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The East Africa High Commission:
(15) The East African Office, London

Washington, D.C.
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Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The East African Office, London, was established in 1926, but from that date until 1945 it was known as the Eastern African Dependencies Trade and Information Office. The East African Office, together with other already existing interterritorial services, came under the administration of the High Commission on its formation January 1, 1948.

The East African Office is under the direction of the East African Commissioner. In 1951 Mr. V.G. Matthews, O.B.E., previously Member for Finance in the Government of Kenya, became Commissioner, replacing Mr. R.E. Norton, C.M.G., O.B.E., who took up a new appointment as Regional Director in East and Central Africa for the Colonial Development Corporation. The senior staff of the Office, in addition to the Commissioner, has included five persons, respectively in charge of Commerce and Industry; Settlement, Travel, and Employment; library, Certification of Invoices, Customs Tariff and Railway Rates; Immigration (Entry Permits, etc.) and General Inquiries; and Coffee.

The East African Office has had its offices in Grand Buildings, Trafalgar Square, London - an easily accessible location. By 1952 these accommodations became inadequate to meet the growing requirements and increasing importance of the Office. In particular the Office did not have a "shop window" - a visual means of informing the public on East Africa - or a place for providing the entertainment considered necessary. In an attempt to meet the need for larger and more suitable accommodation an alternative site was suggested, but the Central legislative Assembly in September 1952 decided that the Office should not be moved - a decision which could be approved on the basis of the convenience of the present location and in the interests of economy. The need for a "shop window" was met in May 1953 when the Office opened an Information Bureau on the ground level in the Grand Buildings.

Expenditures of the East African Office in the years 1948-1950 were met by contributions from the four East African territories and the East African Railways and Harbours Administration. In 1949 and 1950, 58 percent of the total contributions (£15,423 and £15,635 respectively) came from Kenya, 17.4 percent from the E.A. Railways and Harbours, 11.6 percent each from Uganda and Tanganyika and 1.3 percent from Zanzibar. The percentages of the total contributions in 1948 (£13,066) from each of these sources were only slightly different.

The East African Office is "East Africa's liaison agency with the United Kingdom."¹ The overall duty of the East African Office is the personal representa-

tion in London of a wide variety of East African interests. In the years before 1948 activities in connection with trade and economic matters were enlarged and intensified and the Office's scope was widened to facilitate immigration and to carry out railway publicity and other duties. The principal emphasis remains on trade and commerce in both directions.

One of the Office's most important functions has been that of providing a liaison between East African producer organizations, the East African Governments, or the High Commission and the departments of His Majesty's Government in connection with long term contracts for bulk purchases from or by East Africa. The Office has acted on behalf of coffee producers in East Africa as liaison with the Coffee Division of the Ministry of Food in connection with the operation of the various long-term coffee contracts; it has negotiated prices under the various oilseed and oil cake contracts (except in the case of Zanzibar copra and coconut oil) with the Ministry of Food; it secured, in the Commonwealth Sugar Discussions held in 1949-1950 in London, for East Africa a total annual quota of 10,000 tons over a five-year period beginning January 1953; and it assisted, on behalf of the Fig Industry Board of Kenya, in negotiations which resulted in a four year contract with the Ministry of Food in 1950. The Office has also represented producers of flower and vegetable seeds and, before 1949, acted as liaison in London on behalf of sisal growers in Kenya and Tanganyika. The Office has been concerned in some way with most of the other East African products, and has, on request, taken up a variety of questions with the appropriate authorities.

Other types of assistance have been given to East African producers. In 1950 a staff member of the Office was seconded to the Uganda Government to investigate the general reorganization of the cotton ginning industry, negotiate with the ginners and report to the Government recommendations for improvements in the industry. With the cooperation of the Imperial Institute, the Office furnished a report on UK demand for diatomite, which is mined in Kenya, and the standards of production required to meet foreign competition.

