



NORTHERN REGION

ADDRESS

by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor

Northern Region of Nigeria

Sir Bryan Sharwood-Smith, K.B.E., C.M.G., E.D.

to the Northern House of Chiefs

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ADDRESS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF CHIEFS

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF CHIEFS :

I do not intend to speak to you this morning at great length, for you have before you the Address which I gave to the House of Assembly earlier this month, and it is unnecessary that I should weary you with a mere repetition of its contents. I do wish, however, to fix your attention on certain matters to which I referred therein.

Firstly, as I am sure you realise, we are now entering a period in the history of the North when, above all other things, wise, firm and selfless leadership is essential. To this, you Chiefs, individually or corporately, as much as anyone, and more than most, can make your contribution. Given such leadership, the Region can survive and prosper. If, on the other hand, you as chiefs, together with other leading personalities in the political and in the traditional field, show signs of weakness *or* selfishness *or* lack of responsibility, the people for whom you are responsible will become bewildered and disunited. They might then, in despair, easily turn to others who, avid for personal power and careless of the future of the Region, would be only too ready to seize their opportunity.

Secondly, I must remind you of the vital importance to the future of the North and of Nigeria of a strong and responsible Federal Government. The North *must* send worthy sons to Lagos. It is *there*, as much as anywhere else, that the battle for your future will be lost or won. I ask therefore that you and your Councils should not stand in the way should you find that individuals, whose services are highly valued in the sphere of Local Government, wish to present themselves as candidates to the new Federal House.

I am fully aware that many of you are apprehensive of the future and possibly disturbed at what you feel has been a gradual curtailment of your authority. In this you are mistaken. In the old days, individual authority, provided it was just and popular, could maintain itself in the face of any opposition that was likely to appear. Now things have changed. The enemies of traditional authority have become more powerful and more numerous in recent years. Your authority, therefore, must be more broadly based and more demonstrably backed by popular will than it was in the past. Remember please that power and responsibility shared with influential and trusted advisers is power enhanced, not power curtailed. Therefore gather unto yourselves, as advisers and allies all men of goodwill, whose experience and authority commend themselves to you and your people. Then, provided that your administration is just and honest, I repeat, provided that your administration is just and honest, you will find your position unassailable. Walk alone and you will be lost.

I will now turn to another matter which I know deeply concerns you. For some time now the Regional Government has had ample evidence of the ill effects of the abuse of liberties by groups of irresponsible persons, who, claiming to reform, try to impose their will on or undermine lawfully constituted authority. Please be assured that the Regional Government is fully alive to these developments. We have the matter in hand, and we are adopting for our part measures to counter such activities whatsoever their source or inspiration and to prevent them from spreading. It is for *your* part to ensure that there are no breeding grounds for discontent in the areas for which you are responsible, for it is in such breeding grounds that mischievous men find their opportunities.

You, with your Councils and your leading men, whom tradition, experience and education have brought to the fore, are the pillars on which the whole edifice of the Region rests. As long as you stand firm, all will be well, and it is the intention of the Regional Government that your authority shall be maintained and strengthened. Therefore, stand firm for what is right.

One of the most effective ways of retaining the respect and trust of your people is by ensuring that they are at all times made aware without delay of the true facts in matters that closely affect them. Such is one of the main underlying objects of the Yakin da Jahilci, and to you, as to the Members of the House of Assembly, I say *again* and *again*, the war to banish ignorance and the war to spread enlightenment is war in every sense of the word other than violence. A number of you are old enough to have waged war in the old days before peace came to Nigeria. Now you are called upon to wage a different kind of warfare ; this time your weapons will be the words of truth and your battle field every town or village in your chiefdoms where evil men exploit the ignorance of simple folk with lying words and evil practices.

