

LETTERS

For reasons of space, we have reproduced content only, editing out all salutations, introductory notes, titles and affiliations.

As one who has done a fair amount of speaking recently for the Committee for a Just Canadian Policy Toward Africa, I have considerable sympathy toward the idea of an African Liberation Fund, and will be happy to contribute to such a fund if Africanists within or without the ASA set one up. I also am heartily in favour of groups whose specific orientations appeal to a considerable number of Africanists being able to set up plenary sessions at ASA meetings, and of course that scholars from Africa who consider themselves Africanists be given every encouragement to organize plenary sessions, panels or any other form of scholarly discourse they see as desirable. The only problem I see in the latter case is that African scholars could get themselves so heavily committed to ASA activities that they would not be able to find sufficient time to establish a scholarly organization where the premier Africanist group should be, namely, in Africa and consisting primarily of Africans; however, this is their problem to consider.

However, I do not consider a scholarly organization the appropriate vehicle for political activism of any sort. I think it desirable that individual members of the ASA whose work has led them to certain convictions be prepared to act upon those convictions, either alone or in concert with others; but I would hope that as scholars, ASA members would retain enough humility to recognize the possibility that they may be just a shade less than perfectly justified in their convictions. If the day should dawn in which ASA members should achieve complete agreement on what political goals they should pursue, and complete certainty that these goals cannot be improved upon, then the ASA can quite confidently commit itself to a politically active role. But until this millenium, it might be well for us to try to retain a non-politicized sphere in which discourse remains possible between rational beings who seek to further their understanding through discussion and argument.

John R. Cartwright

The defeat of the Johnson-Cole resolution, following the challenge initiated by Professor Morgenthau, should come as a surprise to no one. The ASA is composed of several groups whose behavior and intention we may well seek to understand before any realistic steps could be taken to solve ASA's perpetual crisis.

First, there are the racist-conservatives who will exploit any available excuse to thwart any recommendations either for changes in the status quo or for ensuring adequate participation of black scholars in ASA activities. Second, there are the irrational, left-wing, white radical extremists who pose as concerned scholars but who merely exploit black discontent in order to expiate their burdens of guilt and their tortured souls. These, like the

lady historian who proposed that no debate should be allowed on the substantive resolution, are tyrants; they will hurt the black cause very badly in the long run. These are the people who applaud any and all positions taken by blacks. They are the ones who derive tortured satisfaction from black irrationality.

Third, there is the body of well meaning, good intentioned members, probably a minority of ASA, who desire justice but who insist that innovations be based on reasoned debate and workable structures.

Finally, there are the black scholars themselves. The experiences from Montreal to Boston seem to suggest that some of us (black scholars) are adroitly exploiting the ASA for purposes of personal or group recognition. Some of us advance positions and make demands that are calculated to appeal to, or cultivate particularistic constituencies. We propose solutions which have built-in flaws that virtually guarantee defeat in any mail ballot. We appeal to demagoguery and hysteria; we rely on the kind of emotional heat displayed in Montreal and Boston to carry our proposals through. Such emotional heat is neither conducive to rational discourse that is supposed to characterize the gathering of scholars, nor contribute to the kind of strategies that will help us to realize our objectives.

As I suggested in Boston, hardly any reasonable member of ASA would vote for the parts of the Johnson-Cole resolution that allowed non-ASA members to constitute at least 33% of the Board required to control the proposed Liberation Fund. Theoretically, the non-ASA members of the Board could be as high as 66%. The most that could be demanded is that those who provide the money should alone decide how to spend it!

We could have been wiser by allowing only ASA members to sit on the Board with the qualification that at least 50% of the members should be black. The proponents of the resolution should have accepted the suggestions that the resolution should not be tied in any way to the AHSA, and that each part could be voted on separately. That would have allowed us to gauge the real commitment of ASA.

