

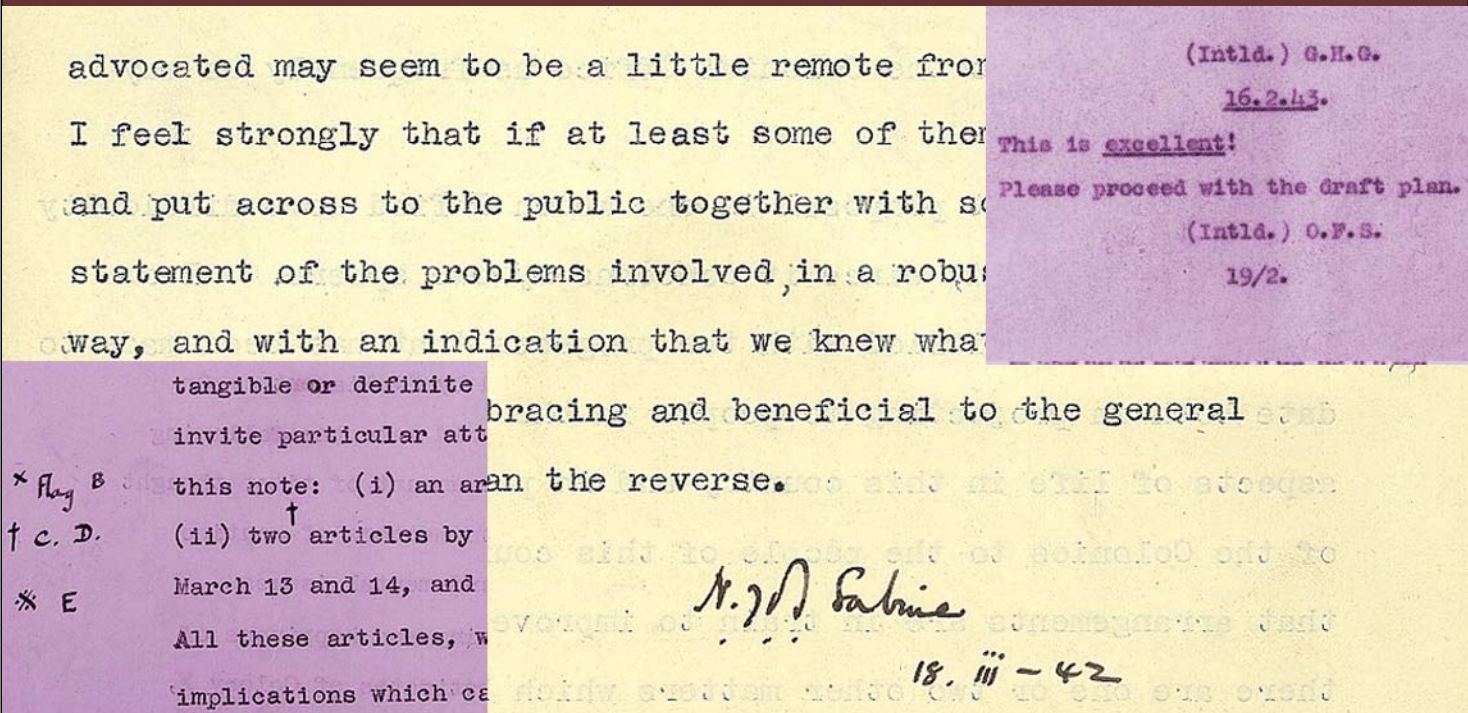


Learning Curve
Education Service Workshops

AS/A2

Decolonisation

Malaya and the Gold Coast, 1940-1960



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Memorandum on future policy in West Africa, ref:
CO 554/132/10

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If the threat of war continues to recede from West Africa, one of the results may be that questions which educated Africans would otherwise have been content to leave until after the war may be pressed upon our attention at an earlier date. The questions to which I refer are those connected with the aspirations of the Africans to be given an opportunity of playing a much fuller and more influential part in the administration of the territories to which they belong.

For the reasons set out briefly below it seems desirable to prepare in advance for this possibility so as to be able to confront an incipient agitation with a definite plan of action by His Majesty's Government.

No practicable scheme will satisfy the extremists and the ill-informed people who encourage them in this country, but the realization that His Majesty's Government know what they mean to do and are in earnest about doing it should have a steadying effect which will be much needed. But it is important not to delay too long.

The proportion of Africans with even a smattering of education to the total West African population is of course exceedingly small, and only a minority of that fraction appears to be actively interested in African advancement as a political issue. That small fraction, however, appears to be capable of exerting considerable influence locally, and is mainly responsible for supplying material to keep alive the interest in this subject shown by persons and bodies in this country who profess a sympathy with the "subject races". It is obvious that the existence of even a small body of African opinion, supported as it is by members of Parliament and other persons of some influence in this country, may have a very unsettling effect upon the local community if it becomes more and more exasperated, suspicious and hostile towards His Majesty's Government. The corrosive effect upon the local community of such an increasingly malignant element might be less serious if we could look forward with confidence to a considerable period of general prosperity of which Africans of all ranks of life would enjoy a fair share. On the other hand, if the West African Colonies have to pass through a period of economic hardship, the discontent of the intelligentsia may be expected to have a much more widespread and serious effect upon the bulk of the community.

