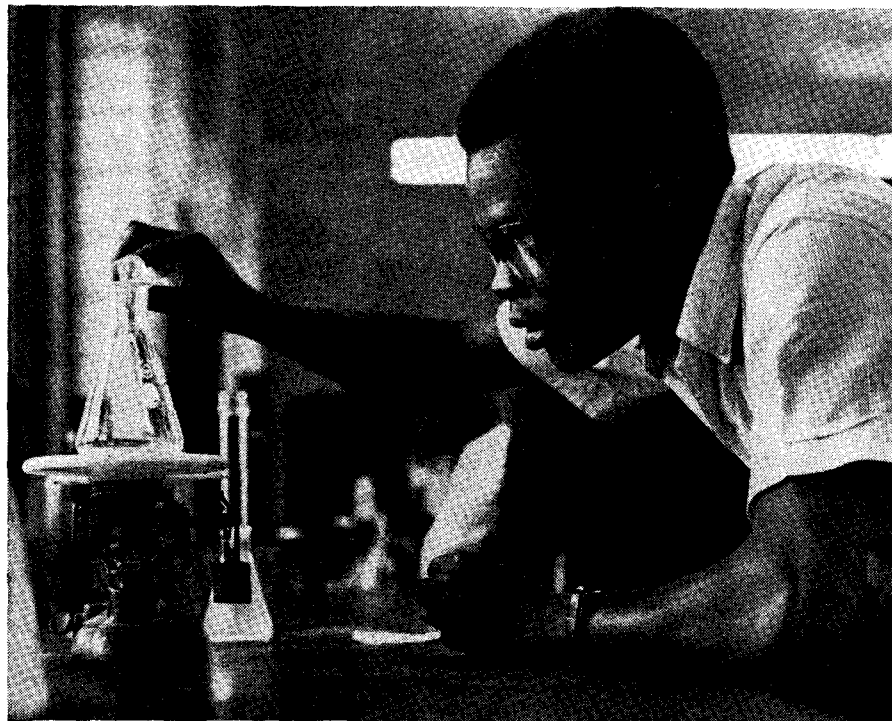


“AID ME IN THE EDUCATION SPHERE”



“Careful selection and placement of the foreign student is paramount to his success in the American university.”

By RICHARD W. MOLL, *executive director of the African Scholarship Program of American Universities.*

THE UNITED STATES has been offering university admission and scholarships to sub-Sahara Africans for more than fifty years, and has educated such notables as Hastings Banda, the President of Malawi; Kwame Nkrumah, the ousted President of Ghana, and Nnamdi Azikiwe, the respected ex-President of Nigeria. Although the 7,500 Africans represent less than 10 per cent of the foreign students currently in America, their number here has steadily increased as the United States Government, the university community, church welfare groups, and well-meaning individuals have responded to their dramatic plea for higher education.

The colonial powers did relatively little to develop indigenous universities in Africa, but planted early seeds of the European system of higher education “for the few.” Extremely rigid admissions requirements in the few countries which had a respectable university at the time of independence eliminated many African students who, by America’s educational philosophy, could contribute significantly to the strength and viability of a rapidly changing society. As America increased aid to Africa during the colorful succession of nations gaining independence, Benjamin Franklin’s wisdom seemed basic: “If a man empties his purse into his head, no man

can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”

With more and more being spent on the young Africans at our local colleges (as we simultaneously help finance the development of indigenous African universities), such painful memories as Nkrumah’s disdain for the land in which he was educated has prompted the questions: How do they like it here? Do they return home as friends? Do they feel our social, economic, and political customs should be copied in Africa? More pointedly—is America’s national interest being served by this investment?

A quick glance at the never-ending flow of “blue letters” from young Africans to American college admissions offices leads one to believe that the offer of higher education would in itself assure the undying loyalty of the student to his benefactor. Excerpts from letters received at Harvard:

We do not want to remain stranded high and dry while the river of advancement runs ahead and our more active friends pass out of sight. America, with its many philanthropic organizations, has chosen to liberate both the politically independent and dependent countries of Africa from the shackles of ignorance and the lack of skill. Our few existing universities consciously or unconsciously maintain the traditional ideas of reserving higher education for those regarded as the intellectual elite. . . . Continue to help Africa through education, and she will ask nothing more.

