpose, it resulted in quickening the affiliation of Fourah Bay College, in Sierra Leone, to the University of Durham in 1876, which established a unique principle (i.e. Durham degree, albeit in theology, taken in an African campus) which was at the root of the later British university colleges in Africa.

From 1900, J. E. Casely-Hayford, a prominent Gold Coast nationalist took on the mantle of Blyden. In his Ethiopia Unbound, published in 1911, Casely-Hayford also called for the establishment of a university in West Africa. He founded the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) in 1920, whose membership was almost entirely composed of West African educated elite. The Congress met in Accra in 1920, and resolved that ‘the time has come to found a British West African Uni-

6. BLYDEN 1872: 8. See also as reproduced in ASHBY 1966: 452.
7. ‘From the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor Berkeley of Sierra Leone, June 12, 1874’ (Public Record Office, Colonial Office Papers, London [henceforth PRO, CO] 879/8), in ASHBY 1966: 462.
8. CASELY-HAYFORD (1969: 193-195). Educated at Wesleyan High School at Cape Coast, Gold Coast, Casely-Hayford obtained his teacher’s certificate from Fourah Bay College. After teaching for a few years, he left for London for legal education and was called to the bar in 1896.
versity on such lines as would preserve in the student a sense of African Nationality'.

9. Delegates from Nigeria and Sierra Leone attended the conference. Later that same year, the Congress sent a delegation to London to present their demand and petition to His Majesty, King George V. The delegation, however, failed to achieve its purpose because West African chiefs and colonial governors were opposed to the Congress and for what it stood, as representative of the people, in consequence the Secretary of State for the Colonies refused to grant them an audience.

10. This opposition was almost predictable because that was the era when indirect rule, which elevated and favoured the chiefs against the intelligentsia, was taking root. Furthermore, Britain had yet to devise a definitive educational policy for its African dependencies, and the Colonial Office did not wish to be pre-empted or be forced to evolve a policy 'prematurely'. Faced with these odds the delegation, eventually, failed to achieve its university scheme.

Direct American Involvement and British Reaction

Meanwhile, between 1920-21, the Phelps-Stokes Fund of the United States set up a Commission on Education in Africa, amongst whom a West African, Dr J. E. K. Aggrey, of the Gold Coast, was a member. The Commission visited West Africa to assess the nature and quality of the education of 'Negroes' both in Africa and in the United States. The report of the Commission (African Education Commission 1922), it has been suggested, 'was a first introduction to the education-hunger of the African people and it had a profound effect on both sides of the Atlantic'.

Although sponsored by missionaries, the Colonial Office was not comfortable with the American interference. Worse still, the report of the commission revealed that the British had neglected the provision of proper education for their African subjects. Apparently, to diminish further adverse international criticism under the League of Nations, as well as to discourage further American intervention, the Secretary of State for the Colonies swiftly set up the Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa in 1923 to advise him 'on any matters of native education in British Colonies and Protectorates [...] and to assist

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10. The other resolutions of the Congress which offended African chiefs include the demand for legislative council in each territory, and the appointment and deposition of chiefs by their own people. See Coleman 1958: 191-192; Albertini 1982: 331-333. As for the governors, they felt that they were not consulted before the delegation left for London, see Okafor 1971: 40, 48.

him in advancing the progress of education in those Colonies and Protectorates'. 12 This happened barely a year after the visit, and consequent report of the Phelps-Stokes Commission to Africa. In 1925, the Committee issued a white paper, which became the first brief and definitive statement of British educational policy in Africa. 13 But the general principle of this policy reflected the ideas of indirect rule. However, from then onward the British began to give some considerable attention to education in Africa, particularly at the primary and secondary levels. However, no serious concern was given to the question of the provision of university facilities for Africans, since the philosophy of indirect rule encouraged the maintenance of traditional structures rather than the creation of a western educated elite. Undoubtedly, the Phelps-Stokes involvement produced an unprecedented British response.

In any case, the failure of the NCBWA delegation to London was not total. It has been suggested that the establishment of Achimota College, in 1923, and the hopes expressed by Governor Gordon Guggisberg of the Gold Coast, during the laying of the foundation stone, that it would serve as the nucleus of a university was partly a result of the pressure from the Congress (Guggisberg 1924: 31; Okafor 1971: 41). The foundation of Yaba Higher College, in Nigeria, may have equally been a result of the demands of the Congress which became a reality by the personal efforts of the Director of Education, F. R. J. Hussey. 14 Although the various African colonial governments desired the establishment of intermediate colleges for the training of junior staff for their departments depleted by World War I, it is difficult to believe that the American involvement through the Phelps-Stokes Commission was not a factor in the foundation of these institutions, including Makerere in Uganda in East Africa. 15 Yet, what Africans demanded was a full-fledged degree-grant-

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12. ‘Historical Notes on the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, 1929’, ACEC 52/29, PRO, CO 987/17.
13. Education Policy in British Tropical Africa: Memorandum by the Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical African Dependencies, 1925, and issued as Command Paper No’s. 2374 of 1925, PRO, CO 987/17. The Memorandum, which was almost entirely the work of Lord Lugard, stated that: ‘Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life’, ibid., p. 27.
14. F. R. J. Hussey was appointed the Director of Education for Nigeria in 1929. Having laid the foundation for Makerere College in East Africa, he was able to plan a similar scheme in Nigeria, which resulted in the establishment of Yaba College in 1930, starting with a special class of medical scholars at the King’s College, Lagos.
15. The Phelps-Stokes Commission also visited East Africa in 1924. Consequently, the Ugandan Advisory Committee on Education issued a memorandum on Makerere (started as a technical institute in 1922) which stated that the ‘department of the College may be the germ out of which in future a university college will grow’ (Memorandum by the Advisory Committee on Education in Uganda, 1924, PRO, CO 847/6/12).
ing university, and not necessarily higher colleges, usually designed to serve the various government departments merely as recruiting grounds for appointment into the junior cadres of the colonial service.

