

secondary school learning all about the specific gravity bottle, and atoms. Because of her own active nature it was all the more satisfying to her to see Richard developing a lot of interests, invariably in what she thought was the right direction. He was not only a member of the Cathedral choir but was also a full member of the Youth Fellowship, and the Sunday School, and at school he became an active member of their branch of the Students' Christian Movement as soon as it was possible for him to join in the third form. The SCM met on Wednesday afternoons, and had a lot of intercourse with the other branches throughout the city. The highlight of the SCM year was the annual conference, which was held at Fourah Bay College, and attended by representatives from all branches in the country; it was later to move to Bo School. This always meant a long week, during which many young minds both male and female were removed from the city with its din some 500 feet below Mount Aureol, discussing religious problems, listening to talks, and annual reports, and above all fostering very valuable friendships. Members of the SCM were also entitled to attend the weekly Youth Sunday Services, which were held in the British Council hall, and conducted alternately by the different SCM school branches.

Mike did not join in these Conferences as they were usually held during the vacation, and in any case he was not a member of the college branch. What he did do was to organise the country's first inter-schools camp for boys in the northern town of Kabala. Betty and Joyce were spending the time with some friends at Hill Station, and Mike was therefore able to organise his camp. Twenty boys took part mostly from schools in the colony, and the rest from the Protectorate, and Mike had six other English friends including Dave who was on leave, to help him with the running of the camp. All the vehicles had a rendezvous at Port Loko, and then continued in convoy to Kabala.

Chapter Eight

“Richard, go to the board. Draw a line A-B, and bisect it. Today we are going to prove theorem 62”.

Gradually, Geometry had become his favourite maths subject, and now that they were in the senior school, and preparing for their Senior Cambridge School Certificate Examination an endless number of theorems had to be mastered.

“Now, I want you boys to listen carefully to my instructions because my aim is to achieve a hundred percent pass from you. Just remember you are the last set to take the Cambridge School Cert., next year we shall be taking the West African School Certificate instead so you are virtually bringing an old era to a close.”

“Sorie, don't forget that it is Friday today, and that we have a special debate in the Literary and Debating Society this afternoon.”

“Really, Richard, you must be joking, how could I possibly forget L&DS? I know what you are really trying to say, and I will save you two good seats so you can have Martha sitting next to you. It shouldn't be difficult because, as you know, I am the Secretary for the day, and will have my own special desk next to the Chairman.”

“Gosh, you can almost read my mind like a book! Thanks all the same, friend, and I need not express in anticipation Martha's gratitude when she learns that you made it possible for us to sit together.”

L & DS was held weekly during the last two periods on Friday afternoons for members of the senior school. Inter alia it provided an excellent opportunity for the students to develop the art of public speaking. They each took it in turn to act either as Chairman or Secretary for the day.

“You have all heard the reading of the Minutes, if there are no objections may we have a motion, please?”

“Mr Chairman, and members, I move that the Minutes as read and amended be passed.”

“As there are no matters arising from the Minutes, we shall now turn to the main business of the day which, as you know, is a debate against the Annie Walsh School on the subject ‘That the rightful place of a woman is at home as a housewife’. Will the members of the Teams please come forward and take their places on the stage, the Pros on my right, and Cons on my left.”

Despite the negative nature of campaigning between political parties in the community, local politicians were becoming more and more active and playing a far more important part in the running of the country. With self government the country was now heading for a cardinal General Elections, the first since the granting of universal adult suffrage. After the many years of grooming the people were now about to embark on the next step, that of governing under close supervision from higher authority at Westminster, and the women were not lagging in any way; they provided ample competition for the men.