And:

About four miles overlooking lak victoria is situated our crazy hut, thatched of grass but without furniture due to intense poverty. We have neither domesticated animal nor cash crop that can wealth us, so as to aid me in the education sphere. May I add that I have got no elder brother to support me and my father is lame. So this incident combined with chronical poverty imposes upon me an overcoming barrier which goads me tremendously to weep to you for the first help. I look forward with high morale and hope for a favorable and considerable reply at your earliest possible convenient. I am ripe.

In our enthusiasm to help, we have invited them over. They eagerly accept. But it is only natural that these students have given little more than passing thought, in their ambitious search for university admission and scholarship, to the foreign climate in which they will receive their American education. Once here, the comfort factor cannot be overlooked, despite its secondary role to the classroom work at hand. Since the majority of African students do not study on campuses where a large number of their countrymen can be found, they are immediately thrown into strange company. And the American personality seems different, very different. No amount of well organized orientation (and there is a great deal of it in America, administered quite naturally by persons sympathetic to the foreign student cause) is able to brace them for this

first onslaught of culture shock. On the surface, the Americans seem outgoing and quite willing to help. Beyond that something is often missing:

The inviting signs at ports of entry and the gleeful and glorious atmosphere around the threshold shrink and fade as you move further. The Americans are friendly and more accommodating than any group you will ever meet. But, this willingness to associate with others—a legacy of their informality—lacks African warmth and European depth. If friendship should consist only of Americans being kind to Africans, always doing them some favor and giving them ten thousand “Hi’s” and providing smiling faces each day, perhaps a few people would be happy. But the African looks for progressive personal understanding, which in many cases means asking too much.

The Africans find it difficult to become “one of the boys” on the American campus. But part of the problem is their commitment to remain African, to compromise as few of their personal and national idiosyncrasies as possible. They are defensive, and find it difficult to separate their political and social selves while living in a “power nation.” One Rhodesian who became president of the student body of a Southern institution advised his fellow Africans:

There is one fact that we need to keep in mind: We are in the minority and the American students are in the majority, and therefore *their* customs, tastes, and interests are better understood and welcomed on their campus. Anyway, it is an enriching experience for us to see the world from the American point of view while in the States.

Even though the African student

often feels ill at ease in the American campus social milieu, he becomes a keen observer of the American’s uniqueness; and he likes much of what he sees. One student wrote that he had never met people so “wonderfully mad about sports, a nice balance to any nation’s hustle. But as for football, I still don’t know whether I like it or not. The way it is played and controlled, and the number of spectators it draws, makes me think that America has devised something only slightly short of perfect war.”

THE Africans admire our punctuality, our restless energy in competing, our willingness to allow cultural extremes to survive (“Would you believe that there are groups living happily here who ride in horse-drawn buggies, wear black gowns, and disallow buttons?”), our informality, our self-confidence, the status of our women, our freedom of religious affiliation (“You can even start your own church in this country—Father Divine has already claimed to be God himself”), and the little man’s readiness to speak up in the governing of the land.

There are, of course, traits which strike them less favorably. “Is material comfort really as important as you make it in this country?” The Africans think our children are a bit out of control: “One may be shocked by the free-and-easy way children talk to their parents—so unfilially, you might say.” Some question the competitiveness: “There are intensities mutually acknowledged which lift an enterprise from aspiration or determination to tears and nervous breakdowns.” They dislike the ostentation of some Americans and the lack of

discretion in some, particularly their fellow students: “Some appear at lectures wearing jeans fit for a petrol salesman. Some girls think it proper to leave their colleges to go to a boys’ school wearing pants and hockey shoes. Certainly such a girl needs a few more lessons in her kitchen from the one who is responsible for her.”

