

## INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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7, Longwall Street  
Oxford, England

30 October 1949

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Things still seem to be going well.

Perhaps you have heard from Mr. Moe that I am being accepted by New College, so that none of the official doors remain to be opened. In the matter of unofficial contacts good progress is also being made. I haven't felt free to leave Oxford and spend the necessary few days calling on Dr. Margaret Read and the others suggested by Mr. Stackpole and Professor Herskovitz, but the other Colonial Service students and others here from African areas are doing much to make me feel at home.

A number of things are going on around the University which are very interesting. There are several regional societies which meet regularly and discuss political problems related to their home areas. A good deal of criticism, apparently very candid in nature, is often expressed at these meetings by both Native and Colonial interests; and by just sitting and listening one can gather in quite a few ideas of the Native vs. Settler conflict and other issues. One such society is the East Africa Association, a small organization of about thirty active members meeting every two weeks or so.

The guest speaker at the last meeting of the EAA was a former Masai tribesman, now the Hon. Mr. Ohanga, M. L. C. His speech turned out (unexpectedly, it seems) to be a pure diatribe against all the non-indigenous peoples in Kenya. He began by damning the Indians as being entirely too grasping, too enterprising, and too able to live on nothing in order to save a small amount of capital---which they would promptly use for purposes of exploiting the Native Africans. "The Indian," Mr. Ohanga asserted, "comes to Kenya with a small hammer; then he squats and begins to break up stones; and in two years he owns everything in sight. And the Native is the one who pays."

Next he indicted the Europeans, naming in turn the land-grasping, labor persecuting farmers, the exploiting industrialists, the face-saving bureaucrats of the Civil Service, even the well-intending but misguided missionaries. "The missionaries," he said, "are the only Europeans who really live with and learn to know the Natives, and yet even they do great harm in the long run. The rest of the Europeans keep themselves entirely segregated, apart from the reserves

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so that the only way an African villager could ever get to know a European would be to go to the White areas and offer himself as a houseboy.

Mr. Ohanga's voice did not rise much as the speech went on but the words themselves came to sound rather hysterical and his accent (reminiscent to me of a North Burma tribesman just mission-converted from headhunting practices) became progressively more thick. From time to time he would reach with one hand to the seat of his trousers as if to tug at a tightly tied loin cloth. But despite all this he seemed able to make some of his points, especially after he began to pick flaws in the Settlers' latest Kenya Plan. He employed some of the arguments which Margery Perham used in her published correspondence with Elspeth Huxley, calling the plan a device for the entrenchment of immoderate White supremacy.

His allotted time ran out long before he would have run out of bad things to say about the Settlers; and he was immediately challenged on every point by all color-tints of the audience. Settlers, settler's wives, sons and daughters, Indians, and even Africans wanted to know what the blazes he had meant by dishing out all these misrepresentations and statistical distortions.

I was sitting in the very center of the small room---a reception office in the British Council---and the arguments went criss-cross above my head. In the next few minutes I heard more about the really controversial issues of East Africa than I could gather in a month's reading. The meeting had had enough of an academic tincture that notebooks had been brought by most of us. Scribbling in mine now enabled me to be unobtrusive. If they had all known me for an American maybe they wouldn't have made so much noise. The few who did know me seemed to be more reserved; and when I was introduced around at the end---after Mr. Ohanga had begun to answer the heated questions by just smiling and shrugging---I found myself singled out for very special attention.

It's turning out to be a treatment similar to that given you and your friend after you had proposed a resolution against deceptive advertising at the manufacturer's conference. All sorts of people have taken it upon themselves to be very hospitable to their new American acquaintance and, incidentally, to make very sure that he is not taken in by Ohanga's radical propaganda. They've given me another month's-reading worth of arguments, statistics favoring the Settler or condemning the destructive, neo-Communist criticism by irresponsible native representatives. It has already been good for a dozen drinks,

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two tea parties, and a dinner I'm having tomorrow. And all I have to <sup>do to</sup> keep this surge of hospitality going is to never look fully convinced that the Hon. Mr. Ohanga is all wet....

On the serious side, I am finding a lot of information very conveniently concentrated here, largely in the current data available through personal contacts with colonial officials now enjoying rest (or imprisonment) at the University, but also in the libraries and files of official papers. It takes time to find books and to run down the most informed people, though, and I am now wondering about the wisdom of curbing the urge to get down to my area in a hurry, and spending three terms here the first hitch.

One thing which already seems certain is that I'll not be able to get a reasonable grasp of the obviously useful elements in a single term. Prof. Evans-Pritchard's basic course in Social Anthropology, a series of lectures on Colonial History called the African Circus, a class and a lecture in Commonwealth History under Prof. Wheare, a lecture on Primitive Economics by Prof. Frankel, another Evans-Pritchard lecture on African Tribes, and the reading and tutorial assignments with Mr. Robinson have my week pretty well crammed. If I squeeze in some lessons in Swahili I might have to budget my time so stringently as to cut into the few hours each week I plan to spend learning how to ride a horse....

Yours sincerely,



PS: Could you, if you think it appropriate, make a special point of telling Mr. Moe that my admittance to a college was entirely the idea of Mr. Veale and/or Mr. Robinson? I rested on the text of the letters, made no suggestions that the University do more than they asked, merely accepted very gratefully what was given. I would have felt free to use your name and influence in any case, had there been need; but since I had no thorough understanding of the Moe-Veale relationship I would not have risked placing Mr. Moe under undue obligation. (Mr. Moe's letter to Mr. Veale, you may remember, admitted the "impossibility" of getting me into a college at such a late date.)