

# REACTION OF NORTH-WEST TEACHERS TO PRESIDENTIAL DECREES No. 97/045 AND 97/046 OF 5TH MARCH 1997

At an enlarged meeting of teachers of the North West Province, holding in Bamenda at Circular Education Secretariat on the 22nd of March 1997, Teachers of the North West Province studied critically two surreptitious and malicious decrees, Nos. 97/045 and 97/046 signed by the President of the Republic on the 5th of March 1997.

The North West Teachers, provoked by the dubious contents of the two malignant decrees, hitherto, observed as follows:

1. That Decree Nos. 97/045 and 97/046 are an epitome of the government's long standing design to crumple the GCE Board and consequently the Anglophone Educational System. This diabolic determination has been overtly manifested by Government's refusal to respect existing text governing the GCE Board and also denying the Board of the much needed subvention - a system of murdering by starvation.
2. That Decree No. 97/045 modifying decree No. 93/172 of 1st July 1993 creating the GCE Board is unnecessary as neither the Board nor the Education forum requested for such modification. Moreover, we see this modification (see article 3) as a malicious and assimilationist ploy.
  - (a) Article 3 (new, sub 1) denies the GCE Board powers to organise GCE in Technical Education Subjects. Given the importance of Technical Education in any developing society, this refusal is tantamount to impeding the growth of technology in Anglophone Cameroon.
  - (b) Article 3 (new, sub 2) subjects the GCE Board to administering the English version of an examination set by a different authority to Anglophone children. As if these were not enough this same article further prescribes Francophone certificates to Anglophone children. These malevolent moves can only mean one thing - total assimilation and strangulation of Anglophone Educational system, attempts earlier rejected by this community.
3. That article 2 of the new decree gives the Minister of National Education absolute control over the GCE Board, instead of the supervisory role he is supposed to play. By handing the hard-earned GCE Board (for which Anglophones sacrificed both blood and limbs), back to the Minister of National Education, the decree ignores the very reasons that prompted the creation of the Board.
4. That article 2 (sub 1) of decree No. 97/046 severing links with the University of London is irresponsible and destructive, as it jeopardizes the international credibility of GCE Certificates. As prove of this, in an admission correspondence between the University of London and a Cameroonian applicant for an undergraduate course, the University of London had this to say:

I note your concern about our entrance requirements and about the fact that we do not automatically accept 'O' and 'A' levels gained in the Cameroon's after 1990. I understand that up until 1990, your 'O' and 'A' levels were externally scrutinised by the University of London examination and assessment council, but that after that date they became entirely locally scrutinised. Since that time, there has been reports of concern about the administration of the examinations and the University has received no response to its letters of enquiry from your Ministry of Education. As far

as the University is concerned, therefore, it is unlikely that we will accept 'O' and 'A' levels taken after 1990 for entrance into University of London degree and diploma programmes.

5. That by dissolving the Examination Executive Council (EEC) and introducing an alien external evaluation team known as the "jury" into the assessment system of the GCE Board, the decree encroaches on the administrative and assessment autonomy of the Board.
6. That article 10 of decree No. 97/046 oversaddles the Minister of National Education with overwhelming powers to :
  - (a) Choose the list of subjects for the examinations.
  - (b) Determine duration of examinations.
  - (c) Introduce the obnoxious system of grading by coefficients alien to the GCE system.
  - (d) Introduce the repugnant group certificate system, vehemently rejected in 1983 by the Anglophone community.
  - (e) Determine modalities for registration, examination centres etc. This is no longer playing the supervisory role, hitherto known, as per the text of application of 1993 determining the administrative structure of the GCE Board.

Taking cognizance of the above observations and considering the bi-cultural nature of Cameroon as enshrined in the constitution, the marginalisation of Anglophones in Cameroon and the need for peaceful co-existence of the two cultures and advantages therein. Finally, considering the necessity for peace given the political agenda for 1997, the teachers of the North West resolved as follows.

1. That His Excellency the President of the Republic should immediately repeal decree Nos. 97/045 and 97/046 of 5th March 1997.
2. That the publication and/or implementation of these decrees will be interpreted to mean an official declaration of the assimilation policy which is secretly and quietly being implemented.
3. That issues concerning the Anglo-Saxon educational identity shall not be negotiated.
4. That government should grant more administrative autonomy and equally fulfill its financial commitment to the GCE Board.
5. That Teachers of the North West shall decline responsibility for any repercussion should government refuse to heed to this timely advice.

***DONE IN BAMENDA THIS 22ND DAY OF MARCH 1997.***

  
Kimfon Michael

North West Teachers Representative  
(GCE Board Council)