

TEXT OF SPEECH BY DR. ARTHUR T. PORTER, PRINCIPAL,  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, NAIROBI, AT A CONGREGATION FOR  
THE CONFERMENT OF DEGREES AND AWARD OF CERTIFICATES  
BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE VISITOR, MZEE JOMO KENYATTA,  
ON THURSDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1969.

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Your Excellency, Mr. Visitor Sir, Your Excellency Mr. Vice-President  
Your Worship, Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Distinguished  
Guests:

Five years ago, I had the honour and privilege, on behalf  
of University College, Nairobi, to present to this House of Congregation  
the candidates for the conferment and award of their certificates,  
diplomas and degrees by our illustrious Visitor, His Excellency, the  
President.

Today again, as Principal, it is my last privilege so to do.

First and foremost, I should like to join our Chairman of  
Council in expressing our deep and abiding gratitude to His Excellency  
who year after year, amidst his many duties and responsibilities of state,  
takes the time to be with us in this House of Congregation and to confer  
the honours and awards. We are also most grateful to Her Excellency  
Mama Ngina who adds lustre to our ceremony by always honouring us with her  
presence.

One of the most strikingly outstanding features of the  
University of East Africa since its establishment in June 1963 has been  
the speed of the growth and development of University College, Nairobi.  
Our undergraduate enrolment has nearly trebled in four years, rising  
from 661 in 1964/65 to 1892 in 1968/69 and over 2000 in the present  
academic year, a much faster rate of growth than had been anticipated.  
Today the number of East Africans on the staff is 142 out of an  
establishment of 293 or 48 $\frac{1}{2}$ %.

The large proportion of our students come, understandably,  
from Kenya and the other East African countries, but we also attract  
students from other parts of Africa, from Mauritius, from Europe and  
the United States. Thus, while we serve the needs of Kenya and of East  
Africa, we find time and the opportunity to serve the world.

Our development has not only been in terms of size; there  
has been a corresponding increase in the range of subjects offered.  
With the assistance of Planning Committees, consisting of both College  
and Government representation, a number of new faculties and departments  
have been established. In addition to our four professional schools of  
Architecture, Engineering, Medicine, and Veterinary Science, a new  
Faculty of Agriculture is to be established next session, and plans are  
well advanced for two other Faculties - of Law and of Education - and a  
School of Journalism. It is anticipated that the inauguration and

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development of a Faculty of Agriculture will further the development of some already very interesting work relevant to accelerated rural development in our other faculties, such as the development of intermediate technology in our Faculty of Engineering, the important research on land tenure problems in our Department of Law, and the research and public health programme in our Faculty of Medicine.

Our physical development plan has mapped out for us the pattern of development for a College of up to five thousand students on our present land holdings and on adjacent lands which we hope to obtain. Our Council has approved this plan and some of the new buildings as, for example, the building to house our Department of Education and our Faculty of Arts, are now reaching the stage of actual construction. Once again we express our sincere appreciation and thanks to all our donors for their continued and generous assistance.

But notwithstanding this new building and the latest hall of residence, the College is still facing an accommodation crisis. The Administration block is grossly overcrowded and this has a very considerable effect on the efficiency of our operations. Teaching accommodation is even more inadequate. Our Timetabling Committee has advised that lecture classes can only be accommodated by scheduling lectures over a ten hour day. This means conflict with dining hours, which again means lengthening lunch and dinner periods and taking on more staff. It also calls for the utmost co-operation and patience from staff and students, as well as urgent and drastic steps by the College and the Government to avoid a complete breakdown of our operations.

In pursuit of our two criteria of relevance and excellence, plans are now afoot for establishing closer working links, and strengthening them where they already exist, between our professional faculties and organisations and institutions in both the public and private sectors engaged in the applied and practical aspects of development. These are the consumers of our graduates, and it is both their right and duty to point out to us any identified weaknesses in our graduates.

Several of our Departments are increasingly concentrating their attention, both in teaching and research, upon rural development problems. These include the Departments of Geography, Botany, Zoology, Meteorology, Photogrammetry and Land Development. The current emphasis in the programme of study in our Institute of Adult Studies also reflects a similar orientation.

