

existing conditions.

ASA can not expect to study and claim expertise on black people so long as its membership consciously and unconsciously supports the derogation of black people to secondary status in our society and the institutions of that society. However, this is essentially a problem, in this case, for which ASA is responsible.

In announcing my resignation, I extend thanks to all those persons who offered their advice and assistance in what has been a valuable learning experience and a warning of where we are.

LETTERS FROM MEMBERS

The Newsletter is pleased to continue to print letters from ASA members who wish to express their opinions about the consequences of the Montreal meeting and other issues of interest to their fellow Africanists.

The following letter refers to the questionnaire sent out to ASA members last December (see February-March Newsletter, pp. 2-4):

The report on the questionnaire shows that a total of 588 members are in favor of alternative 3 which, when carefully read, amounts to a sophisticated but still unacceptable paternalism. This is tragic. Who are the members of ASA Board of Directors or Fellows to try "to interest more Black scholars in the affairs and direction of the Association . . . to promote greater interest in African studies among Black Americans . . . to secure special funds for the support of research in African studies by Afro-Americans . . ."?

The demand of equal voice and responsibility in the determination of the direction, policy and overall activities of ASA is the issue and not the extension of the generosity of ASA Fellows and Board members. This overwhelming preference for choice 3 shows that the point of Professor Morse's letter has been ignored, that the polling exercise has allowed the White overlords of ASA to cloak their discriminatory practices in a contemptuous liberal objectivity. Now the Board can wash its conscience free by resorting to legality and a popular mandate in order to perpetuate discredited patterns. That will not do.

If the determination to achieve equal voice and responsibility is interpreted as a racial policy, we should ask the Board and Fellows what their non-racial policy has accomplished in the last ten years. They ought to be told that the result of their activities has been a de facto exclusion of both Black Americans and Africans. The ASA cannot continue to hide under any cloak of legality and survive the next meeting at New Orleans.

The preoccupation with making concessions to the AHSA and the Black Caucus also disturbs me. The ASA intends to make concessions. But the ASA is being challenged to concede rights. The two are not the same. Moreover the ASA does not seem to realize that the AHSA does not and cannot represent all Black American scholars interested in African studies. The AHSA can neither represent nor speak for African scholars concerned with the content of African studies. The claims of the latter are as valid as those of the AHSA. There are only two African scholars participating in the negotiations as members of the Black Caucus and these have not been mandated by African scholars as such. One would have thought that the ASA Board would invite a number of African scholars available in many American universities to help work out a broadly based formula.

The ASA is being challenged to open its doors to mature, relevant and inclusive

scholarship. Privately it resolutely clings to a subtle racist policy; publicly it tries to make concessions only to accommodate AHSAs. And after the current negotiations have been concluded, the ASA may still have to face another challenge from African scholars—possibly at New Orleans. See you all there.

Emmanuel O. Anise

The next three items deal with issues raised at Montreal:

Should Afro-American Studies Institutes become centers for revolutionary rhetoric? Should scholars be hired to teach courses in Afro-American Studies or should para-revolutionaries and semi-literates be hired to teach in Afro-American Institutes? Should Afro-American Institutes be the exclusive preserve of African-Americans? I confess, I do not know all the answers. Sometimes I am at a loss trying to understand the ineluctable forces of our times. At Richmond, however, I am certain of one thing, and that is, our approach in African and Afro-American Studies is based on the premise that genuine understanding of the historical, cultural, and scholarly heritage of Africans in the fatherland and Africans in the Diaspora requires systematic training and control of the theoretical and methodological aspects of a particular discipline, as well as knowledge of the major assumptions of related disciplines.

The term, "Afro-American Studies" has come to be used generically and academically to encompass the entire Black Diaspora--that is, to refer to the scholarly investigation of the so-called "Black Experience" in the New World as well as the African fatherland. Considered from this, its widest sense, Afro-American Studies seek to project the Black man in a new and more complete image--from an African-American, which is to say, non-racist perspective. The projection of a new image demands the development of a new scholarship--an academic approach which seeks to restore the Black man to the central position as innovator, and moulder of his own culture, as distinct from the previous and secondary position accorded to him as a cultureless being capable only of emulating Western culture. Against this new desire for reconsideration of the African-American contribution to world culture, turning the Afro-American Institute into a center for para-revolutionary professionals would be tantamount to a betrayal of the race.

How else would a student who denies the relevancy of reading help in projecting this new and complete image of the African-American when he is unable to tell that many of the so-called scholarly historical and sociological works are written from a decidedly racist point of view, that they are tainted by prejudicial sentiment, and that the importance of all these works--biased and unbiased--must be seen in terms of the invaluable information which they contain about Black peoples, their culture, and their history; as indeed they must be appreciated in terms of the attitudes they reflect of non-Black peoples towards Black people, their customs and traditions.

At this point in time the Black World is acquiring a different dimension and attitudes are undergoing a constant and often revolutionary change. The interplay of the new forces which are emerging in the African fatherland, among the Afro-Americans in the New World, the Black peoples of the West Indies, and in other parts of the world, make the need for closer analysis of their motivations, their historical origins and cultural links, greater and more urgent than ever. And this demands not revolutionary rhetoric and para-intellectualism, but rigorous scholarship and a sharpened mind capable of understanding the inner dynamics of societal change and of those forces retarding the onward march of mankind.

