

I, Skye Peebles, give permission for public access to my thesis and for any copying to be done at the discretion of the archives librarian and/or the College librarian.

Skye Peebles

---

Date

---

**“UNSATISFACTORY AND UNRELIABLE” WITNESSES:  
Reexamining the January 1945 Uganda Strike through the  
pages of the *Uganda Herald***

*Skye L. Peebles*

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of  
Mount Holyoke College in partial fulfillment of  
the requirement for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts with Honor.

History Department  
Mount Holyoke College  
South Hadley, Massachusetts  
24 May, 2005

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is the result of several semesters of work that could not have been accomplished without the support, energy and good humor of many people.

My wonderful advisor and friend, Holly Hanson. Weebale emirimu.

My brother, Cameron and mother, Giovanna, who traveled all the way to Uganda with me and spent sunny days buried in newspapers inside the Makerere Library My father, David and my sister, Stirling, for holding down the fort and letting us have that adventure. My older brother and mentor, Joshua, who always knows the right thing to say. Thank you for always encouraging me and believing in my ability to do anything and everything.

Patrick, Gordon, Nicholas, and the librarians and staff of the Makerere Library Africana Section at Makerere University for their patience and endless help in my quests for unknown documents.

Mike Harkin, John and Brenda Nsnambo, and the Blue Mango family for showing me Kampala.

The 2004-2005 History Colloquium for Tuesdays full of camaraderie.

Throughout this project, I received endless love and encouragement from Kelly Sleyman, Anna Vrabel, Jen Tougas, Kate Lincoln, Anyssa Samari, Elizabeth Cossin, Carolyn O'Mara, Sarah Icklan, Annie Clarke, Nisha Agha, Allie Doran, Katy Young, Katherine Smith, Tobe Stacey, Kristin Schafenacker and Kris Bergbom.

Thank you for your kindness and humor.

A special thank you to Becky Vick and Erin Stuckey for their editing assistance and constant "motivational advising."

The Kampala aspect of this research could not have been accomplished without the support of the Mount Holyoke College History Department and the Almara Fellowship.

Thank you to Lynda Morgan and Girma Kebede for being my readers.

For my grandmother,  
Maria-Franca Morselli

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Timeline of Strikes</b>	5
<b>Introduction</b> The Whitley Report meets the <i>Uganda Herald</i>	6
<b>Chapter Two</b> Economic Motivations for January 1945 Disturbances	17
<b>Chapter Three</b> Serwano Kulubya and Problems with Representation	37
<b>Conclusion</b>	55
<b>Bibliography</b>	59

## TIMELINE OF STRIKES<sup>1</sup>

- January 5, 1945 – strikes in Masaka
- January 8, 1945 – strikes in Masaka and Entebbe
- January 9, 1945 – strikes in Entebbe
- January 10, 11, 12, 1945 – small strikes in Kampala
- January 14, 1945 – meeting of houseboys held in Kampala
- January 15, 1945 – serious disturbances in Kampala begin; strikes in every Government Dept and most private concerns
- January 16, 1945 – Rioters become increasingly more violent
- January 17, 1945 – strikes in Jinja begin at British-American Tobacco Factory
- January 18, 1945 – strike in Jinja, Lugazi, Koja, and Iganga
- January 19, 1945 – troops of armored cars arrive from Kenya to provide military assistance
- January 20, 1945 – strike in Mubende; Kabaka receives strike leaders and hears their demands
- January 22, 1945 – people begin to return to work; Katikiro Samwiri Wamala resigns
- January 23, 1945 – Kabaka receives strike leaders a second time; Omuwanika Serwano Kulubya resigns; Governor John Hall broadcasts speeches by bullhorn across Kampala
- January 24, 25 1945 – strikes in Gulu and Lira
- January 29, 1945 – details of war bonus increases announced
- February 6, 7, 1945 – small strikes in Gulu and Lira (N. Uganda)

---

<sup>1</sup> N.H.P Whitley, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances which occurred in Uganda during January, 1945. (Entebbe, 14 June 1945): 15-17.

**INTRODUCTION:  
THE WHITLEY REPORT MEETS THE *UGANDA HERALD***

On January 17, 1945 the only article printed in the *Uganda Herald* newspaper read “WIDESPREAD STRIKES IN KAMPALA.” Typically the Uganda newspaper filled its twenty pages with articles, advertisements, editorials, columns, and announcements ranging in topic from theater performances to new government ordinances. On January 17<sup>th</sup> the paper ran only four paragraphs, centered on the front page. The four paragraphs contained apologies for the abbreviated newspaper and attributed the shortcoming to *Uganda Herald* printing works staff going on strike out of sympathy for other African strikers in Kampala. The brief account outlined the spread of the strikes from Masaka (in southwestern Uganda) and asserted that the strikes had been aggravated by “organized hooligan[s],” who picketed violently, destroyed property, and could not be restrained by the police.<sup>2</sup>

The upheaval began as a series of smaller strikes that spread and escalated across Uganda during the month of January, and actually commenced prior to their announcement in the *Uganda Herald* on the 17<sup>th</sup>.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>“Widespread Strikes in Kampala,” *Uganda Herald*, 17 January 1945, 1.

<sup>3</sup> During the 1940s Uganda remained divided under four provinces of British protectorate rule. This essay deals primarily with the Kingdom of Buganda, the wealthiest of the four Ugandan provinces. The kingdom is called “Buganda” and its people are the “Baganda.” Buganda is ruled by the Kabaka (or king) and his Lukiko (or parliamentary structure). The British colonialists formally entered the Buganda Kingdom in 1900, by invitation of the Kabaka under the conditions of the 1900 Agreement. Important localities within the Buganda Kingdom included: Entebbe, the political capital; Kampala, the commercial capital of all of Uganda; Mengo, the Kabaka’s capital and the location of the Lubiri (palace); Makerere University; and the Namirembe (Anglican) and Rubaga (Catholic) cathedrals. (Douglas and Marcelle V. Brown, *Looking Back at the Uganda Protectorate: Recollections of District Officers*, (Perth, Australia: Frank Daniels Pty Ltd., 1996), 63.) One of the weaknesses of this essay is that it focuses exclusively on events within the Buganda kingdom. This is because

The disturbances followed no logical geographical pattern, indicating that they spread from employment sector to sector, or by random occurrence. Strikes occurred across the Uganda Protectorate in: Entebbe, Mubende and Masaka in Buganda, Jinja, Lugazi, Iganga, Mbarara, Mbale, Toro, and as far as Gulu and Lira, all over the Protectorate outside of Buganda.



**Figure 1 Map of Uganda with Strike Locations of 1945<sup>4</sup>**

Provocateurs looted food lorries, sabotaged basic infrastructure such as telegraph lines, and entered workplaces and private residences to prevent

---

there is little information available on other places in the Uganda Protectorate from this period of time.

every African from working.<sup>5</sup> Strikers vastly outnumbered police officers and their violence forced Uganda's governor Sir John Hall to call for a troop of armored cars from Kenya to aid the "110 Europeans and 48 Asian Special Constables."<sup>6</sup> Governor Hall attempted to calm the strikers by broadcasting speeches over loudspeakers set up across Kampala:

I am speaking tonight to the Africans of Uganda under the shadow of grave and unhappy events...my primary task here, as I conceive it, is to improve in every way possible the conditions, economic, social and political, of the people of the country. In this task with God's help I shall succeed, but I need your confidence and your trust and your cooperation.<sup>7</sup>

While the primary strike action subsided by the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January and workers then began to return to their jobs, isolated strikes continued across Uganda until February 7<sup>th</sup>.

During the actual disturbances, strike leaders met twice with Mutesa II, the young, highly controversial Kabaka (king) of Buganda. During the first meeting with the Kabaka, on January 20<sup>th</sup> the organizers clearly outlined their demands and objectives. The strike leaders demanded changes in the Kabaka's ministry, "increased rates of pay" for workers, and "better prices for crops."<sup>8</sup> The Kabaka tried to placate the strike leaders' demands and urged them to resume work immediately. The Kabaka received strike leaders again on January 23<sup>rd</sup> and addressed some of their demands, acting as an agent for his British Protectorate counterparts. Mutesa II lectured the strikers about

---

<sup>4</sup>Gardner Thompson, "Colonialism in Crisis: The Uganda Disturbances of 1945," *African Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 365, (Oct.,1992): 611.

<sup>5</sup>N.H.P Whitley, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances which occurred in Uganda during January, 1945. (Entebbe, 14 June 1945), 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>7</sup>"End of Labour Troubles: Africans Return to Work," *Uganda Herald*, 31 January 1945, 10.



dignified behavior and told them that their demands around wages and war bonuses had already been met. Mutesa explained that measures had been taken to appropriately handle the wage and war bonus problems prior to the onset of the strikes, and that the strikers had acted prematurely. He also mentioned that he had been considering restructuring his government for some time. Above all, he insisted on the benevolence of his government and the Protectorate administration.

On March 3, 1945, eight weeks after the strikes Governor Hall appointed Uganda's Chief Justice, Norman H. P. Whitley, to direct a Commission that inquired into the recent disorders.<sup>9</sup> Whitley controlled the investigation entirely, including the ability to determine which Asians, Africans and Europeans he allowed to give testimony and evidence. He examined 80 Europeans, 16 Asians, and 102 Africans, (who were mostly Baganda).<sup>10</sup> Upon conclusion of his investigation, Whitley submitted a 32-page long report to the Protectorate Government, known as the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the disturbances which occurred in Uganda during January, 1945.<sup>11</sup> Upon submitting the Report he claimed he had done "his best to obtain evidence representing the views of all parties and

---

<sup>8</sup> Thompson, "Colonialism in Crisis: The Uganda Disturbances of 1945," 607.

<sup>9</sup>"Civil Disturbances: Commission of Inquiry," *Uganda Herald*, 7 March 1945, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Whitley, Report, 2.

<sup>11</sup> An English copy of the Report became available to the public in July of 1945, selling for 50 cents per copy. A Luganda-language copy was to be published at a later date; it is unknown whether this ever actually occurred. The publication language and price of the Report indicates that the British Administration did not encourage mass distribution of the document ("Report of Commission of Inquiry into January Disturbances," *Uganda Herald*, 18 July 1945, 1).

classes.”<sup>12</sup> He admitted that he did not take the testimonies of some parties seriously because of their “unsatisfactory and unreliable” nature:

I accordingly did my best to obtain evidence representing the views of all parties and classes. Some of the witnesses were unsatisfactory and unreliable, professing ignorance of matters as to which they clearly must have known a great deal. Some were obviously afraid to speak out and some appeared to be deliberately misleading, but the great majority seemed anxious to do all they could to help and I was gratified and impressed by the frankness of many of the African witnesses and the intelligent criticism and opinions expressed and constructive suggestions put forward.<sup>13</sup>

While Whitley professed his gratitude at the “intellectual criticism” and “constructive suggestions” that had been offered by the witnesses, the fact that he described the witnesses as “unsatisfactory and unreliable” suggests he was not willing to listen to everyone. By only believing evidence that fit into his idea of Uganda’s problems, Whitley presented a partial and inaccurate analysis of the event.

