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# The Golden, the Ugly: Intricacies in the Invalidation of the West Cameroon Civil Service: 1961-1972.

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## **Abstract:**

This paper examines double edge intricacies for the invalidation of the West Cameroon Civil Service following the adoption of a unitary constitution in 1972. It argues that the West Cameroon civil service was golden but ugly and the choice of invalidation stemmed both from the complications that ensued and the personal scheme of the then President, El Hadj Ahmadou Ahidjo. These conclusions have been arrived at backed by primary and secondary sources. The findings reveal that, while the English-speaking Cameroonians blame Ahidjo and their Francophone counterparts for the problems and eventual abolition of the West Cameroon Civil Service, the British colonial administration and the West Cameroonians especially the KNDP led government of John Ngu Foncha must also share the blame. Ahidjo saw the continued existence of the West Cameroon Civil Service as a threat to his unitary state ambition and consequently worked out plans for a gradual absorption by the federal government. But, the KNDP government joined him to politicize the said civil service and the shortage of personnel was the result of lack of will on the part of the British Trustee to train qualified civil servants including technicians in the former British Southern Cameroon. It is hoped that this paper will directly or indirectly contribute to the current debates and advocacies for and against the return of the federal system under which the West Cameroon Civil Service operated.

**Key Words:** *Golden, Ugly, Invalidation, Intricacies, West Cameroon, Civil Service*

## **Introduction**

The prime objective of any civil service is to implement government policy and serve the public efficiently at affordable rates. During the early years after reunification, there were hopes that this objective would be achieved. According to a majority of former West Cameroon civil servants who were interviewed orally, the hopes were dictated by the fact that the Anglo-Nigerian-style civil

service had not yet been infiltrated by the Francophone civil service culture. In other words, the civil service was still rooted in the legacy of the British civil service tradition which had a strong commitment to political neutrality, professionalism, anonymity, accountability, objectivity, and developmental ethos. However, by the mid-1960s, the West Cameroon Civil Service gradually began to experience a series of problems which eventually led to its abolition in 1972. Some English-speaking Cameroonians like Prince Akame have attributed the problems and the eventual end of the civil service to President Ahidjo and Francophone majority led federal government.<sup>1</sup> While these English-speaking Cameroonians blame Ahidjo and their Francophone counterparts for the problems and eventual abolition, the British colonial administration and West Cameroonians especially the KNDP led government of J. N. Foncha also contributed significantly to the problems that the civil service faced and its eventual collapse.

### Positive Attributes of the West Cameroon Civil Service; the Golden

The West Cameroon Civil Service had some unique features that made it very efficient especially in the early years of its establishment. The first aspect was the commitment to the concept of a career civil service. Each corps in the departments or ministries of the West Cameroon Civil Service had a clearly defined career profile as shown in Table I below.

**Table I: Career Profile of the Survey Division**

Post	Scale/Group	Annual Salary Ranges (in FCFA)
Director of Land and Survey	8	1,727,235
Principal Surveyor	8	1,287,120
Senior Surveyor	A (upper segment)	946,656-1,096,128
Surveyor	A	498,240 - 1.096,128
Technical officers Grades I & II	C(T)2,3,4	448,416 – 772,272
Senior survey Assistant	E,4	328,008 – 406,896
Survey Assistant Grade I	E3	230,046 – 298,944
Survey Assistant Grade II	E1	120,408 – 220,056
Survey Chairman Grade I	G4	139,092 – 153,624
Survey Chairman Grade II	G1,2,3	72,660 – 134,940

Source: *File No OA/a/1963/5, the West Cameroon Public Service Commission Part II, 62.*

<sup>1</sup>Prince Akame, "Twenty-one Woes of Reunification of the Two Cameroons", [h#://www. Post watch magazine. Com/investigative-special-report/index. Html](http://www.postwatchmagazine.com/investigative-special-report/index.html), November,2005.