I disagree with the proponents' view that African members of the Board controlling the Fund could easily decide which African or Black American Liberation Movements should receive support. The OAU has not been able to make that kind of decision with respect to Angola, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The ideological factionalism inherent in the African and Black American Liberation Movements could easily be introduced into the ASA. That this danger was either not anticipated or overlooked was a serious flaw in the Johnson-Cole proposal. In times of hysteria and irrational impulses, such problems may be glossed over but sooner or later those who insist on reason and practicality would either be persuaded or be allowed to differ.

All these rational alternatives were rejected because individual egos have become intricately enmeshed in the debate. Those who shouted loudest received the longest applause! But the strategies we adopt as black scholars factionalize our own ranks, and alienate potential allies from our cause.

As Professor Marshall H. Segall's letter in the last Newsletter implied, the resolution could have remained a dead letter if passed because the

establishment of the Fund would have violated the principles governing the tax-exempt status of the ASA. Therefore, such action would have been illegal. The legal opinion on the provisions of the resolution also make this conclusion inescapable. Thus it appears that the pleas by people like Professor Segall that members should vote for the resolution amount to saying "let us satisfy these black activists by passing this resolution, but be it understood that no action will be taken to implement it, if it, in any way, adversely affects ASA's tax-exempt status." This kind of subtle manipulation of events and peoples not only breeds suspicion but also constitutes bad faith. The reality is that the ASA is not about to give up its tax-exempt status for the "dignified survival" of any group!

Unfortunately the way the resolution was stated enabled ASA to escape facing the issues raised about its tax status, and the role it has to play in matters involving Africa, the U.S. Government and Corporate Business. Will the ASA surrender its tax-free status, if it must, in order to play what many of us regard as its legitimate role in influencing the direction of events in favor of that Africa which indirectly provides the members' livelihood? If the AUSA is in similar position, will it, too, be willing to surrender its tax-free status? These issues are central to the debate within ASA but we managed to circumvent them.

Of course there are some of us who think that the idea that the ASA should "commit itself to work for the dignified survival and liberation of African people" is indeed pretentious. We may demand that ASA should not stand in the way of African liberation and survival. But the day the survival and liberation of African people becomes the responsibility of such U.S. organizations as ASA, that day, Africa and the African people would have ceased to exist. The survival of Africa and the liberation of her people has to depend on the African people's will-to-survive. The African people will welcome the helping hands of tested friends - among whom the ASA may not even be counted. The Johnson-Cole resolution was well meaning, but it could also become an insult to the African people.

There is the unfortunate revival of the experience at Montreal. Personally, I think that the AUSA should exist as a viable black organization which combines scholarship with social conscience, and which can challenge, if it pleases, the pretensions of other white dominated U.S. organizations that deal with Africa or that engage in anti-African, anti-black-people activities - including the U.S. government and its secret arms.

The legitimate demands for reforms that will ensure adequate representation of, and participation by African and black American scholars has been perverted into the demand for "racial quotas" by white pseudo-scholars in the ASA. I agree entirely with Professor Wallerstein's position on this issue. If scholars like Richard Sklar can dismiss the Burke resolution as an institutionalization of "racial quotas," and "official orthodoxy," the least we can do as black scholars is to inform such scholars that, although scholarship ought not to have racial colorations, the white people, and white people only, were responsible for creating racist scholarship. The white scholars who, by their behavior and practices, managed to exclude black scholars from meaningful and equal participation in professional organizations, are those who perverted racially neutral scholarship into racist scholarship. This is why all argu-

ments against "racial quotas" as well as all who advance or defend such arguments are already discredited, not by black people but by the very history of Western Civilization. White scholars who support such "scholarly" arguments are either blind men who are blind to the truth, or racists who camouflage their real intentions within the garb of a theoretical, abstract, non-racial scholarship.

Resolutions like the one defeated merely play into the hands of the racists while at the same time alienating those who genuinely struggle in these precarious times for justice and rational solutions. Maybe the age of reasonableness is dead, and the age of passion and unreason has arrived!