The witnesses selected by Whitley gave him information that led him to conclude that the “origins of the disturbances were political rather than economic.”<sup>14</sup> Whitley clearly outlined in the Report his perception of the objects of the organizers of the January disturbances which included

inciting the workers and stirring up popular feeling against the Protectorate Government and also, I think, against [Serwano] Kulubya... to paralyze all public services and so disrupt the general life of the community that chaos would supervene, thus affording opportunity for the organizers to seize the power in the Kabaka’s Government and get rid of Kulubya.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Whitley Report, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 11.

The Whitley Report included an overview of Ugandan history and an analysis of the economic and political condition of Uganda (and the Buganda Kingdom inside it) in the years prior to the January disturbances. In the Report, Whitley acknowledged the existence of economic problems such as low wages in Uganda, but attributed them to the Empire-wide experience of wartime deprivation.<sup>16</sup> The Report asserted that deliberate, planned provocation by organized agitators in January of 1945 turned the typical wartime circumstances into a cause for striking.<sup>17</sup>

The contrast between Whitley's conspiracy of political agitators and the strikers' demands to the Kabaka for changes in the Kabaka's ministry, "increased rates of pay" for workers, and "better prices for crops" invites attention to the nature of indirect rule in the late colonial period.<sup>18</sup> The divergence between how Whitley interpreted the strike and the demands the strikers presented on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January demonstrates unwillingness on the Protectorate officials' part to see or hear African complaints. Thus, this essay seeks to open a more complex discussion on the causes of the 1945 disturbances and to argue that the 1945 strike demonstrates the failure of communication that characterized the British colonial policy of indirect rule.

The 1945 strike illuminates the larger question of political representation in Uganda during the 1940s and vividly illustrates who was allowed to speak and who was consequently silenced. The British structure of

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 13;

Thompson, "Colonialism in Crisis: The Uganda Disturbances of 1945," 607.

indirect rule relied on elite Africans to be the voices of non-elite Africans in the Lukiko and the Legislative Council. The British wrongly perceived Ugandan communities to be organized solely by race, not by class. However, wealthy and powerful Africans sought to distinguish themselves from other Africans and to associate themselves with the British. Therefore, African elites who served as the “voices” of ordinary Africans in governmental representation only represented the concerns of their own classes of chiefs and large landowners. Serwano Kulubya, the Omuwanika (Treasurer) of the Buganda Kingdom was a prime example of the type of African who functioned solely for the elite, and even worse, almost exclusively for the British. Ordinary Africans did not receive representation and in the instances when they tried to speak for themselves, officials and non-official British residents dismissed them as being foolish, childlike and misinformed.

Did the British truly not see this structural problem of voice and representation, or did they simply not want to see it? In this essay I argue that the British chose to avoid perceiving how indirect rule and their policies in Uganda failed. Whitley attributed the strike to trouble-makers, which obscured the role of failed British colonial economic policy. The governors of Uganda and the Legislative Council selected elite Africans who copied British manners exactly and told their British rulers what they wanted to hear. District Officers and other Protectorate officials described African discontent as childish and foolish; they did not have to validate it. Willful ignorance created problems for the Protectorate authorities during moments of extreme

discontent, such as the 1945 strike, when suddenly the Governor of Uganda was reduced to broadcasting messages to strikers over a bullhorn.

This essay employs articles, letters to the editor and editorials from the *Uganda Herald* newspaper to uncover the causes of the 1945 strike. Based on the contents of the publication's advertisements, notices, and article composition (heavily dominated by news from Europe/abroad), the *Herald's* target audience included the wealthier components of Ugandan society, particularly its British members. The periodical contained some elements of bias, as complaints were made on at least one occasion regarding the suppression of viewpoints and the censorship of articles.<sup>19</sup> Despite the limitations of the source, the *Uganda Herald* offers immense insight into the 1945 strike and the condition of the Uganda Protectorate during the 1940s.

The *Uganda Herald* newspaper provides substantial information regarding the 1945 strike which has not been sufficiently utilized in published histories. The English-language newspaper functioned as a distinct, independent voice separate from Protectorate rhetoric for elite Africans, Asians and Europeans. The *Uganda Herald* began publication in 1912 and has been interpreted by Mahmood Mamdani as being the "mouthpiece for settler interests."<sup>20</sup> By the 1940s, the *Herald* had become the mouthpiece of the non-Governmental, English-speaking elite. For example, the Whitley Report mentioned that the Kabaka received strike leaders on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January and

---

<sup>19</sup>Demos, "Censorship in Uganda," *Uganda Herald*, February 10, 1943, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 53. The *Uganda Herald* arose during the same period as a

again on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, but failed to mention that strike leaders delineated their demands in these meetings with the Kabaka. However the *Uganda Herald* outlined the strike leaders' demands in a leading article on January 24<sup>th</sup>. The fact that strikers' demands were revealed invites an examination of how Africans, Asians and Europeans communicated with each other only in the newspaper. In the 1940s in Uganda, Asians, African and Europeans did not mix socially. However, English-speaking Africans, Europeans and Asians conversed with each other through the medium of the *Uganda Herald*; their frustration with the protectorate government gave them common ground.

The Whitley Report is the most complete document concerning the January disturbances of 1945. No historian of Uganda has yet uncovered sources which present the direct voices of the 1945 strikers. Consequently, scholars had to rely on the Report for information regarding the strike and East African social historians have tended to agree with Whitley's conclusions that the strike had political motivations. Mahmood Mamdani agrees that the strike was centered on public opposition to Serwano Kulubya.<sup>21</sup> Carol Summers mentions in her unpublished draft of "Young Africa and Radical Visions: Revisiting the Bataka in Buganda, 1944-54" that radicals in the 1945 strike targeted Buganda's officials in their call for higher wages.<sup>22</sup> R. Cranford Pratt and D. Anthony Low wrote that the object of the riots included most immediately the aim of removing Kulubya from office, although they

---

massive crop expansion, as well as a business boom. (Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation*, 53).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

incorrectly identified the date of the strike and wrote that the riots took place in April of 1945.<sup>23</sup>

Gardner Thompson is the exception to this broad acceptance of the Whitley Report. Thompson contested Whitley's political analysis of the strike in a 1992 article, "Colonialism in Crisis: The Uganda Disturbances of 1945" (1992) and argued that economic factors caused the strike. Thompson identified the strike as a symptom that alluded to the colonial state's moment of crisis in 1945. Thompson opens the examination that the causation of the strike goes beyond Whitley's assertions. This essay relies less on the Whitley Report and instead utilizes the *Uganda Herald* to expand upon Thompson's suggestion that the strike was about economics and political issues far greater than a demand for Kulubya's resignation. It demonstrates that fundamental failures of communication characterized the strike.

Chapter two uses the *Uganda Herald* to explore the economic causes of the strike. Whitley strongly deemphasized the extent of Uganda's economic problems in his Report, distorting the real causes of the strike. Whereas the Report admitted that wage issues prevailed across the Protectorate, Whitley failed to acknowledge substantial suffering caused by poorly enforced price controls and the subsequent system of black marketing.

Chapter three uses the *Uganda Herald* and transcripts from Legislative Council proceedings to argue that Protectorate authorities and those with

---

<sup>22</sup> Carol Summers, "Young Africa and Radical Visions: Revisiting the Bataka in Buganda, 1944-54," unpublished draft, March 2004: 3.

<sup>23</sup> R. Cranford Pratt and D. Anthony Low, *Buganda and British Overrule: 1900-1955, Two Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 275.

power in Uganda consistently discounted ideas of ordinary Ugandans. Their complaints were labeled childish and did not receive representation or voice in the forms of government established in the Uganda Protectorate. Testimonies from the Lukiko and the Legislative Council prove the ineffectiveness of the African leaders chosen to lead by the Kabaka and the British State and their unwillingness to act (or speak) on behalf of ordinary people. Instead the few powerful Africans acted on behalf of themselves or the British state. This allowed the British to maintain a deliberate myopia, as their elite African cooperators told the British exactly what they wanted to hear. Kulubya exemplified the type of African who aligned himself thoroughly with the British authorities. The strike of 1945 occurred because ordinary Africans found no other means to make their voices heard.



## CHAPTER TWO: ECONOMIC MOTIVATIONS FOR JANUARY 1945 DISTURBANCES

The Uganda protectorate's inadequate and counterproductive response to wartime inflation contributed substantially to people's discontent and helped motivate the strike action of January 1945. British residents and well-educated Africans saw that the economic policies were not working and complained loudly in the *Uganda Herald*. The protectorate authorities responded to the elite demands articulated in the newspaper while the conditions of most Ugandans continued to deteriorate. The Whitley Report avoided responsibility and exonerated the administration for economic problems and placed blame for the strike on African-troublemakers. The Report deflected attention away from the ways the British Administration mishandled food provision and wartime inflation.

This chapter employs evidence from *Uganda Herald* contributors who felt discontented because of the wartime economic problems and the Administration's overall mismanagement of the situation. It seeks to challenge the Whitley Report's analysis of the strike's origins as "political rather than economic" and to argue that the strike occurred as a response to Uganda's wartime inflation that exacerbated poverty, and the British officials' mismanagement of the economic difficulties.<sup>24</sup> The *Uganda Herald* documents Gardner Thompson's observation in Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy (2003) that the "Whitley Report...either ignored or dismissed important evidence on the state of the economy in Uganda in

January of 1945.”<sup>25</sup> An educated Muganda, “G. Kay,” expressed the same question in the *Uganda Herald* letters to the editor section, asking, “Is it lassitude or contentment on the part of Government officials which has begotten this lamentable remissness?”<sup>26</sup>

English speakers who contributed to the *Uganda Herald* saw that the Protectorate’s wartime economic policies created greater economic disparities and wrote critically about their ineffectiveness. The exchanges the *Uganda Herald* hosted regarding economic issues predominantly focused on problems that elite (or relatively more elite) Africans experienced. The Protectorate officials responded to the elite problems but continued to ignore the tribulations that non-elite African workers experienced.

