

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

P.O. Box 5113
Nairobi, Kenya
October 30, 1961

IMW-9
East African Literature Bureau

Mr. Richard H. Nolte
Institute of Current World Affairs
366 Madison Avenue
New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Nolte:

The only social service provided by the East Africa High Commission (see IMW-8) is the East African Literature Bureau (EALB). It was set up as part of the High Commission in 1948 following a report made by Elspeth Huxley in 1946 at the request of the Governors' Conference. In the words of its Director, Charles Richards, its purpose is to "meet and indeed to foster the ever-increasing demand among Africans for books of all kinds, and to encourage African authorship---needs which cannot adequately be met by the ordinary publishing trade". It was set up to combat illiteracy by providing reading material in numerous East African languages suitable for the newly literate.

The 1959/60 Annual Report says:

"It is a single integrated organization attacking the problems of production and distribution of general literature, of school textbooks, of books for adults on agriculture and technical subjects, and magazines: it gives assistance to African and European authors, acting in the several capacities of critic, literary agent, editor, financier and publisher: it provides static libraries, book-box libraries, and a postal library service."

Its establishment was made possible by funds provided through the Colonial Development and Welfare Act. Since then further help for almost all aspects of its program has been provided by Great Britain. The East African Governments have also contributed a growing amount. Unfortunately, due to financial conditions in the East African territories, the Literature Bureau's development has had to be curtailed, especially that of its library services. Its mobile book shops have been discontinued, and the small book-boxes have been withdrawn, with their contents distributed among the larger libraries. There are now more books in fewer places. Richards hasn't been able to expand his postal library service either, with the result that it becomes smaller every year. Its publishing activities, on the other hand, are self-supporting except in regard to staff, and so they haven't been curtailed at all. During the 1959/60 year, the Bureau published thirty-eight new titles and twenty reprints, and sales during the year were 486,844 volumes (in ten languages). They ranged from a Swahili thriller (written by a Zanzibari) to an English-

Ateso dictionary and a book on learning to write. All printing is done by private, commercial printers. A magazine in Swahili, Tazama, had to be discontinued recently because of lack of advertizers. In general, however, the Literature Bureau's activities have not been appreciably curtailed. Resources are being used in different ways, and it is by no means a static organization.

The Literature Bureau's estimated budget for its fiscal year 1961/62 (and its estimates for 1960/61 and expenditures in 1959/60) is £36,315, and it is distributed as follows:

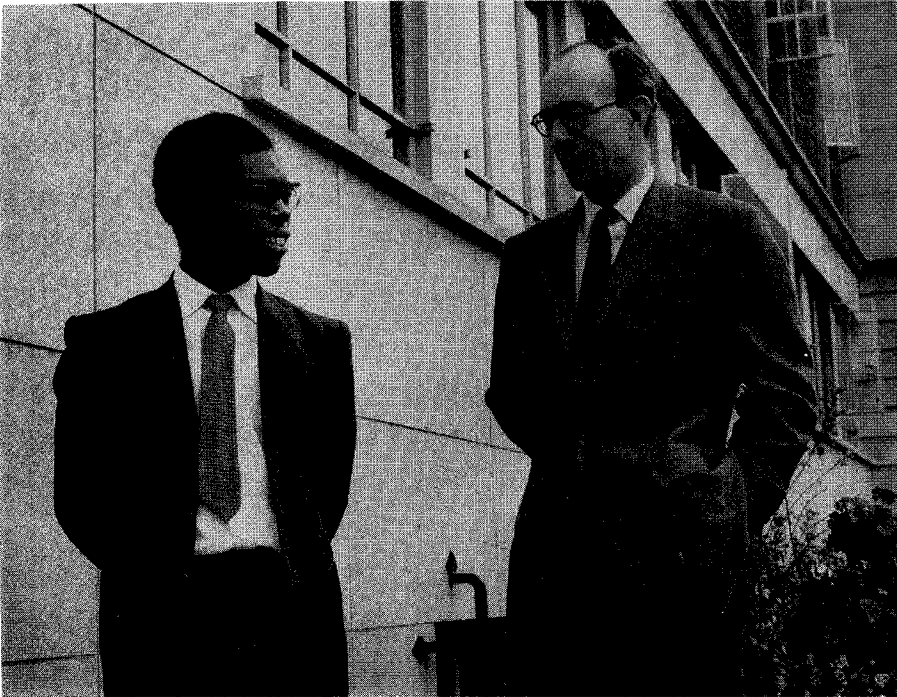
	Estimated Expenditure		Expenditure
	1961/62	1960/61	1959/60
Personal Emoluments (overseas supplement--- compensation)	18,322	17,707	16,094
Administration, travel, pensions, supplies, etc.	2,712	-----	-----
Special Expenditures	12,912	18,879	18,398
Staff Housing	300	1,900	116
Arabic Book Production Unit	-----	4,000	3,258
	2,069	-----	-----
TOTAL	<u>36,315</u>	<u>42,486</u>	<u>37,866</u>

