

TEXT OF SPEECH BY MR. B. M. GECAGA,
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, NAIROBI, ON
THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TILAPIA
RESEARCH LABORATORY AT CHOROMO, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, NAIROBI
ON FRIDAY, 30TH JANUARY, 1970

Over the past few years, there has been growing research activity in the Department of Zoology of this University College. I understand that the Animal Kingdom is divided by zoologists into two main groups - those with and those without backbone. I further understand that the word 'backbone' in this specific context is used in its physical not metaphoric (or metaphysical) sense. Appropriately the two strong research groups in the Department have a zoological balance in that their interests are centred on each of these two animal groups. The group led by Dr. Hyder is concerned primarily with an economically important fresh-water fish - Tilapia. This group goes unofficially by the name of the TILAPIA RESEARCH UNIT.

The investigations being carried out in the Tilapia Research Unit centre primarily on the hormones controlling the reproduction of Tilapia and how these hormones are, so to speak, 'triggered' by environmental factors such as light, temperature and rain. This knowledge is required in order to know how to facilitate increases in lake stocks of Tilapia. On the other hand, under pond conditions the problem is to reduce reproduction to facilitate growth of the fish to a marketable size. Even to a layman the size of the problem becomes immediately obvious. It is a long-term study which requires patience and dedicated application. For nearly four years, Dr. Hyder made field collections and carefully monitored weather conditions. He has arrived at certain interesting theories but, I am glad to say, that neither he nor myself are going to use you as a captive audience to listen to such theories today. The really important thing is that the work has shown that some of these factors - like light, temperature and rain - have a subtle but significant influence in stimulating breeding. This kind of information is obviously very important in the formulation of Government policy on fishing and in manipulating pond conditions to permit growth without

reproduction since the former is almost inversely proportional to the latter in pond conditions.

But field studies inevitably lead to the laboratory where factors can be isolated and both their joint and several influences can be tested. And this brings us to the Tilapia Research Laboratory for whose official opening we are gathered here today. The Laboratory was made possible when early last year the Wellcome Trust awarded Dr. Hyder a grant of £K14,000 for a three-year extension of his Tilapia research. The Laboratory was financed from part of this grant and was built at the cost of just under £2,000 from a design prepared by Dr. Hyder. Since its completion towards the middle of last year, the Laboratory has facilitated a number of experiments on Tilapia reproduction. I shall leave it to you to look inside to find more of its feature. To us in the University, we attach importance to this kind of project for three reasons. First, it demonstrates our real concern for the development of the country by directing fundamental research in areas of significant economic potentiality. Secondly, it provides an opportunity for the training of

high-level manpower to fill important posts in Government Departments. Thirdly, it provides a focal point for co-operation - and through it, understanding - between the University and the Government. It may be hard to believe this can be done without any financial support from the Government but what Dr. Hyder has done does, I suggest, demonstrate that this is possible!

Allow me to take this opportunity of thanking those donors who have supported Dr. Hyder's research in the past. These have included, from abroad, the Wellcome Trust (represented here today by Drs. Williams, Goodwin and Thompson), the Nuffield Foundation and "Campaign Against World Hunger - War on Want". On the home front I can honestly say that this project would have been hard put to achieve much had it not been for the timely support on several occasions by Sir Malin and Lady Sorsbie of the Munitalp Foundation. May I express the hope that this generous support from all of you will continue in the future and possibly also encourage others to lend a hand in the promotion of this important research project.

And now I hope all of you, Ladies and Gentlemen, share my pleasure in declaring the Tilapia Research Laboratory officially open.