From time to time members of His Majesty's Government have referred in general terms to the benevolent intentions of His Majesty's Government towards the Colonial peoples, and hitherto it has not apparently been thought really necessary to do more than to express sentiments of this kind from time to time, while dealing ad hoc with any particular grievance or symptom of discontent as it arises in some concrete form, or even, on occasion, anticipating a demand by some more or less innocuous concession. To judge, however, from what has appeared from time to time since the outbreak of war in the West African newspapers, African opinion amongst the small body of politically-minded African referred to above is becoming less and less easily satisfied with such methods.

It is not suggested that a continuance of the present opportunist policy is likely to result in serious and widespread disaffection or opposition to British administration in West Africa. What is to be feared is rather a widening breach between the European and the African as the latter becomes more educated, and an increasing sense of frustration on his part. The result of such a tendency might well be to hamper very considerably the efforts of His Majesty's Government for

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the general social betterment of the African races. In a word, our success in raising the standard of life, in the widest sense of the term, of the African is likely to be largely dependent upon the extent to which we can associate him as an active, intelligent and enthusiastic collaborator in the task of his own betterment.

Action is required along three main lines:

(1) The provision of greatly increased educational facilities. This is fundamental to all the rest.

(2) Greatly increased employment of Africans in the public administration and municipal government. This is clearly dependent upon the extent to which the increased educational facilities can produce men and women of the right type and with the right training.

(3) A progressive education of the African in the handling of public affairs, whether in Municipal Councils or in Legislative Councils. This is in some ways the most difficult problem of all. It is impossible to deal with it adequately in such a memorandum as this, but for the present purpose it may suffice to suggest that the line of approach should be to make political progress for the African far more closely dependent upon the two factors referred to above than has been the practice in the past.

Moreover it seems not unlikely that the confidence of the educated African in the good faith of His Majesty's Government may, to some extent, be affected by the general economic scheme into which the West African Colonies will have to be fitted in the post-war world. This is a problem which clearly cannot be discussed now.

What, it is suggested, should be attempted now is the preparation by a small committee in the Colonial Office of a plan in outline showing in the form of concrete proposals what His Majesty's Government really mean in the case of West Africa by their oft-repeated expressions of benevolent intentions towards the Colonial peoples. This outlined plan, which should cover the three points referred to above, could then be sent out to Governors, preferably in a personal letter from the Secretary of State, for their comments, and for the more detailed elaboration which will be required. It is not suggested that the plan should be tied to any sort of timetable. That clearly would be impossible; but an attempt should be made to put down on paper as near an approximation as possible to a definite programme for the first item, i.e., education, which is fundamental.

It is suggested that, when the Governors have furnished their comments on the preliminary plan, it should, after further elaboration and final acceptance by the Governors, be published in West Africa and this country at an appropriate time. Such a publication would appear to have several advantages. It would serve to dissipate the growing suspicion that His Majesty's Government really mean very little by their general professions of benevolence. It would serve as a framework to which a good deal of the detailed development plans of the West African Colonies could be related and it would enable His Majesty's Government to resist far more effectively and convincingly any tendency to rush them into making undesirable concessions to impatient hotheads, because they would be able to point to the published plan as evidence of the sincere intention to provide

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definite means by which the African would be able to fit himself for a steadily increasing participation in the affairs of his own country.

(Sgd.) O.G.R. Williams

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Sir George Gater:

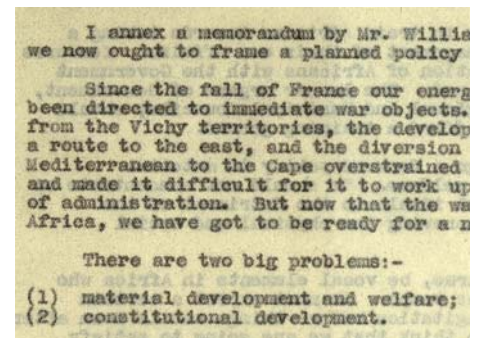
I annex a memorandum by Mr Williams. The thesis is that we now ought to frame a planned policy for West Africa.

Since the fall of France our energies in West Africa have been directed to immediate war objects. The military threat from the Vichy territories, the development of West Africa as a route to the east, and the diversion of shipping from the Mediterranean to the Cape overstrained the Government machine and made it difficult for it to work upon the ordinary problems of administration. But now that the war is receding from West Africa, we have got to be ready for a new phase.

There are two big problems: -

- (1) material development and welfare;
- (2) constitutional development.