The Report sought to deflect attention away from the economic troubles of wartime Uganda and to instead focus on creating an image of African-troublemakers who exploited the wartime conditions to incite a strike about politics and power. Whitley claimed twice on page three of the Report (and again on pages six and thirteen) that “the real origins of the disturbances were political and not economic.”<sup>27</sup> The Whitley Report identified two primary political objectives of the strike, namely “to seize the power in the Kabaka’s Government and get rid of [Ganda Omuwanika/ Treasurer of the Lukiko Serwano] Kulubya.”<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Whitley, Report, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Gardner Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2003), 256.

<sup>26</sup> “G. Kay,” “African Cost of Living,” *Uganda Herald*, 16 December 1942, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Whitley, Report, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

I am satisfied that economic conditions and considerations were not the cause of the disturbances but that in Uganda, like elsewhere, prices had gone up owing to war conditions making it more difficult for the wage earner to make both ends meet, and the agitators took full advantage of this by trying to stir the workers up to action which they would never have taken if left to themselves.<sup>29</sup>

The Whitley Report used two tactics to deflect responsibility for the wartime economic problems from the Protectorate administration and to make the strike about African troublemakers. First, the Report presented the wartime economic issues as commonplace across British colonies. Secondly, the Whitley Report focused the attention on Africans who allegedly used the 1940s economic hardships to exploit working Africans into going on strike when they otherwise would not have. The Report intended to place the blame of the strike on African-troublemakers and to cover up the fact that the British mishandled the economic problems of wartime Uganda.

Letters to the editor, editorials, and articles of the *Uganda Herald* demonstrate the 1940s discontent revolved around issues of material and economic concern, not the political ones identified by the Whitley Commission. The financial burden of fighting in World War II caused standards of living in Uganda to plummet. Under the pseudonym “G. Kay,” one Ugandan clearly stated the impact World War II had on Uganda:

The war has brought a change for the worse in every direction and in every walk of life. This should be realized by all, by the needy unemployed and the Government officials fattening on a large income alike. And I shall be pardoned to say that the African has been hit the worst of all his fellows as a result of the war as regards the present rate of pay.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>30</sup> “G. Kay,” “African Cost of Living,” *Uganda Herald*, 16 December 1942, 11.

Food prices rose and food became unavailable as the war effort drew basic goods and labor out of the Uganda protectorate. Many items became “beyond the purchasing power of the poor.”<sup>31</sup> A well-educated Muganda, Eridadi Medadi K. Mulira complained in a 1942 letter to the editor in the *Uganda Herald* that war caused hunger, describing the food choices of working Africans, whose choice of diet consisted of “some cassava, and sometimes sweet potatoes, and a few ounces of meat on Sunday.”<sup>32</sup> The core of his complaint was Africans’ inability to afford the staple food, green bananas (matooke), whose price increased in Kampala between 1940 and 1944, from one shilling per bunch to 1/50.<sup>33</sup>

The price of all essential commodities besides food also rose, including practical items such as imported cloth. The price of imported cloth, set by the British Price Control Inspectorate, increased over a period of four years from 4.35 shillings to 13.25 shillings in 1945.<sup>34</sup> Prices escalated as the war continued, and availability decreased:

By the end of 1941 drugs and medicines had risen by 15 percent, and shoes by 60 percent. The price of imported bicycles nearly doubled, and that of imported lamps and lanterns more than doubled between 1939 and 1944; and there was a six-fold increase in the retail price of cooking pots in Kampala during the same period. Hoes became difficult to obtain at controlled prices.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup>Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 257.

<sup>32</sup>Eridadi Medadi K. Mulira, “How Millions of Africans Live in East Africa, According to Sir Philip Mitchell,” *Uganda Herald*, 28 January 1942, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 257.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

While the Whitley Report addressed the increased cost of living, it constantly tried to minimize the severity of wartime conditions by focusing on unimportant details. Instead of admitting that Ugandans experienced difficulty in obtaining items such as food, Whitley discussed the impact Japan's entrance into the war had had on the Uganda market.<sup>36</sup> The Whitley Report did not lend weight to legitimate claims that Africans in wartime Uganda experienced difficulty making ends meet.

Pressured to generate massive quantities of goods for overseas export, Ugandan farmers were forced to grow less food for themselves. British Protectorate officers expected and encouraged Africans to contribute substantially and whole-heartedly to the war effort but did not protect Africans from the consequence of their sacrifice. A supplementary pamphlet entitled "Uganda War Effort" in the March 26, 1941 edition of the *Uganda Herald* included two messages to Uganda regarding the work expected from Ugandans for the war effort and the importance of the overall war effort; Uganda Governor Charles Dundas wrote one message and his wife Anne Dundas wrote the other. Governor Dundas wrote,

In this war we must either resign ourselves to defeat or resolve to do anything and everything to win complete victory. There are those who can fight and those who can furnish the means to fight, and most of us in Uganda are in the latter category...Britain still expects every man to do his duty – and every woman too!<sup>37</sup>

Anne Dundas addressed the women of Uganda,

---

<sup>36</sup> Whitley, Report, 13.

<sup>37</sup>"Uganda War Effort," *Uganda Herald*, 26 March 26 1941, supplement to *Uganda Herald*.

To the women of Uganda who have worked so efficiently during the past year in the interests of our fighting forces, I send a special plea for re-doubled efforts for the duration of the war.<sup>38</sup>

The encouragement from the Governor and Mrs. Dundas hides the onerous aspect of wartime labor demands. “Observer” wrote in a *Uganda Herald* letter to the editor entitled “Food and the Black market” that “the Native producer has proved himself more than willing to help in a time of crisis and also that ‘too many individuals have been taking credit for the golden eggs but no one has concerned himself with feeding the goose that lays them.’”<sup>39</sup> “Food and the Black market” identified the one-sided relationship between the Protectorate and the working Africans, and argued that because the British Administration did not provide maize, bread or rice to the poor African laborers, workers were forced to find food in alternative places such as the exploitative black market.<sup>40</sup>

Uganda Protectorate officials charged with enforcing price controls hoped to minimize the threat of price rises that resulted from global shortages and local profiteering, by setting maximum prices for essential commodities.<sup>41</sup> A *Uganda Herald* editorial “Price Control – A Comparison” wrote that “Price Control Regulations clearly define the margin of profit allowed to the trader.”<sup>42</sup> Price control began in September of 1939 when the Uganda Supply Board commissioned a sub-committee to control distribution and fix prices of

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Observer, “Food and the Black Market,” *Uganda Herald*, 1 March 1944, 13.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>41</sup>Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 205.

<sup>42</sup>“Price Control – A Comparison,” *Uganda Herald*, 10 January 1945, 6.

all imported and domestically produced commodities in the Protectorate.<sup>43</sup> Inadequate manpower and unenforceable policies made the price control system ineffective and easy to exploit. In mid-1943 the Price Control Inspectorate consisted of a mere four men, none of whom were Indian or African.<sup>44</sup> The *Uganda Herald* highlighted problems the Protectorate had with supporting the Price Control Inspectorate; minimal Protectorate staffing made enforcement difficult and many people in Uganda did not even know the British had established the price control system in 1939.

Public discontent with the way the Protectorate used price controls to handle the economic hardships received open discussion in the *Uganda Herald*. Sundowner, author the *Uganda Herald*'s popular column "Topical Topics" wrote,

It is at the door of inadequate price control that I lay the ultimate blame for the wage disputes which still remain unsettled...when a month's wage barely suffices to purchase a shirt the like of which he could previously obtain for a week's wage, he thinks that something is wrong.<sup>45</sup>

The discontent with price controls invited public discussion in one article, which asked why the British Administration insisted on using price controls to handle the wartime commodities crisis. Conversely, why had the Administration not chosen to employ an alternative mechanism, such as food rationing? A column appeared in the *Uganda Herald* beginning in the spring of 1942 called "Things We Should Like to Know." The duration, purpose, and author of the column are all unknown, but its contents clearly illustrate

---

<sup>43</sup>Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 205.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 209.

Ugandan's economic concerns. The list of five questions almost always raised both economic and political issues. A question asked in the spring of 1942 invited a comparison with the way the British Administration in Tanganyika handled the wartime crises: "Why does Uganda not adopt food rationing like Tanganyika?"<sup>46</sup> Inadequately administered price controls (in contrast to a more drastic rationing policy) led to the creation of a black market.

The black market emerged in 1939 as an alternative means for obtaining goods that seemed otherwise unavailable because of price controls. A *Uganda Herald* editorial from March 22, 1944 referenced the black market and stated, "matters have reached such a pitch at some places that an African cannot obtain any food at all unless he pays well in excess of the controlled prices."<sup>47</sup> The Whitley Report briefly mentioned that "black-marketing undoubtedly exists" in the "Objects, Organization and Extent" section, but failed to recognize or elaborate on the consequences of the market.<sup>48</sup> The East African Standard published a piece called "The Black Market" on March 16, 1942 and clearly outlined the mechanics behind the alternative market:

Before goods become restricted in supply, the operators of this illegal [black] market quietly buy up large quantities and hide them. They do not appear on the shelves of the shop, particularly if they are goods the price of which is controlled. But if you want such goods, you go to a shopkeeper, say in the Bazaar, and ask for the commodity. He will tell you that he has none in stock but he might be able to get it for you. He has a friend who has a friend who thinks she knows somebody who has a little left. But of course, the price may be higher than usual. You go away, and in a day or two you come back again.

---

<sup>45</sup>Sundowner, "Topical Topics," *Uganda Herald*, 31 January 1945, 4.

<sup>46</sup>"Things We Should Like To Know," *Uganda Herald*, 25 March 1942, 6.

<sup>47</sup>"Letter to the Editor," *Uganda Herald*, 22 March 1944, 6.

<sup>48</sup> Whitley, Report, 13.



You may go two or three times to the shop – because the shopkeeper is wary and does not want to be caught. Eventually the order will be filled – but you have to pay in cash – and ask no questions. If you want an invoice, you will only get one for the control price. The balance will be demanded in cash, and without witness to the transaction.<sup>49</sup>

Africans, Asians and Europeans who experienced complete shortages during the war found food items, medicine, clothing, and even luxury goods in the black market and paid exorbitant prices because these items could not be obtained through any other means.<sup>50</sup> A letter-to-the editor from “J. Jinja” demonstrates the skepticism people felt about retail integrity and the price control system,

Dear Sir, I wonder if any of your readers can help me solve the riddle of the “Tested Eggs.” I understand that the controlled price of eggs is 7 cents each. The only eggs I can buy now, are from the stores sold at 10 cents each, and invoiced as “Tested Eggs.” They are just the usual “shenzi” kind, with no guarantee at all, of having been tested. On inquiry, I was shown a box lid supposedly of the box that the eggs had been packed in, which had the word “Tested” written on it in black paint. What is to prevent the vendor selling any kind of eggs under this title? They are no better than the eggs I used to buy at the door, before this kind of apparent cheating began. J. Jinja.<sup>51</sup>

The inherently corrupt nature of the system was recognized by most market patrons, marketers and Government officials; the Editor of the *Uganda Herald* wrote that Ugandan price controls had “too many loopholes for unscrupulous traders to exploit.”<sup>52</sup>

Market patrons and observant citizens blamed the marketers and the Price Control Inspectorate for the black market via editorials in the *Uganda*

---

<sup>49</sup>“The ‘Black Market,’” *Uganda Herald*, 25 March 1942, 4.

