

SPEECH BY MR. B.M. GECAGA, CHAIRMAN
OF THE COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE,
NAIROBI, AND OF B.A.T KENYA LIMITED, AT
THE COLLEGE LEAVING CEREMONY OF THE
KENYA SCIENCE TEACHERS COLLEGE ON
MONDAY, 1ST DECEMBER, 1969

When your Chairman of the Board of Governors, Dr. A.T. Porter, and your Principal, Dr. Osterling, invited my wife and myself to attend this function today, as Guests of Honour, we were delighted to accept the invitation. Both of us wish to express our appreciation at this singular honour which you have done us.

Kenya Science Teachers College is, as all of us can see, a thriving and progressive educational institute. Although very young, it is an institute whose progress and development is being watched by many people in this country, with a great deal of interest.

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We remember, with gratitude, that this college was a gift from the Government of Sweden to Kenya on the occasion of our Independence some six years ago. It is natural for the donor and donee of any gift such as this, to want to know how it is being used and, indeed, that it is being well used. I understand that the college prepares students for the S. 1 Certificate and that the S. 1 Course includes academic as well as professional training. Some of the teachers who are desperately needed in our secondary schools are teachers of science. Thus Kenya Science Teachers College has met a very important need in the field of trained man-power for Kenya. There is, I believe, ample evidence that very good use is being made of this magnificent gift.

I have referred to this College as a young institute. Youthfulness is an attribute which, throughout the ages, has found favour in Society. It characterises vigour and vitality, energy and vision, adventure and innovation. These are characteristics of youth which make up for what may sometimes appear like paucity in experience and wisdom.

And yet sometimes one cannot help but feel that the older generation, which claims the virtues of experience, sagacity, stability, etc. might with advantage and, indeed, as part of their continuing education, seek to gain better understanding of youth while, at the same time, showing greater sympathy with the hopes and aspirations of youth. While stability as a desirable virtue will find universal acceptance, there are, I suggest, few thinking people who will see any virtue in what is sometimes mistaken for stability, namely, immutability and quiescence; inflexibility and apathy.

Our very environment shows us that nature itself is not immutable. A rainy season is succeeded by a dry one; mortality decrees that daily thousands of lives find entry into this world while daily, similar thousands find their exit; night is succeeded by day and vice-versa. In order to grapple with the multifarious problems around us, I suggest that an empirical approach is worthy of exploration.

We need to start by making it our business to understand as fully as possible our environment. You who have qualified from this course are specially well suited for this purpose. You will, I'm sure, pass on to your pupils that sine qua non in the learning of science, viz. never to take anything for granted but to inquire into everything in order to understand why things happen the way things do. Only if you start from this premise can you then proceed to make well considered and sound judgments and decisions on which future action may be formulated - action which could affect not just yourself but also others with whom you share the environment.

It seems to me that the older and younger generations alike are vitally interested and, indeed, have a right to be interested in the future, both imminent and distant which lies ahead of us. It can, perhaps, be argued that the young generation, of whom you, Ladies and Gentlemen, are a part, is especially interested in and, possibly, also concerned about that future. What we must understand and appreciate is that we have

the power and ingenuity through the continuing accumulation of human knowledge to influence that future.

But it would, I suggest, be just as foolish for the young to be vandals seeking to destroy such wholesome order of things as may have been achieved by the older generation, as it would be for the older generation to resist with tenacity the introduction of change which could, by empirical approach, contribute significantly and beneficially to the future.

I believe it would be prudent for both generations to proceed as active partners in the task of building a better and brighter future - a future of greater opportunity for all, but neither partner claiming absolute and unchallengeable knowledge or right as regards the best road to reach that future. In other words, let us not despise present conclusions based on available evidence, nor refuse to examine fresh evidence which could alter or modify present conclusions. Let us, indeed, be masters of our destiny.

From Kenya Science Teachers College, therefore, we look for new and better ideas - new and better ideas especially in the teaching of science in our secondary schools; ideas which will, at the same time, take account of our local conditions and needs, our Kenyan environment.

Our congratulations are due to those of you who will receive your certificates today, as our thanks are due to your teachers who have laboured to ensure your competency. The certificates will proclaim that you have successfully completed your course of studies at this College - that you have acquired the necessary skills in the teaching of science. Now it is up to each one of you to go out and put these skills into use in the school to which you will be assigned. This will be no easy task. You will be on your own with no teacher or even, perhaps, a good library to turn to in moments of perplexity and doubt. Your pupils will think that you know everything and yet you, yourself, may painfully realize that you do not know everything! It will

be much better, in such instances, to admit your lack of knowledge rather than try and impress your pupils by incorrect or half correct answers. It is no disgrace to say: "I do not know, but I will find out."

In conclusion, I would say to you what I have repeatedly said to students of University College, Nairobi. You, among thousands, are few who have been privileged to attend this fine institution - Kenya Science Teachers College. As you go out, you and your successors after you, have a duty to carry the precious torch of knowledge to every corner of this country to give light to those who will pass through your hands, so that Kenya may become truly a country of enlightened people who possess in good measure the necessary knowledge and wisdom to be masters of our destiny.
