

TEXT OF SPEECH OF WELCOME BY MR. B.M. GECAGA,
CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE,
NAIROBI, AT THE GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE
COLLEGE ON THURSDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1969.

Mheshimiwa Rais Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, Visitor wa Chuo hiki Kikuu cha University College, Nairobi na wageni wetu wote waheshimiwa:

Kama ilivyokuwa desturi yangu miaka sita iliyopita katika sherehe hii ningependa kusema maneno machache kwa lugha yetu ya Kiswahili.

Kwanza ningependa kuwakaribisha nyote wageni wetu na kuongeza kwamba furaha yetu sote imekamilika kwa kuwaona hapa miongoni mwetu Mheshimiwa Rais Mzee Jomo Kenyatta na vile vile Mama Ngina Kenyatta.

Sisi sote katika Chuo hiki Kikuu cha Nairobi shukrani zetu kwako Mheshimiwa Bwana Visitor huzidi tukikumbuka ya kwamba

katika shughuli zako nyingi za maongozi ya nchi hii, wewe hutupatia nafasi hii ambayo nasi kila mwaka twaitumainia na kuingojea ufikapo kuwapa vyeti na digrii zao wale wanafunzi wetu waliojitahidi na kutoka jasho mpaka wakafaulu kwa kuhitimu mitihani yao. Hii ni siku yao ya shangwe wale washindi, nasi twawatakieni ufanisi siku za kesho kwani huu ni mwanzo tu. Dalili ya taa wataipokea kutoka mkononi mwako, Bwana Visitor, mbele ya mashahidi wengi: sasa wajibu wao ni kwenda na kueneza mwangaza wa taa hiyo mpaka pembe zote katika nchi hizi zetu za Afrika ya Mashariki. Tuna imani kwao ya kwamba kokote waingiapo giza ya ukosefu wa ujuzi itatoweka na mwangaza kutawanyikia wengine wasiopata nafasi au bahati kama yao ya masomo makamilifu.

Pengine sherehe hii ndiyo itakuwa ya mwisho ya Mwalimu Mkuu wa chuo hiki, Dr. Arthur Porter kuwa nasi akiwa Principal. Dr. Porter, ambaye ni mwanachi wa Sierra Leone, alifika hapa Kenya mwaka wa 1964 kwa kuitikia mwaliko wa Council ya Chuo hiki na kadhalika Serikali yetu. Alishika madaraka yake, na punde si punde akaonyesha maarifa timilifu katika kazi yake, na dalili

zikawa wazi ya kwamba moyo wake na fikira zake zilikuwa na ulinganifu wa sauti kwa moyo na fikira za Wakenya katika kuweka msingi imara na kupanua masomo ya juu hapa Kenya. Ule msingi aliouweka twajua una kina kirefu, ukiwa mpana na thabiti.

Ingawa miaka hii mitano iliyopita Dr. Porter amekuwa miongoni mwetu kama mgeni, bali kazi yake ameifanya na kuitimiza kwa ukweli na uaminifu kama Mkenya halisi. Mimi sikuona hata siku moja akitoa utumishi wake kwa unyimivu.

Kipindi cha Dr. Porter katika chuo hiki kitakoma katikati ya mwaka ujao. Sina tashwishi ya kwamba mtaniunga mkono nikitoa shukrani nyingi zetu kwa kazi ya maana na muhimu sana aliyotufanyia Dr. Porter katika Chuo hiki Kikuu, na ndani ya eneo la masomo ya juu katika Kenya. Twamtakia yeye na mkewe, Bibi Porter, ufanisi kamili siku zijazo wakirudi makwao.

Your Excellency, Mr. Visitor, Sir, our guests will, I know, share this College's gratification that once again this year you have honoured us with your presence at this degree ceremony at which you have graciously consented to officiate. Every year for the past five years this is a day to which all of us at University College, Nairobi - the students, the academic and administrative staff and members of Governing Council alike - look forward with keen anticipation when we have not only the great pleasure and privilege of receiving you, Mr. Visitor, Sir, but also the opportunity to open, so to speak, and turn the pages to you and all our guests as well as the public at large, of the yearly book of our activities and progress depicting both the achievements and problems. As we turn those pages we leave the past behind us, yet at the same time we draw and learn from its lessons as we look to, plan for and anticipate the pregnant future with all the promise it holds for this and future generations of Kenya to whom education - true and wholesome education which is the pursuit of truth and the acquisition of knowledge and understanding - will, I believe, continue to be

the corner stone of advance and progress in all fields of our national endeavour. However, it is axiomatic to observe that such progress can only take root properly in an atmosphere of unity and stability which, I suggest, it behoves everyone of us in his or her particular sphere to play a part in promoting.