And, as could be expected, the Africans are disappointed in America’s accommodation of Blacks (which they would prefer to be called, rather than Negroes). A Rhodesian writes:

In America the racial situation sounds a strange, if not ominous chord. Racial discrimination is illegal! It exists primarily in social relationships and even there is concealed with subtleties almost too vague to be analyzed. This is not the open hostility of a colonial master in Africa. The foreign student in America has the distinct feeling he is being ostracized from society, yet he cannot tell whether this is due to outright discrimination or is a result of his own odious character. What he does notice, however, are the lame and sometimes pitiful reasons given by girls declining to go to a party or dance. Many are the times he has asked a girl to dance and heard the reply: “I was just waiting for my friend so we could leave,” accompanied by a hasty departure through one door, and seconds later, a furtive re-entry through another.

To be certain, some do experience outright discrimination. At a large border-state university, a young man from Gabon was unfortunately paired in the dormitory with a boy who immediately hung his Confederate flag. The African wrote:



—USIA.

“It is only natural that these students have given little more than passing thought to the foreign climate in which they will receive their American education.”



I'm so afraid it won't be possible for me to love this country as I am too concerned about the dignity of the human being. I just can't find anybody to talk to here—least of all, my roommate. I sit among the crowds in the cafeteria just as a dog among I-don't-know-what! I am as alone as Crusoe on the island. How will I learn to love these people who completely ignore me? Do I have to love them just because my country needs theirs?

But perhaps there is less racial discrimination than the African students suppose. The newspapers in Africa are quick to record sensational racial incidents in the United States, and the Africans come here expecting the worst. Often they blame color for their lack of social success, when other personal traits may be the cause.

America's ability to accommodate the foreign scholar has developed considerably since Nkrumah attended universities in Pennsylvania from 1935-1943, remaining for four degrees. Social conditions have improved. Hundreds of families have opened their homes to these students. Personal problems rarely go unnoticed today, considering the wealth of professional organizations and campus counselors attempting to make the life of the foreign student in America more meaningful and comfortable.

There is a growing awareness that careful selection and placement of the foreign student is paramount to his success in the American university. Colleges throughout this country have had painful experiences with poorly prepared students or those training in disciplines unrelated to their own countries' current needs, thus increasing the "brain-drain" problem of foreigners wishing to remain in America for employment befitting their specialization and level of education. There is a strong movement today, endorsed by high government opinion indicated in the new International Education Act, to place more responsibility for the selection and programing of foreign students in the hands of the universities rather than government. Parties on both sides of the ocean seem to have learned that politically motivated exchange of foreign students can bring, in the end, more misery than honor.

In accommodating the foreign student, America's improvements are indeed welcome, but there is danger in our going too far. Most young Africans come to the United States admittedly reliant upon an "outside" authority for scholarship, job placement, and every convenience befitting the intellectual elite of a European-oriented system. In Africa this is further complicated by the you-owe-me-something attitude extended to the white community, which for years kept Africa out of Africans'

hands. It is difficult today for the concerned American family, service agency, or sensitive individual to know *when* to stand back and let the dependent African struggle for himself. But it must be done if our education is to prepare young people to run nations suddenly left in local hands.

AT the outset, the Africans tend to resist being treated here as any other student. They expect to be treated as the intellectual elite of their nations. One of the most difficult questions was posed by a Liberian student, soon after his arrival in the States: "Is being educated in your white nation my right or my privilege?" The Africans are aware that America is eager to develop friends among the future leaders of a neutral continent. Too many take full advantage of this unique position. On the other hand, they seem to develop a genuine admiration for America's attempts to treat individuals as individuals, regardless of status. They are quick to admit that a major weakness in Africa at the moment is the frantic grab for power and they decry the bribery and favor-playing which is said to be a part of the current African scene.

