

## STOCK-TAKING ON AFRICAN EDUCATION

**D**URING the ten years of its existence, the Nuffield Foundation has made a signal contribution to the welfare of the British Commonwealth and Empire. Through its fellowship and scholarship schemes many promising young men and women have been assisted to travel abroad from their own countries, to improve their knowledge and enrich their experience, so that they may return home more capable of serving their peoples. During the Foundation's first five-year period, its main Colonial policy was to provide material and social aids to ensure that selected scholars obtained the qualifications which the Colonial Office deemed necessary for the specific posts in government service to which the scholars aspired. On their side, the Colonial administrations undertook to absorb all successful scholars. They did not always honour this pledge. So, it is particularly gratifying to note the successful co-operation between the Nuffield Foundation and the Colonial Office which has resulted in the document under review\*.

The report on African education is in three parts, each representing a milestone in an endeavour which lasted two years. The first section is a record of the discussions and recommendations of the West Africa Study Group which spent the last six months of the year 1951 visiting the territories of Gambia, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast and Nigeria. The second part of the book deals with the deliberations of the team of educational experts which visited East and Central Africa at the same time. The work of these two study-groups culminated in a conference which was held in King's College, Cambridge, last September. The proceedings of that conference are chronicled in the third part.

Not since the Phelps-Stokes Commissions of the early twenties has so much thought been given to the vital matters of Colonial education, or so many illustrious educationists been involved in the process. The East and Central Africa group consisted of Mr. A. L. Binns (chairman), chief educational officer for the Lancashire County Council; Prof. B. A. Fletcher, director of the University of Bristol Institute of Education; and Miss F. H. Gwilliam, assistant educational adviser to the Secretary of State. The West African group consisted of Dr. G. B. Jeffery (chairman), director of the London University Institute of Education; Mr. F. T. Arnold, H.M. staff inspector for secondary schools; Dr. Josephine Macalister Brew, educational adviser to the National Association of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs; and Mr. E. W. Woodhead, county education officer for the Kent County Council. The meetings at Cambridge were held under the chairmanship of Sir Philip Morris, vice-chancellor of the University of Bristol, who, as Mr. Oliver Lyttelton states in his foreword to this report, must be credited with a large share of the success achieved and the goodwill shared. A large delegation from the Colonial Office attended the Cambridge conference as visitors, and each of the Colonies and Protectorates affected sent official representatives and unofficial observers. Those from West Africa falling in the latter category were mainly politicians holding the newly created portfolios in education, and the value of their contribution must

\* African Education: a Study of Educational Policy and Practice in British Tropical Africa. (Produced on behalf of the Nuffield Foundation and the Colonial Office.) Pp. xii+187. (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies, 1953.) *Ss. 6d.*

have lain in their immense goodwill and large-hearted co-operation.

An interesting feature of the conference at King's College was the small number of formal lectures delivered; and those that were given came from a strange combination of authoritative sources: Prof. Margaret Read, professor of education and head of the Department of Education in Tropical Areas, University of London, referred to world-wide implications of the African education movement; Prof. B. W. Bigelow, Columbia University, New York, stressed the need for co-operative action in solving the educational problems of Africa; and Sir John Maud, permanent secretary to the Ministry of Education, outlined the value of the British system of separating questions of party politics from those which are purely educational.

The terms of reference of the two teams of educationists which visited Africa in 1951 precluded them from considering in detail not only the political influences at work in the territories under study, but also university work and development. Higher technical education was also not to be emphasized. The points covered included teacher training, elementary and secondary education, the relationship between government and voluntary agencies, financing educational projects, and the curriculum. These aspects were emphasized in the 'working paper' which was drawn up by the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, and dispatched to East, West and Central Africa, prior to the visits of the experts.

The Jeffery and the Binns reports are different in a number of fundamental ways; in one the emphasis is on broad principles, with occasional references to relevant details. The other consists of innumerable tiny dots placed together as in a half-tone reproduction of a photograph. Of course, the issues were not the same and could not possibly have been placed in the same perspective.

The East Africa group was faced with all the complexities of life in a British territory where Anglo-Saxons have made their permanent homes, side by side with Asiatics and Africans. Their hands were further manacled by being told to avoid educational matters appertaining to Europeans and Asiatics. Since Kenya, Uganda, Northern Rhodesia, Tanganyika and Nyasaland are no longer African lands, as such, but have been declared to be places where a life of partnership must be sought, as between members of the different races, any broad study of educational policy must take into consideration the different practices in vogue, and place them in a composite setting which alone can truly reflect the *status quo*. It is the absence of such an approach that makes the Binns report so frustrating to read.

The main thesis of the East Africa Study Group would appear to be that Africa is an agricultural country, and we must do our best to make it remain so. We must educate the Africans for life 'on the land'. So far as possible, the African must be made to pay directly for this education, in fees as well as in taxes. It does not matter if the central government spends several times as much money on European education than on his. It does not matter if European agriculture depends for its productivity on African labour.