The Principal Surveyor was the highest grade in the Division and the Survey Chairman Grade II was the lowest in the career profile of the Survey Division. As career civil servants, West Cameroon civil servants were considered professionals and during the early years after reunification, they remained politically neutral, anonymous and impartial in performing their duties.<sup>2</sup> This was a legacy of the British colonial civil service. Nonetheless, towards the close of the 1960s; these attributes disappeared because the civil service became politicized. According to N.N Mbile, it was common for politicians to compensate their supporters with positions in the civil service even if they were not qualified to hold them.<sup>3</sup>

The well-defined career profile also encouraged hard work from the West Cameroon civil servants in spite of their meager salaries compared with their counterparts in East Cameroon. Most of them strove for promotion to a higher scale by hard work and discipline. For instance, a Grade II Survey Chairman Scale G1, 2, 3, with a salary range of 72,660 – 134,940 Francs CFA always strove for promotion to Grade I with a higher salary scale of between 139,092 to 153,624 Francs CFA per annum through hard work.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, a civil servant could know well in advance the number of years it would take to achieve a particular higher grade with hard work and discipline. For instance, a Survey Assistant Grade II and a salary range of 120,408 – 220,056 Francs CFA per annum knew how many years it would take him to reach the post of a Surveyor in Scale A with a salary range of 498,240 – 1,096,128 Francs CFA per annum.<sup>5</sup> This was an incentive to efficiency and hard work in the West Cameroon Civil Service.

Another constructive aspect of the West Cameroon Civil Service was its efficient mode of controlling and evaluating civil servants. This was done through Annual Confidential Reports on confirmed civil servants and by Confidential Progress Report for civil servants on probation.<sup>6</sup> The Annual Confidential Report provided detailed record of the work, conduct and capability of each civil servant. The public service commission made recommendations for promotions to the Prime Minister based on a favorable confidential report. The report showed precisely the duties a civil servant performed during the year covered by the report. It contained detailed information on the professional qualities of the civil servant: his integrity, temperament, fitness for higher responsibility, rapport with other staff and with the public as well as his failings and shortcomings.<sup>7</sup> Evaluation

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Lydia Ejani Adeosi, Former West Cameroon Civil Servant and politician, Buea, March 22 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 189.

<sup>4</sup>File No OA/a/1963/5, the West Cameroon Public Service Commission Part II, 62.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> NAB File No Oa/a/1963/5, The West Cameroon Civil Service Commission Part I, 21.

<sup>7</sup> Fuabeh Paul Fonge, *Modernisation without Development*, 148.

marks over a hundred corresponding to each of these qualities was recorded in the file of each civil servant.

Annual Confidential Reports were made annually on the date of the officer's recruitment.<sup>8</sup> Confidential progress reports were also written about civil servants on probation. The reports often gave details of a probationary officer's work, conduct and capabilities at intervals of six months. Based on these reports, decisions were made on whether or not to confirm an officer on probation.<sup>9</sup> Any adverse comment made about an officer's work and conduct during the period was brought to his notice in writing by his Permanent Secretary or head of department to enable him or her address his shortcomings. These letters were issued to civil servants who scored below fifty percent.<sup>10</sup> Copies of such letters were forwarded to the Public Service Commission.

In addition, special confidential reports were made about contract officers prior to the expiration of the period of their contracts, to determine whether or not their contracts should be renewed if they so desired. These confidential reports were very important since they were incentives to hard work, good conduct and efficiency in the civil service. This was so because the confirmed officer who expected promotion, the officer on probation who wanted to be confirmed and the contract officer who wanted his contract renewed were always alert to have any negative report written against him or her.

The accounts of Vote Holders in the West Cameroon Civil Service were strictly controlled. This was to avoid the mismanagement and embezzlement of public funds. The Audit Department made sure that public funds were spent for the purpose for which they were intended. State Auditors called on Vote Holders without advance notice and any shortage or embezzlement of public funds was severely sanctioned. Nicholas Ade Ngwa, a former West Cameroon civil servant, confirmed this when he claimed that there was the case of an officer who intentionally or carelessly was found short of funds in his keeping. He lost his job and spent 20 years in jail.<sup>11</sup>

Public accounts of the West Cameroon government were audited by the Audit department under a Director of Audit. Sections 44(1) and 44(2) of the Cameroon Constitutional Law of 1961 governed the appointment of the Director of Audit and the auditing of the public government accounts. Strict regulations existed to ensure the proper use of state property kept at the custody of civil servants. Every office and government residence had an inventory of state

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<sup>8</sup> NAB File No Oa/a/1963/5, the West Cameroon Civil Service Commission, Part I, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>10</sup> Fuabeh, *Modernisation without Development*, 148.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Ndi, *Golden Age of Southern {West} Cameroon*., 139.

property kept therein and these were checked and handed on if the custodian was leaving the office. Every state vehicle had a logbook, showing the performance of the vehicle, in terms of fuel supplied, mileage covered, route, purpose and were inspected on a regular basis. Travel warrants covered all vehicle movements.<sup>12</sup> State vehicles were only used for official duties and were parked in office garages after working hours. These measures limited the misuse of state property by senior civil servants.

