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GWYNETH HENDERSON:

Hello again, Gwyneth Henderson here, and in this week's 'University Report' the introduction of National Service for students in Zambia, plus a look back to the university troubles there last year, and studies in 'East African Geography and Development' in book form. Actually, to be honest when I first saw the book I was so put off by its price - £6 that I nearly went no further! However it is available in paperback as well, so Andrew Clayton has been having a look at it for us.

ANDREW CLAYTON:

Geography has suffered from a fair amount of academic snobbery over the years. On the one hand it's a discipline which isn't quite pure enough to satisfy the academic scholars, men who see it falling between the stools of economics, geology and sociology, and the other equally ill-defined stool of relevants - the great all-dominating ideal of the importance of university and other research to everyday life. Geography, to put it crudely, and I don't think that any geographer would contradict me, is a hotch potch of disciplines, and it will stay a hotch potch of disciplines until it defines an area of activity which belongs to geography alone. So geography is always slightly on the defensive, - it is not often that a historian will begin a book by trying to justify what he is doing - he knows it's worthwhile, as if by some divine right of academic truth - but geography books, like this collection of essays edited by Professor Ominde, seem to need some sort of justification, a declaration of their relevance, a plea to the reader to see the book in its' proper context. So to Professor Ominde's book. The range that it covers shows the intellectual athleticism that a geographer has to go through. It's a collection of essays, devoted to the father of East African Geography, Professor S.J.F. Baker, and the essays range from pure economics - the location and structure of Kenya's industries for example, through geology, the geomorphological mapping of East Africa, to sociology (population in the Southern highlands of Tanzania.) Of course, the definitions that I use

are very loose, but they serve the purpose of showing how difficult it is to think of geography as a coherent academic discipline. But the main concern of these essays is the contribution that geography can make to the solution of development problems, and so the relevant purpose of the book is established immediately. All governments need to define their terms, as it were, before they begin the job of government, and in areas like East Africa in particular, it's the job of definition that the geographers can do most effectively. This doesn't necessarily mean that the university men do the government departments' jobs for them, but it does establish that what the academics are doing is directly relevant to the needs of the governments under which they exist, and that they're not pure Ivory Tower activists. Taken on their own, these essays are each, I am sure, a valuable contribution to their field, but taken as a whole, they mean that East Africa as a political unit can exist without the old perpetual references back to Europe for intellectual support.

GWYNETH HENDERSON:

Thank you very much Andrew. Well, just to recap - 'Studies in East African Geography and Development' edited by Professor S.H. Ominde is published by Heinemann Educational Books at £6 in hardback in the United Kingdom and at three pounds ten pence in the East African students edition - students? at £3.10! Well, maybe they can share. Now you know one of the nicest things about doing 'University Report' is the people whose names and work I know but who I've never met, and who then turn up in London and call in. I have one such with me in the studio today. Sholto Cross, lecturer in political science at the University of Zambia. Of course, Zambia University has had quite a year one way or another. Last year, the students took issue publicly with the government over President Kaunda's southern Africa policy - after much upheaval, demonstrations and so-on, the government closed the University, expelled ten student leaders and deported two lecturers. The University has, of course re-opened and most of the student leaders are now expected back next term, but the lecturers deportation order was not rescinded. Now the big news for the University is that National Service has been instituted - eventually this is intended to involve all Zambians between the ages of eighteen to thirty-five. Well, this raises all sorts of questions - especially since it was over a similar happening that the big Tanzanian university/government fight took place some years back. Well who better to have a look at the whole situation than a political scientist? But first Sholto Cross, can you explain what the National Service Scheme is?

SHOLTO CROSS:

Well, it's part of the policy of developing a National Home Guard. Students were told most of their training would be Military training, but I

Imagine that some of it will be very similar to the sort of general education which is given to the Zambia Youth Services. I think that there are two routes really to this new policy, one of course is in the events which led up to the closure of the University of Zambia in the middle of last year, that is, a fear that students are somehow becoming an enclave in the broader society, and that there should be some attempt made to involve them in the National welfare. Secondly, I think there is that sort of feeling which has led to policies of National mobilisation in neighbouring countries, and that is that the country is liable to be under threat, cannot rely totally on any single group of armed forces within it, and that the wise and far-sighted leader should aim at a policy of National mobilisation in which all the various segments of Society can, in a crisis, be called upon.

GWYNETH HENDERSON: How much is this going to interfere with the students' life in the University, and what sort of ways is it going to be organised?

SHOLTO CROSS: This is not yet really clear. Obviously, at least for the next few years the facilities for training are not going to be able to cope with the large number of students. Students have quite a long vacation in between their years, and I imagine that much of the training will take place during this period. Secondly, it's perhaps a case that this clause, whereby students may opt-out of National Training if they pay a certain amount, reflects the fact that it's privately accepted that mainly students won't in fact be able to undergo this training. I wouldn't have thought that for the next two or three years, it's really going to have much effect on students, although students are already starting to talk about it.