One of the most important duties of the Office is sponsoring, on the recommendation of the East African Governments, East African orders for various commodities, especially capital equipment, in order to gain priority of shipment for them and thus expedite development in the territories. Representatives of the Office had attended the round table conference held in January 1948 to consider the growing difficulties in connection with shipments to East African ports, and the East African Commissioner was appointed a member of the Working Party under the Ministry of Transport which was set up for the purpose of determining the maximum capacity of each of the East African ports and the way in which this capacity should be shared among the various interests.

The Office has answered many enquiries from firms and trade organizations regarding import restrictions, licensing regulations, and invoicing procedure in the East African territories and, at the request of the territorial Import Controllers, has taken up with the Colonial Office numerous matters, particularly in regard to imports from foreign countries. The Office has, on behalf of the Customs Department, certified thousands of invoices for goods consigned to East Africa - over 1,600 in 1948, 1,317 in 1949, and 1,200 in 1950.

Many enquiries regarding the establishment of secondary industries in East Africa have been complied with through the provision of preliminary surveys, statistical data and information about local conditions - company law, import and export control, industrial licensing, office and warehouse space, cost of living, etc.

Enquiries regarding East African Railways - fares, time tables, freight charges from ports, port charges, etc. - have been answered.

The East African Office since 1949 has acted as the London representative of the East African Tourist Travel Association, and the Commissioner was appointed a Vice-President of the Association in 1949.

The East African Office, which has gazetted Immigration Officers on its staff, is authorized to issue Visitors' Passes for British Subjects and certain non-British Subjects for Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar; Entry Permits and Dependents' Passes for newly-appointed Government officials and their families for Kenya and Tanganyika but not for Uganda; Re-Entry Permits for Kenya and Tanganyika (for such persons returning to Uganda the Office issues Visitors' Passes on instructions of the Uganda Government); and In Transit Passes for Kenya and Uganda for persons wishing to pass through these territories.

A good portion of the work undertaken by the Settlement Section of the Office has been connected with persons desirous of taking up residential settlement in East Africa. In addition, a small number of experienced farmers contemplating disposal of farms in the UK and purchase of land in East Africa have sought information from the East African Office. Several, after a preliminary visit to the territories (suggested by the Office), have moved to East Africa. Enquiries from young men nearing completion of their agricultural studies in the UK have been answered. Because of the cessation of the Kenya Settlement Scheme and the substantial capital required to start farming in East Africa under existing conditions, they have usually been advised to apply for the junior appointments in the Colonial Agricultural Service. In 1953 100 or more men were making inquiries at the Office each month regarding agricultural jobs in Kenya, but the European settlers - although urging 30,000 new European immigrants in the next few years - were failing to provide the jobs required.

In 1948, at the direction of the Tanganyika Government, the Office publicized in the press the availability of certain ex-enemy farms near Oldeani, Tanganyika, circulated questionnaires to applicants who seemed suitable, interviewed a number of them, and, on instructions of the Tanganyika Government, selected eight candidates to take up the land.

Arrangements were made, in collaboration with the Director of Agriculture in Kenya, for a limited number of students to be selected in England for admission to the Egerton School of Agriculture at Njoro, Kenya. The East African Office has been represented on selection boards held at the Colonial Office to interview candidates. Once the candidates have been accepted by the School, all arrangements relating to passage, Entry Permits, ^{and} railway concessions are handled by the East African Office.

A few persons in search of employment seek information from the Office, and a certain number with technical training have been placed in East Africa. In addition, the Office has undertaken the interviewing of candidates for posts in East Africa for a number of organizations - the Nairobi Municipal Council in particular, the Coffee Boards, the Uganda Fish Corporation, the Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society of Kenya, the Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education, and a number of factories.

The number of visitors to the Office - prospective settlers, businessmen, seekers of employment or persons planning holidays in East Africa - exceeded 12,000 in 1948, numbered 8,356 in 1949, 8,569 in 1950, 8,748 in 1951 and 11,698 in 1952.