A significant feature of the West Cameroon Civil Service was the automatic annual increment of salary. In fact, the salary scale in which a recruit entered the civil service was generally determined by his educational, technical or professional qualification. They could advance to a higher grade only by promotion due to experience and in-service training. But generally, one increment was granted annually to every civil servant upon the satisfactory completion of twelve months service. Later in 1969, in an attempt to harmonise the service conditions of West and East Cameroon civil services, increments were granted only after two years of satisfactory service. Civil servants were not required to apply for such benefits. All what was required of them was satisfactory work during each incremental period. The automatic increment was a source of motivation to West Cameroon civil servants in spite of the low salary.

In addition, promotion in the West Cameroon Civil Service, especially during the early years after reunification, was based on qualification, experience and merit. In respect of promotion in the West Cameroon Civil Service, Ade Ngwa asserted that “meritorious service resulted in promotion and rise to responsible positions in the service”.<sup>13</sup> Seniority was also taken into account in the promotion of civil servants. For instance, if two civil servants were to be considered for promotion, the junior was only considered if he was more qualified. If on the other hand, both were of equal merit, then the more experienced candidate was promoted. During the early years after reunification, promotion depended on the existence of vacancies in the relevant grade. But, by the mid-1960s, promotion became politicized. S.N. Ajebe – Sone alleged during a parliamentary debate in 1964 that recruitment and promotion in the civil service were based on party loyalty rather than academic qualification<sup>14</sup>

Recruitment into the West Cameroon Civil Service, especially during the early years after reunification, was also in respect of the Cameroonisation policy. In order to ensure professionalism, objectivity, anonymity and political neutrality in the civil service, the Public Service Commission was involved in the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Mbu Etangondop, “Federalism in a One-party State”, 119.

recruitments. The commission did not only organize interviews, but also recommended the recruitment of candidates by the Prime Minister. There was therefore little room for corrupt practices.

Since recruitment was also done by heads of department, Permanent Secretaries and even Secretaries of state for a certain category of civil servants, traces of corrupt practices were severely sanctioned. Simon N. Dikume, in an editorial in *Cameroon Times* of October 1967, entitled "Opportunism," Claimed that "There are examples of appointments that have been made for certain jobs because some influential personalities have been directly interested in such appointments. In some cases, the monster of tribalism and sectionalism appeared and disrupted the machinery of recruitment and promotion."<sup>15</sup> In spite of this, the West Cameroon government meted out severe sanctions against officials guilty of recruiting unqualified candidates. For instance, in 1971 Prime Minister S.T. Muna, by letter No PMO.474/S.8/V.2/288 of 13 November 1971, constituted a committee to investigate the anomalies and irregularities in the process of recruiting students for the Grade II Emergency teachers Courses at the Regina Pacis College (R.P.C) Mutengene and Government Teacher Training College (G.T.T.C) Kumba.<sup>16</sup> The Tanjong Committee concluded that undue pressure seems to have been exerted on the education department by the secretariat of primary education headed by N.N Mbile and that this led to the irregular admission of Awoh Susan Mary and Fontem Grace into G.T.T.C Kumba.<sup>17</sup> As a result, the two students were dismissed from the Grade II Course at the college and Mbile was dismissed from Muna's cabinet as Secretary of State of Primary Education. Although Mbile strongly rejected the accusation and saw the action as a plan, well set for years to oust him from the government<sup>18</sup>. It indicates that severe measures were taken by government against alleged corrupt officials in the West Cameroon Civil Service.

Another major strength of the West Cameroon Civil Service was its efficient ways of correspondence and record keeping especially at the time when there were no computers. The files of all personnel in the West Cameroon civil service were well kept. The file which contained all information about a civil servant was updated. It showed the date of employment and promotion, salary, increments and disciplinary action if any, date of leave, marital status, and number of children.<sup>19</sup> Civil servants were informed in advance about their retirement dates and their pensions were accordingly calculated and paid to them as soon as they

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<sup>15</sup> *Cameroon Times* vol.7, No132, October 1967,2.