Francis A. Botchway
Richmond College of The City University
of New York

I deplore strongly any tendency to convert this association, or any similar one, into a political or propaganda organization. I deplore any kind of racism, furthermore, whether it comes from whites or from blacks or from any kind of religious, or ethnic, or racial group. Organizations of the kind this has hitherto been serve an invaluable purpose: they give us an opportunity to meet, and to discourse rationally with, people we don't agree with, as well as people who share our beliefs, convictions, and conclusions. If we cut away from our world such opportunities for rational communication, we will ultimately find ourselves left only with the alternative of clashing violently with those who don't see things entirely our way.

Donald J. Weinstock

The following members have asked that their signatures be added to the letter from Professors Emerson, Kilson, Nye and Rotberg (November-December Newsletter, pp. 21-22): Barbara Callaway, Raymond F. Kelly, Jacques Maquet, Lorna Marshall, Keith B. Moore, Robert Phillips, Thomas T. Poleman, Beverly J. Pooley, William J. Samarin, Alan Sokolski, Charles H. Stuart, Peter Walshe, Donald J. Weinstock.

This final letter refers to the questionnaire which has been sent out to ASA members for the Language and area Studies Review (see April Newsletter, p. 1):

I have made extensive use of questionnaires in my own research, but in my opinion much of the enclosed questionnaire is irrelevant--and I found myself answering the questions with increasing impatience. I agree that it is an appropriate time to take stock of what area studies have accomplished, and to anticipate future needs, but does your survey do this, and is this enough? Perhaps--though I wonder.

I should like to make my own unsolicited comments about African studies. First, much of what has been written is inconsequential, or, worse--simply wrong. Scholars publish for promotion's sake, and we all do this. Good scholars write one good book, gain some reputation, and then publish a number of totally inadequate books because they are too busy in extra-curricular activities, but feel they must continue to publish. The really good political science materials on Africa are few, though much money and time has been spent--and this is but one field.

Nor have we accomplished a good marriage between discipline and area. Disciplinary-oriented people turn to Africa to use as a playground in which to test their theories, doing so with a totally inadequate background to the cultures of the countries which they study. Data is analyzed on the basis of one's western cultural experience, and everyone's time and money is wasted. God knows how many Africans have answered questions for no useful purpose--and we've about used up our good will in some countries. Area-oriented people, on the other hand, all too often give us nice descriptive studies, which are just that and nothing more.

You've inquired about tensions between disciplines and areas. Obviously they are there, and there's nothing new about it. We have an African Studies Department at SUNY, New Paltz, and are forever on the defensive. I can live with that tension, but what about other more recent tensions which you fail to probe: student-faculty tension, African studies-Black studies tension, the increasing reluctance of African countries to accept American scholars. Students are ques-

tioning the very basis of our research--where we get our funds and why we do research; for whose edification. They also ask what are the biases underlying our conclusions. Some of my research money was provided by the Institute of Social and Economic Research in South Africa. Does this affect the end product? I don't think it has to, but questions of this nature must be answered, for the sources from which we receive research money have political implications. If nothing else, they may guide what we do research about. How easy is it to get a grant to study American imperialism in Africa?

African studies-Black studies tension is very relevant. Why wasn't more asked about this? Some black students are saying that whites should not teach about Africa. How many schools are facing this problem and what do we do about it? Why weren't we asked about the difficulties of fresh Ph.D.'s with white skins finding jobs in African studies programs? The problem is there, as such programs seek to achieve a racial mix. This should be a consideration in our counselling of students interested in African studies.

African nations are becoming sensitive to American researchers. We deplore this as a threat to academic freedom, and in a sense it is. But some of this sensitivity is warranted on the basis of experiences Africans have had with researchers ill-prepared for the complexities of cross-cultural contact. We sent Ph.D. candidates into the field with inadequate social guidelines. Some go out pompous and arrogant, blown up with the self-importance of their first major grant. Some few believe it their right to abscond with materials from files ill-protected by inexperienced African officials. I speak from personal experience here, for a former colleague of mine was proud of the materials he had lifted from a district office. The problem goes beyond Ph.D. candidates wandering about Africa. While in South Africa I visited the Race Relations Institute in Johannesburg, a body whose liberal instincts cause it to reach out to scholars from other countries to find kindred souls. I was received graciously, but with a certain skepticism, because they felt that a previous unnamed American university group had tried to lift irreplaceable materials from their files.

Frankly, there is too much academic gamesmanship. Ego and ambition have caused us to write too much about too little. It has caused us to bumble ahead without the necessary soul-searching as to means and to ends. We need to take stock of ourselves after twenty years, but not because of the "sudden shrinkage of external funding" alone, or because of "the accumulation of intellectual tensions between some disciplines and the area studies approach." This is a case of a self-imposed tunnel vision seemingly reflecting a financial and institutional threat to our ambitions. Surely we can do better than that.

Thomas Nyquist

ASA BOARD MEETING

The following report is based on the minutes of the Board meeting held on April 10-11 in Boston, Massachusetts. Copies of the complete, formal minutes are available on request from the ASA office at Brandeis.

1. Attendance

Board members: Alphonso Castagno, L. Gray Cowan, Philip Curtin, Martin Kilson, Leo Kuper, Daniel McCall, Ruth Morgenthau, Conrad Reining, Marshall Segall, Benjamin Thomas, Absolom Vilakazi, M. Crawford Young