

UNITED NATIONS
TRUSTEESHIP
COUNCIL



GENERAL

T/PET.4/66
2 June 1950

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

5 JUN 1950

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PETITION FROM FIVE MEMBERS OF THE VICTORIA FEDERATED COUNCIL
CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS UNDER
BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

Note by the Secretary-General: In accordance with rule 85 of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the members of the Trusteeship Council a communication dated 28 April 1950 from five members of the Victoria Federated Council concerning the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under British administration.

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T/PET.4/66

COPY

Victoria, British Cameroons
Under United Kingdom Trusteeship

28 April, 1950

His Excellency
The Governor,
Lagos, Nigeria
Thro' The District Officer,
Victoria, &c., &c.,

May it please Your Excellency;

WHEREAS in view of the facts that we, as aggrieved and oppressed people, on behalf of both ourselves and the entire inhabitants of the several Villages which we represent in the Victoria Federated Council, did, in compliance with the provisions laid down in paras: 2 and 3 of the Government Gazette No. 53 of 21st October, 1943, Vol. 30 - Govt. Notice No. 1235, submit our petition dated 11th August, 1949, through the District Officer, Victoria, &c., to Your Excellency in Lagos, praying earnestly that Mr. J. M. Williams be asked to retire honourably from his Office of the President of the Federated Council &c., &c., within the Financial year ended 31st March 1950, and be given adequate gratuity for past services rendered; and

2. WHEREAS the District Officer, Victoria, aforementioned through whom the said petition was submitted did, on the receipt of the said petition in his office, write a letter to us acknowledging the receipt thereof, and in the same letter assured us of his forwarding the said petition of ours to its destination; and

3. WHEREAS from the date of the said petition and the acknowledgment thereof by the District Officer, Victoria, and up to the present time of writing this, there has been nothing forthcoming in the form of a reply from the Governor to whom the petition was addressed, and nothing in respect of the demand made in the said petition by us and our people done in spite of the seriousness of the complaints made and the urgency of our demand; and

4. WHEREAS as our Teacher, Protector, Trustee and Overlord, the Government should have set better example before us by adhering itself to the Rules of etiquette and courtesy which demand that a reply, be it favourable or otherwise, should be given to every petition submitted to it; and

/5. WHEREAS

5. WHEREAS instead of a reply to our petition, the Government kept, and still keeps quiet over the important and urgent matter placed before it, and allows the party whom we asked in the said petition to advise to resign his appointment honourably within the financial year to continue in office till this date; and in addition, has by so doing, led us to the belief that we are a nonentity and must therefore submit ourselves, willy-nilly, to whatever decision that Government might arrive at, whether good or bad for the people; and

6. WHEREAS the Government as our Teacher &c., is aware that the treating in this manner a petition from any great and considerable body of men is not the way to bring about peace in the country and among the people affected, but a sure way of urging the people to demonstrate and agitate in order to bring their standard grievance to the notice of the outside world and the Government for immediate remedy; and when such compulsory demonstration is staged by the people, the defenceless and weak people - the demonstrators - are branded as lawless and breakers of the public peace which deserve nothing but to be shot down by either the Police or the Soldiers which are at all times in readiness to obey the order of the Government; and

7. WHEREAS in spite of our legitimate and righteous demand that Mr. J. M. Williams, O.B.E. should be asked by the Government to retire honourably during the financial year, the Government allowed him, since his return from the United Kingdom to continue in office as Head of both Executive and Judiciary, apart from his being a paid member of the C.D.C. (the Cameroons Development Corporation) Board - an act or measure which must reflect an indellible disgrace on the British administration in the Cameroons since the progress of the age is not a delusion and hallucination; example, it is said, is better than precept; and

8. WHEREAS we are now in the age of democracy as we have been hearing it rung in our ears almost every day; therefore since when any man gives cause for his citizenship to be challenged as a consequence of unbecoming influence, autocratic leanings, which might interfere with the general peace, order and good government, his immediate removal from public office is dictated by expediency; hence the inhabitants of the Villages - men and women, literates and illiterates - which we represent in the Victoria Federated Council aforesaid, are right in demanding that Mr. J. M. Williams, O.B.E. of Victoria, who is the

/Government's

Government's and not the people's choice, must step down, resign honourably and hands off their district politics without favour or fear, affection or ill-will, but in the interest of peace, order and good government, as many men of renown and fame in British History had had their removal from public office enforced since the "greatest good for the greatest number" is the criterion of good government"; and

9. WHEREAS it was an eminent Judge and noble Lord who declared as a basic axiom of democratic law that "it is important not only that justice be done, but that justice appears to be done". Justice does not appear to have been done in this matter by the Government with whom the demand of the people had been lodged, and which appears to ignore the people's desires and demand, waiting presumably, for the time when the people would feel themselves constrained through oppression and victimization to agitate and demonstrate when the Government would then order the shooting down of the demonstrators by its police or soldiers as the events which are daily passing before us urge us to believe this to be the policy of the Government no-a-days when the people would feel to demand what they considered to be their lawful right.