<sup>16</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 228

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid* , 231.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>19</sup> Ndi, *Golden Age of Southern {West} Cameroon*, 138.

left service. Due to the efficiency in recording and filing information, civil servants did not have to apply for their pension.

During this golden phase, official correspondence received prompt reply. Such correspondence was usually polite and respectful. According to Ade Ngwa, letters to the public were usually concluded, no matter the rank of the officer, with the words "Your Obedient Servant".<sup>20</sup> These attributes, together with the strict disciplinary rules and procedures, were responsible for the survival of the West Cameroon Civil Service for at least eleven years. In spite of these golden attributes, by 1966 the West Cameroon Civil Service gradually began to experience the ugly phase. This was associated with a series of problems mainly as a result of the British factor, the West Cameroon factor especially the KNDP party and the interference of the federal government. These problems contributed to inefficiency and its ultimate invalidation in 1972.

### **Challenges of the West Cameroon Civil Service; the Ugly**

The first issue encountered by the West Cameroon Civil Service was the gross shortage of well-seasoned, competent and public-spirited men and women to fill the administrative and professional posts of responsibility to ensure development. This shortage was due to the British neglect of education in the territory. This situation was further compounded by the exodus of expatriates, especially Nigerians and British, after Southern Cameroons became independent in 1961.

The top professional and administrative posts were, as a consequence, left in the hands of less qualified Cameroonians who got to these positions by promotion. As a result, First Class clerks with secondary or primary school certificates were promoted to decision-making positions. Some were promoted to administrative positions like D.Os and A.D.Os after undertaking crash courses in administration abroad.<sup>21</sup> For example, between 1962 and 1964, 19 West Cameroon civil servants did crash courses abroad in administration under the UK Technical Aid Programme.<sup>22</sup> Some of them were J.T Nchamukong, P.M. Elad, W.M Ntube, G.B. Bessong<sup>23</sup>, M.F Takere and J.N Ntui who later became D.O. In January 1963 the Senior District Officer of Victoria, in a correspondence to the PM, attested that the promotions published in the West Cameroon Gazette No.69, Vol.2 of 15 December, 1962 revealed that some of those promoted to administrative officers Class IV had

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Nkese, "Identifying the Anglophone problem", 12-13.

<sup>22</sup> NAB File No Oa/a/1960/8, Public service Structure, Appointment and Promotion Policy, 106.

<sup>23</sup> G.B Bessong was a Typist with the Cameroon Development Corporation before joining the civil service

neither the qualification nor experience.<sup>24</sup> He was contesting the fact that H.P. Sone was not promoted even though he was the most senior officer. According to the Senior District Officer, the promotions were politically motivated.<sup>25</sup>

The actions of these unqualified civil decision-makers contributed to the problems and failures of the West Cameroon Civil Service. They often gave the government and other civil servants partial and biased advice, and mistreated many young university graduates from abroad for fear of losing their positions to them.<sup>26</sup> According to Anthony Nkese, a retired West Cameroon Police Inspector, a young Agricultural engineer who studied in London was mistreated. He resigned from the West Cameroon Civil Service and eventually picked up a new job as director in Yaounde.<sup>27</sup> On 20 April 1962, Tanyi Mbagbaw resigned from his duty as Inspector of Education. In his resignation letter to the Public Service Commission, he stated that it was impossible for him to work with the Director of Education, A.D. Mengot.<sup>28</sup> In spite of attempts by the PM to cause him reconsider his decision when he stated that “he was an employee of the state and not of the Director of Education, Mr. Mengot”<sup>29</sup>, Mr. Mbagbaw still abandoned the civil service.

In spite of the very low levels of salary, the West Cameroon government still faced difficulties in paying its civil servants. In 1966 for instance, the government was unable to pay the monthly salaries of its civil servants.<sup>30</sup> The inability of the government to pay its civil servants was due to the poor financial and economic situation of West Cameroon. The economy of the state was mostly agricultural and accounted for about 63.4 percent of her Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The industrial sector accounted for only 7.8 percent. There were only 27 industrial firms most of which were agricultural plants<sup>31</sup> and the most important of these was the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC).