As to (1), material development during the war will depend largely on factors external to West Africa, e.g., the supply of imported material and trained personnel. But within that limitation there is a good deal which can be done. The release of labour from military works will, for example, make it possible to go forward with the construction from local materials of schools, hospitals and clinics.



A good deal of spadework has already been done. Nigeria and the Gold Coast have already produced plans for education. A comprehensive plan covering all fields is coming forward from the Gambia. We have received Sierra Leone's plan for agricultural development; and plans covering other activities are being prepared. We are proposing a Commission on Higher Education for West Africa which ought, if possible, to get to work before the war ends.

To carry out these schemes and devise new ones we have already the machinery of the four West African Governments. The question is whether we shall want anything else. In my own view there is a case for the establishment of a central staff for development under the Achimota umbrella, (i.e. Lord Swinton or his successor), which will act as an energising and coordinating unit. I will not discuss this in detail now but I went into it with Sir Frank Stockdale when he was here. Broadly the conclusion was that there was a case for establishing a Development Commissioner for West Africa with appropriate staff under the Resident Minister (or the authority which replaces him). This Commissioner would deal with development and welfare plans for West Africa as a whole, irrespective of whether the finance came from the Colonial Development and Welfare Vote or from local revenues.

With regard to (2) – constitutional development – I think it is possible for us to get a much clearer idea of our future direction in West Africa than it is in East or Central Africa. It is not suggested that it would be feasible to impose some cast-iron scheme which could be followed irrespective of circumstances. But in West Africa the main signposts which should guide us are fairly clear.

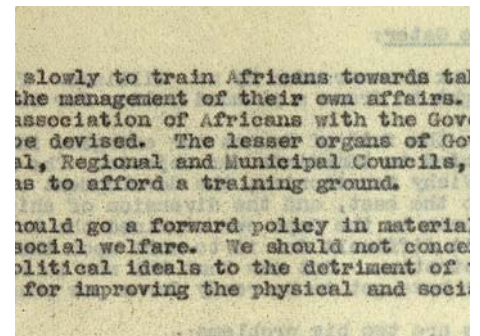
Lord Hailey was commissioned at the beginning of the war to report on the future lines of policy, and I think that in his West African reports we have, subject to certain modifications, the material from which a practicable and stable policy can be constructed. His ideas briefly are as follows. We should go cautiously at the centre while encouraging the activity and broadening the basis of local institutions. The

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object should be slowly to train Africans towards taking a greater part in the management of their own affairs. Measures for the greater association of Africans with the Government services should be devised. The lesser organs of Government, such as Provincial, Regional and Municipal Councils, should be developed so as to afford a training ground.

With this should go a forward policy in material development and social welfare. We should not concentrate on the pursuit of political ideals to the detriment of the pre-eminent need for improving the physical and social conditions.

There will, of course, be vocal elements in Africa who will want to quicken the tempo. We must expect a certain amount of trouble and agitation before things settle down after the war. It is idle to think that we are going to satisfy political aspirations entirely by schemes for social welfare, but in West Africa the "political" elements so far are a small portion of the population. Also it may be that by the end of the war, British prestige generally may have increased in such a way as to have a steadying effect throughout West Africa. It may therefore be feasible to look forward to the application of a sound progressive policy without having too many hand-to-mouth expedients forced on us by ephemeral agitation.



As to immediate action. As soon as the staff for planning is available in the West African Department, I would propose to have a draft scheme drawn up for consideration on the lines indicated in the above minute and in Mr. Williams' memorandum. I am not in favour of establishing any Office Committee at the moment: but in piecing the scheme together, all those in the official circle concerned will be brought into consultation. This scheme will then afford a basis for consultation with the Governors: and I think it might be worth while considering holding in London at some suitable time later on a Conference of the four Governors with the Secretary of State. But all this is for the future and rather depends on what is to happen with regard to the Resident Minister set-up.

? Proceed accordingly.

(Intld.) A.J.D.

9th February 1943

Secretary of State

1. I think you will be interested to see a memorandum by Mr. Williams, the head of the West African Department, and a covering minute by Sir Arthur Dawe. I think it is right that planning in the widest sense should be centred in the Geographical Department, under the supervision of the Assistant Under-Secretary, and I suggest that as soon as the necessary staff is available, the West African Department should be authorised to prepare a draft scheme in consultation with the Subject Departments of the Office concerned. Mr. Clauson should be brought in on long range economic planning, and Mr. Caine as Financial Adviser. Also the other Advisers and the staff of the Economic and Social Services' Departments.

2. I like Sir Arthur Dawe's idea that we should aim at

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the appointment of a Development Commissioner for West Africa, with appropriate staff, working under the Resident Minister, and that the Commissioner should deal with development and welfare plans as a whole.

3. I do not know whether you will wish to have any preliminary discussion or whether you are prepared to let the Department proceed with the preparation of a draft plan for your consideration

(Intld.) G.H.G

16.2.43.

This is excellent!

Please proceed with the draft plan.

(Intld.) O.F.S.

19/2.