The American system of education is hardly what the African has been accustomed to. Unannounced quizzes are a new curiosity, as are multiple-choice test questions. Certainly the pace is different. But the most important difference between America's post-secondary education and the European-inherited system of Africa is the concept of general education or liberal arts. In Africa specialization begins immediately after high school. The African cries "Irrelevant!" when confronted with basic requirements before declaring his major in America—and yet often desires to change his discipline after sampling introductory courses in a variety of fields. Some Africans feel our system is not well suited to their needs:

Eventually, the American institution will be turning out many African graduates every year. But there is fear that few experts will be among them. And it is just these experts that Africa needs most. Although American colleges are serving the needs of Africa quantitatively, some modifications are necessary to accomplish successful realization of the objectives qualitatively.

But many of the students who have been here longer disagree. A Nigerian at Yale writes:

I have found the American system of education very exciting and adequate. I fully subscribe to the wise idea of exposing a student to a broad (and at the same time, deep) academic discipline. This serves the all-important purpose of producing men who can fit into vir-

tually all types of human endeavor.

A student in a small South Dakota college is even more ebullient:

America is harnessing Africa's horsepower now! American education is producing more efficient men than our local colleges. By gaining the liberal arts education in this country, we will not only be bursting with answers to almost every problem that arises, but also cocksure of our usefulness when we return to our countries.

Some are not so cocksure of their usefulness back home if they are forced to return with only the Bachelor's degree, and perhaps with good reason. The degree equivalency problem has been a large one. A British Training Officer in Swaziland wrote about an African student who had just completed the undergraduate course in geology at a prominent Colorado institution: "According to the advice we have obtained from Educational Experts, a Colorado degree in geology is not regarded as the equivalent of degrees awarded by British institutions." A Tanzanian holder of a B.A. from a good college in Pennsylvania wrote: "I have been employed by the Ministry of Agriculture. My status in this Ministry is not clear, for I'm told I need a M.S. from America to be given recognition here as a college graduate."

Conditions have improved considerably in the last few years. Some nations, although quite accustomed now to B.A. recipients returning from America, still tend to favor graduates of European or African universities. But many African nations do award an American B.A. holder a good job. Zambia, among others, encourages its students to return home after the first degree. Students from all of Africa would be more inclined to return home after the first degree if their nations displayed greater interest in them while they plug along in the classrooms of America.

Despite the variety of problems besetting the African student in America—some imposed by our social and academic system, some imposed by the Africans' idiosyncrasies, and most imposed simply by a sudden change of cultural setting—the students rally forth to rather exceptional accomplishments. Of the 1,300 undergraduates brought to the States by our particular program, less than 7 per cent have been repatriated for reasons both personal and academic, and under 5 per cent have flunked out. This is a better batting average than the American student bodies at highly competitive colleges like Harvard or Yale which normally lose more than 10 per cent of an entering class before graduation. The statistics speak well for the high motivation of the African
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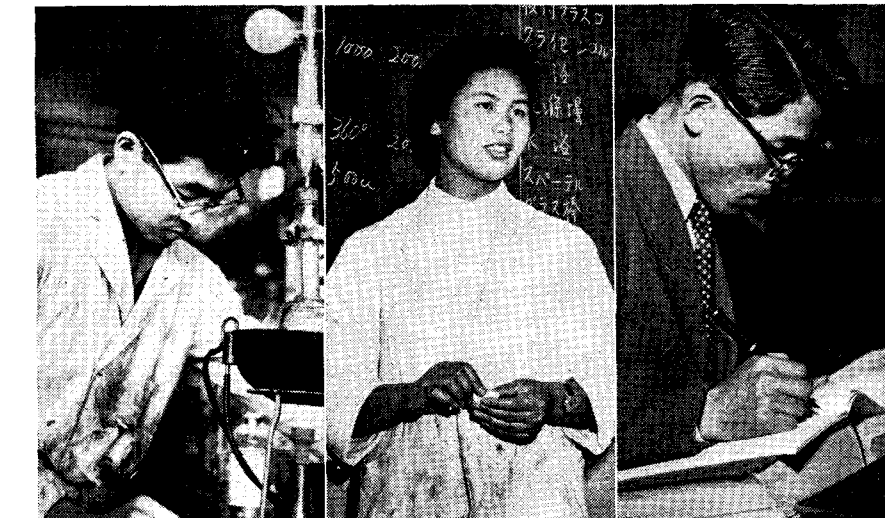
PRAGMATISM GOES WEST