There are some in this Congregation who will remember with me that memorable occasion nearly six years ago on Kenya's attainment of independence when, on this very platform, this College had the unprecedented pleasure and privilege of awarding to the first Prime Minister of Independent Kenya, as Your Excellency then was, the first and so far the only honorary Fellowship, the highest award of this College. On that occasion I said, among other things, these words:

"That your life has had its full share of ups and downs is a fact which no one can deny. You, Sir, were not born with a silver spoon in your mouth, yet from an early age you embarked on a certain course from which you have never deflected, setting as your objective

the restoration of human dignity for the African people in their own continent of Africa and the attainment of Independence for your country, Kenya. That objective you have pursued over the years with vigour and vision, courage and determination, dignity and honour, always consistent in your honesty of purpose. And now, as you stand supreme on the pinnacle of this young nation we know that you have never lost touch with the common man whose hopes and aspirations you have given renewed meaning, and always your actions justly conceived have been tempered with wisdom, kindness and generosity - qualities which flow from the fountain of true greatness; a fountain whose abundant waters the millions of people in this country of all races and creeds, whose collective destiny now lies in your hands to guide, may drink and find their hopes fulfilled - hopes of a happy, prosperous and great nation."

We offer our gratitude to Your Excellency, Mr. President and your Government in guiding so well that destiny during these

past six years of Kenya's Uhuru and we are confident that under your dynamic and sagacious leadership the happiness and prosperity of this nation will continue to be assured.

It would not only be presumptuous but improper of me to make any pronouncement regarding the future of the University of East Africa concerning which certain crucial decisions have yet to be taken by appropriate authorities. However, in the event that new and different arrangements are to be made in the not too distant future, this may well be the last occasion on which we of this College will have the Principal, Dr. Arthur Porter with us at a Congregation of the University of East Africa. It is, therefore, fitting that I should say a few words about Dr. Porter.

At the instance of the Council of University College, Nairobi and in concurrence with the Kenya Government, Dr. Porter accepted our invitation to come and fill the position of Principal which was then vacant. He came in 1964 from his University, Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone, where he was Vice-Principal and also Professor and Head of the Department of History.

When we made the offer to Dr. Porter we had noted that his credentials were of the highest order, being backed on the academic side by a Masters degree from Cambridge University and a Doctorate from the University of Boston, Massachusetts to the latter of which, incidentally, he returned by invitation earlier this year to be honoured by an award of the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters: and on the management side by his experience as Vice-Principal and at one time Acting Principal of Fourah Bay College. His membership of and contribution on the Councils and Committees of international academic organisations as well as education commissions, was not insignificant. The references which we obtained from those who knew and had worked with him were glowing with praise for his undoubted abilities both as an accomplished Historian and academic, and also as an University administrator and negotiator. Thus, in our view, he was admirably suited to undertake the crucial and challenging task of steering the course of the craft of this young University College towards the eventuality of full autonomous university status.

I am happy to be able to say that, in the event, our judgement has been more than amply justified.

Of those who came into contact with Dr. Porter both at work as well as socially, it rapidly became apparent that he was a man of the highest principles, absolute devotion to duty, abundant resourcefulness, open mindedness in his approach to problems - and as you can imagine in a College like this with a capital expenditure over the last five years running into a sum of over £4 million (4,096,700), an average annual recurrent expenditure of nearly £1½ million (£1,456,000) during the last two years, employing a total staff of 1,500 including 360 academic and senior administrative staff, with a student population now in excess of 2,000, problems both as regards quantity and complexity have not been in short supply! But between the Scylla of the academic demands with the concomitant requirements of the expanding and increasing number of faculties, and the Charybdis of the students' claims for greater participation in the conduct of the affairs of the College,

the Principal has, like Odysseus, kept a remarkably cool head in coping with the turbulence and vicissitudes of the sea over which, as captain, he must steer his ship ensuring, as he does so, the safety and integrity of both the crew and passengers. Today at this ceremony we witness the safe and happy disembarkation of some of the passengers who will shortly receive their landing cards, whilst a new group numbering 730 has but this week embarked the ship as freshmen. And so the voyage continues.

The development of this college during Dr. Porter's tenure, alike in physical construction, growth in student numbers, the recruitment of academic staff of high calibre including East Africans, the introduction of new and the expansion of existing faculties, the increasing recognition of University College, Nairobi within the international academic community as a quality institution of higher learning comparable with the best in the world - all these and other manifestations stand as more eloquent tribute to Dr. Porter's outstanding work and immeasurable contribution to the continuing development of this College than any mere words from the Chairman of Council.

I know I speak without fear of contradiction when I say that any future Principal will find that this College's foundations have been laid by a true academic craftsman, and that brick has been placed firmly upon brick with the meticulous care of a master builder, Dr. Arthur Thomas Porter.

But, alas! as Alice discovered in her Wonderland all good things come to an end, and so for us our enjoyment of Dr. Porter's loyal and unstinting service is to be brought to an end in June, 1970 when his contract of employment with this College expires.

I wish, therefore, to take this opportunity of stating publicly what a great debt of gratitude we owe to Dr. Porter, his University, Fourah Bay College and his country Sierra Leone for so generously coming to our assistance during Kenya's hour of need. This, if I may say so, is among the best and most profitable forms of inter-African technical aid.

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To Dr. Porter and Mrs. Porter, by whom he has been ably sustained throughout his captaincy of the ship, and to their family Arthur and Dina, we wish every success and good fortune for the future when they finally depart from our midst.