

University Platform

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PORTER MOVES OUT

THE FAREWELL CEREMONY for Dr. Arthur Thomas Porter which was attended by hundreds of people, took place at Taifa Hall on the fourth of this month. Dr. Porter, B.A. (Durh); M.A. (Camb.); Ph.D; L.H.D. (Boston); L.L.B. (Malta); — has been the principal of the University College Nairobi for six years.

Professor Thomas R. Odhiambo, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture gave a speech on "Dr. Porter as an Academic Colleague". He had the following to say:

"Dr. Arthur Thomas Porter, distinguished historian and sociologist, Vice-Principal of Fourah Bay College, Professor of History and Director of that College's Institute of African Studies, came to us more than five years ago not because he had answered an advertisement and his application had been found to fill the bill — the way most of us reach their goal — but because he had accepted an invitation from our University College Council to come to our aid. In those five short years, Dr. Porter has steered the College through monumental phases of planning and development, phases of planning and development so eloquently narrated by the previous speakers. He has demonstrated to us, beyond any doubt, his administrative skill, his academic acumen, and his human qualities, all combined in a rare blend that has assured success. For it is this complexity of character, this peculiar interplay of superlatives, that has made us regard Dr. Porter as a 'centre of excellence' in himself."

HUMANITY

"But", he went on, "knowledge and wisdom, eloquence and incisiveness, are not necessarily lovable characteristics — however abundantly endowed we are with them. I think one had to add humanity to this menu before one can reach the third heaven. Apart from heavy responsibilities in the College and elsewhere, he has remained exceedingly accessible; and willing to get to the bottom of the most tangled of personal or departmental issues."

RELEVANCE

Dr. Porter has been concerned with the ultimate justification for an expensive plant such as this University College is. This is best reflected in his own words, which he used to preface the College's book on Education, Employment and Rural Development in which he said:

"Problems of education, employment and rural development affect us all. They

are at one and the same time individual problems, social problems and, not least, political problems. They impinge on all efforts of Kenya, of East Africa, of the whole of the developing world, to improve the welfare and prosperity of their people.

DETERMINATION

The fact that the conference was sponsored by the College reflects our increasing commitment to matters of national concern and our determination to make our contribution where it is most needed . . ."

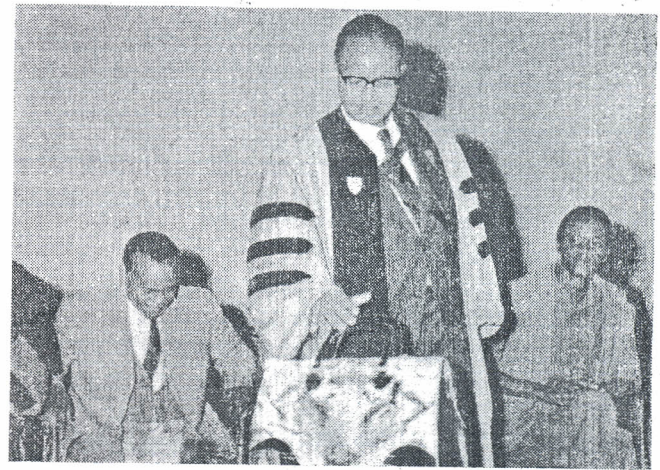
LAST MESSAGE

IN his last words Dr. Porter, recalled that throughout his speeches, a recurring theme has been the need for relevance and for excellence.



In 1965 he said "we know that without excellence in every field that is advanced by teaching, our day as free Africans shall too soon be done, for our very freedom will depend upon the quality of our learning and our teaching."

In 1967 he said "If one must find only one aspect to characterise this College, we hope it will be our 'links with life' . . . Our new academic developments are not in prestige areas but in areas of direct re-



Dr. Porter is seen above admiring his present given to him by the students.

levance to our developments and, I hope, substantiate our claim that we are a College with links with life itself."

"We aim to be a service institution fully responsive, within the limits of our capacities, to the needs of Kenya and East Africa. Our basic evaluative criteria are relevance and excellence."

IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS

Throughout the years, Dr. Porter has been called for improved communication and better understanding between the State and the University. In November 1965 he said: "We must find a way to involve the politicians, Africa's most important citizens, with the University." "I think," he went on to say, "we are on the road to achieving this, for informal machinery has now been set up for consultations between us and the Government."

TEAM WORK

In the University, as in comparable institutions, the important thing is team work. In his speech to new students last year he said: "We are not isolated individuals, each

seeking his own selfish ends. We are not separate and divergent groups — students and faculty and administration — each at variance with the other. We must, as members of the family, respect and care for each other with true humanity and strive to support and uphold each other. Student power, faculty power, or administrative power each alone, without others, cannot solve the problems of our community. No society can satisfy the needs of its members if every dissatisfied group regularly mounts the barricades to demand redress of each real or fancied wrong."

TASKS

In his very last word, Dr. Porter said that the task before us, wherever we may be, is the same: it is to build our nation: to achieve our cultural independence. In essence, to fulfil the hopes contained in the dedication of our President's classic book **Facing Mount Kenya**, first published in 1938: "to all the dispossessed youth of Africa: . . . in the firm faith that the dead, the living and the unborn will unite to rebuild the destroyed shrines."

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