<sup>50</sup>“Black Market,” *Uganda Herald*, 28 June 1944, 6.

<sup>51</sup>J. Jinja, “Tested Eggs,” *Uganda Herald*, 26 April 1944, 13.

*Herald*. Kenneth Ingham pointed out that “since few Africans had the courage to complain against unfair treatment because of the justifiable fear of victimization in the future,” it was non-elite Africans who experienced the black market’s corruption most severely.<sup>53</sup> Non-elite Africans’ position as Ugandans with the smallest incomes exacerbated their severe experiences with the black market.

Protectorate authorities’ tolerance of the black market incensed the editors of the *Uganda Herald*. Editorials suggested the Protectorate Government’s bumbling inattention promoted the black market system. An editorial from the *Uganda Herald* editor on March 1, 1944 stated that

It is useless to tell Africans to report abuses of this kind to the authorities. From past experiences the African has not much faith that the authorities will assist him...more vigilance in needed at markets where food is sold. Food profiteers are criminals of the basest sort, and they should be relentlessly hounded down and treated as such.<sup>54</sup>

Another editorial in the *Uganda Herald* in June of 1944 identified the lack of administrative activity in combating the black market, writing, “it is the duty of the Control to seek out goods that have gone underground with a good deal more vigour and purpose...and to make the goods available to the general public.”<sup>55</sup> The consequences of neglect and incompetence did not just apply to consumers, but to some retail traders. Price controls allowed large traders to exploit small-scale traders, who were the most vulnerable to being fined.

---

<sup>52</sup>“Price Control – A Comparison,” *Uganda Herald*, 10 January 1945, 6.

<sup>53</sup>Kenneth Ingham, *The Making of Modern Uganda* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958), 216.

<sup>54</sup>“Food Shortage,” *Uganda Herald*, 1 March 1944, 6.

<sup>55</sup>“Black Market,” *Uganda Herald*, 28 June 1944, 6.

Non-elite African merchants experienced the harsh strains of the black market because of their class rank. Smaller, less wealthy marketers paid fines for prices that they were forced to set by other marketers with greater access to power. “Vasavda’s” 1944 letter to the editor in the *Uganda Herald*, “Jinja Retail Traders Forming Union,” regarding the purpose behind the formation of a retail trader union in Jinja illuminated the hierarchy of power and wealth in the marketing schemes. The analysis displayed how larger, wealthier marketers forced the smaller, less powerful marketers into the system of black-marketing, making the smaller marketers a “buffer” between the wealthy and the law. “Vasavda” wrote,

Small traders have to pay *extras* to the bigger ones in the trade or go without supplies. And when they in turn try to recover such *extras* by raising their prices by a few cents, they are instantly brought to justice by their aggrieved customers, and quite rightly too at first glance. But the second glance reveals in most of such cases that the alleged profiteering had been done by the bigger traders.<sup>56</sup>

In November of 1942 the *Uganda Herald* published a letter to the editor by a correspondent named Mr. Khairu which asked, “Will the Authorities please wake up in time to protect the small trader and the poor consumer who are fleeced regularly by the greedy big bug in the Bazaar?”<sup>57</sup> Clearly this problem had developed over several years. In an editorial about the effectiveness of price controls, the *Uganda Herald* editor argued that a similar price control policy worked in Congo because it was tightly administered. The editorial, “Price Control - A Comparison” suggested that Congo’s price control

---

<sup>56</sup> “Vasavda,” “Jinja Retail Traders Forming Union,” *Uganda Herald*, 10 February 1944, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Mama Khairu, “Price Control of Goods,” *Uganda Herald*, 4 November 1942, 11.

regulations worked because of their rigid enforcement, as opposed to Uganda's regulations that did not receive "very [energetic] enforce[ment]."<sup>58</sup> The editor asked Uganda's new governor, John Hall, to pay attention to the price control problem and to create improvements. "Price Control - A Comparison" illuminates how elite Ugandans used the newspaper to ask the Protectorate government to fix the conditions that did not work well for them.

In addition to *Uganda Herald* columnists like Sundowner, other contributors agreed that price controls did not work in Uganda. Under the pseudonym "Pourquoi," one contributor wrote that "Price control has completely failed."<sup>59</sup> The direct and indirect consequences of the price control mechanism severely compromised all members of Ugandan society, although non-elite Africans experienced this pull most dramatically. On the more frivolous side of the experience, the 1941 minutes of the Entebbe Club, a retreat for off-duty European administrators, described the shortages and nuisances they experienced during the war years.<sup>60</sup> The minutes described the shortage and rationing experienced by the Entebbe Club members who "were restricted in May 1941 to one bottle of gin per week and, six months later, to a single bottle of whisky per month."<sup>61</sup> When the Whitley Report claimed everyone in Uganda was sacrificing it equated the working Ugandan's inability to acquire food and clothing to the Entebbe Club member's inability to acquire whiskey.

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>59</sup>"Pourquoi," "Letter to the Editor," *Uganda Herald*, 7 February 1945, 12.

<sup>60</sup>Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 201-2.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 202.

A series of *Uganda Herald* editorials expressed concern about short-sighted food policy. Editorials wrote that the “goose who laid the golden eggs,” of the war effort (African workers) lacked support, and would die without support.<sup>62</sup> An editorial written on May 10, 1944 wrote that, “during the most critical period of the food shortage...the African had a legitimate grouse with the powers that be on account of the large quantities of food that were...sent out of the country.”<sup>63</sup> Two months earlier, in March of 1944, the editor of the *Uganda Herald* asked in an editorial entitled “Food Shortage,” why “was it agreed to send our food away in such large quantities without first securing some guarantee about prices when the food was returned?”<sup>64</sup> Export of Ugandan agricultural produce affected a large group of the population: farmers lost their crops and food purchasers faced higher prices.

Procedures put in place by the Administration to provide food to ordinary Africans failed. For example, in the 1940s the British Government supplied larger employers in Uganda with a new type of mixed-meal posho for the purpose of feeding their workers. The *Uganda Herald* reported on the new posho on March 22, 1944 in an article called, “The New Posho: Serious Effect on Production Feared.” The article stated that the new posho made a number of Africans ill and was known for its “questionable quality.”<sup>65</sup> Employers fed laborers the new posho on a widespread scale, even though employees found it inedible and harmful to their stomachs. They wanted

---

<sup>62</sup>Observer, “Food and the Black Market,” *Uganda Herald*, 1 March 1944, 13.

<sup>63</sup>“Food Prospects,” *Uganda Herald*, 10 May 1944, 6.

<sup>64</sup>“Food Shortage,” *Uganda Herald*, 1 March 1944, 6.

<sup>65</sup>“The New Posho: Serious Effect on Production Feared,” *Uganda Herald*, 22 March 1944, 7.

bananas or at least edible posho. Africans rejected the posho fed to them and refused to continue production unless they received food more fit for human consumption. Employers did provide more edible posho in some cases, but the solution only temporarily solved the much larger food problem.

Even wealthy Ugandans disliked the way the Protectorate government mismanaged the economic problems of the 1940s. English-speaking Africans wrote letters to the editor and editorials in the *Uganda Herald* that grumbled of having to wait in lines with poor Ugandans for their rations of sugar and bread.<sup>66</sup> Elites also complained of the inconvenient designated daily or weekly timeslots for food purchasing. They felt that unemployed Africans obtained sugar more easily than they could since unemployed Africans arrived early enough at the distribution shops to purchase the allotted 1 lb. increments from several stores.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to their cost, wartime shortages and price control affected the quality of products being sold in Uganda. Non-elite residents of the Protectorate felt that the Price Control Inspectorate caused the commodity manufacturers and distributors to reduce the quality and production costs of their commodities. Manufacturers used the excuse of wartime crises to reduce the quality of raw materials (whether or not supplies were lacking) and to provide lesser quality goods at elevated and fixed prices to people in Uganda.<sup>68</sup> A 1944 letter to the editor complained about the cost of soap. The letter argued that “prices should be fixed not on figures supplied by the

---

<sup>66</sup> Observer, “Food and the Black market,” *Uganda Herald*, 1 March 1944, 13.

<sup>67</sup>“Sugar Distribution,” *Uganda Herald*, 26 April 1944, 6.

manufacturers but on the basis of the cost of raw material actually used.”<sup>69</sup>

Technically, soap manufacturers adhered to the Uganda Protectorate wartime economic policy that required a reduction of raw material use. The letter to the editor claims that technicalities aside, producers took advantage of an enforced Government policy and distributed sub-par merchandise at a fixed price that greatly exceeded the actual value of the product.

Non-elite Africans had a more difficult time sustaining themselves during the war period because of direct and indirect taxation. Protectorate-sponsored proposals for areas of taxation shifted on a regular basis and created an atmosphere where uncertainty flourished as taxes consistently rose. Adult Africans who resided in Buganda were subjected to the following taxes in 1942, regardless of their employment status: Poll tax: Shs. 15/-; Luwalo Commutation Tax: Shs. 10/-, *Special Taxation*: 1/ 50 Shs. Ground Rent: Shs. 8/50.<sup>70</sup> Additional land taxes ranging between Shs. 5/- and 25/- and special levees/ “nvujjo” existed as well.<sup>71</sup> An African peasant cotton grower made approximately Shs. 50/- to 60/- a year through the sales of his cotton, and paid around half of that in taxes.<sup>72</sup> Considering that a few day’s supply of green bananas alone cost Shs. 1/50 per bunch, taxation in the 1940s contributed to the difficulty bakopi (peasants) experienced in survival.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup>“Soap and Uganda Price Control,” *Uganda Herald*, 23 February 1944, 11.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>70</sup>“G. Kay,” “African Cost of Living,” *Uganda Herald*, December 16, 1942, 11.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>72</sup>Eridadi Medadi K. Mulira, “How Millions of Africans Live in East Africa, According to Sir Philip Mitchell,” *Uganda Herald*, January 28, 1942, 18.