There is also the ironic part of this exercise in futility. ASA's perpetual crisis has left the fundamental issues far behind in the deluge of irrelevant controversies. The papers presented in Boston and the panels, all reveal that a quiet transformation is taking place within ASA's definition of what is relevant to scholarly pursuits. The names of panelists show a level of African participation that has not been known before. The topic of discourse and the positions of panelists were not only provocative but almost revolutionary. And yet we are either battling over trivial or we manage to degrade basic issues to the level of trivial in the general assembly.

Professor Johnson's tactics in getting elected only to confront the electors with unconditional demands before he can perform his obligations can only be used once. It is doubtful that such tactics will help black reformers in the long run. Next time electors may insist on knowing the positions of eligible candidates before they cast their ballots. After all, is there any other way to be a rational voter? Since the emotional exercises in Montreal and Boston were directed toward questioning the morality and legitimacy of the ASA, the question naturally arises: can good men achieve moral goals by morally questionable means? Can we also insist that the actions of both white and black scholars be morally defensible at least at the very moment of questioning the morality and legitimacy of other actions or organizations?

Perhaps the ASA Board of Directors will do well to heed the suggestions of Professor Gwendolen M. Carter. The ASA ought to be presented with a series of proposals drawn up by the Board in line with the views already expressed, from Montreal to Boston and after, so that a decision can be reached through mail ballot before the next annual meeting. Any further delay by the Board members will tend to imply an abdication of their leadership responsibilities and an invitation to real disaster. The Board should try to anticipate The Fire Next Time.

I hope that my opinion would be communicated formally to all the members of the Board of Directors. I hope too that ASA members at large will eventually have the benefit of addressing themselves to the issues raised in this rather lengthy letter.

Ladun Anise

The February issue of the African Studies Newsletter contained a request for funds for an Eduardo Mondlane Memorial Scholarship Fund. In addition, members of the Association have received a letter from its president suggesting that profits from its annual meeting be put into this fund.

Mondlane was sceptical of the value to the revolution he led of those educated abroad.* Generally, they do not return home. He also was interested in getting refugees back into Mozambique. About a year before his death, at a meeting in California, he was asked what Americans of limited means could do for Frelimo. He said that the organization needed tennis shoes and transistor radios. More recently, Frelimo representatives have indicated a need for donkeys. A donkey costs only \$20.

Those who wish to contribute tennis shoes, transistor radios or donkeys to Frelimo can send money to Project Mozambique, 30 Albany Street, Toronto, Ontario. For those who want something tangible, Project Mozambique will try to get a picture of your very own donkey. The contributor will be able to rest assured that every donkey will make a contribution to the cause for which Mondlane gave his life, a free Mozambique.

Martin Klein

* In announcing the Eduardo C. Mondlane Memorial Scholarship Fund (Newsletter, Vol. IV, No.1, p.22) no statement was made regarding the use of funds for education abroad.

SUMMER INSTITUTES

Notre Dame University's third ecumenical institute on Sub-Saharan Africa for Christian missionaries, religious and lay, will be held from 21 June to 16 July, 1971. During these four weeks the Institute will provide an introduction to the historical, social, economic and political conditions in traditional African societies and will then concentrate on the contemporary scene. Participants will be drawn from a variety of Christian denominations.

For further information contact: Dr. Peter Walsh, Director; African Studies Program, 1105 Memorial Library; University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556.

Scarritt College, Nashville, Tenn. has announced a full-time summer institute, June 22-July 31, 1971. Six semester hours of credit will be given to participants in the Institute which offers "a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to Africa providing an integrated overview of African economic political and social patterns in the past and the present." Several visiting professors will take part in the Institute. Write to: Dr. Omar L. Hartzler, Scarritt College, Nashville, Tenn.37203.

African Language Institute

At a meeting of teachers of African languages held in Chicago last January "It was resolved to carry on what has hitherto been the Eastern NDEA Summer Language Institute, beginning in 1972." Guidance is now being sought from individuals concerned with African studies regarding the languages (other than Arabic, Hausa, and Swahili) in which there may be a demand for instruction over the next few years. People interested in learning such languages at an institute should write to: Carleton Hodge, Research Center for Language Sciences, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.