



Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow

MR. CHANCELLOR, when one speaks of African culture, African education, African civilisation one immediately thinks of Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, educationist, humanist, advocate for world peace. Our University of the West Indies takes pleasure in admitting into its academic fellowship this great son of Africa whose achievements and contribution to human development have already merited recognition from such distinguished academic communities as the University of Buenos Aires, the University of Granada, Spain, and the Sherbrook University of Quebec, Canada.

Born in Dakar, Sénégal, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow received his early education in his native country and pursued higher studies at the Ecole d'ingénieurs électriciens Breguet, in Paris and at the Université de Paris. His commitment and dedication to the educational and cultural development of his Africa was translated into action when he served for two years in Mauretania as a teacher at Rosso College. It is characteristic of the insight and deep understanding of the man, that he should have seen education as more than a hide-bound, school-based activity. Instead he saw it as the embodiment of a total process of socialisation and a vital means of giving form and purpose to an emergent society. Between 1953 and 1957 he was to find himself back in his native Senegal giving direction to a far-reaching educational programme embracing literacy, social education and community development.

What a fitting apprenticeship for the role he was to play between 1957 and 1958 as Minister of Education and Culture in the first national government of Sénégal during the transitional period preceding independence! He was to re-enact this role some eight years later but not before returning to the source — namely the field of active teaching and by 1968 when he became Minister of Youth and Cultural Affairs, his work was aptly informed by a wealth of practical experience which had in turn provided Sénégal, and indeed Francophone Africa, with publications authored by this devoted son of Africa with all the care and integrity of the committed scholar.

"The function of education is not only to prepare people for work", writes Monsieur M'Bow. "It must, above all, prepare people for life – that is, give them the possibility of understanding the times in which they live and of being able to participate fully in the tremendous changes taking place around them. In traditional African societies", he reminds us, "education is closely linked to the environment in which one lives and is based on the cultural, social and ethical values of the community. There is no separation between acquisition of knowledge, social and moral training and the experience gained through work."

The path to UNESCO of which he is now Director-General was a logical road, then, for one who had dedicated his life to the cause of education and culture and, above all, to the notion that peace must come to this world, and if man must be freed of the concern of ignorance, hate and fear, then all humanity must unite in the promotion of education, science and culture for all humanity. As the first African to attain to this exalted position he carries into one of the important and significant world bodies the sensibilities, hopes, aspirations, of the entire Third World. It must be an awesome, even agonising thought for Monsieur M'Bow in the responsibilities he has inherited but his established talents and proven commitment have left the world in no doubt of his capacity to transmit to this world-body that extra dimension of thought and vision rooted in the experience, creative energy and vitality of the once-neglected Third World.

The University of the West Indies joins in this expression of confidence in Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow; and by the authority of Senate and Council call on you Mr. Chancellor, to receive into the academic fellowship of our University this distinguished son of Africa and citizen of the world with the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.