

1ST ANNUAL LECTURE AND AWARD OF POST GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STEPHEN OLUWOLE AWOKOYA, FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE HELD AT THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS, ON MONDAY 18TH MARCH 1996.

WELCOME ADDRESS - OTUNBA OLABIYI DUROJAIYE

The Chairman, our dear Mama, Chief Mrs. J. O. Awokoya, our Distinguished Guest Lecturer, and Guest of Honour, Your Excellencies, fellow Trustees of the Stephen Oluwole Awokoya Foundation for Science Education, Gentlemen of the Press, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. On behalf of my colleagues on the Board of Trustees of the STEPHEN OLUWOLE AWOKOYA FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION, I am very delighted to welcome you to the first Annual Lecture and Award of Scholarships by the Board of Trustees of the Foundation.

2. Some of us may recollect that it was a year and two days ago that the Stephen Oluwole Awokoya Foundation for Science Education was launched in this very hall. The Chairman of the occasion, Chief Anthony Enahoro was represented by Dr. Robson Momoh, while the Military Administrator of Lagos State, Col. Olagunsoye Oyinlola held the fort for the Guest of Honour of the day, Lt. Gen. Oladipo Diya mni, the Chief of General Staff. The inaugural Lecture was delivered by Professor Aliu Babs Fafunwa. Some 70% of the faces I see here today were present last year. We sincerely thank you.

3. Today, we are exceedingly delighted to welcome so many of you distinguished ladies and gentlemen. We appreciate how busy most people are, particularly on Mondays. I must welcome in particular, the Chairman of today, Dr. Michael Omolayole, a Scientist turned Management Consultant, Businessman, Orator, Humorist, and one time an acknowledged commentator on public events. That was in the days before the NADECO era, when one was free and safe to make analytical comments on issues of vital public significance. (Young Mike Omolayole was one of the first sets of three brilliant science undergraduates of the University College Ibadan invited by Mr. S. O. Awokoya (as he

then was) to teach at Molusi College during summer vacations in 1950 and 1951. The others were Mr Birnengi Idoniboye-Obu and G.C. Odumodu Esq.).

4. Our Board would also like to welcome our Guest of Honour, Chief M.J. St. Matthew-Daniel, an icon in international business and financial matters, a modern Daniel who has exhibited sound judgements in business investments and quiet, humble philanthropist.

5. The Board also heartily welcomes the Guest Speaker of today. Considering the fact that Professor Chief Stephen Hezekiah. Oritola Adisa Jenriogbe Oluremi Oluwole Awokoya in whose memory these annual events are organised to honour and immortalise, was an intellectual giant of international repute, it takes no less than a holder of and F.A.S' to be our Guest Speaker of today. The rare breed of men who have the letters 'F. A. S' written after their names are the 'FELLOWS OF THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES'. In that special category stands Professor Muyiwa Awe, Member of the distinguished Order of the Niger - MON, PH.D Cambridge, F.A.S and Emeritus Professor of Physics of the University of Ibadan. He is the masculine counterpart of one of the best-known women leaders in Nigeria, pre-and-post Beijing Professor (Mrs.) Bolanle Awe.

6. I shall leave further recognition and acknowledgements of the most prominent members of this star-studded assembly to today's Master of Ceremonies, a fine linguist and well-known broadcaster, Bisi Olatilo Esq.

7. Before I leave this podium, I should say our Board met seventeen times during its first year in office. The unusually large number of meetings was found necessary in this formative period in order to complete the painstaking formalities of incorporation and laying down of sound principles and policies that will govern the direction, scope and activities of the Foundation. As can be seen in the bio data of the Trustees as published in the Programme of today's events, one can hardly expect a more versatile and dedicated group to work with.

8. Perhaps the only unpleasant experience of the Board was the need to postpone four times, the closing date for receipt of recommendation of science students suitable for

scholarship awards. We were astonished and astounded that most university dons and administrators written to appeared too busy to recommend their students for the few post-graduate scholarships we decided to award during this first year. We have, however, planned a- new procedure that will make 'selection of awardees easier without sacrificing our insistence on excellence and relevance of courses as from this second year.

9. We pray earnestly and sincerely hope that the political and economic crises, which have ravaged this nation, these past three years will soon be resolved. All the systems of statecraft and the productive distributive, and communication machineries painfully established in yester years for the efficient performance of both the public and private sectors of the economy sometimes threaten to grind to a halt. The apparent casualties have been the Nigerian people, their safety, their welfare, their national values and their future. Yet, the solution to all these problems could be very simple and cheap. It is the determination and readiness of those in leadership positions at all levels to practice the elementary dictates of JUSTICE, FAIRPLAY and HONESTY. You cannot deprive a man of his rights, terrorise him into accepting your will and expect everyone to acquiesce and everything to go smoothly ever after.

10. Since there has been no noticeable effort to improve on a situation I called attention to in my welcome address last, year, I am constrained to repeat one aspect of my speech.

I quote:

"No matter how brief I want my welcome address to be, I must not fail to call the nation's attention to the fact that Nigeria dearly needs more dedicated teachers like the Awokoyas, the Tai Solarins, the Alvan Ikokus, the Rev. Dallimors, the Rev. Ransome-Kutes and the likes of the founding teachers of Barewa College Kaduna, Kings College Lagos etc, whose products have contributed a lot to the nation's growth and progress."

But has the general atmosphere in the country in the past two or three decades been conducive to producing first-rate teachers and educational administrators. How consistent have our educational policies been it is apparent that most teachers have lost confidence in themselves and interest in their profession. To most young teachers, teaching is only a

stopgap vocation and stepping-stone to other lucrative jobs. Their physical working environment is usually filthy. They lack books, teaching aids and other equipment. Their remunerations are often inadequate and sometimes arrive in arrears. It is difficult to get dedicated service from a set of workers who have no faith in what they are engaged to do and no hope in their future. Considering the strategic importance of teachers' work in moulding the character of our children and imparting knowledge and skills to the labour force of the near future, our country runs the risk of suffering dearly for the apparent neglect of teachers all over the country".

11. Today, I feel impelled to add another chapter to the observation I made last year. That is to appeal to those in authority to re-introduce and invigorate moral instructions in the school curriculum. Let religious studies be re-instituted in all the three-tier levels of education, allowing parents to choose either Christian or Islamic teachings, which should be taught their children.

12. My view on this issue is strengthened reports of more frequent atrocities and acts of violence in institutions of higher learning. There are also chilling reports of nefarious activities of cults and secret societies in many colleges. Only last Saturday, I witnessed yet another dimension of moral decadence in our secondary and tertiary institutions of learning. I was at home at Ijebu-Igbo during last Saturday's Local Government Election. Although I did not participate, I heard report and personally witnessed instances of students hired and carried in lorry loads to vote in polling centres outside of their normal place of residence contrary to electoral rules and guidelines. I know it is adult politicians who hired them. It is frightening that the next generation of Nigerian leaders are already being hired as electoral mercenaries. There is urgent need for moral rebirth at all levels. The situation in Nigeria today Remind one of Oliver Goldsmith's sad commentaries in his book: "THE DESERTED VILLAGE ". The writer lamented on a situation: 'WHERE WEALTH ACCUMULATES BUT MEN DECAY". 12. I should round up now by leaving information on the process and criteria by which we arrived at the final list of Scholarship awardees to one of my illustrious colleagues on the Board, a fellow Molusian and a Chemical Engineering, Professor Ayo F. Ogunye, at a later stage of today's proceedings.

Thanks and HEARTY WELCOME once again.

OTUNBA OLABIYI DUROJAIYE.