<sup>73</sup>Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 257.

In addition to taxes, the government put pressure on Ugandans to contribute monetary donations to the Uganda War Fund to support various war endeavors abroad. The *Uganda Herald* published War Fund figures on a regular basis and it is remarkable how much cash left Uganda during the 1940s via donation. Of particular interest are the Buganda Government donations; for example from July 1, 1940 to December 20, 1941, the Buganda Government contributed a total of Shs. 294,131.95.<sup>74</sup> The tally for all districts during that timeframe totaled Shs. 2,517,680.47.<sup>75</sup> In just one difficult year of the war, the Uganda Protectorate sent over two and a half million shillings out of the country.

African wages played a role in African dissent and disagreements during the 1940s, even catalyzing five minor strikes during 1944.<sup>76</sup> The Whitley Report ignores these strikes. Wages remained in the purview of the Legislative Council which actively addressed the wage problem in their proceedings, although it is unclear how much progress ever actually was made with regards to establishing a livable minimum wage. In the *Uganda Herald* the issue of low wages remained on the forefront of African thought. In a letter to the editor Eridadi Medadi K. Mulira asked, “Take the peasant cotton grower, who is regarded as the chief source of wealth in this country. What does he get?...Can it be imagined how such a person lives?”<sup>77</sup> Mr. Mulira

---

<sup>74</sup>“Uganda War Fund,” *Uganda Herald*, 24 December 1941, 11.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>76</sup>Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 261; “Labour Department Annual Report, 1944,” *Uganda Herald*, 20 June 1945, 13.

<sup>77</sup>Eridadi Medadi K. Mulira, “How Millions of Africans Live in East Africa, According to Sir Philip Mitchell,” *Uganda Herald*, 28 January 1942, 18.



emphasized the injustice of the fact that the people who produced Uganda's commodities could not afford to send their children to school.

Elite Africans perceived that Protectorate officials refused to completely acknowledge the African cost of living situation. A critique of the Uganda Protectorate's lack of examination of the African cost of living appeared in the Correspondence section of the *Uganda Herald* on December 16, 1942 in a letter entitled "African Cost of Living," submitted by the pseudonym "G. Kay." "G. Kay" noted the visible lack of enquiry on the part of the British, and questioned whether the Administrations' absence of a cost-of-living examination was related to laziness or that they simply did not care.<sup>78</sup> His question supported the idea that in Uganda during the 1940s the motives of the Uganda Protectorate remained unclear with regards to how they approached the socioeconomic challenges Africans faced. "G. Kay's" inquiry also questioned whether the British intentionally tried not to see the real economic inequities of Uganda.

The letters that "G. Kay" submitted to the *Uganda Herald* demonstrated how the Protectorate listened to the elite opinions presented in the newspaper. "G. Kay" demanded a complete Government-based examination of the rates of wages for all Africans, including those employed by the British Government. "G. Kay" called for, "an attempt to try and obtain accurate information regarding the relative standard of living of each of the various classes of the African population in the Protectorate."<sup>79</sup> "G. Kay"

---

<sup>78</sup>"G. Kay," "African Cost of Living," *Uganda Herald*, 16 December 1942, 11.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

sought to expose the existence of great wage inequities experienced by Africans of different classes, and indirectly expose the British cooperation in this system. It seems that “G. Kay” had observed the differences of class and access and sought to incite discussion regarding the obligation and responsibility classes had in their “relative” hierarchical positions. He continued, “Each class has a certain groove, peculiar to itself, along which it moves in accordance with a certain standard of living, high or low; while, in common with the rest, it has certain definite obligations and customs to which it must conform.”<sup>80</sup>

It is unclear whether the upsurge of calls in the newspaper for an inquiry into the African cost of living catalyzed the British response, but there seems to have been a chronological correlation between “G. Kay’s” demands and the instigation of an actual inquiry. In response to the “G. Kay’s” letter to the editor on December 16, 1942 an editorial was published on January 6, 1943 that addressed several of the concerns of “G. Kay” and announced the recent launching of an official Protectorate inquiry into the cost of living of African civil servants. The Protectorate agreed to examine the livelihoods of African civil servants only. This reluctance blocked the potential progress that a real examination of all African livelihoods could have produced.

The “African Cost of Living” editorial addressed the wartime inflation problem but offered agreement on the necessity of “G. Kay’s” suggestions and credited the protectorate for beginning the inquiry. The editor criticized the

---

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 11.

absence of Asian and European wage statistics that isolated Africans in a vacuum. However, the article did not address the need for an inquiry that examined the cost of non-civil servant African living. The article subtly suggested that inflation affected a “certain class of people in Uganda” more than others.<sup>81</sup> Only African civil servants/government employees received war bonuses. Farmers and the self-employed had to live on less. Wartime economics affected business operations in Uganda and the people who facilitated them. Tyre rationing and cuts in petrol allowances constrained road transport and the jobs that people engaged in upon the roads.<sup>82</sup>

In 1944 the Standing Finance Committee of the Legislative Council and the Development and Welfare Committee published a joint report that acknowledged the need to raise the living standards of the African inhabitants of Uganda over the course of the following six years.<sup>83</sup> The report identified necessary actions to be taken to achieve the raised standard of African living; these included “mass education, greatly increased medical services and improved housing.”<sup>84</sup> Editorials in the *Uganda Herald* paid attention to inadequate African housing, particularly in ginneries and on plantations especially since Government regulations existed that dictated housing standards for African workers (though they were frequently violated).

Although the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the disturbances which occurred in Uganda during January, 1945 stated that the

---

<sup>81</sup>“Cost of Living,” *Uganda Herald*, 6 January 1943, 6.

<sup>82</sup>“Economy,” *Uganda Herald*, 25 February 1942, 6.

<sup>83</sup> Ingham, *The Making of Modern Uganda*, 219.

economic conditions of Uganda during the 1940s were just a pretext to the January disturbances, the *Uganda Herald* demonstrates that wartime inflation led to serious suffering because of increased food and commodity prices, pressure to produce export crops, poor price control policies, the strains of the black market, high taxation and low wages. The protectorate government only listened to the complaints of the wealthier sufferers and completely disregarded the voices of the poor. Uganda's wartime inflation problems and the government's inadequate responses to these problems contributed to strike action in January of 1945.

---

<sup>84</sup> Ingham, *The Making of Modern Uganda*, 219.

### **CHAPTER THREE: SERWANO KULUBYA AND PROBLEMS WITH REPRESENTATION**

The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the disturbances which occurred in Uganda during January, 1945 claimed that strikers sought the removal of Serwano Kulubya, the Omuwanika (Treasurer) of the Buganda Lukiko as their primary strike objective. In the Report, Whitley described a strike plot where organizers attempted to use the January disturbances to “seize the power in the Kabaka’s Government and get rid of Kulubya.”<sup>85</sup> The *Uganda Herald* newspaper and Legislative Council proceedings document a problem in the structure of Ugandan government that extends beyond a single political figure such as Omuwanika Kulubya. Evidence from the *Herald* and the Legislative Council proceedings indirectly demonstrate a problem of representation where ordinary people in Uganda (including the kingdom of Buganda) were not listened to by the Lukiko chiefs and African Legislative Council members who were supposed to represent their interests. Protectorate officials and chiefs labeled African discontent childish, foolish and symptomatic of immorality, instead of focusing on the validity of the complaints. The Africans allowed to speak in official forums seem to have been chosen for their willingness to reiterate official positions.

The previous chapter used the *Uganda Herald* to illuminate the economic discontent which caused the strike, discounted in the Whitley Report. This chapter uses indirect evidence from the *Uganda Herald* to demonstrate the frustratingly unrepresentative nature of Ugandan government

experienced by ordinary Ugandans. In the years leading up to the strike, letters and essays in the *Uganda Herald* document both the clearly articulated concerns of Africans and official and non-official British residents persistent unwillingness to listen to those statements or taken them seriously. Evidence from Legislative Council proceedings supplement the *Uganda Herald* and demonstrate how African representatives only represented and protected the interests of chiefs and large landowners like themselves. Ordinary Ugandans demonstrated their anger and frustration at not being respected or listened to in critical moments like the 1945 strike.

According to Whitley, the Ganda masses hated Kulubya because he aligned himself and the Buganda Kingdom finances strongly with the British Protectorate government.<sup>86</sup> Kulubya began his career in government as an interpreter and clerk for the colonial government, and eventually became one of three men who served as regents upon Daudi Chwa's (Buganda's Kabaka until November 22, 1939) death.<sup>87</sup> He oversaw many of the pivotal transitions made in the Ugandan Government during Kabaka Mutesa II's controversial succession to the throne.<sup>88</sup> Kulubya served as the first African president of the Uganda Society and was regarded by the officers of the Protectorate as a man of character and a strong ally for the protectorate government.<sup>89</sup> In contrast, Kulubya was regarded by his fellow Ugandans as dishonest, a "trickster"<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Whitley, Report, 11.

<sup>86</sup> Whitley, Report, 6.

<sup>87</sup> Jan Jorgensen, *Uganda, a Modern History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 86-7.

<sup>88</sup> Whitley, Report, 6.

<sup>89</sup> Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 227.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

according to James Kivu.<sup>91</sup> Kulubya was strongly criticized for allowing himself to be guided by British advice in his handling of the Buganda finances and his policies tended to serve the British Protectorate; he had “insisted on rigorous tax collection and the rooting out of peculation throughout the 1930s depression.”<sup>92 93</sup> He was known for being “unable, or unwilling, to satisfy the demands of aspiring entrepreneurs.”<sup>94</sup> Kulubya lost some credibility in Uganda when he approved the remarriage of the *namasole* (Queen mother) to a man a generation younger, which scandalized Buganda.

The Whitley Report detailed a strike campaign for Kulubya’s removal that “poison[ed] the minds of the Buganda public against Kulubya.”<sup>95</sup> Whitley wrote of 500 strikers picketing outside the Kabaka’s palace on January 20<sup>th</sup>, demanding the resignation of the Lukiko’s *Omuwanika*. A crowd of 500 would actually have been paltry, considering the crowds of many thousands that characterized the strike. Several well-established facts about the strikes undermine the premise that they centered on Kulubya. First, strikes occurred in places which were not a part of the Buganda kingdom, the only place where Kulubya had any power: these locations included Gulu, Lira, Mbarara, Jinja, Mbale, Iganga and Toro.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, the disturbances had begun to subside

---

<sup>91</sup> Kivu and his comrade Ignatius Musazi were the leaders of the UAMDA, the only union in Uganda during the 1940s. The UAMDA was “populist rather than class-oriented because it included independent owner-drivers and well as transport employees of ginneries and bus companies.” UAMDA closely linked to the Sons of Kintu (both founded in 1938) (Jorgensen, 180).