Its sources of income for 1961/62 are as follows:

Her Majesty's Government	13,421
Government of Kenya	7,320
Government of Tanganyika	7,320
Government of Uganda	7,322
Government of Zanzibar	449
Rents Received	383
Sundry Revenue	100
TOTAL	<u>36,315</u>

Charles Richards, O.B.E., the Bureau's Director, came to Kenya in 1935 to develop and expand book publishing activities of the Church Missionary Society. He evidently did an admirable job, for after the Second World War when the Governors' Conference wanted to establish an organization on the lines suggested by Elspeth Huxley, he was asked to prepare a plan for its implementation. He worked for a year on this and then went home to England for leave. Upon his return at the end of 1948, he was asked to head the new organization and he enthusiastically accepted. In 1958 he was awarded an O.B.E. (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) by the Queen for his work as Director of the Literature Bureau. In his spare time Richards has written numerous books (both in English and in Swahili), mostly dealing with Christian devotion and the early East African explorers. He is also President of the Mountain Club of Kenya, a small but active group.

Charles Richards believes the Literature Bureau's greatest



Charles Richards and Mr. J. Kariara standing on the steps of the High Commission's headquarters in Nairobi.

contribution to East Africa is to act as a non-profit publishing house until such time as publishing in different East African languages becomes profitable as a result of a rise in literacy. The work of the Literature Bureau is under the general direction of an Advisory Council of about fifteen members. As they are spread across East Africa and the Council meets but once a year, it cannot act effectively in policy formation, although it does supervise and occasionally suggest new projects. During the remainder of the year, however, Richards keeps in informal contact with its members.

Richards runs the Bureau with as few employees as possible (in his three offices he has only thirty-eight employees: seven Europeans, five Asians and twenty-six Africans). This is a rare phenomenon in any civil service, and it has kept personnel expenses down to about one-half the budget. He has encouraged Africans to take responsibility and his second-in-command is African, Mr. J. Kariara, who is Book Production Officer. Charles Richards has had great difficulty in getting qualified librarians however. With the exception of one, all are European because Africans with higher education usually prefer to go into different fields. The only East African qualified librarian is John Ndegwa who is the Literature Bureau's Librarian in charge of the Kenya branch. He has taken a year's leave of absence for further study in Britain under a UNESCO grant.

The Literature Bureau has attempted to stimulate the development of a public libraries system. Recently they presented a plan to the three Governments based upon the method used in Ghana where the Government maintains a central library committee with responsibility for overseeing libraries' development, preparation

of catalogues, provision of librarians, etc. The local government erects the library building as its share. The three East African territories have accepted this plan in theory, and each one has an advisory library committee. Only Tanganyika, however, has found the funds for its implementation. From July 1, 1962 it has budgeted £ 23,000 (a grant from Her Majesty's Government) for this. In Kenya the first two local government libraries have recently been established with the encouragement and cooperation of the Literature Bureau. One is in Eldoret and the other is in an African community near Nyeri. Up to now the Government has been unable to offer any financial assistance.

An experimental project undertaken only this year is the Arab Book Production Unit. Financed entirely with Colonial Development and Welfare Act funds, the project is to print books for the teaching of Arabic to non-Arabic speaking people. The aim is to develop the most effective means of teaching Arabic to East Africans.

The future of the East African Literature Bureau, along with all the other High Commission services, is in question. As part of the East African Common Services Organization, the Literature Bureau will come under the aegis of the triumvirate dealing with Social and Research Services. How the Bureau will fare in the annual scramble for money depends entirely on those appointed to the triumvirate. The Literature Bureau, however, is popular among Africans, who understand the needs and support its work. The value of an organization of its kind is far better understood than of most of the research services which at times seem removed from the pressing needs of everyday life.

I think the Literature Bureau will do as well as the other High Commission services!

Sincerely yours,



Ian Michael Wright

Received New York November 6, 1961