PROBLEMS OF EASTERN AFRICA¹

It is impossible to examine in the time available this evening more than a few of the many problems that face both the Government and the community in Eastern Africa; and I will not attempt more than a general discussion of some of them. Most of them are common to other Colonies, but I have the existing conditions of Kenya and Uganda chiefly in mind. I would like you clearly to understand that for the purposes of this paper, I speak from the position of a student, and not a law-giver; and moreover as I am not a free lance, I must be moderately careful of what I say and how I say it.

I think the first two questions that come to mind in Eastern Africa are the Currency problem and the Indian problem. I do not intend to discuss either at length because the first is finished, and largely because the second is not finished. No regrets or recriminations will alter the currency position; and, moreover, a close analysis now would be rather like flogging a dead horse. A recovery in the European market for Colonial produce; greater production by both settler and native, and the lowering of handling costs at Kilindini and ocean freights which will follow; and the readjustment of expenditures which the new coinage and the lower cent value should bring, will all have a gradual beneficial effect. Time and common sense alone will bring settlement; in the meantime I think none of us will forget the lessons which the last two years have taught us in this matter.

As to the claims and the rights of the Indian community in Eastern Africa, I have only a very few words to say, and I would prefer to say them not as an official, but as an ordinarily intelligent resident who is trying to take a reasonable view of a very difficult position. If such an observer would cast his mind ahead for, say, 15 years, he would realise that the standard, which we are to-day setting up, as that of the dominating European influence must be a very high one, and for

¹ This paper was read at a Meeting of the Society held on February 15th, 1922. For report of other proceedings on this occasion see p. 228.

this reason the qualifications for both the immigrant and the voter, whatever his colour or his creed, must be of a stringent character. This is particularly the case in Uganda, where, for reasons which I need not now explain, our trusteeship is of a peculiar gravity. I am on safe ground in urging the importance of a high qualification for both immigrants and for those who may later exercise the vote, for it does no violence to the final principle of equal rights for all civilised men.

I will turn now to a short discussion of the question of communications. Here is a problem upon which we all agree in principle, namely, that transport facilities from the producing areas to the collecting-points and to the ocean ports should be many and rapid and cheap; and that assuming both population and fertility of soil, if the Government provides the roads, the community would lose no time in using them.

It is said that once upon a time there was a Governor in some land unknown, who refused to build roads through his country on the ground that there was no need for them because he saw no wheeled vehicles about. He did not realise that if he had built a trunk road or two, and feeder roads to it, his subjects would soon have acquired the wheeled vehicles, and that trade and traffic and State revenue would have grown up together.

In this, as in several other problems of development, the community must share with the Government; that is to say the Government cannot be expected to provide both roads and vehicles. The roads should be, first, in the right areas, that is, where the need for them is most urgent; second, of not more costly a character than is needed to carry the vehicles which will run over them, or than the community can bear; and third, that they are so graded and drained in the first place that maintenance cost will be low, and that the surface can be broadened and improved as traffic increases without costly deviations and re-gradings. If it is unwise to do shoddy work in the first place, it is, on the other hand, wasteful to be too generous with costly cement and steelwork upon a pioneer road; but it is very wise economy to lay out and grade the road with great care in the first instance.

These facilities are so necessary and they confer so undisputed a benefit that all sections of the community should

place themselves under tribute in some form or other. It is not too difficult to suggest a programme under which a fraction of the enormous potential energy of the native population, for instance, may properly and profitably be utilised in road construction and maintenance, and with the full concurrence not only of every public official, but of the most watchful critic of Government policy who is animated by the most impersonal and philanthropic zeal. I may here mention the fact that a large part of the road maintenance in Uganda is undertaken by the Native Government, and very efficiently carried out, practically without interference by and without cost to the Department of Public Works. Research and experiment is employed in the scientific departments, but such work need not be confined to the laboratory. Beyond the methods of traction we are familiar with, there are others, still in the experimental stage, to which every encouragement should be given; of these I need mention, as instances, only the locotractor or road rail system, and the use of fuel alcohol or producer gas instead of petrol. It is often thoroughly bad economy to wait until some one else has spent money upon practical experiment.