There are many of you here whose territories I have still been unable to visit owing to the degree to which the claims of the Legislatures and preoccupation with constitutional reform have compelled me to spend my days in Kaduna and in Lagos. Despite this, there are many of you whom, if God wills, I hope to visit before long. As a means to make such visits more frequent, and more simple, in the future, I draw your attention to the proposal of the Regional Government to establish numbers of air-strips in the less accessible parts of the Region. Typical examples which are being given consideration, though there has been no definite decision, are Mubi and Jalingo in Adamawa, Gboko, Oturkpo and Keffi in Benue, Geidam and Biu in Bornu, Gombe in Bauchi, some point on the Niger in Lafiagi-Pategi Division, Okene and Idah in Kabba, Birnin Kudu and Hadejia in Kano, Kontagora in Niger, the Zonkwa-Kafanchan area, Shendam in Plateau, Birnin Kebbi and points in the Zamfara and Gegere Valleys in Sokoto. There are others, and, I repeat, this is only a tentative list which

I quote to illustrate what it is hoped to achieve. It should be realised, furthermore, that the construction of air-strips takes time and only a limited number can be expected in the next year or so.

There is a further matter concerning which I wish to speak to you. Many of you will have read a recent announcement on the subject of the historical background to the grading of the Chiefs of the North. Grading, as you know, has been dependent on a number of factors ; the area over which a particular chief had effective control at the time of the British occupation, or the traditional importance of the chieftaincy. The great rulers of the North who were accorded the status of first-class Chief by Lord Lugard were, at the time of the British occupation, rulers over wide territories with well organised administrative and judicial systems. Although grading is personal to a Chief, it is not based on the personal attributes of the holder but on the importance of the high office which he holds. Recognition of purely personal attributes can be shown in other ways. So much for the historical background. As regards the more recent past and the future, I, as Lieutenant-Governor, in consultation with my Executive Council and the leading personalities among you have always been prepared to review the status both of Chieftaincies and also of Federations, for the march of circumstances and political and economic developments can well result in the enhancement of the importance of a Chieftaincy or Federation, which a score or more years ago possessed limited importance or did not even exist. A statement on the subject of Federations and the dignities and insignia to which they may be entitled will shortly be made by the Regional Government.

While on this subject, I wish to refer to certain inaccurate rumours that have been recently spread abroad, by loose tongued persons who should have known better. These rumours were to the effect that certain Chiefs had already in fact been advanced or were about to be advanced to grades higher than those which they at present possess. I wish to make it quite clear that so far, no decisions whatsoever on this point have been made by me, and when I do make these decisions, I will cause them to be given full publicity. The rumours in question have done considerable harm, and have in fact prejudiced the timing and nature of certain decisions that I might otherwise have made.

I regard the status and prestige of the great natural leaders of the North as one of the greatest single assets which this Region possesses. I and my Ministers do not propose to debase that status by agreeing to a lowering of its standards, still less do we intend that it should be prejudiced by the intrigues of individuals or groups of individuals.

I end on a sad theme. It is hard to lose old friends. It is harder still when they are men of high authority, whose wise counsel we can ill spare. This House has lost heavily during the past few months, and I must particularly refer to the late Emir of Gwandu and the late Emir of Kano,

both men whose friendship I had prized for many years ; more years than I care to remember. I can recall, as District Officer Gwandu, twenty-four years ago, touring with the late Emir, when he was District Head of Kalgo, in his little Austin Seven motor-car. Later he became Emir and fast grew in stature until he became pre-eminent in integrity and ability and as a leader of men. My first visit to Kano on the other hand took place thirty years ago. But it was not till five years later that, as a youthful Administrative Officer, I first met the late Emir, whose piety and wisdom were so renowned and whose passing has caused us so much sorrow. The work of these great Chiefs will live after them : and that must be our consolation.

To those who have taken over the burden of high office from them and now sit for the first time today in this House, I extend my welcome and an undertaking of sympathy and support in all they do to further the well-being of their people.

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT, HONOURABLE MEMBERS:

You will not expect to hear from me today the detailed plans and intentions of the new Government such as are customarily embodied in a Speech from the Throne. My Ministers have taken office only within the last few days and the statement of their policy will perforce be deferred until the next Meeting. You are met today primarily to take the Oaths which are obligatory before any Member can take his seat or vote and to appoint the Committees of the House.

