

	WMM	11/19		

THE FORD FOUNDATION

Inter-Office Memorandum

115
O&P

TO: F. F. Hill and J. George Harrar

DATE: 13 November 1965

COPY TO: W. M. Myers ✓
J. Donald Kingsley
F. Champion Ward

FROM: David Heaps

SUBJECT: International Institute of
Tropical Agriculture and the
Nigerian Political Situation

AGR 1 Chron

Attached you will find the draft bill for the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture. It has just been released to me by the Attorney-General's office for such further comment and discussion as may be required before formal submission to the Council of Ministers. You will note that, in virtually all particulars, the bill now meets the conditions demanded by us. My own comments are few and relatively minor. They are appended to this more general memorandum which, I believe, should be written because of the acuteness of the political situation in Nigeria, and in the Western Region in particular; in recent weeks, this situation has reached a point of gravity which could have a bearing on the establishment of the Institute.

GENERAL

Nigeria is undergoing its most serious political crisis since independence. Instead of being pacified by time, the turbulence and unrest which characterized the recent Western elections have become aggravated. The much vaunted Nigerian capacity to go to the brink, and then pragmatically step back through compromise and consensus, will be more strenuously tested than ever before. The current crisis is not confined merely to conventional political rivalry, but is symptomatic of a deep-seated grass roots dissatisfaction and malaise which are prevalent throughout Yorubaland in particular. Recurrent police and political strong-arm squad actions have resulted in a general atmosphere of apprehension and hostility. The crisis simultaneously is intertribal (Yoruba vs. Ibo primarily) and interpolitical (NNDP vs. UPGA).

There is a general belief that the Western electoral results were subject to widespread manipulation and rigging. It would be hazardous to guess what would have happened if a

relatively free and open election had been held. The opinion among many objective observers, however, seems to be that NNDP would not have won under normal circumstances, and that popular mass support continues to favor UPGA. One story reported by a reliable source to Dr. Kingsley and myself is that the Electoral Commission, which is responsible for announcing the final results, was constrained virtually to reverse the real electoral count. The Federal Government, by its silence, tacitly supports the present outcome and the policies of the NNDP. The Prime Minister has remained silent for the past several days in his retreat at Bauchi, and the President left the country for London the day after the elections were held.

Through Western Nigeria, widespread and sometimes unenforceable measures are in force--e.g., a ban on selected newspapers, proscription against listening to broadcasts on the Eastern radio, curfews, armed police road blocks, etc. On the university campuses, it would seem that the majority of students and professors at both Ibadan and Ife strongly oppose the current state of events and the prevailing Government.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

A condition of frantic excitement, verging almost on panic, appeared to characterize the behavior of senior administrative and professorial staff during Dr. Kingsley's and my recent visit (November 9-10). Rumors, suspicions, and fears dominated the actions of normally reasonable and responsible persons. Instead of attempting to calm and control the situation, Dr. Dike had become so deeply affected by recent incidents that he seemed actually to encourage the disturbing atmosphere we noted. He is in a highly nervous state, and appears more deeply conscious of his isolated Ibo identity in alien Yorubaland than of his immediate responsibilities as University Vice-Chancellor.

I had the impression that the crisis at the University was perhaps more psychological than real, and that external appearances gave an exaggerated impression of the real temper of the situation itself. There is, however, every possibility that the isolation and current fears of the University could actually provoke the advent of the real crisis which so many fear.

In addition to apprehension about continuing Western Government and/or NNDP harrassment of the University, there are also indications that the Federal Government through its Ministry of Education may make life increasingly difficult for the University in general and the Vice-Chancellor in particular. Dr. Dike informed us that the new Minister of Education had sounded out the Prime Minister about buying the University for £2,000,000 with the presumable intention of handing it to the Western Government: the Minister of Education also appears to be making effective encroachments into the area of university financing which hitherto has been handled through the Prime Minister's office by the National Universities Commission. Certainly, the position generally of a Federal university in Yorubaland at this time is difficult so long as it has an Ibo Vice-Chancellor and no equitable working relationship with the prevailing political party.

INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE

The current situation re-emphasizes the need to maintain the independence of the proposed Institute, and to avoid functional ties with any single Nigerian academic or governmental body. In my judgment, it is too late and, in any case, not desirable to consider changing the proposed location of the Institute, even if one wanted to do so. I do not believe, moreover, that the Institute will be directly affected by the troublesome nature of current conditions. The NNNDP and the Federal Government both recognize the international value and prestige of the Institute and will not do anything to embarrass its presence in Nigeria. Indeed, they have been providing, and will continue to do so, every assistance in order to enhance their own claims of being responsible for the Institute's implacement in the West.

In the circumstances, however, it is uncertain if much cooperation currently can be anticipated from the Eastern Government, which feels itself increasingly isolated by the present conjecture of events. At a private dinner with Premier Okpara and selected Eastern Cabinet Ministers, Dr. Kingsley and I were sharply questioned and implicitly criticized for acceding to what was believed

to be political pressures in the choice of Ibadan as the Institute site. This feeling among Eastern leaders has been reinforced by claims to this effect, made both privately and publicly, by Prince Lamuye, Federal Minister of Natural Resources and Research.

As already stated, it is not desirable in the circumstances for the Institute to have an integral functional or institutional tie-up with the University of Ibadan: Dr. Dike himself, moreover, does not now want it because of the greater vulnerability to possible Government intervention that could ensue. Indeed, I rather think that Dike is now more concerned about the problems of too close an association with the proposed Institute, rather than the contrary.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

On the assumption that the draft legislation is in sufficiently good shape for general acceptance, I would think that certain conclusions can now be reached:

1. Administrative and organizational planning for the Institute must be begun shortly on a solid and systematic basis. This work is as at least as important as the question of professional staffing and, in my judgment, should precede it. Arrangements and contacts should be initiated with Government to establish the working framework for such procedures and activities as the issuance of visas and work permits, customs entries and foreign purchases, the development of a proper labor code and working relations for indigenous staff, etc.

These factors may be of early relevance inasmuch as my office will, as agreed upon, now disengage itself from all future involvement in the Institute as soon as legislative agreement is reached. Subsequent work and negotiations will now be the sole responsibility of those directly concerned with Institute affairs.

2. Continuing working relations with the Government (Federal and Regional), research stations, and other pertinent agencies should be undertaken shortly on a more systematic basis by the Institute staff concerned.

3. Although the draft legislation may now be generally satisfactory, there should not be an undue rush for final Ministerial or Parliamentary approval. The normal sequence would entail Parliamentary approval when the House reconvenes in March, and we should not attempt to accelerate this process. It can, in any case, be assumed that the passage of law is a mere formality once legislation is approved by the Council of Ministers.

4. I believe that plans for the Institute building program should be established on a phased basis. There is no need currently to rush into a total building program, but merely to establish building and equipment required for the first phase of Institute operations. I would not want to see a total, and inextricable, capital investment in Ibadan at this time.

5. A meeting should be held as soon as possible in New York by representatives of the Foundations with the draft legislation as the basis of discussions. Its purpose would be to determine the response to the draft legislation, to plan a general schedule of activity in the current situation, and to assign on a specific basis future responsibilities.

Enclosure:A/S

DH:klm

(Dictated but not read)

MINOR COMMENT ON DRAFT LEGISLATION

1. Section (3), page 4, does not specify the continuing relationship of Ibadan University or its Vice-Chancellor to the Institute. In view of the uncertain situation affecting university development, there are, in my judgment, advantages of retaining the present wording.

2. Section (7), page 4, refers to the Institute being placed "in Ibadan": I believe it preferable for the phrase to read "in or near Ibadan."

3. Section (8), page 5, does not specify the land area to be allocated to the Institute; this is not, however, in my judgment, required in view of the separate land posting that has been or will be made.

4. The current legislation refers throughout to the Institute of Tropical Agriculture. I recall some talk in New York that it would be preferable to use the preposition for.