Vasey Explains East African Trends

BY ANTHONY PAPPAS

The political development of East Africa was the subject of a lecture by Sir Ernest Vasey. November 8, East Africa is one region where major political changes will occur in the near future, creating political turbulence in this part of the world. Sir Ernest is well qualified to discuss this subject, having lived in East Africa for 26 years. He was Minister of Finance in Kenya and Tanganyika. He was mayor of Nairobi. In addition, Sir Ernest has been associated with MIT, Yale, and Harvard in various capacities. Among the native population of the region, there has been no existence of a great degree of political consciousness.

Economists Differ on Aims

Sir Ernest outlined the reasons for the present social structure in these countries. About sixty years ago East Africa had not been settled to any degree. Thereafter, the British government began building railroads and, as a necessary consequence, encouraged settlers to migrate to the region. The building of railroads required a large, semi-skilled labor force. Among the native population this did not exist. As a consequence, workers from the Indian subcontinent were imported. Gradually, three economic areas were established. The Europeans occupied the managerial and administrative positions; the Africans became artisans, traders, and semi-skilled laborers; the Asians performed the unskilled, menial jobs.

The advent of the Europeans interrupted the pattern of native life. Prior to this, the Africans had no sense of employer or employee. There were no private holdings of land; it was communally owned by the tribe. The appropriation of land by the Europeans for farming ceased recognition and misunderstanding.

Nationalism Demand

Independence After World War II, the nationalist movement in Asia and Africa was felt in Kenya. For several years in the 1950's the authorities contended with Mau Mau terrorism. Kenya has now been granted independence by Great Britain. Uganda, a former protectorate, received independence this year. To the south, Tanganyika, a former United Nations Trust Territory, is also independent. Kenya is officially a Crown Colony.

Sir Ernest criticized Britain for not preparing the natives politically for nationhood. In particular, he condemned the method of voting whereby Europeans vote for European candidates, while Asians and Africans for Africans. Instead of unifying the country, this accentuated racial differences.

Sir Ernest believes a common electoral roll with a common list of candidates would have been better.

With independence, national boundaries have been formed: the Kenya African National Union and the Kenya African Democratic Union. KANU is led by Jomo Kenyatta and Tais Moi. It is opposed chiefly by the larger tribes such as the Kikuyu. Party discipline and unity are lacking, with the party often unable to agree on a single candidate. Most observers agree, however, that it is the majority party. It favors a strong, centralized government.

KANU, the minority party, represents the smaller tribes. They favor more local autonomy with a weak, central government. It is more aggressive and disciplined than KANU.

At present, one cannot say what course a future Kenya government will follow. Both parties are bent on a split between modernization and racialism. It is uncertain which faction will emerge in control.

At the end of the lecture there were a few questions. One person wanted to know the role played by Jomo Kenyatta in the Mau Mau movement. Sir Ernest replied that the objective history of the Mau Mau movement has not been written. The facts and events are the object of dispute.

A second lecture, dealing with Tanganyika and Uganda, will be held tomorrow at 8:30 p.m. in the Little Theatre of Kresge Auditorium.