10. R E S O L V E D therefore that (a) since the right of petition is an undoubted privilege of the people under the British Rule and we as Protected persons and under the United Kingdom Trusteeship are no less privileged in this respect than others, yet we are being deprived, as instanced this vexed matter, of the enjoyment of this privilege; and (b) since the laws of toleration provide for every real grievance which any loyal subject can rationally complain of, but this has not been extended to us as a people as the above facts would reveal; and (c) since the Government has wilfully treated us as a body of men with such contempt, and has by disdainfully treating our petition, spited us, notwithstanding the legitimate demand therein made; and (d) since the Government as our Teacher, Protector and Trustee is aware that isolating a disease is a negative action, and cure is positive, but would not like to effect the cure; and (e) since the Government is aware that indifference to a crime when it lies within a man's power to prevent it is moral guilt as much as the crime itself, but would not attempt to find a way to effect peace, order and good government in time and when approached in a constitutional manner as instanced the present case, and as the law demands, but would simply keep

/waiting

waiting for the time when it would send in troops or a squad of Police with Rifles or Tear Gas to shoot the people down because of their making demonstrations, this petition, attached to the previous one be forwarded to the Governor of Nigeria through the prescribed channel, and a copy each to be forwarded to the Rt. Hon'ble the Secretary of State for the Colonies, London; The Chairman or Secretary, the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations Organization, Lake Success; The Press respectively, so that our plight may be known to the world ere we be urged to demonstrate and agitate in order to have our wrongs righted and ere we be shot like beasts in consequence, or otherwise treated on account of our legitimate demand.

On behalf of both ourselves and our people,

We are Your Excellency's obedient servants.

(signed)(illegible)

(")(illegible)

(") S. Itutu

(") Albert N. Melambe

(") R. W. Masnufas

Written by me thro' petitioners' request:

(signed)(illegible)

Tiko, British Camercons.

1341 words. Fee pd. 6 3/-

Original & 7 copies.

Received at United Nations Headquarters, 4 May 1950.

COPY

Victoria, British Cameroons

11 August, 1949.

His Excellency The Governor,

Lagos.

Thro' The District Officer, Victoria,

&c., &c., &c.,

May it please Your Excellency;

The humble petition of the undersigned members of the Federated Council of Victoria, British Cameroons, on behalf of both ourselves and the entire members of the Villages which we have the honour to represent, praying humbly and respectfully, sheweth:

1. That at the outset, we feel it our bounden duty to renew and reaffirm our unflinching and unswerving loyalty to the British Throne, and to assure Your Excellency that we are very grateful because, we form an almost insignificant portion of the British glorious Empire, we are honoured by being granted the privilege of having our own Native Council and Administration whereby our Constitutional and Customary laws which are found to be not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience are retained and practised without any interference from any source.

2. That the joy we should naturally feel for such magnitude is destroyed in our mind by the apparent indifference of the Government to our oft-repeated demands for changes in our judicial and Executive works, the Government's knowledge of the fact that these changes are essential and necessary in a democratic country, notwithstanding.

3. That we shall not be thought to have been influenced by jealousy, envy or prejudice, or by any desire to supplant him when we humbly submit for Your Excellency's consideration and approval the united voice and desire of the entire people of the Villages we have the honour to represent, that it is time Mr. J. M. Williams, CBE be asked to retire from service and another take his place so that our Native Administration's Machinery may run more smoothly than at present, and on the same line with those in Nigeria and elsewhere, instead of the present running of same by one man who is not the peoples' choice and does

/not therefore

not therefore represent them as will be observed later in this petition.

4. That as we are well aware that Mr. Williams, OBE has held the position of the Native Administration Judicial and Executive works combined for many years, according to the Government, has filled it with loyalty and intelligence, and it is therefore not the policy of the Government to discard their loyal servants for no good reason, we therefore do not wish Your Excellency to consider us as demanding from the Government the casting aside, as vile instruments are usually dealt with when they are no more useful, of J. M. Williams O.B.E., the loyal servant of His Majesty's Government of Nigeria and the Cameroons, but rather to ask him to retire honourably and be given one year's salary but not pension.