Thus those few Africans who either were able to secure the limited government scholarships, or had the resources, proceeded to British universities. Having struggled to generate the resources, these Africans equally had to compete for placement in British universities. However those who could not afford the high costs of English universities, and yet desired advanced education, began to look elsewhere for the satisfaction of their noble urge. It was against this background that, from the late 1920s, West African students, such as Eyo Ita, Nnamdi Azikiwe and a few others, proceeded to the United States for advanced studies. Given the anti-imperial stance of the United States since its War of Independence with Britain, in 1776, British colonial officials and academics began to feel disturbed by the close association being forged between America and African territories. As Furley and Watson (1978: 297) observed: ‘America was frowned on […] because […] the African student might encounter politicians and political movements considerably more militant than in his own country, and he might realize that educational standards in his own country were very low by comparison’.

It is therefore hardly surprising that, as early as 1933, the Currie’s Sub-Committee, the first of its kind on higher education, appointed by the Advisory Committee on Higher Education in the Colonies (ACEC) in Britain ‘to consider the educational policy underlying the views expressed by the conference [of East African Directors of Education] on the question of the standard for admission to Makerere College in Uganda’, expressed concern over the British neglect of higher educational facilities in Africa. The ACEC Sub-Committee cautioned that if the issue was not adequately addressed its effects would be dangerous to the empire. According to the Sub-Committee: ‘There is a grave danger, as we see it, of the Africans’ zeal for education being neglected, and ignored by the government to whom they ought to be able to look for its reasonable satisfaction’.

The most potent element of this grave danger, which had begun to agitate British ‘expert’ thinking, ‘was the beginning of American influence upon higher education, and the potential flow of an increasing number of American-trained graduates’ (Flint 1979: 7). It was becoming clear to the Colonial Office that this influx of African students was socio-politically and intellectually undesirable, because it had the latent potency of

16. Report of the ACEC Sub-Committee under Currie on the Recommendation of the Conference of East African Directors of Education held in Zanzibar, June 1932, PRO, CO 847/3/2. The Sub-Committee was set up in 1932 and its report was submitted to the ACEC in 1933.
17. Report of the ACEC Sub-Committee …., PRO, CO 847/3/2 (see supra fn. 16).
jeopardizing the very foundation and interest of British colonial administration in Africa. Thus, the Sub-Committee stressed that, apart from the educational considerations, the influx "appears to us to be open to grave objections from broad general point of view of British prestige and administrative efficiency". Furthermore:

"It seems indefensible, for example, that the Gordon College should, at all events till very recently, have had to rely substantially upon the American University at Beyrut [sic] for the advanced training of natives needed for its own staffing [...]. From another, and slightly different point of view it appears equally indefensible that intelligent Africans from the Gold Coast should most easily obtain further training of a University type by taking advantage of American bounty and American institutions".18

Consequently the Sub-Committee concluded that: "The only right policy for the Government is to think out ahead a scheme of developing selected institutions in Africa up to a real University standard, and that this policy, as soon as decided upon, should be publicly announced as officially adopted".19

The ACEC reached this decision at the height of the Great Depression when colonial services of all nations, including education, were being constricted. However, this economic crisis did not negatively affect the receptivity of the Committee's resolution among officials in London. For one thing, even though the British Government was aware of the propagandist functions of such declarations, the Treasury did not expect to fund such projects. As a matter of policy, all colonial governments had been instructed to be self-supporting financially. Furthermore, the public announcement of the intended policy was aimed at the African audience, in order to pacify the emergent nationalists who, noticeably restive, had begun to clamour for social, economic and political reforms. Nevertheless, African colonial governments were not comfortable with the recommendation of the ACEC. They felt that elevating the institutions to university colleges would not only constitute a burden on their already lean budgets, but would also expand the class of educated Africans who would pose social and political problems, harmful alike to the principle and practice of indirect rule.20

20. Albertini 1982: 309-335. Colonial officials feared that, by increasing the class size of the educated elite, they would be consolidating African competitors who, surely, would seek to displace them.
Be that as it may, the proposal of the ACEC constituted a landmark in the history of the development of universities in Africa. Not only was it the first time that colonial officials in London had advocated the foundation of universities in Africa (something Africans had agitated for since the 1860's), it also was the first official British recognition that developing universities in Africa would be less dangerous politically than the lack of them. Aptly, the Sub-Committee observed that ‘There appears no prospect—nor is it in any event a prospect that can in the least be wished or desired—that the present vehement demand for higher education will slacken off’.21 To the ACEC, and the Colonial Office therefore, the provision of university education for Africans within Africa had become imperative. This was not necessarily because Africans deserved higher education as part of imperial social welfare package but because of the inherent social and political danger—especially ‘radical’ nationalism—in the continued education of Africans abroad, particularly in the United States. It is therefore not surprising that the Secretary of State for the Colonies was advised to announce publicly the policy as soon as adopted.

American Education and British Apprehensions

British apprehensions about the potential disruptive effects of American education upon the colonial status quo were real. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who later became one of the foremost Nigerian nationalists, returned to Nigeria in 1934 after advanced studies in the United States. The kind of political radicalism he unleashed after his nine-year sojourn in the United States was unsettling for the British colonial administrations in West Africa, as well as the Colonial Office in London. Traditionally, most British-trained Africans had been known for their conservatism, and support for the colonial order. While studying in Britain, they had imbibed the Englishman’s notion of education as ‘an intellectual exercise, a passive process that would concern itself little with the social forces of the present’, rather than ‘as a dynamic social force’ (Okeke 1955: 73-75). Furthermore, in the various British colonies, as McKee observed in his Indian case-study (1930: 25-27): ‘Memory rather than thinking is emphasized, imitation rather than originality and conformity rather than initiative’ were stressed.

