

DEVELOPMENT PLANS OF GUGGISBERG PRIOR TO 1957

The period of Governor Guggisberg's administration in the development the Gold Coast.

Much of this was due to the governor's personal devotion to the advancement of the country. Guggisberg has been described as the greatest governor the Gold Coast ever had. Long after the end of his governorship, he was still remembered with great affection by the people. Guggisberg's predecessor, Governor Clifford (1913 - 1919) had made plans for the building of a harbour at Sekondi, extension of the railways and the building of feeder roads into the important cocoa producing areas. But the programme could not be implemented for lack of funds.

Frederick Gordon Guggisberg, who was an engineer and surveyor by trade, had first served in the Gold Coast from 1901 to 1908 as Assistant Director of surveys. He was appointed governor of the gold coast in 1919. One of the first things he did when he assumed office was to prepare a Ten-Year Development Plan. Under it, he planned to spend £25 million on building a harbour, extending the railways, building new roads, providing water, drains, public works and schools, post and telegraph facilities, maps and surveys. He wished to provide the country with the physical facilities that would promote economic development. By making the transportation of goods and produce from the interior cheaper and more efficient, he hoped to increase trade.

Taking into consideration, the situation on the grounds before the appointment of Guggisberg as governor of the gold coast, he is seen as a saviour in the Gold Coast and even today. The extent of Guggisberg's contribution is best seen when he became governor. At this time, even though a number of roads and railways had been built, they were insufficient to help bring produce from the interior to the coast in large quantities. In the area of health and education, the picture was not bright. It was mostly the missionary societies that provided format education. The

contribution by the government was to give grant – in aid to schools that satisfied its conditions. Most of the schools were poorly organized, ill equipped, and staffed by teachers who were inadequately trained. There was more demand for schools than there were places available.

In 1918, there were altogether only 204 government and government – assisted schools, with a total enrolment of 25,496 in the entire country. Education was mostly, but not entirely, literate and there were almost no good technical and industrial schools. In the area of health, the facilities that existed were unable to meet the need of the people. A few hospitals had been built in the principal centres of European population, but most of them looked after Europeans only. The rest of the country did not have any such government facilities. Here again, Governor Clifford had made plans to build a good African hospital at Korle Bu in Accra, but had not done so before he left. The following paragraphs give detailed analysis of the developmental policies of Governor Sir Gordon Guggisberg before the year 1957 when the Gold Coast re-attained independence.

To start with, when Guggisberg became governor, he tackled three key areas of the Gold Coast economy namely; transport, industry and agriculture. He made sure these sectors of the economy were developed to meet the needs of the people at the time. He planned to improve the condition of the people by reforming the existing educational system and improve the medical facilities. To do so he needed money. This could be obtained if trade increases and if the country's cocoa, timber, manganese and gold could be sent to the coast cheaply and efficiently. He then tackled the transport sector of the economy, instead of building the harbour at Sekondi, he decided rather on Takoradi. He got the money for its construction partly from the local sources and partly from a loan of £4 million which he raised in London. Work was started in 1921 and completed in

1928. Takoradi harbour was to play a very important role in the import and export trade of the gold coast.

With respect to railways, Guggisberg also extended the existing railway network. He built new lines and made plans to extend the railways to the north. He rearranged the lines from Sekondi to Kumasi and extended the Accra to Tafo lines to Kumasi. He also began a construction of a new line from Kade to Huni valley to serve the cocoa and timber areas of the central province. By the time of his departure, 128 km of this line had been completed. Altogether, Guggisberg added 168 km of railway to the 430 km which existed in 1919.

Furthermore, there was an improvement in the existing roads and new ones were built as well. A new improved technique of road building was applied to improve the main ones to make for easy access to the railheads and stations. New quality roads were built in the Northern territories. During Guggisberg's regime, altogether, 5340 km of new motor roads were constructed.

In addition, there was substantial increase in mining activities during his time. Gold of course had been mined by traditional methods for centuries. Towards the end of the 19th industrial mining was started by both Gold Coast African and European companies. The concentration of these companies was on the Tarkwa district. By 1910, the Gold Coast was exporting over £1million worth of gold yearly. Other minerals were soon added to the export list. In 1916, the African Manganese company began to mine manganese at Nsuta near Tarkwa. The ore was of high grade. In addition, in 1919, the Geological Department discovered diamonds; commercial scientific production began in 1920. The diamond was mostly of the Eastern region and Takoradi in the Western region. Alluvial mining or panning for diamonds was carried on by individual African prospectors at places like Oda.

In the field of agriculture, Guggisberg extended his efforts to the development of the cocoa industry and the diversification of agriculture. His period of administration saw an agricultural revolution and most historians have credited this solely to him. But it appears that the credit should be shared between him and the peasant farmers. The expansion of agriculture began towards the end of the World War I and continued till about 1928. From about 1917 onwards, the farmers began to take a number of measures to stop the decline in agriculture which had started from the beginning of the war. Military requirements in Europe during the war increased the demand for crops like coconut, oil palm and rubber. This stimulated increased farming activity. Farmers in most parts of the county, particularly coconut and cocoa farmers, worked hard to increase their production. They tried to break the control that European companies exercised on the export of cocoa, the planters assumed the shipment and marketing of cocoa themselves from 1918 to 1924 when they stopped because they had been defrauded by their white agents in America. The planters also took steps to improve the quality of their produce by thoroughly drying the cocoa beans and bagging only good quality ones. They also formed association to put pressure on the European companies to pay better prices.