Since we last met two old and valued Members of this House have departed from amongst us, the Waziri of Zaria and Tor Tiv. May their souls rest in peace. I hope and expect, when next we meet, to welcome their successors. I do, indeed, welcome the new Atta of Igala who, I am sure, will make a valuable contribution to our debates.

Much has been said and written, particularly in recent months, about the position of the Chiefs of the Northern Region in the past, in the present and in the future. It seems to me that this is a suitable time at which I should make some statement on this matter. It is averred that, in the course of British Administration, the Chiefs have become more powerful and more secure than they were before the British came to the North. In one respect this is true and in another respect it is far from being true. During the previous century Chiefs could maintain their position by force of arms against the popular will. On the other hand, however just their rule and however acceptable they might be to their people, they could be removed from office as the result of armed revolt by rival claimants to the Chiefdom. Today, a Chief is more secure in that armed revolt at the instigation of rivals is no longer possible but, here is the fundamental difference from what obtained in the past. In the modern age in the North, an unjust Chief or a Chief who is careless of his people's welfare cannot survive against the people's will. The violent remedies of the past are dead but all will be aware that others more appropriate to the age have taken their place. A Chief is only appointed when it is clear that he is assured of popular support and he cannot remain in office if he forfeits that support.

As Governor, and as representative of Her Majesty the Queen, I have always held a special responsibility towards you and towards your people. I have many times made it clear to you how deep is my admiration for the manner in which the great majority of you have fulfilled your responsibilities and I am fully confident that you will continue in the same path.

I repeat what I said to you in March 1955. Whatever the position of constitutional progress I am sure that you, the natural rulers of the North, will have, with your Councils, a part of paramount importance to play as guardians of your peoples' liberties and, in company with others, as leaders in their forward march towards prosperity and happiness.

To turn now to other matters. Remember that during the life-time of this House it is expected that the North will attain full Regional Self-Government. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that upon the shoulders of the two Houses of the Northern Legislature rests a greater responsibility than has ever been laid before on any body of Northern Nigerians. I am sure that the responsibilities now assumed will be bravely borne and that you will not fail the trust imposed upon you. It is your people who will pass judgment and it is their welfare that you will, I am sure, have continually in mind.

I pray that the spirit of unity and common purpose which has, so far, characterised this Region will persist and flourish during the months and years ahead because on this spirit more than any other factor the future welfare and happiness of eighteen million people will depend.

Finally, and speaking in a purely personal capacity, I wish to pay tribute to my former Government one and all of whom, led by the Premier, laboured so unstintingly, so harmoniously and so loyally for the good of the Region.

And now I pray that Almighty God will grant His blessing to you and that He will guide your deliberations.

MATAIMAKIN SHUGABA, SARAKUNA:

Ba za ku ji nufi da shirye-shiryen sabuwar Gwamnati filla filla ba daga bakina a yau kamar yadda aka saba yi a cikin Jawabin Gwamna. Ministocina sun kama aiki a cikin 'yan kwanaki kafan da suka wuce kawai, don haka ala tilas bayanin manufarsu za a dakatad da shi sai taro na tafe. Kun taru yau musammam don yin rantsuwar biyayya wadda ta ke wajiba ce kafin kowane Maishawara ya zauna a kujerarsa ko ya yi kuri'a, da kuma naɗawar Komitan Majalisa.

Tun daga tarommu na farshe da muka yi wassu tsofaffin Mashawartan Majalisan nan su biyu kuma waɗanda muke darajantawa, sun riga mu gidan gaskiya. Su ne Wazirin Zazzau da Sarkin Tiv. Allah ya jifansu. Ina fata, kuma na sa rai cewa lokacin da za mu sake taruwa mu yi wa waɗanda za su gaje su maraba. Ina maraba ainun da sabon Atta na Igala wanda, na tabbata, zai yi kyakkyawar gudummawa ga mahawararmu.