By NOBUSHIGE UKAI, *president of the International Christian University, Tokyo.*

THE RAPIDLY GROWING number of academic exchanges between the United States and Japan gives one a sense of optimism about their long-range consequences. In 1963 there were about 5,300 Japanese graduate students and scholars studying at foreign institutions, of whom 70 per cent were in the United States, while in 1964 more than 400 American college and graduate students were in Japan, constituting the largest group of Western students. Throughout the fifteen years of the Fulbright program alone, nearly 700 Americans have taught and studied in Japan, and more than 3,500 Japanese have studied or lectured at American institutions of higher education, at a cost of more than \$14,000,000.

Recently a number of American colleges have initiated exchange programs with Japanese institutions, whose impact is expanding as rapidly as the programs themselves. The time, therefore, is past due for a systematic evaluation of these educational exchanges, which should include the problems inherent in living and studying abroad and the effects on students, universities, and relations between participating nations.

Although Japanese have been noted for interest in developments in Western countries, our own scholarship has been tinged with insularity and our scholarly idiosyncrasies have gone relatively unchallenged. We have considered ourselves free from political biases, cultural peculiarities, and personal ambitions and anxieties. These assumptions, reflected in our frequent criticisms and "inborn" dislike of American pragmatism, are now being subjected to the same critical ap-



—Fujihira (Monkmeyer).

"Exposure to American scholarship helps to liberate us from the prejudices within our intellectual circles while revising some of our misgivings about American culture as well."

praisal that we have applied to Western scholarship. This exposure helps to liberate us from the prejudices within our intellectual circles while revising some of our misgivings not only about American scholarship but about American culture as well.

The effects of interchange fall into two groups—tangibles and intangibles—which inevitably overlap. The tangibles, more easily measured, include new thrusts in Japanese education, among which are the development of American studies in Japanese universities, the formation of group projects in research, interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary communication across national boundaries, and the improvement of the teaching of English in Japanese schools. The development of American studies in Japanese universities was encouraged in its early stage through Rockefeller Foundation support to the University of Tokyo. Since then periodic seminars involving Japanese and American scholars from different institutions have been held, and a Japanese Foundation for American Studies makes annual grants to Japanese universities. Through the leadership of Fulbright scholars from the United States and Japanese Fulbright returnees, seminars and courses in American civilization have developed into organized programs in the regular undergraduate curriculum at such schools as the University of Tokyo and Japan Women's University.

The formation of various group projects in research, particularly in the areas of the natural and social sciences, has been greatly stimulated by Japanese scholars who brought back with them the "American way of research" in complex problems of natural and social phenomena. One example of the group approach to an educational problem is the organization of Japanese biologists,

inspired by the American Biological Science Curriculum Study movement to recast biology textbooks for Japanese secondary schools. The group's work in the rewriting of textbooks with new approaches to the world of living things has benefited by the close contacts between Japanese biologists and their American colleagues through frequent conferences in Japan and the United States.

Intellectual exchanges stimulate inter- and intradisciplinary communication across national boundaries. Among them is the writing of joint research papers by Japanese and American social scientists at International Christian University (ICU) on the effect of Japan's postwar disarmament on the nation's economic growth, as part of an international study on the relation of economic adjustment to disarmament and peaceful coexistence. Because the economic and social situations in Japan and the United States relative to disarmament are vastly different, social scientists from both countries, who share a common concern for shaping the socio-economic environment of tomorrow's world, attempted to communicate through the joint writing of papers on this topic.

THE intangible effects of interchange are more elusive to assess but may be more significant in the long run. Most of them have to do with attitudes, although they also have consequences in procedures and processes of decision-making in society. There is, for example, a sharpened awareness on the part of Japanese intellectuals that a significant difference exists between Japanese and American modes of thinking. This sounds almost trite. Nevertheless, for intellectuals daily occupied with abstractions and symbols, to discover through personal experience what may or may