Moreover, most of the revenue generating departments and ministries were federalized for instance the Customs, Post and Telecommunication, Medical and the Judiciary. Furthermore, the Federal Constitution of 1961 did not clearly define the manner in which revenues were to be allocated between the Federal Government and the federated states. Although the Federal Government made grants to West Cameroon government, they were only on ad hoc basis and upon

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<sup>24</sup> NAB File No Oa/a/1961/3, Policy on the Staffing of Public Service of West Cameroon, 156.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Nkese, “Identify the Anglophone problem”, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> NAB File No Oa/a/1961/3, Policy on the Staffing of Public Service of West Cameroon, 56.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ngoh (ed.) *Cameroon: From Federation to a Unitary state*, 104.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 96-97.

request by the state. In other words, the grants were only given to solve particular problems as they occurred.

Moreover, the grants from the Federal Government were not usually enough to address the salary need of West Cameroon civil servants. Between 1962 and 1971, the Federal Government's grants to West Cameroon amounted to about two-thirds of the territory's budget.<sup>32</sup> In the 1962-1963 financial year, the subvention was 1,150,000,000 francs CFA, in the 1963-1964 financial year it increased to 1,270,000,000 Francs CFA and in the 1968-1969 financial year the amount stood at 1,600,000,000 Francs CFA.<sup>33</sup> In spite of these huge amounts of subvention, the West Cameroon Government was always unable to balance its budget and pay civil service salaries and increments. The poor financial situation was also a result of the withdrawal of the grants provided by the Colonial Development and Welfare scheme.

The poor economic situation and the inability of the West Cameroon government to pay higher salaries not only led to the exodus of some highly skilled civil servants, but also provided an opportunity for the Federal Government of Ahmadou Ahidjo to constantly interfere in civil service matters of West Cameroon with the aim of centralizing most of the services. This often-brought conflicts between the federal and the West Cameroon governments.

Article 49 of the Federal Constitution required the governments of each federated state "to place at the disposal of the federal government, the services which are to be exercised by the federal powers".<sup>34</sup> In West Cameroon, these included customs, prisons, police, posts and telecommunications, treasury and health. But before these services were federalized, Ahidjo issued Circular No. 2 of 1961 in which it was stipulated that until the setting up of a federal civil service, federal departments would have to make use on loan of public servants from the two federal states.<sup>35</sup> This meant that the civil servants of West Cameroon still remained under the control of the state government and were still governed by the West Cameroon civil service regulations even though their salaries were paid by the Federal Government. This situation lasted until a federal civil service was created and before this was done, there was a further problem of who to obey and receive instruction.

In the customs department for instance, the Chief Collector of Customs was instructed by his head of department in Douala that all recommendations to the Customs Department in West Cameroon ought to be made by him and not the PM

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> See Federal Constitution, 1961

<sup>35</sup> NAB File No Oa/i960/8, Public Service Structure, Appointment and Promotion, 21.

of West Cameroon.<sup>36</sup> In the judicial and medical departments, certain dispositions were made by the ministries in Yaounde without reference to the West Cameroon Government. In 1962, J. Bixon, expressed the difficulties of who to be answerable to in the aviation and meteorological department when he asserted that “in the aviation department the control men were East Cameroonians, therefore under the regime of East Cameroon. The petrol men were West Cameroonians and so under the control of West Cameroon. There was doubt as to where orders should come”.<sup>37</sup>

In the education department, the problem of who to obey in policy making often arose. This was because primary education was the responsibility of the states while higher education was that of the federal government. The decisions of both sides often conflicted and the director of education did not often know which authority to obey.<sup>38</sup> In the Public Works Department (P.W.D), conflicts existed between the federal government and the West Cameroon government. The director of public works complained that experts were sent from Yaounde to inspect the Tiko Airport and he was not consulted even though at that time the department was controlled by him. In response, the Federal Inspector of Administration of West Cameroon, Jean Claude Ngoh, said that “aviation is a federal matter and if Yaounde sent experts to inspect Tiko Airport, he could not see how it was the concern of the director of public works”.<sup>39</sup>