Under such educational framework, it would be hardly surprising what colonial officials expected of these American-trained Africans. They desired to find in them passive and conformist lots, who would neither seek to displace them nor undertake any acts which were likely to endanger British rule. But they were disappointed. American-trained Afri-

African possessed different views on racism, colonialism, and British rule, moulded by their experience in the United States. Their ‘radical’ response to colonial problems were dictated by the American social and political culture with which they came in contact—an experience which was lacking in the British situation. As Sagay and Wilson aptly stated: ‘Britain’s constitutional practice did not give her African students that political radicalism and bitterness that conditions in the United States of America produced in her African students [. . .]. American Negro mass demonstrations and the prevalence of the colour bar produced a stronger nationalist political bias among West Africans studying in America’.22

In any case, this should not lead to the erroneous impression that there were no racism targeted against Africans in Britain during the period under study. Admittedly, imperial Britain of the 1930s was racist, although those few African students who were in elite institutions, such as Oxford and London, felt it less than those who had to contend with middle class Britons. The ‘radicalism’ exhibited by few British educated Africans, such as Jomo Kenyatta and Tom Mboya of Kenya, remains instructive.23 The emergence of the West African Students’ Union (WASU) in London under the leadership of Ladipo Solanke of Nigeria, and its outspokenness against racism and colonial domination, represented another departure from the conservatism implicit in British educational system (Webster 1974, II: 588; Coleman 1958: 204-209).

Thus, the difference between Britain and the United States was not the degree of racism as such but the response to it at that time. In the first place, colonialism resulted from the inherent feeling of a sense of superiority by one race over another. Hence, Britain cannot escape from charges relating to racism. Nevertheless, the political culture with which they came in contact, no doubt, affected the behaviour of African educated elite. In any case, the strong nationalist and anti-colonial outlook of overseas-educated Africans, particularly American-trained, was becoming upsetting to British officials. It was reasoned that if the tendency was not checked, it would be attended by social and political phenomenon, harmful alike to the prestige of this country [Britain] and the true well-being of the Africans.24

Azikiwe’s critique of British education, colonial administration, and European civilization undoubtedly provoked a state of uneasiness among colonial officials, who began to attribute his somewhat seductive ideas and direct assault on British administration to his American educa-

22. Sagay & Wilson 1978: 317. Details of the American experience will be elaborated upon later in this discussion.
23. See Mazrui (1978: 1-77). Both Kenyatta and Mboya criticized British education in Africa despite that they were products of that system.
24. Report of the ACEC Sub Committee on higher education in the colonies, 1933, PRO, CO 847/3/2.
tion. It was equally recalled that Dr Aggrey, as well as a few other West Africans, also American-trained, had exhibited similar tendencies albeit in a lesser ‘radical’ manner in the 1920s. Not surprisingly, from the 1930s British higher educational schemes in Africa focused on the means to check what they would have begun to consider as ‘the American virus’.

Ultimately the reasoning followed that the assimilation of socially and politically dangerous ideas would be avoided if Africans remained at home to study, and be ‘wisely’ guided under the dictates of indirect rule. If ever they were to proceed for advanced studies overseas, African colonial governments logically preferred Britain, where the political climate supported imperialism, to the United States, where anti-colonial sentiments were extremely strong. Since British universities were fewer, and thus had a fixed number of places, this greatly affected the number of Africans who gained admissions into them. In such circumstance, the other viable option was to develop selected institutions in Africa into university colleges, if Africans were to be discouraged effectively from taking the advantage of the bounties of American institutions.

The process advocated for attaining the university college status was one that could engender an effective control of the number of educated Africans who could possibly stir political troubles. Hence, the ultra-conservative stage-by-stage plan for the development of universities in Africa was outlined by E. R. J. Hussey, the Nigerian Director of Education, as an ideal educational approach whereby African institutions—Yaba, Achimota, Makerere and Fourah Bay—would undergo three slow phases before they could reach university college status. It is not also surprising that Hussey’s scheme was acceptable to all West African governments. The purpose of this scheme, it would seem, was to enable African governments to regulate the number of graduates who would clamour for high posts in the colonial service, or destabilize the effective operations of the indirect rule system predicated upon often illiterate chiefs.

25. The Gold Coast government was very worried about Dr Aggrey during the stormy days after the First World War when it claimed that he had sympathy with the Marcus Garvey extremist faction. See Macartney 1949: 57.
26. ‘Notes by F. R. J. Hussey, Director of Education, on Draft Report of Sub-Committee with regard to university Education’, 1935. PRO. CO 847/5/7. The first stage was that at which courses of university character, but not up to university standard were given. Stage two was that at which the standard reached warranted affiliation with an English university for purpose of external degrees. Stage three, which Hussey advised should not be hastened unduly, was the period at which the college became a local university.
Out of these institutions Yaba was the most viciously attacked by the local intelligentsia.\textsuperscript{28} Yaba Higher College served the Nigerian government as a training and recruiting ground for the few Africans who would enter the colonial service, usually at subordinate levels. As a result the colonial administration determined the number of passes and failures each year, depending on how many Nigerians it wished to recruit, and the government departments in which vacancies existed (Adewoye 1973: 14, Fafunwa 1971: 35). Since the number of Nigerians employed into the service each year was usually small it therefore followed that the number of passes would be equally small, thus making the students who failed (normally a large number) feel as if they were academically inferior (\textit{ibid.}). Obviously, just as the colonial officials were opposed to universities, African intelligentsia were equally opposed to the type of education provided by Yaba, Achimota, Makerere and Fourah Bay colleges because their standards were considered as ‘inferior to a full-fledged university which would offer degrees that would be universally recognized’.\textsuperscript{29} Azikiwe returned from America to meet this poor state of higher education in Nigeria in particular, and West Africa in general.