If this is accepted as the line of argument, then the recommendations of the Binns report begin to make sense—the first phase of primary education

should be curtailed from six years, as it is now, to four years; and the aim should be to give 50 per cent of all children of school-age four years schooling in the local vernacular. Swahili, which is the only indigenous lingua franca, should be discontinued in schools, and its place taken by relatively unknown local tribal languages. It should be the aim of the educational authorities to provide a further four-year course for 10 per cent of the school-age population, and four years secondary schooling for 2 per cent of all the children who should be at school. It is preferable to site African schools not too near the towns. European supervisors should be placed over trained African teachers, for the time being. The prerequisite of a university degree for highly paid European teachers should sometimes be waived to make it easier to recruit men with an agricultural bent, who, by their presence in African schools, would inspire the 'natives' to become good farming folk.

However, the report of Mr. Binns and his colleagues is valuable on account of the stress it lays on (a) the importance of research into those aspects, for example, wastage, of African education which now appear baffling; (b) founding teacher colleges of 100-200 students, with practising schools attached; (c) the encouragement of female education by relieving transport difficulties; (d) providing bedsheets, spoons, lavatories, and similar elements of prime necessity in boarding schools; (e) making teachers competent to teach Africans English in the intermediate and secondary schools; (f) erecting a suitable moral and religious basis to all education. Perhaps the most important—certainly the most wise—utterance in the entire report is the following: "The ideal school, if it were acceptable to parents, would be an interracial school. There are no insurmountable practical difficulties in the way of interracial education at any stage, but there are many difficulties in men's minds. Initiatives in this direction must therefore be the pioneer efforts of individuals who feel a call to experiment in this field . . . and because the task of government is eased as racial tensions are eased, such initiatives should receive moral and financial aid from the Government". One cannot help wondering why this does not appear in the official recommendations of the group.

Dr. Jeffery and his co-workers, who are convinced that "the potentialities of the West African have been demonstrated by actual achievement", had an easier task. The Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1920 had a Gold Coast member, Dr. Aggrey, on it; and the implementation of its recommendations have probably been pursued much farther in West Africa than elsewhere.

But there are still many problems awaiting solution. For example, the group expressed its anxiety over the possibility of the local governments taking over responsibility of recurrent expenditure for education when the Colonial Development and Welfare Funds come to an end. The question of raising capital for the great educational expansion that is called for is another cause of worry for those responsible for educational development in West Africa. About a third of the probable annual expenditure of £3 million by the Nigerian Government will be absorbed by higher education. Is this proportion too high, in view of the great need for extending the frontiers of elementary education in the rural areas? Is it wise, at this critical stage, to build up an extravagant medical school to train only a handful of clinicians annually?

On the perennial question of the relationship between voluntary and governmental agencies, the commission agrees that a functional amicable relationship is gradually being built up in West Africa. The system whereby government grants voluntary bodies financial aid in the running of their schools is commended here, as in East Africa. The group records a consensus of informed African opinion that an entirely secular education is undesirable; but does not insist that the religious basis should be Christian. West Africa has a considerable Moslem population, and there are other religious groups.

Although the Jeffery committee commends the "Accelerated Development Plan for Education in the Gold Coast" on both educational and administrative grounds, the bottleneck may prove to be the recruitment of staff. It is the same problem all over again. African graduates do not take up the teaching profession because the prospects of promotion are not great. Besides, expatriate staff receive much better emoluments, even under the African Governments which are emerging on the West Coast.

The Cambridge conference reconsidered all these questions under the following heads: *A*, Responsibility and Control; *B*, Expansion of the Educational System; *C*, Teaching Profession; *D*, Organization and the Curriculum; *E*, Education and the Adult. The reports of the five study-groups of the conference and the plenary discussions on them are printed in this volume in an edited form. Mr. W. E. Ward, editor of the Colonial Office journal *Overseas Education*, in his private capacity put the material together. On the whole, the conference appears to have favoured the Jeffery approach rather than the Binns; but many a reader will feel regret that the names of the speakers have been omitted from the dialogues.

As Sir Philip Morris states in his epilogue to the conference, its chief purpose was, obviously, in human relations. The whole purpose of education is in human relations; for, in the language of the West African study-group, "education is the complex of actions and reactions between persons by which a nation prepares itself for its future by the dissemination of knowledge and skills and valid ideas of human dignity and fellowship".

OLUMBE BASSIR

## NUCLEAR PARTICLE LABORATORY AT QUEEN MARY COLLEGE, LONDON

THE inauguration on June 23 of the Nuclear Particle Laboratory at Queen Mary College, University of London, marks what is probably the first occasion on which applied nuclear physics has been officially instituted in Great Britain as part of the undergraduate engineer's education. The laboratory has, however, a dual function to fulfil. In addition to the provision of practical work for undergraduates in the field best described as nucleonics, it also makes available facilities for research work relating to accelerating machines and gas discharges, where high-voltage electrical engineering, electronics, and nucleonics have a common frontier.

Taking the undergraduate work first, the subject designated 'nuclear energy' is offered to third-year mechanical and electrical engineers as one of a