At times, federal ministers even cancelled recommendations and promotions in some services made by the public service commission and the Prime Minister. For example, in 1963 B.T. Sakah, the deputy federal Minister of Health, addressed a letter, to the director of medical services, West Cameroon, ordering him to cancel the promotion of Mr. Epale and Mrs. Dibue.<sup>40</sup> The director refused to comply because according to him all federal structures in West Cameroon were still under the control of the P.M. Although health was a federal issue, a Presidential Circular No.2 of 15 November 1961 had empowered the West Cameroon Public Service Commission and the PM to make appointments and promotions in Federal departments in West Cameroon pending the creation of the Federal Public Service and the Federal Public Service Commission.<sup>41</sup> Conflicts concerning issues of appointment also occurred between the P.M of West Cameroon and the Vice- President. In 1967, Prime Minister A.N Jua appointed a Pharmacy Board of West Cameroon. Foncha, the Vice- President of the Federal

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 19

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 20

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>40</sup> NAB File No Oa/a/1961/3, Policy on the Staffing of Public Service, West Cameroon, 68.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Republic, pointed out in a letter dated 21 January 1967 that the department of health was federal and the P.M could only take decisions based on delegation of power by the Vice- President. Foncha said

I would like to point out that the department of health being federal cannot have any decision taken on it without specific delegation of power to the Prime Minister of West Cameroon by me. Such delegation has not been given. Decisions taken and published in the official *Gazette* such as those relating to the appointment of boards and handling of personnel matters such as promotion and appointments, without reference to this office for decision are therefore wrong.<sup>42</sup>

These conflicts between the PM of West Cameroon and Federal authorities helped to impede the smooth functioning of the West Cameroon Civil Service.

Another major weakness of the West Cameroon Civil Service was the controversy between generalist administrators such as the D.Os and A.D.Os and professionals like Agricultural engineers, Survey engineers and teachers. This was in fact a great problem that dated back to the trusteeship period. Promotion prospects and working conditions for the administrative corps were better than those for professionals. This made many civil servants of West Cameroon to seek administrative positions. In 1965, many of the graduates who appeared before the Public Service Commission expressed strong preference for administrative posts.<sup>43</sup> This resulted in shortages of personnel in the professional fields like teaching, surveys and health. The shortage of teachers was very severe as many Grade II teachers preferred to be administrators like district officers and permanent secretaries. It also led to rivalry in the civil service which generated mutual suspicion and made team work difficult.

The West Cameroon Civil Service was far from the general public and this made it ineffective in rendering services to many of the citizens. About 40 percent of the West Cameroon civil servants lived and worked in Buea and about 50 percent in the divisional headquarters, yet a majority of the people lived in rural areas. This meant that a majority of the people of West Cameroon, mostly in the rural areas, had limited access to the public service. By 1972 many rural areas still lacked government schools, health centers and were still inaccessible by road. It is even alleged that West Cameroonians voted overwhelmingly for a unitary state to have greater access to public service providers. Moreover, there was not enough contact between the civil servants and the community that it was supposed to be serving. This was particularly true of the "Senior Service" or the Administrative class which had separate residential quarters, recreational clubs, and hospitals and so on.

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<sup>42</sup> NAB File No Oa/a/1966/4, Federal Public Service Harmonization, 348.

<sup>43</sup> NAB File No Oa/a/1960/8, Public Service Structure, Appointment and Promotion Policy, 146.

The politicisation of the civil service also contributed to weaken it. According to the *General Orders* and the West Cameroon Civil Service Regulations, civil servants were prohibited from involving in party politics. This was a hand-over of the Anglo-Nigerian civil service tradition, which required that the civil service be politically neutral in order to serve the public and successive governments impartially irrespective of their ideology. Robin Cook, a Senior Labour officer in Britain, justified the need for a politically neutral civil service when he explained that “government and politicians will come and go, but the civil service will go on forever.”<sup>44</sup>

A few years after reunification, the West Cameroon Civil Service was far from being politically neutral because the ruling K.N.D.P politicized it. Most of the civil servants recruited into lower and higher ranks were supporters of the K.N.D.P. Mbile confirms this when he asserted:

In the high offices (administrative) that had to be filled, the K.N.D.P did it all alone, appointing only persons accepted as being 100 percent K.N.D.P. Those even remotely suspected of opposition leanings were heavily clamped down. The cases of Peter Efange, Eric Quan to name only a few are on record as persons who were removed from office with no explanation at all, save the suspicion that they harboured pro-C.P.N.C sympathies<sup>45</sup>

Mbile’s statement was indicative that the K.N.D.P government of Foncha in the early years after reunification not only recruited its supporters and sympathizers, but also intimidated, and even expelled civil servants who were not pro- K.N.D.P. The outcome of this was that civil service was left in the hands of officials who were incapable of distinguishing between loyalty to their party (K.N.D.P) and their duties to the state as a civil service above party politics. It also prevented qualified Cameroonians in the opposition from participating in the development of West Cameroon through the civil service.