Azikiwe came back to Nigeria in 1934, having obtained his higher degrees at Columbia and Pennsylvania Universities while working as an instructor in political science at Lincoln University,\textsuperscript{30} ‘to discover that his American education was not taken very seriously’ (Flint 1984: 5). Least expecting that he could be rejected on any grounds, Azikiwe applied for a teaching job at King’s College, the elite Grammar School in Lagos, and was denied a position. He also applied for civil service positions, ‘which demanded a university degree’, and was turned down. The reasons for Azikiwe’s rejection have been explained in various ways. Firstly it has been suggested that because he was a journalist—and hence much more likely to be a political agitator—he was denied a government job (Sagay & Wilson 1978: 347). Secondly, the standard of American-educated

\textsuperscript{28} For some of the attacks on Yaba, see A. Babatunde Fafunwa’s pamphlet (1974a: 5-6), and his book (1974b).

\textsuperscript{29} ‘Editorial’. \textit{Daily Times} (Lagos), 23 Jan. 1934 and 2 Feb. 1934 (\textit{Fajana} 1972: 329). If these institutions would not be upgraded to full universities, the only acceptable alternative, for the intelligentsia, would be generous scholarships to study overseas to compensate for facilities denied at home. But this option would have encouraged those unable to secure any funding to proceed to America where they could work their way through university education.

\textsuperscript{30} Lincoln was a poverty-stricken ‘Negro College’ where Azikiwe was considered a star pupil, for he knew more than some of the tutors. Hence it is not surprising that he was accepted as an instructor in Political Science after his course. There is no question that Azikiwe was academically sound. However, it would appear that his real education came with entry to University of Pennsylvania (a non-segregated northern institution) and Columbia University.
graduates was viewed by the colonial governments as ‘much lower than that of the British-trained’.  

But above all, the colonial officials preferred to deal with British-educated Africans than they were ready to accommodate their American-trained correlatives. It was in an attempt to discourage other Africans from going to America for advanced education, which would ‘mould their minds’ negatively against British rule, that colonial governments frustrated pioneers such as Azikiwe who had gone through the American system. Naturally the British were aware that: ‘Whoever controls education is in a position not only to mould the mind of the next generation but to allocate individuals to important roles in society’ (Uchendu 1979: 2). Consequently Azikiwe was rejected. In contrast, however, those Africans who obtained British academic qualifications secured jobs, even though they mostly filled the subordinate positions. This, as Orizu concluded (1970: 65-67), was because they were miseducated to think English and behave English, and developed strange mental habits which in reality ‘denationalized’ them.

Alienation and Nationalism

By alienating Azikiwe, British officials were unwittingly drawing a battle line on the sand. They were provoking ‘radical’ nationalism. ‘Such closing doors drove him into his career as journalist, editor and newspaper proprietor and thus to nationalist politics’ (Flint 1984: 5). After his ordeal, Azikiwe left Nigeria and relocated in the Gold Coast ‘where there was a greater literacy rate than his native Nigeria’ (Flint 1966: 160), and where he became the editor of the Accra Morning Post. It was as a journalist that Azikiwe became very prominent. It was as an editor that he grew very bold. It was as a newspaper proprietor that he was able to launch unrestrained and provocative broadsides on colonialism, British rule and white supremacist doctrine. By denying American-trained graduates jobs in the civil service, the British obviously miscalculated, since this section of an aggrieved elite turned to create a new journalism ‘which was racy, irreverent, often ungrammatical, but which would be read by the mass products of the mission schools who had no higher education’. Had the British accommodated and assigned appropriate roles to Azikiwe and his colleagues, it would have been difficult to say whether

31. Flint 1966: 160. On their return American-trained graduates often found themselves dismissed by their British counterparts as ‘semi-literate’ and the recipients of ‘cheap degrees’. It is sad that this is still a common belief even after American education has distinguished itself, practically, in science, arts and vocational studies, and evidently way ahead of British pattern.
32. Flint 1966: 160. This new journalism became very provocative and insulting to the colonial governments, and British rule generally, because the proprietors
mass nationalism of the late 1930s, and 1940s would have erupted when they did.

In any case, Azikiwe and his associates had been indoctrinated by the sensationalism and pugnacity of American yellow journalism, and particularly the obsessive race-consciousness of American Negro newspapers, which influenced the format, style and content of the newspapers he founded in West Africa (Coleman 1958: 222-223). It has been pointed out that: ‘The boldness, daring and sometimes shocking directness of his editorials and news items, [which] radically differentiated them from those of his predecessors’ bore the insignia of American tradition (ibid.) American-educated Africans began to cater for the grass root politics which constituted a major defect of the elite ‘debating society’ nationalism of old. Predictably Azikiwe soon became very popular. His activities and fame inspired a young Gold Coast teacher, Kwameh Nkrumah, to leave for the United States in 1937. By this time Azikiwe had published his book, Renascent Africa (1937), which was highly inspiring, and provocatively critical of colonialism, racial prejudice, and British educational system in Africa.