There were a few minor political parties, but as usual two major parties emerged. The one that was backed mainly by people in and from the Protectorate was led by Kpanabome whilst their colony supported counterpart was under the leadership of Sonnie Boy. Both of them were scholars in their own right, and more than just budding politicians. This

was the start of the era of public political meetings in the programme of mass softening up and indoctrination prior to the casting of that most valuable piece of paper, the ballot. Suddenly, there was somewhere now to spend the evening for Mammy Talabi, and her friends, for Richard, Martha, Sorie, and all other young and actively thinking minds. The halls were not large enough for all those who came from far and wide to listen, and open air meetings were quite frequent; at Brookfields, Victoria Park, and Cline Town. The story was always the same, and there was always a large number of staunch supporters, and a crowd of hecklers from the other camp.

Sonnie Boy embarked on a series of very interesting and high powered lectures in the Wilberforce Memorial Hall, and he was so popular that he used to have people hanging from the windows, and sitting all down the staircase for lack of space.

“Come on, Martha, let’s try for seats up in the gallery. We can see everything from up there, and hear better as well.”

“You know, Richard, this is one of the few times when you and your friend Sorie split up, and go your own ways. It’s such a shame isn’t it?”

Richard admired Sonnie Boy for his sincerity. Diction, and subject matter, and dreamt of his leading a new government in the House. He could not see why this should not happen, after all Sonnie Boy had selected a personal emblem, which in itself embodied all his aims – Sonnie had adopted a MONKEY, he was going to climb up to the top of the political tree.

“Good evening my friends. You people sitting along the front row, please make enough room for Mammy Talabi, and her friends so that they may be more comfortable. You may not know this, but they have been here since five o’clock this afternoon to make sure that they should secure a good seat. Please think of them because we don’t want to lose

their company just yet, do we? After all every vote counts you know. Before I start, I know we have visitors sitting on the staircase from the other camp. Let me make it plain right away that nobody is going to prevent them from coming upstairs, and getting themselves a chair. Feel free to come up, and if you can't find a seat you may send your leader onto the stage, and he can have my chair because now that I have got on my feet to speak, Mammy Talabi will tell you that for the next four hours I shall not need it. Oh yes, we are quite used to that; after all, if it is going to take us that long to put your house in order then we don't mind if it is well past mid night before we pack up. Don't worry we have paid for six hours hire of the hall, and the watchman does not mind staying up, not if he is listening to sense; and as for taking the young ones home we have got police protection, and if it comes to that we can arrange for taxis to take them home. No? Well, if you feel like staying out there you can please yourselves, but do try and listen carefully to what I am going to say because there is nothing more painful than someone that misleads carelessly and more than that, intentionally."

"I wish we would get on with it, Richard, because as you know we have to be on that last bus."

"Tonight, we shall deal with the aspect of tribalism that we see appearing from over the wall. This is something that should concern you very much because if it gets any worse you and I stand to lose a lot of what you are enjoying at the present time; minorities always suffer. So, I am warning you know, take heed, listen to what I have to say and beware. I am not a prophet, but "ar know book", and I have not got a lazy mind, and I have studied the problem. Mammy Talabi wae you see we dae go Englan en Americcka nor to for nattin, it is so that we the sons whom you have trained and made a lot of sacrifice for, can come back and look after you, and give you a comfortable life in your own country. Whate man nor cam ya for cam die. The white man's life in Africa is

limited. The whole of Africa is rumbling with a desire to free herself of the subjugation of the Colonial yoke. Today, the Imperialist is the Master, and Boss, the men with the KWTD. Yes, my friends, you cannot lose sight of that salient fact; he posses all the 'Knowing What to Do', but our people are waking up, and learning fast, and tomorrow someone has to take over from him, and you want to make sure that when that happens that you elect the man who is most suitable for the job, the man who can stand up and put his point of view across on behalf of all the people alike instead of just the privileged few. Monkey nor bar joke, it is the top of the tree or nothing!"