5. That in support of our humble demands, we humbly and respectfully entreat Your Excellency to permit us to state, in as succinct a manner as possible, the grounds of our present Constitutional requests, since our previous repeated calls upon the Government to effect necessary changes in our Judicial and Executive works in the light of the present-day awakening, have always met with cold indifference and at times with banter and biting sarcasms:

(a) That before the advent of the Whiteman into this country, the Sea port of Victoria was a market for all several Villages in the neighbourhood, the nearest being MWENWO where the present residence of the District Officer is situated. There was also a Village called MOKUWAW which is now known as the Botanical Gardens; other Villages such as BOTA, KIE, NDAME, MONDONT, MARUKA, LIWANDA, MBENDE and BIMBIA existed and are still existing till this date.

(b) That each of these Villages was composed of several families; each of these families had a family Head; and these family Heads usually meet together and elect among themselves one man as the Village Head, and these latter, in turn, elect one of their number as the President to whom they give respect in any case - minor or major - which may happen. This was the natural order and Constitution by which our Government was wont to be guided and worked are the advent of Europeans into our Country.

(c) That it would therefore be observed that according to our Native Law and Constitution, nobody can be recognised as a Head Chief without being elected by other Village Heads and approved by them and the people; and nobody can be a Village Head if he is not of the line and approved by the people. A Head Chief

/must

must first prove himself a Village Head appointed and recognised by the people of the Village that appoints and acknowledges him as such.

6. That in the case of J. Manga Williams, O.B.E. who claims to be a Bimbian but who is, in fact, a foreign-native of the said Bimbia, having been born by one late NALBEKE - a foreign-native who came to sojourn in Bimbia. This Mr. J. M. Williams, during the course of events became a School Teacher during the German's occupation of the Cameroons and in this capacity, through his intrigues and malignity, he succeeded in getting the German Authority to make him the President of the Court, and from that time till now he became autocratic in his dealings with others according to the German training he got from his German Masters.

7. That much as we as a body do not wish to dispute the worthiness of Mr. J. M. Williams on whom His Majesty has been graciously disposed to confer the title of O.B.E. in recognition of the services given to the Government (but not to us and the Country), also his loyalty and intelligence, we cannot, however, help repeating the fact that from what we have been witnessing and experiencing through the autocratic leanings of this man, his loyal and intelligence which appear to have an outward sign of zeal, self-abnegation and disinterestedness, are only a selfish plan to parry invectives and purchase popularity and honour at the expense of that body which cannot defend itself - posterity.

8. That times and again, through petitions and interviews, have we been suggesting to the Government the needs for changes and urging it to accede to our demands for reform in our Native Administration Judicial and Executive works, but have often met with disappointment. Mr. J. M. Williams, O.B.E. whose father as stated above was never a Village Head nor a Chief but an ordinary foreign-native who came to sojourn in Bimbia with his son has, since many years past, and through the support of the Government, been allowed to rule the indigenes autocratically, and as it pleases him.

9. That treating in the manner above described a petition from any great and considerable Body of men is not, in our humble opinion the way to allay the jealousies and extinguish the uneasiness that occasioned it; and the oftener such instances are repeated the more we fear the disaffection of the people will increase; for, as Your Excellency will admit, narrow-mindedness tends to wickedness, because it does not extend its watchfulness to every part of the moral nature and this neglect fosters the growth of evil in the parts neglected.

/10. That in spite

10. That in spite of the fact of his having no legitimate claim to the Chair of an ordinary Village Head as his father was not one nor the other, Mr. J. M. Williams O.B.E., having succeeded in securing the favour and support of the Government, is both the President of the Native Court of Appeal and of the Lower Court of Victoria; a Member of the Cameroons Development Corporation Board; the President of the Federated Council, and a Member of the House of Assembly, nominated by the Government, in which latter capacity, as he has often told us he is not accountable to us; and to prove this, he has never one day from the time he was nominated a Member of the Legislative Council representing the British Cameroons under the Old Constitution and up to the present date, made any attempt to tell us what and what had been done and said in the Council on his return.

11. That Mr. J. M. Williams, O.B.E. having been made or created a Chief by the Government and without the people's knowledge and consent and contrary to our Native Customary Law and Constitution, have never one day failed by his autocratic tendencies, to make us know and feel that he is truly not of our stock, and therefore does whatever pleases him, as instanced the case - among other cases - of electing people of his own choice and likeness to sit among other Councillors in Council and in the Court as he desires and wishes, without the knowledge of the Members of the Federated Council and even out of the Council, thus arrogating to himself the right and power to make and unmake members; and we wonder as this is being tolerated under Democratic Government such as the British Government is.

12. That from our para: 10 above, Your Excellency will readily see that this one man - Mr. J. M. Williams, O.B.E. - in order to eclipse others so that the Government may be led to believe that we have no suitable, efficient and intelligent men capable of doing or performing the duties of the Administration besides him and him alone has, all these years been forcing himself to perform quadruple (if not quintuple) functions, thus retaining, for the sole and only purpose of oppression, vindictiveness and victimization, both judicial and executive powers and prerogatives.