Confronted with the general apathy among British-educated African intelligentsia, Azikiwe concluded that ‘Africans have been miseducated’. As a result of the extent of indoctrination, brainwashing and alienation plaguing British-groomed elite, Azikiwe argued that ‘they need mental emancipation so as to be re-educated to the real needs of Renascent Africa’. The type of mental emancipation he advocated includes: ‘The education of the sort which should teach African youth to have faith in his ability; to believe that he is the equal of the people of the races of mankind, mentally and physically; to look at no man as his superior simply because the man comes from the Antarctic or Arctic regions’.33

For the emergent nationalists as exemplified in Azikiwe, Nwafor Orizu noted, the battle to be fought was two-fold: ‘To educate the uneducated and, more important and more difficult, to re-educate the miseducated’.34 The colonial officials were not prepared to let the emergent radicals perform either role for fear that they might incite the entire population against British rule. As a result, colonial governments began to look for an effective way to discourage Africans from proceeding to the United States for further studies. The stage became set for a realistic consideration of the foundation of universities in Africa.

Meanwhile, in Uganda, the rudimentary and complex nature of educa-

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33. Azikiwe 1937: 9. In 1937 Azikiwe returned to Nigeria from the Gold Coast to establish his newspaper, West African Pilot, which, ”whatever its literary defects, was a fire-eating and aggressive nationalist paper of the highest order”, see Awolowo 1960: 84.
tion, and the pressure exerted by the Baganda in favour of higher education had, in 1936, compelled the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Ormsby Gore, to set up a commission under Lord De La Warr to consider the question of higher education in East Africa in relation to Makerere College. However, it would appear that the appointment of this commission was a precautionary measure to discourage East Africans from considering the American option for advanced studies, given the disruptive activity of American-trained graduates in West Africa. Therefore in his request to the Treasury for funds for Makerere, the Secretary of State highlighted the undesirability of Africans proceeding to America for university education: ‘[African students] frequently engage in studies which are not of particular value, and [...] form most undesirable acquaintances and habits outside Africa, with the result that on their return they are not suitable for employment in the public services, [...] and in some cases became a positive danger to the ordered progress of their race’.36

The De La Warr Commission’s report was the first of such authoritative commissions on higher education in tropical Africa to be set up by the British government. It was equally the first to recommend that African institutions such as Makerere should be developed, without delay, into university colleges, and ultimately should become autonomous universities with the power to grant their own degrees.37 Undoubtedly, the policy makers in London had, as a matter of high policy, begun to view the absence of universities in Africa as a potential danger.

Nevertheless, by 1938 twenty Nigerians and a few Gold Coasters had been educated in the United States of America. These included professor Eyo Ita who, by this period, had begun to play a prominent role in national politics.38 That same year, twelve Nigerians including Mbonu Ojike, Nwafor Orizu and K. O. Mhadiwe set sail to America to join Nkrumah who had arrived in 1937, and a few other students from the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone. West African colonial governments were worried. The Colonial Office, also, grew uncomfortable because the problem had become evidently acute. Ostensibly, London had begun to

36. ‘Draft Letter from the Secretary of State to the Secretary of Treasury’, dated November, 1937, PRO, CO 822/83/11. This letter was to request for a grant of £100,000 towards Makerere College endowment funds, as suggested by the De La Warr Commission.
38. Eyo Ita returned to Nigeria from America in 1934 with a list of academic degrees, and a burning passion to revolutionize national schools as instruments of the ‘war of liberation’. Although his national influence was limited by his residence in remote areas, such as Ogbomosho and Calabar, ‘he was Nigeria’s example par excellence of a sensitive individual who returned from abroad with a strong cultural nationalism’ (Coleman 1958: 218-219).
think that, if allowed to continue, the American education would rather increase the number of non-conformists and neo-nationalists, such as Azikiwe, who would, definitely, constitute themselves into a formidable opposition against British rule. 39 In other words, the British were concerned that ‘radical’ nationalism might be unleashed by American-trained African graduates in the same manner in which the United States threw off British colonial yoke during the American War of Independence. The continuous flow of these graduates from America and a ‘further delay in establishing universities’ in Africa, it was concluded, ‘would feed disaffection among enlightened colonial subjects’ as well as threaten British control and prestige in Africa (Flint 1979: 7).

African Predilection for American Education

Yet, there were several reasons for the African craving for American education. Firstly, there was ‘an absence of control by extraneous examining bodies’ centred in Washington as in London to control standards and decide who would pass or fail, or be admitted into a university, which, to an African, was a sign of neo-colonialism. Secondly, the African had discovered that ‘five passes at O-level are sufficient to give him a place in a reputable, even in a famous, American university’ unlike in Britain where he was told that ‘ anyone who could not pass in at least two subjects at A-level general certificate of education was not qualified for higher education leading to a degree’ (Ashby 1966: 264). Thirdly, Africans discovered that American universities offered ‘a bewildering variety of courses, all deemed worthy of study’ in contrast to Britain where ‘university education sets great store by specialisation’ with an ‘austere emphasis on rigidity in the curriculum’ (ibid.).

Distinguished institutions such as Cornell and the University of California at Berkeley, for instance, offered courses ranging from hotel management, journalism, home furnishing to advertising and household sanitation, which in England were relegated to non-degree courses in non-university institutions. Furthermore, British education tended to be more ‘high learning’ and less practical. Finally, Africans were ‘impressed by the democratization of education in America’ (ibid.: 265). They observed that unlike British universities where certain subjects were debased, and certain students pre-selected as talented, in American universities ‘...there is no assumption of elitism: there are facilities for brilliant undergraduate who will become a scholar or a leader; there are on the same

39. FAJANA 1972: 329. There was no doubt in the minds of colonial officials that American education encouraged the rapid growth of ‘radical’ nationalist sentiments.
campus facilities for the mediocre undergraduate whose pinnacle of ambition is to be a poultry extension officer or a salesman or a sanitary inspector’.40

In a continent which was in dire need of higher and middle level skilled manpower—politicians, technicians, educators, economists, farmers, clerks and so on—to launch its peoples into the modern world, it is not surprising that Africans would clamour for a broad-based education provided by the American system rather than the traditional English pattern of one-subject honours courses. American emphasis on relevance, as opposed to the English fetishism on standards, was essential for a country which was dominated by Britain. Like Nigeria, America was formerly a group of colonies of Great Britain. Nigeria, therefore, was involved in a struggle similar to that which was successfully waged by the Americans in their liberation war with Britain. Thus, as Okeke concluded (1955: 69): ‘Nigeria can draw great inspiration from the spirit of the American revolution in her struggle for political and economic freedom from her present rulers, and consolidate her gains in order to achieve the social reconstruction which would follow’.