In Kenya, the general conditions of the roads, and their number, is not satisfactory, and though this is due largely to lack of good road material in many districts, it is also due to lack of foresight in the early days when, as so often in South Africa, the wagon track of the pioneer was allowed to grow into a main road without subsequent attention as to either proper alignments or grades. The high cost of maintenance is naturally increased by the continual demand for improved and costly deviations. In Uganda conditions are much better, though they are not yet adequate; this is partly because good road material is generally available, partly a well-distributed native population has always taken its full share of maintenance; but largely because the Public Works Department has for years paid early attention to both alignment and flat grades.

From roads one comes at once to railways. The original survey for the main line from Mombasa to Lake Victoria, about 584 miles in length, was not too good, as the frequent subsequent deviations show; but the chief error lay in taking it to a very shallow port on the Lake. This fact has controlled

the design and the cargo-carrying capacity of every large steamer placed on the Lake, where violent storms and short high seas demand a fairly deep draught. I may add that the Lake is about 250 miles long, and 150 miles broad. This is all twenty-five-years-old history, but the lessons are still with us. The policy and control of the railway after it is built is so important that I must deal with it, and in order to make my points clear, I am compelled to quote the case of the Uganda Railway. I will do so, however, as briefly as possible.

The facts are, briefly, that though the whole of the main line runs through Kenya, it serves both Kenya and Uganda : before 1920 the railway earned a large amount of money, probably not less in all than £1,500,000, the whole of which was absorbed into the revenue of Kenya, then the East Africa Protectorate, and none went to Uganda ; latterly, surcharges and a "super-charge" were imposed on traffic paid by both countries, for the confessed purpose of raising revenue for one of them, that is for Kenya ; and finally, no fund of any sort was created, in spite of the heavy strain on the railway during the war, for renewals or betterment. Sir Hugh Clifford comments upon a similar condition into which the Nigerian Railways were allowed to drift during the war period. Part of this was unbusinesslike and part was plainly inequitable. In 1920 Lord Milner, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, decided that the Railway should not be regarded as a revenue-earning department for either Colony ; that its revenue should go in the first place towards betterment and upkeep ; and that both countries should have an equal voice in the general direction of policy.

Naturally the whole question had been for years the cause of much friction and jealousy, and this eminently businesslike and equitable decision was hailed with relief in Uganda ; and I suppose naturally also, the people of Kenya exhibited some restiveness at the prospect of losing the full control which they had exercised so long. It is contended also, I believe, that dual control of the Railway is bound to be unsatisfactory ; but I cannot think that it is beyond our wit to devise powers for a joint board under a permanent and largely independent chairman which would control the policy and adjust the rates not only of the main line, but its auxiliary marine services on the three Lakes.

What are the chief lessons from this problem, probably more East African in character than many others? I think they are clearly as follows: first, that it is unwise to use purely railway revenue for ordinary administrative purposes until railway requirements have been provided for; second, not to allocate railway revenue obtained from the traffics of two countries to the administrative uses of one of them; third, the improvidence of not providing ahead for upkeep, betterment and renewals. I speak entirely without antagonism and without after-thought: I can lay my hand upon my heart and say that I am solely concerned to read the position and learn the lesson aright in the great cause of common sense; and I believe that these views are approved of, in their hearts at any rate, by every thoughtful official and settler in both countries.

I have not time this evening to discuss the question of trunk lines, such as the extension of the new Plateau line from Eldoret through Uganda to the Belgian Congo. Some such measure was urged by Mr. Churchill when he was Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, and from experience gained on the spot, about fifteen years ago; the passage of these years has fully confirmed that view. It is an important question, but it is a matter of higher policy, and I need, and indeed can, say no more to-day than to express my own regret that grave problems of India and Ireland and Egypt are of necessity absorbing energies at headquarters which are needed to-day in the solution of problems of permanent economic importance within the Colonies and Protectorates.

I have dealt at sufficient length in the time at my disposal with the problems of Currency, the Indian view-point, roads and railways. I must abandon many points of great interest, many of these being the parts that should be played by the technical departments towards the territory; I can only touch upon two other broad questions, those of the relationship of the native to the Government and to the European community, and the ever-present problems of economy and finance.

