

Notes for Secretary of State's Speech at  
Kgotla at Serowe - 1st February, 1951

Bamangwato,

I am glad to meet so many of the Bamangwato people in their Kgotla at Serowe, especially at this difficult time of harvest when most of you would wish to be at work in your fields. It is also very nice to see your women and your children in such great numbers. I am glad of this opportunity to discuss some of your problems with you as the representative of the King's Government.

I am responsible in London for the affairs of the Bamangwato and the whole of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and I watch with care and attention all that happens and I give much thought to the future and prosperity of all the inhabitants of the Reserve, the Bamangwato and their allied peoples. I have also closely studied its history and its past and have a great respect for the memory of Khama, who was one of the great men of Africa.

I have listened with care and attention to what you have told me and will bear all your words in mind. I have noted with pleasure your expression of loyalty and allegiance to the Crown and on my return to England will convey them to His Majesty. I will answer some of the questions you have asked me.

On the question of the Chieftainship dispute, the Government in London made a clear statement nearly a year ago of what it thinks and what it means to do. This statement is written down in the White Paper which I have with me here. What it says is clear and simple. It means that the Bamangwato are to have no chief for at least five years. I have given a pledge that at the end of the five years the Government will look at the whole question again in the light of all that has happened and in the true interests of the people. The White Paper makes no promise at all about what will happen at the end of the five years

It does not say that anyone will then be made Chief or not be made chief. I want you to be quite clear about that so that there can be no misunderstanding. What the White Paper says is that the Government will look at the matter again and afresh with an open mind.

His Majesty's Government wishes to restore a system of administration run by Africans and I call on you, in the name of the Government, to co-operate fully and wholeheartedly in restoring such a system.

We wish this system to represent the people better than in the past- both the Bamaangwato and the allied peoples. What we have in mind is that there should be small councils in each district. These councils would send representatives to a central council. I have told the Resident Commissioner to discuss the idea of these councils with the people in a series of tribal meetings so that every one may understand.

As the district councils grow they can and will be given more and more responsibility.

The central council can begin by helping and advising the District Commissioner until it can be given all the functions of a native authority. I want you to know that the Government is anxious as the Bamaangwato themselves that this should happen and that there should again be a native authority. But the speed with which this can happen depends upon the co-operation of the people and above all upon their willingness to forget feuds and factions. There can be no native authority with full functions until the interests of the whole people are put above feuds and personal jealousies.

I want you to know further in reply to the speeches you have made to us, that the Government will never impose Tshekedi or anyone as Chief of the Bamaangwato against the wishes of the majority of the people.

I hope that in their own interests the people will co-operate with the plans and intentions of the Government

Nothing.../

Nothing but unhappiness and misery can come to failure to co-operate.

On the other hand with co-operation there can be greatly increased prosperity and happiness. I have noted with care what you have said to me about the problems of water supply, hospitals and schools in the Reserve.

I can assure you that the Government will as you suggest, give every assistance possible to build up a sound education in this Territory. Moeng is already a very important step in that direction and it will get every encouragement from the Government.

I have noted what you said about dispensaries in the villages. The most important problem here is that of staffing. When I go back to London I will consider what help I can give.

But the most important of all is that the people should be prosperous so that they can themselves help to build up the services they need. But if this is to be done the people themselves must play their part and pay their taxes, both the graded and the basic, promptly and in full. You must remember that 35% per cent of the basic taxes and the whole of the graded tax goes into your own Native Treasury.

The Government is making and will make a big effort to help develop the Territory. £1 million is being spent on improving water supplies of all sorts, in particular surface dams; upon a geological survey to discover the hidden wealth and resources, education, health and roads. The establishment of an abattoir will greatly increase the wealth of the territory. All these things promise a steady increase of prosperity and a steady advance of the people.

In short, therefore, if during the period in which the chieftainship is in abeyance, you for your part will co-operate and assist government in setting up a fully

representative..../

representative from a local Government to be conducted by yourselves, Government for its part will do everything in its power to help you. Forget for a time your past difficulties and concentrate your minds on the future a future full of possibilities not only of economic development and increasing prosperity but of your, participation in the management of your own affairs to a far greater extent than in the past.

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