GWYNETH HENDERSON: If we can just talk about this clause that you mention, that they can opt-out if they want to, and pay money to the Government in lieu of doing a service, isn't this in fact just going along once again on the elite path? Because University students perhaps are going to be the only people who will have the sort of money to be able to do this.

SHOLTO CROSS: Yes and no. I do think that, it does smack of elitism, in that most of our students tend to come from urban backgrounds; their parents tend to be in the wage sector, they will if they want be able to do this, whereas other Zambians will not have this option. However, I think that maybe this clause is directed at non-Zambian students at the University, that is, other Africans from Rhodesia, Botswana, who have come to the University of Zambia, who while perhaps, permanently resident in the country, do not experience the same sense of patriotism perhaps as Zambian students.

GWYNETH HENDERSON: So you really think that the rest of the country will accept that the students are allowed a cut-out if they want to.

SHOLTO CROSS: Well, what we really mean by the rest of the country, I think that this is an issue which is largely going to be decided by the urban elite, let's call it, and if they see it as part and parcel of the more effective recruitment to their numbers, well that's the way it will be, I don't think that it's in any way an issue of electoral importance.

GWYNETH HENDERSON: You said the students are already talking about it, what are the reactions that you've heard.

SHOLTO CROSS: Well, there seems to be two types of reaction. On the one hand the official student organisation has welcomed National Service of this sort since, students, I think are fairly concerned, particularly after the events of last year, to demonstrate to the Zambian public at large, that they are not unashamedly elitist, that they are part of a common society, and they feel that this will enable them to do so. However, there's also an under-current feeling amongst some students that their business is to devote their time to their studies, that such things as filling their holidays with military training, is, just a waste of their time, and that indeed by mixing with all the other Zambians who are not in the same bracket as they themselves are, this will somehow impair their status and position, however, this latter attitude is not thankfully as yet become an explicit one.

GWYNETH HENDERSON: When National Service in the sense that it exists in Tanzania, was introduced in 1963, this in fact did become an issue, over which the Government of the University fought, and, the future direction of the University was in fact probably decided then. Do you see any possibility that this might become an issue in the future of Zambia?

SHOLTO CROSS: It's not impossible, although one should stress that, relations between the University and the Government are fairly good, in the sense that the national priorities set by the Government, are acceded to by the University. The very severe cut in University funds, however, might make the University into the position where they physically cannot undertake some of the requirements which Government imposes on it. I think that this, is, perhaps going to be one of the dominating factors in the relationship between the University and the Government in the next few years. In terms of the National service requirement for its students however, I think the University would not only support and go along with this, but, really find

that it helps in its programme of educating Zambian students, after all, one of the problems about students at the University of Zambia is that they come in initially with an 'O' level pass, to a four degree, and many of us feel that they lack, the students lack, not only a certain maturity, but a wider contact with their own society, and to the extent that National Service is going to mitigate these two factors, well, I'm sure that most people will welcome it.

GWYNETH HENDERSON: You mention that there had been a cut in the University budget. Do you think that this is a direct result of the Government/University clash that took place last year?

SHOLTO CROSS: No, I don't. I think that this cut stems from the Government decision to cut into all, what you might call, the softer areas of policy, now that they are realising just how slender the resources for 1972 are going to be. Of course, one can't really put a figure to this cut, but it appears that it's going to be a sufficiently Draconian measure to lead to a cut in the number of students being brought in, that is, that the expansion in students is not going to continue as projected, that new posts probably not going to be filled, and that the various other facilities and development which the University had planned are at least going to be frozen.

GWYNETH HENDERSON: Well, looking back to last year still, what is the feeling now on the campus about the way in which the Government treated the University, and the way the University and the students treated the Government.

SHOLTO CROSS: Well, it hasn't been forgotten. There is still very much an air of wariness amongst students towards the Government, and certainly amongst the staff, who still remember very much that two of their colleagues were deported, but in terms of whether this is going to lead to further action, it's very difficult to say. I suspect that, students learnt a great deal from those events, in that they see that there is a kick-back for any of their forays into the wider political arena, and that these should be very carefully assessed before they venture forth again.

GWYNETH HENDERSON: Summing it up, could you say that they don't admit that they're wrong, just that they went about putting over their opinion in the wrong way.

SHOLTO CROSS: Oh, students certainly don't admit that they're wrong, but I think that they realise that their actions were very naive, that they weren't quite clear of any of the issues involved. Next time, they will really seek to understand the total situation much more clearly before acting.

GWYNETH HENDERSON: Thank you very much indeed, Sholto Cross - and there I'm afraid we must leave you for this week - in next week's 'University Report' Food, Science and Technology, so join me then, but until then, from me, Gwyneth Henderson, it's goodbye for now.

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