African preference for the American educational system was a product of the same colonial experience. The American pattern was worked out while it was still a British colony, and consolidated while fighting to gain its independence, hence the American educational system ‘is pregnant with ideas that have, more often than not, become valuable tools in the hands of colonials struggling to obtain their freedom from alien rule’ (ibid.).

Apart from purely academic reasons, many relatively poor African students preferred to go to America where they could work their way through university. Azikiwe belonged to this group. Hardly able to raise the money for his passage, Azikiwe ultimately landed in America by the grace of the entire savings of £300 his father had made during his twenty-three years of hardwork as a civil servant before his retirement.41 The money ran out during his first two years in the United States. To pay his fees, cloth himself and cater for his accommodation Azikiwe was therefore compelled to work as a dishwasher, a steward, a coal miner, and even as a boxer. Although he felt the full impact of the discrimination and economic insecurity that befell the average American

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40. Ashby 1966: 264-265. See also Okeke 1955: 63-86. The American educational tradition ‘repudiates the European system based on social class distinction which Nigeria has adopted from the British and which stems from a mistaken notion by certain educators that some people are not able to profit from what they conceive of as education’ (ibid.: 67).

41. For detail of this, see Azikiwe 1970: 71. It was as soon as Azikiwe’s father was invalidated out of the civil service and placed on pension that he was able to support his son’s bid to proceed to America, a backing which he could not have openly made were he still in the service.
Negro while doing these menial jobs (Coleman 1958: 222), he was satisfied that, at least, he was able to pay his fees—something of a near-impossibility had he gone to England where fees were high, and where African students were not allowed to work and study concurrently.

But as Ajayi aptly notes (1988: 7): 'The American experience tended to stimulate as well as frustrate and thus to lead to asking fundamental questions about race, liberation and education'. The competitive nature of the society, the anti-imperialist tradition and economic opportunities which America presented to African students were inspiring. As Coleman (1958: 245) says: 'Certain features of American culture—the lack of class consciousness; the heterogeneity and mobility of the population; the anti-imperialist tradition; the dynamic and competitive nature of political social, and economic behaviour—were unsettling and highly contagious influences which undoubtedly had a profound impact upon African students'.

American experience also tended to frustrate. African students spent years in segregated Negro colleges in the southern states replete with racial discrimination and caste. Along with colour prejudice and 'the very different and, for them, difficult climate, financial worries, and academic curricula for which [African students] were not prepared, it was psychologically an overwhelming and traumatic experience' (ibid.). They were able to appreciate how Whites rated Blacks as lesser humans, which for them could be linked with the public rationales offered for British colonial domination of Africa. Consequently these students began to nurse a deep sense of bitterness against colonialism. They became resolved to take actions which would liberate Africa from foreign control. This resolve guided the activities of Azikiwe, and later Nkrumah, on their return from America.

Criticism, Colonial Reform, and the University Question

Nevertheless, by the late 1930s the Colonial Office was moving away from indirect rule in favour of representative government while African governments rigidly clung to the system. By 1938, the need for colonial reforms had become very imperative in imperial thinking as a result of British neglect of their colonies, coupled with the effects of the economic and social crises of the inter-war years, and culminating in the West Indian riots between 1935 and 1938. These disturbances in British colonies, particularly in the Caribbean, 'severely shocked those in Britain who took interest in colonial affairs' (Pearce 1982: 17). The West Indian revolts uniquely helped to expose the pitiful socio-economic and political conditions of British colonies to the international community, particularly the United States. Consequently, criticisms mounted both inside and
outside Britain that Britain was running a 'slummy empire'.\textsuperscript{42} The Colonial Office began to feel that unless colonial reforms were undertaken immediately 'there would soon be eruptions of organized nationalist pressures from a number of African colonies reminiscent of the Indian situation'.\textsuperscript{43} Clearly it is upon what Emudong (1981: 37) refers to as 'the anticipatory factor' that one can aptly situate the origins of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 which provided funds for research and university facilities in Africa.

Eager to evolve a more definite and progressive policy the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Malcolm MacDonald, mandated Lord Hailey to appraise political forces in African territories as a necessary step towards reforms. This resulted in a publication which advocated, amongst other things, the acceleration of the higher education of Africans and the elevation of the existing institutions to university college status.\textsuperscript{44} Since his assumption of office MacDonald had been puzzled with the rhetorical question as to what constituted the ultimate aim of the British colonial policy. Furthermore, he was appalled about the nonexistence of any British long-term policy, and imperial objectives in the colonies; a situation which he felt was dangerous in the face of the impending war. Accordingly: 'The policy of the Colonial Office up to now had been nothing but make-shifts and expedients [...]. The time for a policy is now and the time for putting it into practice is immediately after the war is over'.\textsuperscript{45}

While official thinking in London was shifting in favour of the establishment of facilities for university education in the colonies, the opposition of colonial governments against the scheme solidified. Overwhelmingly concerned with the maintenance of law and order, officials on-the-spot could hardly appreciate how much had changed in imperial opinion. As they resisted the establishment of universities because they feared and alleged it would result in the overproduction of the educated class of Africans opposed to the system of indirect rule, the Colonial Office supported it because indirect rule was becoming anachronistic. The traditional desire of officials on-the-spot continued to revolve around the notion that the number of the educated elite should be kept as small as possible to contain radical nationalism as well as guard their own tenure. As Fajana aptly puts it, these officials continued to believe that:


\textsuperscript{43} EMUDONG 1981: 37. See also LEE 1967, and PEARCE 1982.

