

**Bishop J. O. P. Lynch's Address to the Sierra Leone Grammar School Alumni Association of North America on Saturday, April 21, 2007 at the monthly general meeting in Maryland.**

**INTRODUCTION**

Thanks to all for warm welcome. Congratulate new President and Exec. for love and concern for alma mater - that great School in Freetown that has made us who we are and what we are. Thanks for this opportunity of updating you on the status of the Sierra Leone Grammar School.

**Text**

I brought with me certain documents pertinent to the subject, copies of which I hope you all have. The matter of privatizing the SLGS began during the episcopacy of my predecessor, Rt. Rev. P. E. S. Thompson of blessed memory some 12/13yrs ago. In November 1996 I inherited and fully supported the move as the state of the Sierra Leone Grammar School and the entire educational system was fastly deteriorating. Overcrowding, lack of individual attention to the needs of the children, lack of staff encouragement and motivation, withdrawal of financial assistance or scholarship (available to some of us to see us through secondary school and further), the operation of the double shift/double administration system which continues to be in shambles and more so a serious deterrent to the performance of our children.

As a new proprietor then, I led a delegation comprising the members of the Status Review Committee, after a series of meetings of that committee, to the Hon Minister of Education, Science and Technology sometime in 1996 when he clearly agreed that the request was in line with his thinking. This matter was put in abeyance because of rebel activity in the country in 1997. When we thought things were getting under control we were overtaken by a more devastating scenario in 1999. After the rebels left, we again met with the Minister who agreed in principle to the SLGS going Private but pleaded for time as the country was just recovering from the effects of the war. He pleaded for three years but understandably we waited for four. We agreed because as he put it 'only 30% of teaching and learning was done in the Provinces with 70% in the Western Area.' As said already, we approached Govt. after 4 years and we were informed that the then Education Act did not provide for schools going 'Independent' We started going back and forth till we complained to H.E., whose statement then 'that our request was in line with government policy to hand over the administration of schools to their proprietors' clearly supported our move. Despite instructions from H.E. blockades continued in our path.

In consultations with some Lawyers who are Regentonians, we were poised to proceed w.e.f. 1<sup>st</sup> September 2006. We were assured of legal representation just in case. Fees from over 60% of the new intake had been collected. Some form of confusion and confrontation were emerging when the President invited both the officials of the now Status Implementation Committee and the Ministry of ED. SC. and Tech. to a meeting at his lodge.

H.E. proposed a compromise which I agreed to i.e. to 'await a general policy on Privation' which is to pave the way towards the SLGS changing status on 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2007. After that meeting nothing was heard from the Hon Minister till after my letter to the President dated 28<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

Further instruction was issued and members of the newly formed Education Committee of MEST visited me and my team members of the Status Implementation Committee and certain questions were raised and clarifications made. Before I left Freetown on 6 April, a meeting of all stakeholders was convened by the Ministry and a draft report was produced for discussion and possible amendments. I can assure you that the amendments were rigorous.

We are now awaiting the final decision. As I pointed out in my last letter, read in all Churches of the Mission on 8<sup>th</sup> April, Easter Day, we are poised to go, come 1<sup>st</sup> Sept. 2007 God being our helper.