The farmers increased their output in agriculture in general and cocoa in particular. From the early 1920's, agriculture became the most important commercial activity. Cocoa was being grown in the Eastern and Central Provinces of the colony, in Asante and southern Togoland, Krobo district and Central Province, coconuts in Keta and Ada district and timber in the Western province. Other crops include rubber, cotton and coffee. The increased transport facilities made possible by Guggisberg administration made a major contribution to the expansion in agriculture.

In volume and value, cocoa was the most important crop production rose from 10,000 tonnes in 1919 to 256,000 tonnes by 1932. As production rose, prices also rose, partly as a result of the

farmers' associations. The increase in exports was reflected in the total trade figures. In 1919, 244,000 tones of trade passed through the ports. By 1923, 637,000 tones were recorded. The trade increase improved the trade balance of the country. Cocoa had become the most important single export commodity.

Guggisberg addressed himself to the problems of the country's dependence on a single crop. He called for the revival of the oil palm industry. He thought of establishing groundnuts and Shea better plantations in the Northern territories, sisal on the Accra plains and corn, sugar, coffee, and tobacco in other parts of the country. To this end, he established an experimental farm for oil palm and a sisal plantation near Takoradi. In 1927, Guggisberg put into law a forestry ordinance. This was to regulate the timber industry and make sure that the forests were not over exploited. But because of a number of factors including the absence of real experts in the field, Guggisberg attempted to diversify the economy failed. Cocoa remained the only important export crop and all of it was produced by the ordinary peasant farmer. Guggisberg also failed to do anything about the disease which began to attack cocoa trees.

In addition to the above, Guggisberg also used part of the increasing revenue from agriculture to provide social facilities, schools and medical facilities. He put great emphasis on the provision of health and education facilities and actually considered all the work he did in the economic field as directed towards making it possible to provide schools and hospitals. As stated earlier, Guggisberg was convinced that there was a need to reform education in the country. As a surveyor and engineer, Guggisberg did not approve of the type of education available. He planned to improve the situation by reforming education. On the basis of the suggestions made by an educational committee, that he set up to advice him, Guggisberg drew up his sixteen principles of education to solve the country's problems. These included the reduction of the size

of classes, increase in the number of places for girls, building of new training colleges, instruction in local history, folklore, teaching local languages, character building activities and organized games. Another important feature was the removal of untrained teachers and the closure of bush or improperly organized schools. An education ordinance fixed standards which non government schools must satisfy to qualify for grants. Grants were now to be given to technical secondary and training colleges. All these steps were expected to improve the standard of teaching in the schools and to produce more and better teachers.

Guggisberg built Achimota School in 1927, as a model to put his ideas into practice. He enlarged an earlier plan to build a normal government school to one which added other departments to the school. The full range of departments was Kindergarten, primary, secondary and University College. Achimota was headed by the Rec. A G Frazer who was assisted by Dr. J E K Aggrey. The two were great educationists and put the school on a firm footing. Guggisberg also built four trade or industrial schools to serve the colony, Asante and the Northern Territories.

In these schools, regular education was combined with instruction in the latest methods of cultivation of the important agricultural products. He also built technical schools where surveying and engineering were taught. Finally he moved the Accra Training College to Achimota and gave it better facilities.

On the negative side, as many as 150 bush or inefficient schools were closed. This put many children out of school since they could not find room in the few schools left.

The Health aspect was not left out. Guggisberg made an improvement on existing conditions he took over. Clifford's plans and added his own improvements. In addition to a regular hospital, there was to be a medical school. This plan was that African doctors who were refused the

opportunity to do practical work in British universities should do their practical work at the hospital and thereby qualify to be appointed government doctors. The plan to provide clinical training locally for British Trained African doctors failed. Korle Bu hospital, which was completed in 1923, provided medical facilities to the people of Accra and the surrounding villages.

Again, when it came to political reforms, he contributed to the political development of the Gold Coast. In the first place, he made plans for appointing Africans to senior positions in the government service. During the 19th century, Africans had been appointed to the senior posts including that of lieutenant governor, but at the beginning of the 20th century. Africans were eliminated from the senior posts in the civil service as a matter of policy. When Guggisberg became governor, he condemned that policy as immoral and uneconomic. He drew up a plan for the systematic appointment of African to senior posts. According to this plan, by 1926, there were to be 29 Africans in such positions. The number was to rise to 76 by 1931 and 229 by 1945.

Guggisberg followed his plan and by 1927 had appointed 35 new Africans to add to the 3 who held such position in 1919. However, none of these were appointed to the position in the political service that is considered such post as too important to be given to Africans. He was prepared to appoint Africans only to posts in the technical departments like medicine, the judiciary, agriculture, forestry and education. Even this programme was put aside by later governors of the country.

In the political field too, he introduced the 1925 constitution which was named after him. It was a new constitution which came to replace the 1916 Clifford constitution. This constitution allowed the local people a greater measure of political say than before. For the first time, some of

the representatives of the people on the Legislative council were to be elected. The total membership was also increased. The official representatives increased from 11 to 15 and the unofficial members from 9 to 14. Of these, five were to be Europeans, representing the European business interests. Of the remaining nine who were all to be Gold Coast Africans, three were to represent the municipalities of Accra, Cape Coast and Sekondi. Six members were to be paramount chiefs elected by the three provincial councils of the Eastern, Central and Western provinces.

The creation of the provincial councils of chiefs and the decision to allow their members a greater representation in the legislative council to be the spokesman of the local people, were all opposed by the educated people as unprogressive.

In conclusion, the above discussion was in direction of addressing the value we placed on the contributions made by Governor Guggisberg towards the development of the Gold Coast.