\textsuperscript{44} See Lord HAILEY 1938: 1248-1250. These institutions were Makerere in Uganda, Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, Achimota in the Gold Coast, and Yaba in Nigeria.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Parliamentary Debates}, Fifth Series, Vol. 380, Column 2026 of the Supply Committee on Colonial Estimates, 24 June 1939, HCRO.
‘If the University for West Africa was established there would be a great risk to their own tenure and they were certainly not prepared to allow Africans to displace them in their enviable positions as masters’.  

As the war ‘fever’ gripped Britain on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War Africans nationalists—amongst whom the American-educated formed a larger part—were putting pressure for reforms on colonial governments, through provocative journalism and aggressive anti-colonialism. Yet African colonial governments did not take the initiatives as demonstrated by the recommendations of West African governors in 1939 with regard to the establishment of universities in Africa. Although the various governments agreed that ‘the establishment of a West African University was an ideal at which they should aim’ the governors stressed that ‘the day when that goal will be reached must be regarded as belonging to the remote future’. Nevertheless, they called for the appointment of a local commission to report on the educational needs of West Africa.

By this time the Colonial Office had begun to take effective control of policy-making and -implementation in the various colonies, and the vested self-interest of the colonial officials on-the-spot, the preservation of their own tenure, had to be subordinated to a higher imperial interest—the expansion and ‘wise moulding’ of the class size of the new elite who were to be utilized in order for the reform process to succeed. Consequently, persistent ‘public criticisms [...] led the Colonial Office to sponsor intensified discussion on the whole question of Higher Education in West Africa’ (Fajana 1972: 330).

In 1940 the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies endorsed the recommendation of the West African governors by asking the Secretary of State to appoint, ‘at once’, a commission on higher edu-

46. Fajana 1972: 329. See also ‘Address by Pickthorn during the House of Commons’ Debate on Education (Higher) for Africans, June 2, 1937’. PRO, CO 847/9/1. Pickthorn argued that some British officials opposed the education of Africans because they felt that they were ‘thereby training their racial supplanters’.

47. ‘Extract from the Recommendation of West African Governors after their Conference held in Lagos, August 1939’. PRO, CO 847/18/9. Refer also to Memorandum on Higher Education prepared by the Government of Nigeria, 1939, for the Governors Conference, Open Policy Files on Education (General), Sierra Leone National Archives at Fourah Bay (Freetown). CSO E/26/34.

48. Memorandum on Higher Education on West Africa prepared by the Gold Coast Government for the Governors’ Conference, 1939, Open Files on Education (General), Sierra Leone National Archives at Fourah Bay (Freetown). CSO/ E/26/34.

49. Before 1939 the Colonial Office allowed the various governments the freedom to initiate and implement policies. This was necessary because of the pragmatic nature of indirect rule which called for an on-the-spot action. With the emerging ‘progressive’ imperial outlook initiated by MacDonald, the Colonial Office began to position itself for a more dynamic role in streamlining colonial policy.
cation in West Africa 'in order to review matters of urgency in this country and to submit on these an interim report, and proceed to West Africa as soon thereafter as might be practicable'.

It is interesting to note that, at last, the question of the provision of universities in Africa which, for so long, had been deliberately and consistently ignored by Britain had suddenly become a 'matter of urgency' in imperial thinking. Although MacDonald stated that the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, which provided funds for higher education, was 'not a bribe or a reward for the colonies' support in this supreme crisis...',

there is no doubt that the West Indian revolts and the need to retain the war-time loyalty of the colonies made colonial reforms almost inevitable. Universities, therefore, had to be established in African territories to train the African leaders, and thereby manage 'radical' nationalism. Clearly the probable post-war colonial situation and the possible effects on the colonial peoples had begun to trouble officials in the colonies as well as those in the Colonial Office.

By 1941, however, African students in America had formed the African Students Association of the United States and Canada which commenced the publication of a monthly magazine known as African Interpreter. In alliance with the West African Students Union (WASU), the association called upon the British Government 'to grant internal self-government to the colonial peoples of Africa'. Furthermore they demanded that 'those who claim to be fighting for democracy implement their expressed ideals by considering Africa a sovereign land in all of its glorious heritage and history'.

Unquestionably, students' pressure, and international criticisms equally played some role to convince Britain that the time had come for swift action if the colonial political process and development were not to be arrested by the emerging and aggressive nationalists. A major rethinking emerged which began to view the foundation of universities in Africa as beneficial and desirable institutions which would strengthen the empire not help to liquidate it. Hence Cannon's Memorandum which made a strong case for the establishment of universities in the colonies was unanimously endorsed by the ACEC and approved by the Colonial Office in 1942.

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50. 'Extract from Draft Minutes of the 108th Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, December 12, 1940', PRO, CO 847/18/9.
‘Self-Government’, Educated Elites, and African Universities

In the meantime, beginning with MacDonald in 1938, the notion of preparing the colonial peoples for self-government, as the ultimate imperial goal, came to dominate discussions in the Colonial Office. Lords Moyne and Crandborne, who succeeded MacDonald respectively, both pondered over the issue. Although the definition of what actually constituted self-government, and the question as to whether the principles outlined in the Atlantic Charter was applicable to British African territories generated much controversy (in London, the Colonies, and the United States), the exigencies of the war and the American tenacious and irrepressible war-time influence made the exclusion of African territories inadvisable.54 It was not until Oliver Stanley became the Secretary of State in 1943 that a decisive declaration was made with regard to self-government, and social and economic development of the colonies as what constituted British colonial objectives. Nonetheless, the self-government was envisaged to be within the framework of British Empire. Thus, ‘...we are pledged to guide colonial peoples along the road to self-government within the framework of the British Empire. We are pledged to build up their social and economic institutions, and we are pledged to develop their natural resources’.55