Sorie was not only in a different house from Richard at school, but his political affiliations were also different. As he walked along 'Beggan man corner' towards the meeting at How Street, his mind went back to his friend Richard. They had been together for most of that day. The day had started with Algebra, and the rest of the morning had gone by quickly as they spent time out on the Sports field training for their forthcoming inter-house Sports competition. During the lunchtime break they had started off with hand tennis, as usual, followed by a swim. They had in fact ventured out to the buoy, which was used as a midstream berth for the 'Kingtom' launch, something they might not repeat in a hurry as they had encountered a vicious school of jelly fish on the way back and got hopelessly stung in places. They had walked back together from school, not going home directly, but first going into town where Richard had been able to see Martha. Now, at the end of the day, opposing loyalties set in.

He could hear the mumbling noise from the huge crowd as he approached the open Meeting. Kpanabome was not due to speak for at least another half hour, but his supporting committee had started the meeting as usual, and were concentrating on the technical side of things. The vote was valuable to all, and the people had to be told what to

do with it, and where to put their finger prints where applicable, and which box to put it in. It was no good putting it in the box with the monkey; these enthusiastic people had to understand that it was the box with the hippopotamus with mouth wide open that mattered, and none other. Kpanabome was out to 'eat' them all, he was going to swallow his way to victory, and once he got into the seat of government he was going to stay put like the hippo, keeping his nose and his people above water. The half hour soon passed, and Kpanabome rose to his feet to deliver yet another of his marathon speeches. The applause and noise was fantastic, and like Mac's Band music, Mary was fully aware of this from her balcony.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you, very much. Thank you, thank you my friends. Yes, I know exactly how you feel, but please keep quiet so that I can carry on. I do wish you would not push against each other so much at the back, because you are not going to hear any better as a result of that."

"My people, for years we have struggled to make ends meet, we have always been trampled upon by the white man, and by our other brothers. Now you have got the vote, and let me tell you that the little piece of paper, which you have been told about will make you very powerful individuals. It is within your power now to say who is going to form your new government. When the voting is finished, those valuable pieces of paper are going to be counted, and don't let anybody fool you, the Hippo has no fear, we are in the majority, and we are going to 'eat' them all up and not tell the difference. Don't worry, monkey can't even swim, poor poor monkey; by the time he gets to me he would have drowned himself. But even if he managed to get to me, my mouth will be wide open waiting to bite, and you will agree that we have never heard of the monkey being able to kill a big-big-hi-po-po-tamusssssssss! Let us stick together, and power shall surely be ours."

The Governor observed all these developments with supreme interest. As things continued to gather momentum he became increasingly aware of the fact that this was going to be a crucial tour for him. It was almost akin to guiding a son through his late teenage years towards his majority. He is frisky, inexperienced, sometimes flippant, full of misguided ideas, and aspirations, full of complicated and immature thoughts, which are not always intelligible to the more composed adult. The novelty of the situation offered no help whatsoever, and there was nothing that could be used as a real yardstick. The other self governing members of the Commonwealth like Australia, and Canada had been so for many years, and in any case their people belonged to the English speaking Caucasian races with a completely different disposition. Now, he was about to become the Head of a Cabinet acting at times on the advice of his Prime Minister. Was it going to be Kpanabome or Sonnie Boy?

After months of weekly political meetings, and verbal battles, the day fixed for the first General Elections finally arrived. Enthusiasm was at its peak, Mammy Talabi was up earlier than usual because she was determined to secure her place at the head of the queue, if possible. Sorie, and Richard were amongst the senior students who had been recruited from many secondary schools to be on duty at the numerous Polling Stations. School were closed for the day, in fact a number of the school buildings were being used as polling stations. Kpanabome had installed an extra microphones on the roof of his Bedford van, and his publicity agent was to go round on a last minute reminder to people inviting the whole proletariat to go out and vote. They could not afford to be indifferent or lethargic, this was Election Day, and the next five years depended on the happenings of this day. Transport was organised where necessary, the Hippo was taking no chances, it was no day to go for a swim, he was going to stand there, and watch it all happen. Sonnie was no defeatist, but accepted subconsciously the tremendous odds he