<sup>92</sup> Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 227.

<sup>93</sup> Whitley, Report, 6.

<sup>94</sup> Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 227.

<sup>95</sup> Whitley, Report, 7.

<sup>96</sup> Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 254.

prior to Kulubya's 23<sup>rd</sup> resignation, a dimension which the Whitley Report distorts.<sup>97</sup>

Perhaps because of a lack of primary sources, historians including R. Cranford Pratt, D. Anthony Low, Mahmood Mamdani and Carol Summers have tended to concur with Whitley's conclusion that strikers organized themselves with the goal of removing Kulubya. It is possible to glimpse a more complex motivation in the *Uganda Herald* and transcripts from Legislative Council proceedings. These sources reveal how discontent over political representation extended beyond Kulubya, and that a larger structural problem about voice existed in Uganda. African subjects did not feel represented by their elite African leaders who functioned in legislative structures such as the Lukiko and the Legislative Council in ways that served British interests and their own. When African subjects expressed discontent British protectorate officials labeled the mature and reasonable demands as childish, foolish and symptoms of immorality, instead of focusing on the substance of the concerns. This chapter argues that Serwano Kulubya served as a symbol to strikers of the problems that indirect rule created with class and representation, but as an individual he did not cause the strike of 1945.

Ugandans shared the experience of being ignored with other colonized Africans. British colonialists infantilized legitimate African discontent in the colony of Kenya. In June of 1945 Kenyan Governor Philip Mitchell, the former governor of Uganda, blatantly disregarded complaints that had been made by local leaders in Kisumu in the Nyanza province of Kenya. Governor

---

<sup>97</sup>Thompson, "Colonialism in Crisis: The Uganda Disturbances of 1945," 612.



Mitchell held a *baraza* in Swahili in response to a memorandum that outlined local issues of discontent including the price of maize, low rate of wages, heavy taxation, levels of crime, and labor conscription – all problems that poor Ugandans experienced as well. The *Uganda Herald* published an English translation of Governor Mitchell’s address in June of 1945, entitled “A Lesson For All Africans.” Governor Mitchell addressed the Chiefs, members of local native councils and local elite and chastised the complainants’ memoranda, saying, “...things contained in these documents are either foolish or childish, lacking in foundation or meaning.”<sup>98</sup> Although the newspaper never bothered to publish the local demands it is possible to see them in Mitchell’s point by point refutation. It appears the demands focused on work conscription, the price of maize, high taxes, low wages, and crime rates.<sup>99</sup> Mitchell repudiated each complaint and asserted that Kenyans did not appreciate European efforts and that they misunderstood the full economic issues of their complaint. He also mocked pre-colonial African society. Mitchell said,

The others have written that the Government had not done right by the people of this part of the country, or that they are in great distress because of the severity of the taxes and dues which they pay without receiving any adequate return from them, and more to that effect: but until fifty years ago, when the old men of today were children, what was your condition like?...Who opened for you every path out of darkness and oppression, every path that can lead you to civilization? And then this talk of the heavy taxation you pay!<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup>“Sir Philip Mitchell’s Speech: A Lesson For All Africans,” *Uganda Herald*, 20 June 1945, 11.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

In publishing Mitchell's speech, the *Uganda Herald* demonstrated its agreement with Governor Mitchell's perspective that Africans lacked morality and possessed ungrateful, petty, child-like and foolish characteristics. The negative portrayal of Africans allowed British authors of letters to the editor to refocus the disquiet and ignore African concerns over serious problems such as heavy taxation and high wartime prices. The *Uganda Herald's* choice to publish the transcript of Mitchell's Kenyan baraza address entitled "A Lesson for All Africans" indicated how to understand "All" Africans and reinforced the policies that ignored and discredited peasant/ poor people's problems in Uganda.

Europeans such as Mr. A.W. Turner-Russell, a frequent contributor to the *Uganda Herald*, used the Uganda newspaper as a place to discredit African discontent and to publicly question their abilities to lead themselves and even think for themselves. In a letter to the editor Mr. A.W. Turner-Russell refuted legitimate African qualms about African teacher's salaries and sought to shift the focus to "moral" problems and to suggest that Africans like Mr. Mulira misunderstood problems such as low salaries:

Our friend Mr. Mulira in his letter on the subject of African masters salaries has...overlooked vital points, or maybe he is not aware of them. I was pleased to notice that he sees a comparison between the quality of the European teacher and the African, but I think he has not seen a matter that is very vital, and that is the unreliability of the African. The majority of employers complain that the African in the main has not a sense of responsibility. I have talked with employers of Africans in schools, offices and works, and have heard it said frequently, "So and so is very good, but I cannot rely on him. If I didn't keep a check on him, he would let me down, etc." The question of dependability is one that is vital in the wage world,

and it is for this reason that I feel it will be many years before the Indians and Goans can be replaced. The slightest excuse is used by the Africans to absent himself...this weakness in the African character confirms my opinion that the mushroom type of education has failed to teach dependability.<sup>101</sup>

Mr. Mulira asked for Africans masters to be given salaries comparable to their European counterparts. Mr. Turner-Russell responded by turning Mr. Mulira's education topic into an assertion that African teachers did not deserve wage increases because of their negligent moral values and questionable work ethic. Mr. Turner-Russell also used the absence of African dependability to defend the higher class positions occupied by Asian counterparts. He expressed the idea to *Uganda Herald* readers that Africans needed European superiors in the workplace in order to function effectively. Mr. Turner-Russell had a history of discrediting African opinions in his letters to the editor. On January 10, 1945, Mr. Turner-Russell questioned if Mr. Kigundu, another contributor, understood the economic issues involved in his plea for higher African wages.<sup>102</sup>

In the years leading up the 1945 strike, the *Uganda Herald* published letters to the editor and editorials that chronicled the discrediting of legitimate African concerns. A 1942 complaint in a letter to the editor from "Africanus" expressed concerns with African access to education and employment.<sup>103</sup> Again in 1942, "G. Kay" demanded in a letter to the editor, "African Cost of Living" that the protectorate government begin an official inquiry into the African cost of living focusing on education, taxation, and salaries for all

---

<sup>101</sup> A.W. Turner-Russell, "Education," *Uganda Herald*, 21 February 1945, 10.

<sup>102</sup> A.W. Turner-Russell, "African Education," *Uganda Herald*, 10 January 1945, 13.

African, from the wealthiest to the poorest. “G. Kay”’s letter provoked commentary in several other letters to the editor and editorials, but when the official inquiry of the Cost of Living Committee was published in the *Uganda Herald* on March 24, 1943 it revealed that the protectorate officials had only examined the living costs of African civil servants and had disregarded the real demands that Africans like “G. Kay” expressed.

The *Uganda Herald* printed the opinions of elite, English-speaking Africans who acknowledged that ordinary Africans did not receive representation. In leading up to the strike of 1945, the frustration Africans felt with Serwano Kulubya was not because of his corruption but with the absence of representation he signified. In 1944 Mr. S.K. Kisingiri, the wealthy, powerful son of former Ganda regent Zachariah Kisingiri wrote in a letter to the editor that “the opinion of the ‘Bakopi’ or peasant is never taken into consideration, only those of the Chiefs.”<sup>104</sup> He continued, “With so much money going to the Treasury of the Native Government one fails to see why the general improvement in its method, and the raising of the standard of living of the African, is not taken in hand.”<sup>105</sup> In another letter addressed to *Uganda Herald* columnist Sundowner, Mr. A. Kalule Sempa identified African discontent with not being listened to: “A good deal of unfortunate suspicion by Africans as regards the intentions of Europeans on matter

---

<sup>103</sup> Africanus, “An African Complaint,” *Uganda Herald*, 12 September 1942, 15.

<sup>104</sup> S.K. Kisingiri, “The Drink Problem,” *Uganda Herald*, 26 April 1944, 13.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

affecting Africans originates largely from the fact that the African does not take his rightful place in discussions which affect his own development.”<sup>106</sup>

Lukiko members and African Legislative Council members appointed to speak for ordinary Africans did not validate their discontent or even attempt to represent them. The 1900 Agreement between British colonial officers and the pre-colonial ruling elite of Buganda had established a system of indirect rule that gave the British control over African subjects and created a class of what Mamdani calls “landed” African aristocrats.<sup>107</sup> The 1900 Agreement recognized the Kabaka as king of Buganda; his Lukiko as the parliament of Buganda; and granted Ganda chiefs mailo land.<sup>108</sup> The pre-colonial Ganda system of political power remained intact, but the Ganda elite now acted as agents for British political purposes.<sup>109</sup> Throughout the 1940s the Ganda remained political collaborators with Uganda’s British protectorate officials and compromised their duties as the spokespeople of the Ganda for their sense of duty to the British protectorate. Baganda worked in partnership politically with the British protectorate as members of the Lukiko (Parliament of Buganda) and beginning in late 1945 as members of the Protectorate’s Legislative Council.

In the 1940s the Buganda Lukiko represented and protected the interests of chiefs and large landowners, Baganda like themselves.

---

<sup>106</sup>A. Kalule Sempa, “Letter to Sundowner,” *Uganda Herald*, 26 July 1944, 11.

<sup>107</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 141.

<sup>108</sup> Ganda elites acquired over 18,000 square miles of mailo land in the 1900 Agreement. The transfer of this mailo land turned the large number of Ganda peasants living on the mailo land into rent-paying tenants to their newly “landed” chiefs. (Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 141)

<sup>109</sup>Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 44.

Structurally the Lukiko consisted of 89 members including “a Prime Minister or Katikiro, a Chief Justice or Omulamuzi, a Treasurer or Omuwanika, the chiefs in charge of twenty counties, three notables selected by the Kabaka from each county and a further six persons of importance chosen by the Kabaka.”<sup>110</sup> Individually, as mentioned before, the Lukiko consisted of a small wealthy and powerful proportion of Baganda men. Lord Hailey wrote in 1950 that “it was...the custom for the Kabaka to select...officials belonging to the hierarchy of chiefs. The Lukiko was therefore almost entirely official in its composition.”<sup>111</sup> Lukiko members did not have interest in representing the needs of Ugandans who did not fit into their small elite socioeconomic demographic. Lukiko members did not think of the Lukiko as place for complete representation.