Notwithstanding the progress, the year has not been without its difficulties. Perhaps the most dramatic of those problems was the chain of events which led to the temporary closure of the College for about three weeks during our second term. If there is any benefit in any such circumstances, it is the opportunity it gives to reflect on our institution and to learn the necessary lessons. Not all of the lessons may be clear to us yet, but in the crucible of the University of the

1960's, I think our common experience has clarified several fundamental matters. In the pursuit of knowledge and in the cultivation of the intellect, the only certainly false doctrine is a belief in infallibility. We at the College are conscious of our limitations; we know that ours has been but a brief, modest and unbalanced engagement with the gargantuan problems of national development and university growth. But our spirit is wild and willing. We are ready to listen to advice from any quarter and learn from our experience, so that we can go forward in the building of a better and brighter tomorrow. We are convinced that universities in our countries have a strategic and unique role to play in national development, that our staffing emphasis, the content of our curriculum, the organisation of our research enterprises, and, above all, the spirit of our relationship with our governments, should all reflect this dedication and sense of mission. But we also believe that in certain areas, self-responsibility on the part of the university is essential if it is to retain its character and mode of operation. We share Winston Churchill's view that "if we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find that we have lost the future".

Graduation ceremony is a symbol of the connection between the past, the present and the future.

We mark our sense of continuity with the past in the medieval pageantry of our robes and the academic processions; in the opportunity we take on this occasion of expressing our thanks and appreciation to all those into whose heritage we have so richly entered.

We pay tribute to the accomplishments of the present in the granting of degrees and diplomas to our young men and women who have completed their courses with us. We are trying to make the present more meaningful and our co-operative search for the truth more assured by the recent decision of our Council to include student representation, and an increased number of non-professorial staff, in the academic committees of the College, such as our Academic Board and our Faculty Boards.

We note also in this ceremony the importance of the future in our attention to the careers of those students who are still serving their apprenticeship with us and whose future progress must be our concern. We must make sure that we are helping them learn that important balance between individual freedom and social responsibility.

Some months ago, Mambo, in one of his columns, referred to a notice he had seen in an office which read as follows:

"Due to a lack of interest, tomorrow has been cancelled".

This can be a sharp reminder that tomorrow is important for all of us, for our University and for our young people, and that we are in danger of cancelling tomorrow if the right decisions and commitments are not made today.

Depending on what decision is taken by the East African

Authority and the Government of Kenya - a decision eagerly awaited by this College - this last year of the present triennium may well mark the end of the period of incubation and the beginning of the flowering of an independent university of Kenya. There would be no note of surprise or astonishment in the world university community if Kenya's University College were to attain full university title and status for, though perhaps it is not ourselves who should say it, ability has been demonstrated, respect and recognition have been won.

Your Excellency, Mr. Visitor Sir, I am deeply moved by all the kind words which our Chairman of Council have said about us, and on behalf of my wife, my children, Arthur and Dina, I say Ahsanta sana.

However, no man can build anything alone and I owe much to all my predecessors and those who have assisted me throughout the years.

I wish publicly to record my thanks to the Government of Kenya, and in particular the Minister and his staff in the Ministry of Education, the Councils of the University and of this College, the University Senate and the College Academic Board; my former Vice-Principal, Mr. Waruhiu, and former Deputy Principal, Professor Wasawo; and all members of the College staff and student body, past and present, whom I have been proud and happy to serve. I want also to record my appreciation to my secretaries, to whom must go the credit for any efficiency in the Principal's office. I wish especially to thank Mr. Gecaga, our Chairman of Council, for all his advice and assistance. He has been a veritable tower of strength. His interest in the College is legendary; his influence beneficent, benevolent and benignant

I will be ever grateful for the opportunity this College has given me as Principal to serve Kenya and our own continent of Africa, and I owe a debt which I know I can never fully repay to all of you who have guided, supported and prayed for myself and my family throughout the years.

It has been a distinct privilege and opportunity to serve under our great father and Visitor, His Excellency the President. If I may be allowed to parody Apollodorus, in the opening lines of the Symposium, I can say, as he said of that great master Socrates, "Now and in all the years to come, whenever either I am talking about him, or I hear others doing so, I receive, and will always receive, the very greatest pleasure in addition to the sense of having good done unto me".

Today we take time off to honour our young men and women who have gained their laurels. We trust and pray that they will be capable participants in this our increasingly complicated civilisation; that they will be sophisticated and creative members of our common culture and active and concerned citizens.

Your Excellency, Mr. Visitor Sir, we present to you today 410 of our students on their graduation. We have again exhorted them to consider their degrees and certificates merely as a token - valuable but

temporary - until they can base their reputation upon personal accomplishments in service to their country.

My image of this great country is of a people confident of the future, committed to nation building and always hard at the job. I can report that this is the mood of our graduands and is the mood here at University College, Nairobi.

Your Excellency, Mr. Visitor Sir, the Deans will now bring forward to you in this House of Congregation the candidates to be admitted this day, if it is the will of the House, to their respective degrees and diplomas. I testify that they have all completed their exercises and are fit and worthy to be presented.