

2ND ANNUAL LECTURE OF THE STEPHEN OLUWOLE AWOKOYA FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION AT THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS - 16TH MARCH 1997

WELCOME ADDRESS - Tade Ismail

It is a great pleasure and privilege for me to welcome you all on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Stephen Oluwole Awokoya Foundation for Science Education to this second Annual Memorial Lecture and Award of Post-Graduate scholarship. I stand before you today only in a representative capacity since the elected Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation, Otunba Olabiyi Durojaiye mni, is in detention for an Offence, the nature of which we are yet to know. We sympathise with the family and trust that the legal processes, which are being followed, would lead to his early release.

Our Purpose today is to continue the celebration of the excellence of the life of a scientist which we began three years ago. Science education was a life-long engagement of Chief Stephen Oluwole Awokoya. He taught Science. He developed Policies about science education. He then proceeded to administer education. Very few Nigerians of his generation had the opportunity to be at once a Minister for Education, a Science teacher and a Principal both at Secondary and Post Secondary Science School, a Permanent Secretary and Federal Adviser on Education and finally a Professor of Education in a University within the same country. I should add that he was also a world civil servant at UNESCO. Such a gamut of experience occurs rarely and it is given only to a few outstanding individuals in the firmament of knowledge. It will be impossible to write the history of science education in Nigeria without placing the Late Chief S. O. Awokoya in a prominent position in the pantheon of the scientists who have passed away.

Science has a peculiar fluidity in which what is knowledge of it is time-related.

The development in the field of science has a rather high velocity with the result that what is regarded, as a certainty today may be false tomorrow. Chief Awokoya made it his purpose to advance the teaching of science and to promote the understanding of it by the public. At one of his more relaxed moments at tea in my office one afternoon in 1981, he

told me how he fabricated beakers and jars for the students of the Federal Emergency Science School in the late 50's and the early 60's instead of waiting for the factory produced ones. He also told me of the over three hundred specialisations in science and how only a dismal few were known to Nigerians.

This year we have array of guest-speaker, guest of honour, and a chairman that I consider we are very lucky to secure.

The Guest Lecturer is one of the eminent historians on the African Continent and he is without doubt one of the greatest authorities in his field in the world. He will be speaking to us on the topic of Science and Technology which I find very interesting.

When it was suggested that a historian would deliver the lecture for this year and that he had chosen the topic of science, I thought we should expect the modern equivalent of the 'Big Bang' Theory from which some people thought the universe began. We might still have it. I have the honour of welcoming Prof. Jacob Ade-Ajayi on behalf of the Foundation.

Our Guest of Honour was the youngest Commissioner for Economic Planning in Lagos State in the era of Brigadier-General Bolaji Johnson. He is an Economist, a playwright and commentator on literary and economic matters. He is also a businessman and may sometimes dabble into industry. He has generally remained in the eyes of the public and it may be that one day when he is more confident of the voters he will decide to determine his standing among them. May I welcome Chief Rasheed Abiodun Gbadamosi on behalf of the foundation.

We are fortunate to have Mr. George Dove-Edwin the retired Ambassador of Nigeria to the Court of St. James and one of our most distinguished diplomats in our midst. He has agreed to direct the affairs as the Chairman of the occasion. The Late Chief S. O. Awokoya affected each of us in our respective ways. He kept a little book into which he entered the names of his younger friends and the prospects, which he thought they had. I

have a suspicion that Ambassador George Dove-Edwin's name must have been entered into that book. May I welcome Ambassador George Dove-Edwin to this event.

I should conclude this brief statement by wishing all the awardees of the Stephen Oluwole Awokoya Foundation for Science Education a successful career in science and hope that they would take advantage of their grants to advance the benefit of science to the less fortunate members of the community.