The Office distributes handbooks and guides for the three territories, and itself issues leaflets on a variety of subjects, such as taxation, cost of living and employment. Requests from the press and publishers for photographs have been met. In 1949 the Office prepared an exhibit on East Africa in connection with Colonial Month, and, as representative of East African coffee interests, staged, in conjunction with the Coffee Buyers' Association, Ltd., a display on coffee at the National Gardens Show in July-August. The annual reports of the Office give information on production and exports of a large number of agricultural, mineral and secondary industries products, imports and import policy, transport, tourist travel, and settlement, and a note by the Director of the East African Meteorological Department on weather conditions during the year.

The Library of the East African Office contains a comprehensive collection of the Laws and Regulations of the East African territories, departmental reports etc. Secretarial and office facilities have been placed at the disposal of East Africans visiting England on official duties, a special room being reserved for this purpose, and a great number of miscellaneous services have been performed for East African residents.

The Commissioner is a member of the Ministry of Transport Working Party on East African freights, the Primary Products Committee of the Colonial Office, and the International Tea Marketing Expansion Board. He - or other representatives of the Office - also attends meetings of the East African Section of the London Chamber of Commerce, the Joint East African Board, the Imperial Institute, the British Empire Producers' Association, the Victoria League, etc. Close cooperation has been maintained with all these bodies. The Commissioner also attended in 1950 the Board Meeting of the Magadi Soda Company, to which he had been appointed the Kenya Government nominated Director.

In 1949 the Commissioner and one staff member paid a two-months' visit to East Africa. The same year the Commissioner returned again to East Africa for consultations. The Commissioner attended the Conference of International Tourist Organizations at Luxemburg in 1949 and the meeting of the International Union of Official Travel Organizations in Dublin in 1950. In 1949 another staff member paid a short visit to Germany to report on the availability of consumer goods and other supplies from that country. The staff member in charge of the Settlement Section paid a two months' visit to the East African territories in 1950.

Closely associated with the East African Office is a London club known as East Africa House which was established in 1950. East Africa House is sponsored and financed by the East African Governments with the High Commission acting as their agents. It is under the direction of a Management or General Committee including the East African Commissioner as Chairman and other members nominated by the East African Governments. The club's purpose is to provide accommodation for East African male students who have just arrived in England or are visiting London from other universities, and for other visitors, and to provide a social center for people of East Africa visiting the UK and for East Africans now resident in the UK. It is inter-racial and its primary purpose is to improve understanding between the European, Africans and Asians who use it and to prevent the bitterness and damage done to race relations by unfortunate experiences of some East African students in England.

The Club first occupied a building at 36 Great Cumberland Place, London, with 20 bedrooms available to members for short stays, a large lounge, billiards room, games room, bar, and dining room where guests could be entertained. In Spring 1953 the adjoining house, No. 38, was acquired by the East African Governments and converted to the requirements of the club, with 15 single rooms, 12 single cubicles - all provided with running water, built-in wardrobes, writing tables - a new and larger bar, a new billiards room, a study, a television room, and a laundry room. When the new premises were opened by Sir Edward Twining, Governor of Tanganyika, in June, it became possible to accommodate 30 students permanently in the two houses throughout the academic year while 16 other rooms were available for short visits by other members.

The membership - originally expected to be 500 - had reached 1,450 by November, 1953. The annual subscription is from one-half to two guineas. On a purely financial basis the experiment can not be regarded as an unqualified success. A deficit has to be met from the revenues of the East African Governments every year.

Comments on the East African Office by officials in East Africa have been entirely favorable. The Governor of Tanganyika said in May 1953:

"The East African Office in London has done sterling work for years. I have known them buy theatre tickets for a Secretary of State, smuggle a Governor through the customs, arrange for a distinguished non-official to have a Turkish bath, and interview candidates for the post of public executioner. These and their other versatile duties they perform with success.