To achieve this objective the Colonial Office realized that there was the need to expand the class of African educated elite upon which the new policy were to depend. Thus in his confidential letter to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, in connection with his intention to appoint an authoritative commission on higher education in the colonies, and to solicit the help of the institution in that task ahead, Stanley reiterated the role of colonial universities in producing the indigenous leaders needed for self-government. According to him:

‘As you will be aware from the public announcements, His Majesty’s Government is deeply committed to quickening the progress of colonial peoples towards a higher level of social well-being and towards the ultimate goal of self-government. It is essential to the success of this policy that the supply of leaders from the indigenous people themselves should be rapidly increased. There is, therefore, an urgent and fundamental need to enlarge our facilities for higher education without which these leaders cannot be created’.56

In July 1943, Oliver Stanley therefore appointed two authoritative commissions on higher education in the colonies. While the one, the

54. See Louis 1977, also LIÉ & PETER 1982.
55. Parliamentary Debates, Fifth Series, Vol. 391, Column 48 of the Supply Committee on Colonial Affairs, 13 July 1943, HCRO.
Elliot Commission, was mandated 'to report on the organization and facilities of the existing centres of higher education in British West Africa, and to make recommendation regarding future university development in that area', the other, the Asquith Commission, was a more general body which was to formulate principles to guide the foundation of universities in British colonial territories. Specifically, this commission was mandated to 'explore means whereby universities and other appropriate bodies in the United Kingdom may be able to co-operate with institutions of higher education in the colonies...'. The reports of both commissions were presented to Parliament in June 1945. Although the Elliot Commission's report provoked ferocious protests in West Africa, particularly in the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone, because of the minority proposals for a unitary University of West Africa to be located in Nigeria, it should be noted that, to Britain, the establishment of universities in Africa was now considered not only inevitable, but highly desirable. By this time the attitudes of African colonial governments had shifted in positive direction.

Another conference of West Africa governors, convened in Lagos in 1947 to consider British educational policy in Africa, illustrates the change in attitudes of the colonial governments. The governors declared that 'The political development of the people of Africa will go forward with an increasing strong impetus, irrespective of Government action, and if educational development cannot keep pace with it the results may be disastrous'. They saw this state of affairs as already evident in Nigeria 'where the “Zik” press is exercising a highly dangerous influence on a partly literate, but at the same time mainly uneducated public, and is threatening to disturb the whole political development of the country'. In the same year, Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast from America, and took a more revolutionary approach towards the re-education of Africans and the liquidation of British rule in Africa, than towards the gradualism of Azikiwe (Davidson 1989. Nkrumah 1963). Completely distressed by the influence of American education, the

57. Report of the Commission on Higher Education in West Africa, presented to Parliament in June 1945 by the Secretary of State, and published as Command Paper No. 6655, PRO, ZHC1/8806. The Elliot Commission included three Africans, K. A. Korsah of the Gold Coast, E. H. Taylor-Cummings of Sierra Leone, and I. O. Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria. This was the first time Africans were made members of such an authoritative imperially appointed body; it demonstrates that the wind of change—modern nationalist activities led by the American-trained Africans—had begun to blow.

58. Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State in June 1945, and published as Command Paper No. 6647, PRO, ZHC1/8805.

governors warned that: ‘The peoples of the African Territories are demanding more education. If that demand is not met adequately the people will have a just ground for complaint and will certainly be tempted themselves to pursue a course of educational development which may be not only unsound from the educational point of view, but even dangerous socially’.

Despite that the governors did not specifically state it, there is no doubt that the socially dangerous course of educational development they were referring to entailed the American education. By 1948, however, opinions, British and African, strongly favoured the establishment of universities in Africa. The Colonial Office desired it, colonial governments recommended it, and Africans demanded it. The wind of change had begun to blow over Africa. Consequently, Britain swiftly took the plunge and founded two university colleges in West Africa in 1948, one in the Gold Coast and the other in Nigeria; Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone was also reconstituted. Yet it was not until 1950 that Makerere College in Uganda became elevated fully to the status of a university college to serve the whole of East Africa.

Clearly this discussion has demonstrated that although the establishment of universities in British tropical African dependencies came to fruition during the colonial social, economic, and political reforms of the war era, there is no doubt that the American factor played a visible part in the process. Age old African demand for universities, which began with Horton in 1865, Blyden in 1872 down to Casely-Hayford in 1920, did not produce any positive response from Britain until the American Phelps-Stokes Commission visited Africa in 1920-24. Soon after, Britain moved swiftly to appoint the ACEC, and formulate an education policy for its African territories in 1925. British response remains instructive. Still, it might be put forward that the reforms of the 1940s equally constituted another British response to the growing efflux of Africans to America, even though it became subsumed under the exigencies of the West Indian revolts, the Great Depression, and the Second World War. The unsettling social and political dissensions engendered in the colonies by the activities of the emergent nationalists (mostly American-educated) cannot be ignored in any interpretation. Hitherto, British policy of indirect rule which made use of the illiterate African chiefs could not envisage any role for the educated elite. Also, British colonial officials jealously guarded their position against African competition so that the few African graduates were either placed at subordinate positions when employed at all, or refused employment in the civil service of their own country for fear that
they might displace their British counterparts, who were, in most cases, less qualified for the jobs they performed. In any case, the reform process itself constituted a response to some long-standing grievances nursed by the colonial peoples, grievances amongst which was the demand for university facilities in Africa.

_Dalhousie University, Department of History, Halifax, 1992._

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