

WELCOME ADDRESS AT THE 3RD ANNUAL LECTURE AND SCHOLARSHIP AWARD OF THE STEPHEN OLUWOLE AWOKOYA FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION

OTUNBA TADE ISMAIL

Mr. Chairman,

The Honoured Guest Speaker,

The Honoured Special Guest.

I have the continuing privilege and honour to welcome you all to this third Annual lecture and Post-graduate Scholarships Award of the Stephen Oluwole Awokoya Foundation for Science Education. For a second time we miss the participation of the elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Otunba Olabiyi Durojaiye whose contribution to this Foundation has been immense and whose absence we deeply regret. We hope that we will be allowed to know in due course what his offence has been and when he will be tried for such an offence in an open court.

We are lucky again this year in securing the support of very eminent persons for the Lecture and the Award of Scholarships. Mr. Akintola Williams, a very highly respected Nigerian who pioneered the study of accountancy in West Africa and began the first indigenous practice in that profession is our chairman, Mr. Williams was himself a student of the Yaba Higher College where the man whom we honour with these lectures began his science education. Professor Chimere Ikoku, a distinguished chemist and scion of an illustrious family of educationists and a former Vice Chancellor of the University of Nigeria Nsuka, is our honoured lecturer. He too knew the late Professor Awokoya and the choice of his topic for this lecture amply demonstrates that fact. Our honoured guest is Dr. Babashola Chinsman whose life at a point crossed that of the late Professor Awokoya and has had to reschedule his programme in order to be able to accommodate us at this ceremony. Dr. Chinsman as you may know is the Resident Representative in Nigeria of the United Nations Development Programme.

This Foundation was inaugurated not only to keep the memory of the contributions of the late Professor Awokoya to science fresh in our minds but also to signify our own commitment and understanding of the fact that man is the ultimate resource in the development process. He is the most purposive factor in nature. All other factors are inert in comparison. This was why it was so important for the late Professor Awokoya that every child should be given a sound education. Looked at objectively, it must be clear that it would be an offence which would approximate a sin if we were to allow our children to grow in an environment for which they have not been educated.

We need many things in our country today. We need development but I think that in order to properly develop we must be free. But we cannot be truly free unless we are educated. It is therefore imperative that we work for the development and survival of both freedom and democracy through a sound programme of education. No civilization has been able to achieve either or both without a sound programme of education.

We also need democracy for our edification. It is an inevitable condition of existence for an educated people. But democracy requires a rotation in office in order to prevent the development of an untouchable bureaucratic elite or aristocracy. Besides, the attribute of modern thinking is the acceptance by all people of the right of all citizens to participate in the process of all decisions concerning their lives. The great political issue of the moment given the diversity and the plurality of our society is not to destroy but to organise discussions among the Nigerian people so that a new meaning may be given to the concept of our plurality. Not to do so is to engage in a dream the realization of which may lead to a cataclysm.

It is important to understand that neither force nor rampant corrupt inducement will compel an educated people to fall in line. It is reason, alone which is a product of sound education that can compel an educated mind to comply. Society should not be allowed to degenerate into camps of deliberately disaffected and deliberately favoured people. Such polarization will not lead to the development of a healthy community.

We place our emphasis on post-graduate awards because we wish to invest in the area of the development or original thought. We select students with good results in their degree for higher degrees and we faithfully hope that their higher degrees will lead to better production of food, better health, more regular power supply, better roads and a more secure society. This is our hope and we believe it is what would have pleased our mentor in whose name and memory these lectures and awards have been inaugurated.

May I now request you to join us in our determination to continue in the tradition to which the late Professor Oiuwole Awokoya dedicated his life - the right of all children to be educated. We request you to reject with us in this Foundation the notion that education may be too much or that any people may engage in a mad rush to education. Education is something that we need everyday and we can never have too much of it.

I thank you all for accepting our invitation.

TADE ISMAIL

Stephen Oluwole Awokoya Foundation for Science Education.

Tuesday 17 March, 1998.