An faɗi abubuwa da yawa kuma an sha rubuce rubuce, musamman a cikin 'yan watannin baya, game da maƙamin Sarakunan Jihar Arewa a da, da lokacin yanzu da kuma nan gaba. A ganina wannan shi ne lokacin da ya dace in yi wani jawabi akan wannan al'amari. A kan nuna cewa, a cikin zamanin Mulkin Ingilishi, Sarakuna sun daɗaƙa ƙarfi da kwanciyar hankali fiye da yadda su ke gabanin zuwan Ingilishi Arewa. A wata fuska haka ne amma kuma a wata fuskar ko kafan ba gaskiya ba ne. A cikin ƙarnin da ya wuce Sarakuna suna iya riƙe maƙaminsu da ƙarfi da yaji ko ba tare da son mutane ba. Amma kuma komi adalcin mulkinsu kuma komi bukatar da mutane suke yi masu ana iya kore su daga sarauta ta hanyar tawayen wasu masu jayayyar sarautar ƙasarsu. A yau Sarki yana da kwanciyar rai saboda cewa tawayen wassu masu jayayyar sarauta ko kafan ba abinda ke yiwuwa ba ne, amma wannan shi ne tushen bambanci daga irin yadda a ke can da. A zamanin yanzu a Arewa, azzalumin Sarki, ko Sarkin da bai kula da kyautuwar sha'anonin mutanensa ba, ba zai tsira da sarautarsa ba idan mutane ba sa sonsa. Irin hanyoyin nan na yamutsi na can da sun wuce amma kowa ya sani akwai wassu hanyoyi waɗanda suka fi dacewa da zamani a madadin su. A kan naɗa Sarki kawai lokacin da aka tabbataɗ da jama'a sun goyi bayansa, kuma ba zai iya ci gaba da sarauta ba idan ya rasa wannan goyon baya.

A maƙamina na Gwamna, kuma wakilin Mai Alfarma Sarauniya, kullum ina riƙe da wani haƙki musamman zuwa gare ku da mutanenku. Sau da yawa na bayyana maku yadda na ke yaba wa irin hanyan nan da galibinku suke tafiyad da ayyukanku kuma na tabbata za ku ci gaba da tafiya a bisa wannan tafarki.

Zan maimaita abinda na faɗa maku a cikin watan Maris na 1955. Ko minene maƙamin ci gaban shirin mulki na tabbata cewa ku, sarakunan Arewa na gargajiya, tare da Majalisunku, kuna da muhimmin aikin da za ku yi da ya ke ku ne masu tsaron 'yanci mutanenku, kuma tare da wassu, ku ne shuwagabannin su a cikin tafiyar su gaba gaba zuwa ga ƙaruwar arziki da farin ciki.

Yanzu kuma zan juya ga wasu al'amurra. Ku tuna cewa a cikin rayuwar Majalisan nan ne ake sa rai Jihan nan za ta sami cikakken Mulkin Kai. Saboda haka ba wata za'ida a fadi cewa a bisa kafadun Majalisun Dokokin Jihar Arewa guda biyu ne babban alhaki yake fiye da wanda aka taba d'orawa akan kowace fungiya ta 'Yan Arewa. Na tabbata cewa hakkokin da kuka d'auka a yanzu za ku d'auke su da jaruntaka kuma ba za ku gaza ba da amanar da aka aza ku. Mutanen ku su ne za su zama al'kalai kuma na tabbata cewa za ku ci gaba da tunawa da hakkokinsu.

Ina addu'a cewa irin hada kan nan da niyya guda wadda har ila yau take ga Jihan nan za ta ci gaba kuma ta ya'adu a cikin watanni da shekaru nan gaba domin akan irin wannan ne fiye da komi zama lafiya da farin cikin mutane zambar dubu goma sha takwas zai dogara.

Daga farshe kuma, anan kuwa ina jawabi ne bisa ni kaina, na so in yaba wa Gwamnati na ta da wadda a bisa shugabancin Firimiya ta yi aiki da zuciya daya tare da hada kai kuma bisa gaskiya saboda amfanin Jihan nan.

Yanzu kuma ina roƙon Allah Ma'faƙakin Sarki Shi albarkace ku kuma Shi zame maku jagora a cikin dukan shawarwarin ku.