Sir Hugh Clifford, who has an immense experience of tropical administration, expresses strong views upon the wisdom of developing native industries in the tropics. In his very

valuable address to the Nigerian Council in December 1920 he says that such industries have a firmer root than similar enterprises when owned and managed by Europeans because they are natural growths . . . and are self-supporting as regards labour . . . that they are incomparably the cheapest instruments for the production of agricultural produce on a large scale . . . that they are capable of rapidity of expansion and a progressive increase of output that beggar every record of the past, and are altogether unparalleled in all the long history of European agricultural enterprise in the tropics.

This is strong testimony, but while it is profoundly true it does not in some countries conflict with the principle that native and European interests and their development side by side are neither antagonistic nor incompatible, but are complementary.

Sir Hugh was addressing a Nigerian body, but there are other countries where, though there is a large native population, conditions are different. I have Kenya in mind at the moment with its energetic European settlers, and its wonderful highland area in which the native population is comparatively sparse; and I may also quote such countries as South Africa and Rhodesia. But if the progress of the native in his own country, both in industry and morality and happiness, is to be on the right lines and rapid, it can only be under wise and far-sighted guidance of the local Government. Here Sir Frederick Guggisberg, Governor of the Gold Coast, and with a wide experience of the problems of that country, has some sensible things to say, namely, that it is the training of the character of the native that matters. The finest example, and I believe the best results, of missionary endeavour and the true missionary spirit are to be seen in Uganda. But the scope of the missionary is necessarily limited, by reason of finance, if from no other, and in such conditions the Government must take up the responsibility where missionary work ends. This has been commenced in Uganda by technical schools under which carpenters and masons are being trained under the control of the Director of Public Works; motor-drivers and engine-drivers under the Director of Transport; native instructors in the growing of cotton and oil seeds and their own food crops under the Director of Agriculture;

native dispensers, inspectors and inoculators in sleeping sickness, venereal disease, small-pox, and so on under the Principal Medical Officer; and other similar training courses.

This is Instruction, and is most necessary to the native himself, the man who belongs to the country and will remain there, and to whom almost every day opens a new avenue of usefulness to himself and to his country. With Instruction should go hand-in-hand its two closest companions, Research and Experiment. But in a young country with small population and as yet few industries, I think expenditure upon these two items, which it must be remembered, is apt to be a very costly business, should not go beyond the ascertained needs of the Colony, and what it can pay for. Such research and experiment is going on continuously elsewhere, and their results from year to year are nearly always available. Heads of technical departments, in which I beg to include the Governor, should always remember the story of the sensible village sexton, who made a point of spending his spare day in watching how the sexton of the next parish did things.

There are other directions in which the native's interests should be both stimulated and assisted. I will mention now only one, that is, in the matter of the protection of his own cattle. There are to-day approximately seven million head of native-owned cattle in the three East African dependencies—Kenya, Tanganyika Territory and Uganda—and the Veterinary Adviser of these countries states that the cattle are diminishing in number, chiefly from preventable disease. Here you have a problem of which the importance is seldom recognised. With the life of nearly all Bantu people their beasts have been closely interwoven from the beginnings of their recorded history. To-day native-owned cattle possess an added economic value to every one in the country concerned, official, settler and owner, for they are a most important factor in the wealth and happiness of the foundation of the dependency—that is, its native population. I will give you an instance.

It was recently reported to me that the birth-rate of the pastoral Karamoja tribe, south-west of Lake Rudolf, is diminishing as a result of a serious epidemic amongst their cattle. The connection is not apparent at once, but it is because there are now few cattle for purposes of purchasing

wives and for dowry, and therefore fewer marriages and births.

It is sheer nonsense to say that you can only develop the native at the expense of the European settler and farmer. The progressive and sensible white settler in Eastern Africa depends enormously upon the native, and Mr. Churchill was perfectly right a few days ago in drawing attention to the need for understanding the native view-point. Native industry is increased, not diminished, by contentment with his conditions; a reasonable and earned prosperity increases and not diminishes the desire to go abroad and learn more and earn more; native prosperity shows a direct and immediate reflection in industriousness and cheerfulness, and also in the Customs revenue of the Government. I have no apology to make for returning to the question of the position of the native inhabitant in Eastern Africa. The European settler in Kenya and Uganda is of an exceptionally high class, and he is a good and honest employer of native labour. I believe the true interests of the native peoples are being properly guarded by the Governments, but the whole interest of this question is so great that it should never be neglected or even minimised.

