

Influential people too ready to build distrust of foreign students here—Coore

Mr. David Coore, Q.C., a vice-president of the People's National Party, said on Monday that there were clear indications that there were influential persons and voices who were ready and willing "to build up such an atmosphere of mistrust of all 'foreign' students (at the university) that no Jamaican would dare to speak in support of the university for fear of being branded unpatriotic."

Mr. Coore, who was addressing the weekly luncheon meeting of the St. Andrew Rotary Club at the Courtleigh Manor Hotel, said he was speaking not as a politician but as a citizen and Rotarian.

He said that Jamaica should and would have a university of its own one day, but could not now afford it in view of other pressing commitments. But a multi-national university existed at Mona, and was making a valuable contribution to Jamaica. The efforts of all right-thinking persons should be directed at helping that institution to overcome its present difficulties.

"Only last week," said Mr. Coore, "Mr. Laurie Ramson addressed you on the opportunities for inter-Caribbean trade in Carifta and spoke of the need for closer links with the Commonwealth Caribbean. In saying this, he was expressing views which coincide with those of Government."

Armed soldiers

"Today, the only remaining inter-Caribbean institution—the UWI — is in serious danger of ceasing to exist. Armed soldiers of the Jamaica Defence Force stand in front of the main gate of the Mona campus, and we have been very emphatically reminded that students from other West Indian islands are foreigners in the fullest sense of that word."

"This juxtaposition of events, points up a continuing pattern in the Commonwealth Caribbean: the recognition of the mutual benefit that can come from co-operation, coupled with a failure to achieve it in practice on any stable or permanent basis."

He said he believed it was highly desirable in the interests of Jamaica that the UWI should continue to exist, and that to create the impression that the breaking up of the university would be a patriotic act was to do a great disservice to Jamaica.

"No one," said Mr. Coore, "can deny that it is absolutely essential for us to have a university to which our qualified students can be admitted as of right. It is impossible to run a modern society and to achieve the social and economic progress which we all desire, unless we have an ever-increasing supply of the skills and training which only a university can provide."

"Those who talk glibly about transforming the Mona campus into a purely Jamaican university, should stop and reflect on the consequences of what they are advocating. We cannot at the moment find the money and resources to provide even a proper primary education for all children. These schools are hopelessly overcrowded and understaffed and every year thousands of children of school age are turned away because there is simply no space."

Shortage of schools

"We have hardly even begun to tackle the vitally important field of infant education. We are still woefully short of technical and agricultural training schools. Our secondary grammar schools stagger along in a state of perpetual crisis, in terms of finance, facilities and staff."

"In this situation we must stop and ask ourselves whether it makes sense to direct scarce resources to the very expensive business of establishing and running a good modern university on our own. . . . It must also be remembered that a university does not only consist of build-

ings and equipment. It must be able to attract academic staff of high quality, so that it can establish a reputation for sound scholarship.

"It must promote and exemplify a spirit of free enquiry into all aspects of human life. These things are not achieved easily or overnight. When they are achieved, as I believe they have been to a substantial extent by the present university, their continued existence cannot be taken for granted."

"I am extremely disturbed," Mr. Coore went on, "by the fact that an attempt is being made at this present time to persuade the Jamaican public that the whole trouble is due to the presence of foreign students and foreign staff at the university. This is a very dangerous line."

"It is in fact an appeal to precisely the same kind of debased emotionalism that Dr. Rodney has been condemned for preaching. Like the overwhelming majority of Jamaicans, I hate racialism with all my heart and soul, whether it be white racialism or black racialism. I hate it because it involves a denial of the equality of man and of the dignity and worth of the individual human being. For precisely the same reason, I deplore any attempt to depict all non-Jamaicans at Mona as potential subversives."

News media

"Xenophobia masquerading as patriotism is just as bad as bigotry masquerading as racial pride."

Mr. Coore said that as Rotarian-
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'There are people ready to build mistrust of foreign students'

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ans, they had a special responsibility in the matter: the promotion of harmonious relationships between peoples of different nationalities was one of the objects of Rotary. They could not do much about preventing war between Russia and the United States or between Israel and Egypt; "but we do have a multi-national university here in Jamaica and we can and should make our voices heard and our influence felt on the side of tolerance, fairplay and good sense."

Mr. Coore said he was also disturbed by the fact that the university staff and students — both Jamaican and non-Jamaican — feel very strongly that the existing news media had not given them a fair opportunity to present their side of the story to the Jamaican public.

"They contend and believe with some justice, that the actions of the students, their motivations, the point of view they have been trying to put across, have been consistently misrepresented and distorted. They complain that their attempts to make use of the existing media of communication to refute a number of false charges and to correct certain wrong impressions, have been thwarted."

He said that the university had set up a committee charged with the responsibility of establishing communications with the Jamaican public. The committee was headed by two Jamaicans: Professor D. G. Hall and Mr. Rex Nettleford.

"I would strongly recommend," he said, "that these gentlemen be given a full opportunity in the Press and on radio and television to say what they wish to say to the Jamaican public. If the university has an answer to any of the charges and attacks that have been made on it in recent days, then it is right that its spokesmen should be given the opportunity to present its answer in an effective and

legitimate way.

"I am sure that persons of this calibre can be trusted not to make any improper use of such an opportunity, and this will be an important step in starting the process of restoring normalcy at the university and its relationship with the Jamaican public.

Spirit of youth

"We must remember that a university, above all else, typifies the spirit of youth, its energy, its idealism, its curiosity and its impatience with conventional wisdom. These are highly valuable qualities. But they are not always easy to live with. We have seen what has been happening in universities all over the world—in France, the U.S.A. and Great Britain.

Appealing to the Rotarians to make an effort to get the students involved in constructive projects, Mr. Coore concluded: "It is wise to try and find a way to harness this idealism and these energies to constructive rather than destructive purposes."

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