

Africa Night coming to UNB

by Chris Tumwine and J. Exama-Ayaa
for *The Brunswickan*

The theme Africa Night '96 is "Africa". This article will attempt to enlighten both Africans and Non-Africans on trends of development and what the future holds for Africa.

If political independence was perceived as a necessary condition for the attainment of some form of eventual continental unity, economic development was believed to be its handmaiden. Thus were the decades of the 1960's and '70's designated respectively by the United Nations as the First and Second Development Decades. With the perspective offered by subsequent years, the development decades are now remembered as Africa's golden age. It was a time of hope; national economies were growing and there was a sense that the modern sector was delivering on its promise. However, by the 1980's, disillusionment had already set in. From 1980 to 1990, Africa's debt to donor countries/agencies - a widely accepted economic indicator - more than doubled. In the sub-Saharan region and on a continental basis, the debt represents respectively, 142 percent and 90 percent of Africa's gross national product. No other region of the world comes close to these debt ratios.

As if to add political insult to economic injury, the recent shift from a bi-polar to a uni-polar ideological world has only exacerbated an already difficult situation for African countries. In a re-ordered ideological climate, it is now possible for the major industrial powers to attach new and more stringent conditionalities to already diminishing flows of development aid and declining commodity prices. Pressures from industrialised countries on African countries to shift toward multi-party democracy, toward open markets and the privatisation of the huge parastatal sectors have been strong and less than subtle.

In its attempts to adjust to these diverse and powerful forces, Africa has for all practical purposes lost the tenuous gains achieved during its golden age. Despite the talk of an African Common Market by



A scene from last year's Africa Night

the year 2000 and the formation of supportive regional trading blocks - such as Preferential Trade Area (PTA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), etc. - there is little possibility that Africa's hopes for economic development will be realized. Additionally, Africa's quest for western style economic development has proved to be a profoundly divisive exercise. For the more than 50 African countries compete with each other for assistance from the same pool of donor countries. With the exception of the collective negotiations related to the Lome Conventions, many of the encounters between Africa and donor countries take place in the context of the so-called round-table talks, an arrangement in which an individual African country meets a collective of well-coordinated donor communities, constituting essentially another process of divide and rule.

Still, the counter discussion by African planners on economic direction for the continent has not been totally absent. In April of 1980 the Organization of African Unity adopted the Lagos Plan of Action. It was a plan emphasizing the objective of continental self-reliance in Africa, calling for an all Africa Economic

Community by the year 2000. This plan views self-reliance as both the means and the goal by which the region will eventually mobilise its resources, its development, and its future.

For purposes of continental integration, it is considered that complimentary relationships must exist between regional African organizations such as the Southern Africa Development Co-ordinating Conference (SADCC), the Preferential Trade Area, the Inter-Governmental Agreement on Drought and Development (IGADD) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), amongst others. It was considered, finally, that if an African economic utopia is eventually to be

Photo courtesy Chris Tumwine

realized, the continent's political systems will need to evolve toward full democracy with full participation by all sections of society.

The recent (the 10th) PTA summit for heads of state provided yet another occasion for the region's senior politicians to dream about a more cohesive African future. President Chiluba of Zambia, the current PTA chair, dreamt of a common market in the region as an answer to the choking debt problem. He spoke of a "common market with common sense for the common man." Like others before him, he was appealing to the dream of an active South Africa providing the only possible alternative for "kick-starting" Africa's moribund economies.

UNB SJ votes Yes to Pub

UNBSJ has given its SRC overwhelming support for an off campus Social Club.

"This is a great day for the students of UNBSJ. The results indicate that the students on our campus are committed to progress," said SRC President James Luck. "There is still a lot of work ahead of us. We are committed to completing this project for the students who showed their enormous support."

In a referendum, students responded 300 in favour and 115 against supporting "a Student Council-owned and operated Social Club in the uptown Saint John area," and 283 in favour and 139 against authorizing "the SRC to invest \$25 of your SRC fee, to ensure your membership and make this social club a reality."

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This Issue Dedicated to:

David Mazerolle

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The Brunswickan
Student Union Building
University of New Brunswick
P.O. Box 4400
E3B 5A3
Phone: (506) 453-4983
Fax: (506) 453-4958
E-Mail: bruns@unb.ca
WWW Site:
<http://www.unb.ca/web/bruns>