"Their job, that of making East Africa known, is important. They have to deal with jaded globe-trotters, potential settlers, merchant princes considering the establishment of local companies to replace remote control from London, and many others."²

Major F.W. Cavendish-Bentinck, Member for Agriculture and Natural Resources in Kenya, said on the same occasion that he had always believed that the territories had not spent enough on the Office or made full use of it. Kenya needed strong London representation and welcomed the addition of the new shop window. In December 1950 the Chief Secretary of Kenya said that Kenya's larger contribution to the Office was justified since Kenya was getting more services than the other territories - particularly with respect to settlement. He declared that "if that office was not operated on an interterritorial basis there is not the slightest doubt that Kenya would have to operate its own agency and its own office in London. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that, if Kenya did that, the cost to us would be much greater than it is now."³

Some criticism has come from unofficials in Uganda and Kenya. Kenya Unofficials have felt that Kenya contributes too much of the cost of the Office. Lord Delamere, while a candidate for the Aberdare constituency in the 1952 general election in Kenya, stated in the course of an address that it would never be easy to find the type of settler required in Kenya "until practical information on Kenya is more readily available." He continued:

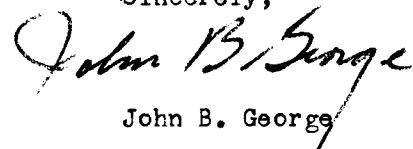
"The East African Office in London, in my view, needs a complete overhaul, and the head of that office, who occupies the position of our ambassador in England, should be most carefully chosen.

"The attitude of the bulk of the English Press towards the European in Kenya shows complete ignorance, and immediate steps must be taken to remedy this. Kenya problems will never be understood until we have a top-class public relations officer in London, and his selection and appointment should be dealt with now."⁴

Sharp criticism of the East African Office's representation of Uganda appeared in the November 8, 1952 issue of the Uganda Herald. This newspaper reported that a Uganda businessman, seeking a man to fill an important executive position in his firm, advertised widely in Britain, went there to interview a few applicants, and found two outstanding men anxious to take the job. Then both these men suddenly withdrew their applications, explaining they had changed their minds after visiting the East African Office. One said he had been told that Uganda is not a suitable place for women and children. The other had learned that his two small sons would have to be sent to Kenya or left in England at considerable expense because there were no educational facilities in Uganda. The article continued, "Both men had obviously been given the impression that Uganda was nothing but a series of clearings in the steaming Equatorial jungle ... in the latest booklet on the Protectorate prepared and issued by the East African Office, everyone coming here is still advised to wear topee and mosquito boots!"⁵

In reply to this article, the Editor of East Africa and Rhodesia wrote that he could "recall no statement suggesting that Uganda is unsuitable for European women and children" in any publication issued by the Office. Regarding lack of educational facilities, he pointed out that "it is not long since non-official M.L.C.s were themselves complaining of inadequacy. Inquirers should be told that European children are normally educated outside that country after the primary stage." Moreover, he felt there were still vast areas in which it is wise to wear sun-helmet and mosquito boots, if only for comfort. The booklet which stated this "was, in fact prepared in Uganda" - produced and published by the Public Relations and Social Welfare Department of the Uganda Government. "So if there are shortcomings which ought to be rectified, the target for representation is in Uganda, not the United Kingdom." Furthermore, it was "inconceivable" to the editor of East Africa and Rhodesia that any of the staff of the East African Office could have used the phrase "the steaming equatorial jungle."⁶

Sincerely,



John B. George

F.S.

Footnotes

1. G.V. Mathews, quoted in East Africa and Rhodesia, May 28, 1953, p. 1244
2. Sir Edward Twining, quoted in East Africa and Rhodesia, May 28, 1953, p. 1244.
3. Kenya, Legislative Council Debates, 3rd Session, 1st Sitting, 1 December 1950, 591.
4. East Africa and Rhodesia, May 29, 1952, p. 1168.
5. Uganda Herald, November 8, 1952, "Uganda Not Suitable."
6. East Africa and Rhodesia, November 27, 1952, p. 365.

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