While members of the Ugandan Protectorate Government, including former Governor Charles Dundas, believed that the Kabaka selected chiefs and members of the Lukiko based on personal merit,<sup>112</sup> Baganda observers challenged this idea. Mr. Mulira, a contributor to the *Uganda Herald* who closely observed the mechanisms of Ugandan politics identified the “whole system of chieftainship as a major cause of unrest in Buganda in the 1940s.”<sup>113</sup> Mr. Mulira believed that it was a system of patronage, as opposed to merit, that allowed Baganda to climb the “unfair” ladder in government

---

<sup>110</sup> Whitley, Report, 4.

<sup>111</sup> Lord Hailey, *Native Administration in the British East African Territories: Part I. East Africa: Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1950), 9.

<sup>112</sup> Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 224.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

service.<sup>114</sup> Mr. Mulira's description of the patronage system implied that only a select, very small group of very wealthy Baganda who could afford to engage in patronage had access to the prestige and access to power that Lukiko membership offered. Non-elite Baganda had no opportunity for expressing themselves, since they could neither be on the Lukiko nor have their opinions expressed for them in the Lukiko. Baganda protested the "sham quality of the Lukiko" as early as in 1924.<sup>115</sup> A Ganda chief, Samwiri Mukasa, testified that, "We had a Lukiko, but it was not a Lukiko in reality."<sup>116</sup> Democratic elections for Lukiko membership did not begin until after 1946.<sup>117</sup>

In the early 1940s African contributors to the *Uganda Herald* asserted that Lukiko members participated in the Council for self-serving purposes and worked to accomplish their personal objectives. Baganda like Mr. R.M.K. Kasule saw Lukiko members as weak-minded men with "axes to grind," who ignored the public opinions of their people.<sup>118</sup> In a *Uganda Herald* letter to the editor Mr. Kasule argued that the exclusive composition of the Lukiko and their unfair mechanism of attaining power created the adverse economic conditions in Buganda. Ordinary Baganda wanted a system of election to be implemented to ensure the revival of good governance in Uganda.<sup>119</sup> Letters like this one suggest that the disturbances of January 1945 were not so much

---

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 224.

<sup>115</sup>Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: the Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH : Heinemann, 2003), 220.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>117</sup> Lord Hailey, p. 9-10.

<sup>118</sup>R.M.K. Kasule, "The Drink Evil," *Uganda Herald*, 10 May 1944, 13.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 13.

about replacing specific members of the Lukiko, but about the objectionable nature of the unrepresentative system of governance.

The *Uganda Herald* frequently published transcripts from major events including the coronation of Kabaka Mutesa II, Legislative Council sessions, and Lukiko sessions. These transcripts illuminate how the Kabaka and Lukiko representatives echoed the British protectorate government officials in their speeches, instead of giving voice to their Baganda subjects. The *Uganda Herald* published partial transcripts of the April 15, 1942 speeches of the opening of the Buganda Government Quarterly Sessions that demonstrated Lukiko alignment with British goals and ideals. Katikiro (Prime Minister) Wamala mentioned four specific areas for concentration in the upcoming Quarterly Session. Of the four areas mentioned by the Katikiro, three pertained directly to achieving British Protectorate goals. The Katikiro specified that Lukiko and Baganda energy should be directed at “the war and how it affected Buganda and that all should pull one way in the war effort; cultivation of food and industrial crops; [and] payment of Government taxes, which he regretted to observe was not being made as quickly as it should be.”<sup>120</sup> The Katikiro might have pointed out that war impoverished Ugandans and created a subsistence crisis that was worsened by taxation, but he did not.

Governor Dundas’ concluding statement at Mutesa II’s November 1942 coronation confirmed the interconnection and loyalty between the Lukiko and the Legislative Council as governing parties, “On behalf of the Regents and the Chiefs and the people of Buganda it gives me great pleasure



to congratulate Your Highness... We, as well as your people, Your Highness, are greatly honored to have seen you into your High Office.”<sup>121</sup> This statement indicated the alliance between the Kabaka, “regents,” “chiefs,” and the British, and separated the Ganda people from this categorical alliance. Education and money created a complete divide between the elite and the non-elite, and non-elite Ganda ended up unrepresented.

The powerlessness felt by ordinary Africans immensely contributed to participation in the strike of 1945. As a response to this, Governor Hall added unofficial African members to the Legislative Council. The Africans selected to be unofficial members of the Legislative Council in the fall of 1945 also failed to listen to their Ugandan constituents and speak on their behalf in Council. In October of 1945, Governor John Hall and the Secretary of State decided that three African members should be inducted onto the Legislative Council; one from the Western Provinces, one from the Eastern Provinces, and one from Buganda. The positions from the Western and Eastern Provinces were to be filled on a rotating basis by the “katikkiros of Bunyoro and Toro and the Nyanzi of Ankole [in the West]...and the Secretaries-General of the Native Administration Councils of Busoga, Bugisu, Bukedi, and Teso [in the East].”<sup>122</sup> The selection process in Buganda involved a more direct path of authority and power; the Buganda representative needed to be a Minister of

---

<sup>120</sup>“Opening of Buganda Government Quarterly Sessions,” *Uganda Herald*, 15 April 1942, 8.

<sup>121</sup>“Coronation of His Highness the Kabaka Mutesa II,” *Uganda Herald*, 25 November 1942, 9. My underlining.

<sup>122</sup>Ingham, 231.

Buganda nominated by the Kabaka and then approved by the Governor.<sup>123</sup>

Governor Hall had the power to overrule the appointment of all three nominees.

The Legislative Council proceedings reveal that the British government selected African community leaders who told them what they wanted to hear about the economic and political desires of Africans. Governor Hall stacked the Council with three Ugandans who already had power and had benefited from the British presence and would not challenge the status quo: Mr. Mikaeri Kawalya-Kagwa from the Buganda Kingdom, the son of Sir Apolo Kagwa; Mr. Petero Nyangabyaki from the Western Province; and Mr. Yekonia Zirabamuzale from the Eastern Province.<sup>124</sup> The African members expressed more loyalty to their British friends than to their African constituents. At the close of his introductory speech on December 4, 1945 Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa concluded with this allied pledge to the British, “We shall serve this Council loyally, diligently and in the interests of the people of this country and those of the Empire.”<sup>125</sup> Did Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa, Mr. Nyangabyaki, and Mr. Zirabamuzale contribute to the Council on the behalf of other Africans? Did ordinary Africans benefit or lose from having elite Africans on the Uganda Legislative Council?

In October of 1945 Governor John Hall identified the type of Africans with whom the British were interested in working collaboratively on the

---

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 231.

<sup>124</sup>Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 293; Ingham, 231.

<sup>125</sup>Uganda Protectorate Legislative Council Proceedings Report, 4 December 1945, 13.

Legislative Council. Hall began a process of elimination with regards to membership qualification, arguing that in order for the Protectorate and its' people to benefit all members (specifically the new African members) needed to be "men of substance and authority, of ripe experience and possessed of a developed sense of responsibility."<sup>126</sup> The Protectorate authorities wanted cooperative, wealthy people already aligned with the policies of the Protectorate. Carol Summers' identifies Hall's ideal when she describes "...young Africans who understood Britain, assessed their own societies using British categories, and were willing to make sacrifices toward keeping their African homes British."<sup>127</sup> These qualities allowed colonial authorities to avoid seeing or hearing about discontent. In his first speech in the Council, Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa put the interests of the Council and the British Administration above the thoughts of his African constituents, saying, "The honour conferred upon us [Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa, Mr. Nyangabyaki, and Mr. Zirabamuzale] is great and I am sure will please the African communities, but we are not unmindful of the task placed on our shoulders and we feel that our presence here may well assist the Council."<sup>128</sup> African Legislative Council members undertook one task: to validate Council ideas. On December 4, 1945 Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa stated that the African presence on the Legislative Council served to "assist the Council to reach decisions on matter affecting

---

<sup>126</sup>Uganda Protectorate Legislative Council Proceedings Report, 23 October 1945, 3.

<sup>127</sup>Carol Summers, "Young Africa and Radical Visions: Revisiting the Bataka in Buganda, 1944-54," unpublished draft, March 2004: 4.

<sup>128</sup>Uganda Protectorate Legislative Council Proceedings Report, 4 December 1945, 13.

Africans with a better understanding of the African mind.”<sup>129</sup> Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa, Mr. Nyangabyaki, and Mr. Zirabamuzale demonstrated to the Legislative Council that the “African mind” agreed with their policies.

African council member’s knowledge of “their” community did not influence their ideas: instead, they demonstrated the same paternalism as their British counterparts. Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa admitted that his so-called African constituents would dislike an Ordinance related to African management of businesses, but supported it anyway. Playing his role as pacifier, Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa assured the Council, “It is true, Sir, that Africans will at first feel suspicious about the Ordinance and may not come forward readily...but that will be a matter of time. As the time goes, Sir, they will understand the benefits of the Ordinance and will come gladly to form societies in order to run their own business properly.”<sup>130</sup>

In the first Legislative Council proceedings they attended on December 4, 1945 Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa thanked the Council for the opportunities he and his fellow Africans had been afforded and stated his three important points of attention: “The improvement of health. Elimination of ignorance. The improvement of living conditions.”<sup>131</sup> Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa’s points each met perfectly with goals the Council had set forth previously, particularly number two regarding eliminating “ignorance.” Governor Hall had implied on multiple occasions, including on January 23, 1945 that ignorance and African misperception played a role in African’s decisions to

---

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>130</sup>Uganda Protectorate Legislative Council Proceedings Report, 19 February 1946, 27.

strike.<sup>132</sup> Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa asserting that took issue with ignorance confirmed Governor Hall's implication. Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa also confirmed that the discontents non-elite Africans expressed had roots in ignorance and misperception and not in substance.

Most often the African Legislative Council members did not make useful comments in the Council proceedings or they said nothing. The silences of the African Legislative Council members demonstrated the unrepresentative nature as much as their speeches. It is interesting to examine the comments that Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa, Mr. Nyangabyaki, and Mr. Zirabamuzale felt required their responses. As there is little information on the official procedure for speaking in the Legislative Council, it is difficult to determine whether this is the African members' fault or an area where they had no control. If, however, they spoke of completely free will and not constrained by formalities, the African members chose to respond in some of the less important moments of debate. An example of one place where an African response would have been valuable is in a comment from December 18, 1945. Mr. Fraser, a European Legislative Council member commented that, "[the African] idea of co-operation, at the moment anyway, is to be allowed to trade as they wish with little or no protection to their members and with no supervision of their activities."<sup>133</sup> Surprisingly none of the African members responded to this comment, even though it presented a valuable

---

<sup>131</sup>Uganda Protectorate Legislative Council Proceedings Report, 4 December 1945, 13.