I will deal with only one more question: a brief consideration of the principles underlying the administration of public finance in a young dependency. Every one who is concerned is aware that two of the three countries that make Eastern Africa are passing through a period of financial depression, and that the third is comparatively prosperous. It would be improper for me to discuss too closely the causes which produced this result. But two important points must not be neglected, namely, the character of the foundation upon which your Colony is being built, and what is its financial resiliency, that is, its power to combat and to recover from, such a siege as that we are now undergoing. One has often heard it said that Kenya was living largely upon imported capital, and in an account of the Report of the Director of Agriculture for 1920-21 he states that £4,000,000 of new capital was introduced during that year. This means that Kenya has not yet reached the stage of large-scale production; while in the neighbouring country it is a native industry,

that of cotton growing, which is helping it through the storm. There is no royal road to prosperity and success in a tropical dependency, even one so fine as the Kenya Colony and with so high and virile a type of European settler. The problems governing the phases through which these countries are passing are more or less familiar to every student of Colonial administration, and he would probably condense his proffered solution into the watchword "Economy for to-day and Foresight for to-morrow." Incidentally I may here state my regret that serious explorers in this field are far too few.

It would appear to have been the aim in past years to make a Colony self-supporting at as early an age as possible. This no doubt has strong points, and it is probably effective in encouraging self-reliance and independence both in the official and the settler for much the same reason as youngsters are thrown into the world to earn their own living. But this last ten years has produced enormous changes in view-point, and our time-honoured "Colonial policy" cannot be exempt. In nearly all respects we are closer to bed-rock than we were. Assuming that all proper humanitarian spirit and trusteeship are assured and safeguarded, was there ever a time in commercial history when a wise and bold development of the resources of our tropical countries would be repaid in richer measure?

The Colonial Office has behind it an immense experience of many Colonies in all parts of the habitable globe, and over a long period of years. It is quite recognisable that it will be difficult to alter and remodel much of that accumulated view-point. A chief function that has emerged during the years is that of wisely curbing the energies and sometimes the exuberance of its children. But the spur is just as necessary in this imperfect world as the curb. If it is foolish to be extravagant in the innumerable attractive avenues of ordinary administration, it is, on the other hand, equally unbusiness-like to hesitate to spend money when the beneficial result is desperately needed in the home country, and when a profit on the transaction in the shape of increased employment at home and increased markets abroad cannot be challenged.

I have mentioned the apocryphal story of the Administrator who did not look far enough ahead even to build roads in

his legendary kingdom; such a director of affairs would assuredly have got his country into a fine mess over finance in a few years. It is never enough either for the head of a technical department or, I add with humility, the Governor himself, to be satisfied to present even a reasonably decent Budget from year to year, though to be sure it is easy enough to fall into that habit. There are periods of depression when I confess that I should like to discover a sort of surprise machine which would reveal at any moment by pressing a spring what programmes and what goal the head of department—and again I include the Governor of the territory—has in his head for his department or his country in say two, five, and twenty-five years' time.

Within the circumstances of the Colony itself, it appears to me that a daily responsibility of those in authority should be to keep as low as possible those expenditures which are called in the Transvaal mining industry "working costs." The refined gold of an efficient and just administration should be won with as large a profit as possible, for all "profit" in such an administration goes back directly into the Colony and for the benefit of its people. Let me suggest a test of this aspect of efficiency—it would be to work out a sort of graph to show the staff employed and its cost, the European and native population, the revenue and expenditure, the imports and exports, and the percentage of effort and the production *per capita* of European and native; the relationship, in fact, between the cost and the result.

In this short address I have aimed at simplicity and clarity in the search for the elementary and elusive truths; and I have tried to preserve an impersonal and reasonable attitude. You will remember, of course, that I have had in mind the common problems of a young country under tropical conditions, such as Eastern Africa, and not so much those of an old and settled community, such, for instance, as Newfoundland; you will realise that there is time only to touch upon a few of those problems of perennial and of human interest. Mr. Churchill recently pictured an East African Confederation; in the interests of those separate territories I hope that such a Confederation is within reasonable distance.

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