

Bogle meets Ambassador

by Nathaniel Scott

Last week at Commission Dick Bogle's luncheon forum at the Red Lion Motor Inn, Edward Joseph Perkins, who will assume the ambassadorship to Liberia July 17, was the guest speaker.

Perkins, a former student at Holladay grade school and Jefferson High School, will not be a stranger to the continent of Africa, nor to governmental work.

For the past three years, Perkins managed 16 African nations from his Washington, D.C. office; served the U.S. Agency for International Development; was assistant director for management in Bangkok, Thailand, and a political counselor at the U.S. embassy in Ghana.

The ambassador told the approximately 40 guests who attended the noon luncheon that one never achieves anything by oneself, that his career has been "one learning experience... and an accumulation of many things."

Ambassador Perkins' "talk" touched upon many things, particularly U.S. foreign politics with African nations.

Perkins' understanding of different African nations is derived from the past that his "entire government career" has been spent in either Asia or Africa.

Perkins understands the economic situation of Africa and maintains that one of the solutions to Africa's problems lies in "a partnership between the (U.S.) government and the private sector."

"Economics are a part of what me and my colleagues are concerned with," he said. "Economics is a large part of Africa and in future relationship it will become even more important."



(l-r) John Banda, Commissioner Dick Bogle, Ambassador-designate the Honorable Edward Perkins at commissioner's forum.

(PHOTO: Kathryn Bogle)

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U.S. Ambassador-elect Edward Perkins shows his mother, Mrs. Tiny Holme, accreditation papers for his appointment to Liberia. Both are Portlanders.

He insisted that the U.S. is mainly concerned with the security and the economics of the African continent. "We intend to assist African governments... with economic growth, not stifle it," he said. Ghana might become one of the countries where economic growth is started next year."

The ambassador's vision included the perfection of "seeds" and "plant life" that can survive in hostile surroundings.

Due to the serious drought problem many African nations have experienced, the ambassador feels that it is imperative that America, with its technological know-how, should assist stricken countries and help them find ways of becoming self-sufficient.

"Putting the scientific minds of America on causes (for the betterment of mankind) is long overdue," he said. "Everyone must look to ways to not let Africa's Ethiopian famine happen again."

Perkins said African problems are many, but the main emphasis should be placed on listening to the needs of individual countries. "The idea is to listen to what a national has to say and look for mutual cooperation," he said. "Africa is doing a lot for itself."

The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other agencies are playing vital roles in the economic development of Africa, he said.

Ambassador Perkins said some African countries, such as Benegal, Liberia and Nigeria, are making great strides in raising the livability of their people, adding that "The politics of survival demands that we recognize that Africa is on the move."

While admitting that South African politics was not his area of expertise, the ambassador said, "South Africa's apartheid policy has caused a great deal of controversy in this country."

He added that President Reagan's "constructive engagement" policy with South Africa is a model... (that) have some possibilities if certain things are done."

The ambassador would not elaborate on the racist policies of South Africa. However, he did mention the fact that all the African nations are bound to the OAU's (Organization of African Unity) condemnation of apartheid.

Commissioner Bogel announced that the weekly forums will resume in September.

While making it clear that he was not making any official statements, he did outline how the U.S. government works to help strengthen the economic stability of many African countries and he urged those in the audience to "know as much about foreign policy as possible."

"The world is always changing," Perkins said. "The third world is coming on the scene and for good or ill, it's to our advantage to be supportive of it."