<sup>132</sup>“End of the Labour Troubles,” *Uganda Herald*, 31 January 1945, 1.

<sup>133</sup>Uganda Protectorate Legislative Council Proceedings Report, 18 December 1945, 77.

opportunity to discuss relevant problems such as black marketing and alcohol sale.

Although the Whitley Report and secondary sources identified Serwano Kulubya as the motivation behind the January 1945 strike, the *Uganda Herald* and the Legislative Council proceedings show that ordinary Africans endured a constant ignoring and belittling of their justifiable complaints. Lukiko chiefs and officials did not represent the interests of their ordinary African subjects, and British officials and non-officials ignored their complaints in public fora such as the *Uganda Herald*. After the strike, when Governor Hall and his protectorate government realized the need for African voices, they moved to place African members on the Legislative Council. This attempt at giving Africans representation failed as well, as Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa, Mr. Nyangabyaki, and Mr. Zirabamuzale only represented their own class interests in their duties on the Council. While Serwano Kulubya was a poor representative to the Baganda himself, the striker's desire for his removal from office had more to do with the larger issue of lack of representation that he symbolized.

## CONCLUSION

Whitley concluded his report on the January 1945 strikes by describing the stress-free life of Ugandans:

Everywhere the people look well fed and cheerful. One sees very little in the way of real destitution. The climate is such that clothes are a luxury rather than a necessity. Nature supplies free all that is necessary for building the ordinary native house. The country produces in plenty all the food required including tea, sugar and coffee. When occasionally the rains fail and crops are poor the Government makes adequate arrangements for import and control so that there is no real famine. Wages, judging by English standards, are of course very low but it must be borne in mind that food is extremely cheap, and that most natives build their own houses and have their own little plantations on which they grow food and often cotton or coffee.<sup>134</sup>

This happy picture of Uganda during wartime bears no resemblance to the circumstances described by writers in the *Uganda Herald*. In chapter two I used the *Uganda Herald* newspaper to demonstrate that economic destabilization caused by World War II overpowered ordinary, working Africans in Uganda. The *Uganda Herald* also revealed that the Protectorate government handled the economic problems incompetently. The 1945 strike demonstrates how British protectorate officials did not see the failures of their policies in Uganda, a problem that continued after the resolution of the 1945 disturbances and contributed to the 1949 cotton strike.

In chapter three I demonstrated that Serwano Kulubya did not cause the 1945 strike, but that he represented a larger issue of political voice for ordinary Africans. The Whitley Report explicitly identified the removal of

---

<sup>134</sup>Whitley, Report, 31.

Serwano Kulubya as one of the primary objectives of the strike, but evidence in other primary sources indicates that a more substantial problem than Omuwanika Kulubya existed in late-colonial Uganda. The *Uganda Herald* showed that ordinary Africans lacked representation and their legitimate concerns were continuously disregarded and mocked. The Legislative Council proceedings demonstrated that the problems of representation were not solved by placing unofficial African members on the Legislative Council in December of 1945.

The few scholars who have written about the 1945 strike have based their explanations for it primarily on the Whitley Report. I have argued that the Whitley Report misrepresents the causes of the strikes and shown that the use of available sources can enhance our current understanding.

Some scholars have seen the 1945 strikes as a step in the creation of nationalism. Kenneth Ingham employed the Whitley Report in *The Making of Modern Uganda* (1958) to assert that strikers sought to “play a part in the country’s political life.”<sup>135</sup> Mahmood Mamdani identified the 1945 strike as a coalescing of nationalist movements that were sparked off by the Namasole Affair, a controversial moment in 1941 when the namasole (Buganda queen mother) decided to marry a commoner and her decision was backed by elite Baganda politicians such as Serwano Kulubya.<sup>136</sup> Nationalism may have been forming, but my sources indicate that the protectorate response to the strike was a new way for elite Africans to stifle the voice of their “community.”

---

<sup>135</sup> Ingham, *The Making of Modern Uganda*, 225.



Gardner Thompson in Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy (2003) argues that when Ganda chiefs and African elites increasingly cooperated with British protectorate officials during the 1940s they “alienated” themselves ever more from their own people.<sup>137</sup> The Legislative Council speeches of Mr. Kawalya-Kagwa, Mr. Nyangabyaki, and Mr. Zirabamuzale as well as the patronizing letters to the editor written by some Ugandans, underscore this point.

Pratt and Low’s Buganda and British Overrule (1960) claims that in 1940s Uganda colonial administrators were unlikely to understand or sympathize with the “political emotions that move[d] their subjects” because of the “great cultural and language barriers” that divided them.<sup>138</sup> This argument excuses the way British protectorate officials ignored clearly stated African discontent. It also ignores and contradicts the extended conversations carried out in the *Uganda Herald* among official and non-official British residents and English-speaking Africans and Asians.

Carol Summers argues in the conclusion of her article “Young Buganda and Old Boys: Youth, Generational Transition, and Ideas of Leadership in Buganda, 1920-1949” that regardless of the cause of the strike (be it economic or political), it gave Ugandans an opportunity to make their “grievances matter, not just to themselves, but to the protectorate, the

---

<sup>136</sup> Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, 178.

<sup>137</sup> Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*, 230.

<sup>138</sup> Low and Pratt, *Buganda and British Overrule: 1900-1955, Two Studies*, 291.

missions, and the Colonial Office.”<sup>139</sup> Summers offers an optimistic outlook at the outcome of the strike, but in light of colonial reactions such as the one Whitley presented in his concluding paragraph, this essay argues that the strikers failed to “make their grievances matter.” Protectorate officials did pay attention, but they misinterpreted and misrepresented the strike causes. The real result of the strike, as I have shown, was that British protectorate officials placed Africans in the Legislative Council and they still failed to represent or legitimize African desires.

“G. Kay” asked if the problems Ugandans experienced during the 1940s were the result of government lassitude or contentment. This essay has demonstrated that both lassitude and contentment contributed to the governmental mismanagement, dismissal and discrediting of Ugandan concerns that caused the strike of 1945. Chief Justice Whitley was himself the unreliable and unsatisfactory witness: he incorrectly identified the roots of the January disturbances. His influential report buried the legitimate complaints of African subjects under layers of willful ignorance. The 1945 strike and the response to it reveals that Uganda protectorate authorities could not let themselves see the fundamental flaws of the policy of indirect rule.

---

<sup>139</sup> Summers, “Young Africa and Radical Visions: Revisiting the Bataka in Buganda, 1944-54,” unpublished draft, March 2004: 123.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Published Material

- Brett, E.A.. *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa*. London: Heinemann, 1973.
- Brown, Douglas and Marcelle V. eds. *Looking Back at the Uganda Protectorate: Recollections of District Officers*. Perth, Australia: Frank Daniels Pty Ltd., 1996.
- Buell, Raymond Leslie. *The Native Problem in Africa*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928.
- Cooper, Frederick. *Decolonization and African Society: the Labor Question in French and British Africa*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Fallers, Lloyd, ed. *The King's Men: Leadership and Status in Buganda on the Eve of Independence*. New York: Oxford University Press (on behalf of the East African Institute of Social Research), 1964.
- Ferguson, James. *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Gifford, Prosser; Louis, William Roger. *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization, 1940-1960*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Goldthorpe, J.E.. *An African Elite: Makerere College Students, 1922-1960*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Hanson, Holly. *Landed Obligation: the Practice of Power in Buganda*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003.
- Iliffe, John. *A Modern History of Tanganyika*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Ingham, Kenneth. *A History of East Africa*. London: Longmans, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Making of Modern Uganda*. London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958.

- Lord Hailey. *An African Survey: Revised 1956. A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara*. London: Oxford University Press, 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Native Administration in the British East African Territories: Part I. East Africa: Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950.
- Low, D. Anthony. *Buganda in Modern History*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Eclipse of an Empire*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Jorgensen, Jan. *Uganda: a Modern History*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981.
- Mair, L.P. *Native Policies in Africa*. London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1936.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*. New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1976.
- Oberst, Timothy. "Transport Workers, Strikes and the "Imperial Response": Africa and the Post World War II Conjuncture." *African Studies Review*, Vol. 31, No. 1. (Apr., 1988): 117-133.
- Powesland, P.G. *Economic Policy and Labour: A Study in Uganda's Economic History*. Kampala: East African Institute of Social Research, 1957.
- Pratt, R. Cranford and D. Anthony Low. *Buganda and British Overrule: 1900-1955, Two Studies*. London: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- Richards, Audrey I. *The Changing Structure of a Ganda Village*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966.
- Summers, Carol. "Young Buganda and Old Boys: Youth, Generational Transition, and Ideas of Leadership in Buganda, 1920-1949." *Africa Today* 51.3 (2005), 109-128.
- Thompson, Gardner. "Colonialism in Crisis: The Uganda Disturbances of 1945." *African Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 365 (Oct., 1992): 605-624.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2003.
- Van Zwanenberg, R. *Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya*. Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1975.
- Welbourn, F.B. *East African Rebels: A Study of Some Independent Churches*. London: SCM Press, 1961.
- Willis, Justin. *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa, 1850-1999*. London : British Institute in Eastern Africa; Oxford : James Currey; Athens: Ohio University Press; Nairobi: E.A.E.P.; Kampala: Fountain Publishers; Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota, 2002.
- Whitley, N.H.P.. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances which occurred in Uganda during January, 1945*. Entebbe: Government Printer, 1945.
- Wrigley, Christopher C. *Crops and Wealth in Uganda: A Short Agrarian History*. Kampala: East African Institute of Social Research, 1959.

### **Other Material**

*Uganda Herald*, 1941-1949

Summers, Carol. "Young Africa and Radical Visions: Revisiting the Bataka in Buganda, 1944-54." Draft: March 2004 (University of Richmond, History)

Uganda Protectorate Legislative Council Proceedings Reports of these dates:

March 29, 1943 (pp. 7-14)

September 27, 1943 (p. 8)

May 25, 1944 (pp. 5, 13-4, 18-9)

November 14, 1944 (pp. 2-4)

December 5, 1944 (pp. 3, 6-7, 27)

December 18, 1944 (pp.34-7, 40-1, 48-9, 50-3)

December 20, 1944 (pp. 20-1, 23, 28-9, 44-6, 50-3, 62-3, 70)

June 18, 1945 (pp. 3-6)

October 23, 1945 (pp. 1-3)

December 4, 1945 (pp. 2, 13, 37-47)

December 18, 1945 (pp. 76-7)

February 19, 1946 (pp. 13-7, 19-21, 26-7)

April 30, 1946 (pp. 13-7, 19-21, 26-7)