

president of N.U.S.A.S. visited the Bush campus in this regard, only to be led out by police before meeting any students there. The bid for the establishment of an N.U.S.A.S. branch at Bush is as old as the college itself, and all attempts were of no avail. A few students at Bush fraternised with some N.U.S.A.S. members from U.C.T.; and one or two were subsequently asked to try to establish an N.U.S.A.S. branch at Bush, but did nothing effective in this regard. It became apparent that their fraternisation campaign was merely for the satisfaction of a social need on their part. This proved to be a quest for popularity among white students. There was no determination or singleness of purpose in them as regards establishment of an N.U.S.A.S. branch at Bush. It is funny how some nonwhites think a heaven of themselves by being known by whites, and in the same breath it is sad to see how certain whites think humanists of themselves by chatting or shaking hands with a few nonwhites. Perhaps it is a malady of our time; to be unable to live with oneself.

Time was fast running out and the winter vacation was in sight and the Preparatory Committee was not prepared to shelve its scheme for later. A shattering blow, which caused the Preparatory Committee to halt the launching of its scheme,

came when some senior students asked the Rector to allow them to stage a post-graduation function in the cafeteria. The Rector told these students to form themselves into a committee, under his auspices, to run the function, and after the function to become the automatic S.R.C. of the college. This most unfriendly suggestion forced the students concerned to abandon the idea of the function. What was most disconcerting and harrowing was to see how little the Rector cared for student opinion on the campus. No S.R.C. can be formed without a mandate from the students. It is a purely student affair; and the students have to elect those they feel can lead them ably to form an S.R.C.

It was now time for the half-yearly examinations, and the students were settling down to hard swotting and the S.R.C. question passed off the scene. What measures are to be taken in this regard still remains to be seen. This report has been written to summon public opinion and interest on the plight of the student down at Bush. No student can be divorced or can divorce himself from the entire public. Therefore, the lot of the student at U.C.W.C. is, in a word, the lot of the entire South African public. We call on the public to watch, enquire into and do something effective about the goings-on down at Bush.

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COMMENT

**Separate and
unequal libraries**

FOR AN AFRICAN KEEN ON STUDIES lack of an adequate library service is one of the major stumbling blocks. In all municipal areas, let alone in country places, there is a shortage of libraries for Africans. Yet whites are provided with large libraries through which they can order any book they need. It is only by borrowing from and exploiting a white friend that the African manages to get the book he needs. Of course, it is from a small number of rational whites that one gets the right book.

In a Pretoria location where I stayed some time back the only thing that could pass for a library was a local mission library. Besides this, the only other thing approaching a library that I have known during my stay there was a shifting, poor affair that hardly could house in one street for a season—a struggling adventure

by some far-sighted and diligent residents. And then in any case one finds that any such library is hardly known except to a few exceptional devotees to studies. This was in a freehold location, and perhaps the municipality would not trouble to aid a society not directly under it?

A look at any of the new municipal locations while growing will show that library service is not considered of much importance. The municipality concerned will furnish first those institutions that have little to do with developing mental skills. Among the earliest plans will be accommodation for sporting grounds, beer halls, all of which make for physical development and leisure. These amenities, though desired, should not be primary in a State faced with the need for social reform. Though schools and churches are provided, these schools teach their creeds to their particular class of people and end there. A public library will be slow in coming, and then it will be too small for the community it serves.

BUT THEN WE ARE ALWAYS TOO ready to put forward figures—often inaccurate—when we search for truths. In this case statistics will probably show that the

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number of Africans using libraries is small. That in a community served by one library a large percentage of the people never use the library. Only an inefficient government will glory in the ignorance of a large section of its subjects. Ignorance does not justify the negligence. It only is a result of the negligence. It is not a society characteristic. It is a malady. If the majority of Africans have not had a chance or encouragement to better their learning under the present form of administration, then the administration does not offer any progress. Every nation is born with certain skills and talents. These need large, open schools and libraries to refine and enlarge.

Perhaps all this is in keeping with the policy of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, that believes in and works for perpetuation of ignorance among Africans. Yet the African nation is in a process of reconstruction. And a nation thus engaged needs all the ideological direction that one finds in a well-stocked library. In the absence of one, this only means that ideological direction is not expected to come from the reconstructing nation, in this case the African, but from the ruling overlord, the Department of B.A.D. C.M.

Towns instead of Elephants

John Clare

The Historian in Tropical Africa, edited by Vansina, Mauny and Thomas (London, Oxford University Press, 45s.).

THE EDITORS of this collection of papers describe it as a review of the existing knowledge of the pre-Colonial histories of tropical African countries and a consideration of the methods and problems of research.

The book is a comprehensive review of the proceedings of the Fourth International African Seminar held at the University of Dakar in 1961 and was made possible—as was the Seminar—by grants from the Ford Foundation. One thread which runs through all the studies is an emphasis on the great mass of research that remains to be done—and the lack of funds to finance it.

The editors believe that one of the urgent tasks of the young independent states is to recover their own history and to reconsider it as something more than merely the history of European interaction with and influence upon African peoples.

HISTORY THEREFORE COMES to have a definite political function and thus we have one of the contributors drawing a distinction between the scientific conception of history which aims at an objective portrayal of the past, and the popular conception which, he notes, has in Africa more emotional force and dramatic quality.

Another writer on the same theme, after noting the difficulties involved in interpreting the (few) facts available, warns that people

seek to reconstruct the past to explain the present.

He points out that Colonialism did little to foster interest in the past of the subject peoples and that with the awakening interest in the subject on the part of the newly independent states it is necessary to guard against the opposite tendency to use African history as the rationalisation of myth—a tendency aptly described elsewhere as "passionate history".

One essay, incidentally, provides a fascinating illustration of the use of myth to justify the deep cleavages of wealth, power, privileges and right which characterises the social and political systems of Rwanda.

Bearing in mind recent events in that country one finds a startling parallel with current South African mythology.

Thus five principal themes appear in the Rwanda myths of origin: (1) the heavenly origin of the Tuutsi who are members of the dominant caste; (2) the fundamental and "natural" differences existing between the castes; (3) the Tuutsi have brought with them a superior form of civilization and the Hutu and the Twa (inferior castes) are automatically placed at their service; (4) there are divine sanctions against those who rebel against the regime, and (5) the king is divinely appointed by God. The myths are used to sanctify an inegalitarian ideology.

To return to the problem of interpretation, there is an interesting study by Mr. B. E. Ogot on *Kingship and Statelessness Among the Nilotes* in which he shows that the prejudices of European historians have led them to evolve a fallacious theory that assumes a positive correlation between the amount of Hamitic blood in a people's veins and the degree of their political evolution.

THUS IN TERMS OF the theory what little culture the Negro in East Africa possessed before the advent of the Moslem Arab and the Christian white was due entirely to the civilising influence of ancient Egypt and was imported to East Africa by the Hamites.

Such a denial of any form of indigenous culture clearly calls for a bit of passionate reinterpretation.

Though the studies included in the book range through all the countries of tropical Africa, it is important to note that they represent a review of existing knowledge only in certain highly specialised fields and that the whole in no way compares with the broad surveys of say, Basil Davidson.

In spite of (because of?) this specialisation it quickly becomes clear that knowledge of the ethnic and political regions of tropical Africa is fragmentary.

The contributors, of course, are the first to admit this and thus Mr. Jack Goody, for example, at the conclusion of his essay on "The Mande and the Akan hinterland" notes with a quiet desperation the "need for a great deal more field work".

"Only then," he continues, "will we be able to fill our maps with towns instead of elephants."