13. - That though he does not perform full-time service as President yet he is being paid his monthly salary by the Federated Council from the Council's Revenue. This we humbly submit is unjust, since as a member of the Cameroons Development Corporation Board, he is paid monthly salary; we therefore humbly

/submit

submit that we are no more willing to pay him or any other person from our Federated Council Fund who does not perform full-time duties for the Council.

14. That self-love and egotism which are bad qualities are observable in his daily practices and dealings with us and our affairs as instanced the question of a letter No. 427/234 of 17th May 1949, from the Senior District Officer, Victoria, which was a reply to ours of the 5th May 1949, in which the District Officer expressed his agreement with us in respect of our suggestion that there should be separate Members for Judicial work and for Executive work, and subjoined thereto the Roster which he forwarded to the President, Mr. J. M. Williams O.B.E. instructing him to "explain the above to the Full Council and ask them to adopt my suggestion" which has displeased the President as he saw by this that his arbitrary function in that line is being checked and prerogatives curtailed.

15. That the loyalty and love of constitutional methods which we are proud to profess and in which spirit the vexed matter of Mr. J. M. Williams, O.B.E. autocratic rule, coupled with the apparent unwillingness and neglect of the part of the Government to check the growth of the evil and to help the people in their struggle to have their legitimate right and liberty freed from encroachments and protected, are now placed before Your Excellency for necessary and immediate adjustment ere it be too late; for we feel that to submit ourselves and our dear ones to continuous insults, buffets, biting sarcasms, and unkindly innuendoes, taunts and raileries and banter is impossible, and we therefore humbly, respectfully and earnestly pray that the man - Mr. J. M. Williams, O.B.E. be asked to step down and retire from the service honourably now and within this financial year as he had served the Government 40 years, according to him, and be given a year's salary from our Federated Council's Revenue as a token of the Government's appreciation of his past services, so that others may have their chances to serve the Country which needs them and their services under the supervision and direction of the Government.

16. The case for which Your Excellency's equitable adjustment is humbly sought by us and our people is almost clear in view of the foregoing, and can be summarised as under:

- (i) That Mr. J. M. Williams, O.B.E. be asked to retire honourably from the service of the Native Administration, Victoria, within this financial year.
- /(ii) That he is not

- (ii) That he is not of our tribe but was brought to Bimbia when young by his father who was a foreign-native - a sojourner and was therefore never a village Head nor a Chief.
- (iii) That because of his lineage, Mr. J. M. Williams, O.B.E. cannot be and has never been a Village Head nor a Chief.
- (iv) That through his intrigues and malignity, Mr. J. M. Williams O.B.E. was raised to the post of the Victoria Native Court President from School Teacher by the Germans from whom he learnt to be autocratic and has ever been so till this date.
- (v) That self-love and egotism are observable in his practices and dealings with the people.
- (vi) That he is unapproachable and hates criticisms however constructive. He is oppressive, vindictive, insolent and conceited.
- (vii) That he does not wish any one of us to rise or aspire to rise in order to improve and become useful and helpful citizen. He is selfish and afraid of being supplanted.
- (viii) That to him is given by the Government the power and prerogatives to function as Head of the Executive and Head of the Judiciary which is unheard of in any other country under British Rule.
- (ix) That he became infatuated, wicked and proud because of the support he always received from the Government which seems to condone his autocratic and oppressive dealings with the people by winking at all his mistakes and misdoings.
- (x) That the people (with the exception of the few he had bought up) have lost confidence in him and are desirous of having him retired immediately since he had had enough and has served the Administration and the Government long enough.
- (xi) That we desire that the wishes of the people be entertained in good time so that peace may continue to reign in the land and among us as a people.
- (xii) That he elects people of his own choice by himself and gives such people Seats in the Council and in the Native Courts without caring a sou about the Council's Standing order.
- (xiii) That since Mr. J. M. Williams is being paid by the Cameroons Development Corporation Board as a member of that Body, and since he is therefore

/not a full-time

not a full-time President of our Council, we strongly object to his being paid his salary from Our Federated Council's Revenue, and therefore request that this be ordered to cease forthwith.

17. That in conclusion, as the essence of the British Justice is fair-play and it is so universally acknowledged, and as the policy of British Democracy is based on the fundamental principles of natural law and justice, we cherish the hope that Your Excellency will grant the request of the people in the interest of peace and order.

And this Your Excellency's humble and dutiful servants and petitioners ever pray.

We have the honour to be
Your Excellency's humble and dutiful servants
(signed) Otto Musuka
and others.