The creation of a single party in 1966 in Cameroon led Cameroonians, even civil servants rally behind President Ahidjo’s C.N.U party with the view to building a strong and united Cameroon. This idea appealed to many civil servants in West Cameroon especially those who suffered discrimination from the K.N.D.P, and believed that through the C.N.U they could improve their individual prospects. Although some proponents of the West Cameroon Civil Service culture have blamed its politicization on President Ahidjo, the West Cameroon government and its political leaders were also to be blamed.

The involvement of West Cameroon civil servants in politics made other vices to be common like laziness and squander mania, corruption and partiality,

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<sup>44</sup> Kevin Theokston, *The Civil Service Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 3.

<sup>45</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, 189.

tribalism and sectionalism in the West Cameroon Civil Service.<sup>46</sup> *Cameroon Champion* of 11 January 1963 confirmed that “tribalism is at its peak [in West Cameroon]; nepotism in the civil service is a creed of a political party [K.N.D.P]”.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, political neutrality, as inherited from the British, was absent in the West Cameroon civil service from the early years of reunification and this was caused partly by Foncha’s K.N.D.P.

### **The Invalidation Intricacies**

The abolition of the West Cameroon Civil Service was due to President Ahidjo’s<sup>48</sup> ambition of creating a unitary state. This ambition could only be realized by the gradual absorption of the West Cameroon Civil Service by the federal government headed by Ahidjo. He saw the continued existence of the West Cameroon Civil Service as a threat to his unitary state ambition.<sup>49</sup> According to Ahidjo, the Cameroon federation was too expensive because of the duplication of services.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, West Cameroon was unable to balance its budget in spite of huge subsidies by the federal government making it difficult for the State to pay its civil servants higher salaries. Moreover, the creation of a unitary system, according to Ahidjo, would consolidate national unity and national integration. Other members of the public believed that Ahidjo wanted to consolidate his power.

In fact, the basis for dismantling the West Cameroon Civil Service was laid at the Fouban Constitutional Conference. The federal constitution weakened West Cameroon financially and placed its civil service at the mercy of the federal government. Article 49 of the Federal Constitution of 1961 required the government of each of the federated states to place at the disposal of the federal government, the services which were to be exercised by the federal government. Article 6 of the constitution also empowered the federal government to decide when and how to take over any department under the control of the federated states. With this legal backing, Ahidjo did not hesitate to federalize the key

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<sup>46</sup>Muna, *Speech*., 12.

<sup>47</sup>Cited in Ngho (ed.), *Cameroon: From a Federal to a Unitary State*, 167.

<sup>48</sup> Ahmadou Ahidjo was born in 1924 in Garoua. After serving as a post office radio operator, he became leader of the Jeunes Musu/mans Movement and in 1947 was elected to the Territorial Assembly. In 1952 he was elected to the Assembly of the French Union and became its vice-President in 1956. In 1957 he served as vice Premier and in 1958 he became the P.M of French Cameroon. When the territory achieved independence in 1960, he became the pioneer president of the Republic of Cameroon. In October 1961, Ahidjo became President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

<sup>49</sup> This fact was confirmed by many of those who were interviewed in the field.

<sup>50</sup> Ngho (ed.), *Cameroon: From a Federal to a Unitary State*, 144.

departments and ministries in West Cameroon. Most of the services were those which generated revenue to sustain the state and its civil service. They included the customs, courts, post telecommunication, prisons, health, secondary and higher education.

The customs department was federalized as early as 1961 and the police in July 1963. Decree No 63/DF/216 created and organized the National Police Force and the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D) of West Cameroon was incorporated into it. This was opposed by West Cameroon leaders like A.N Jua who argued that the C.I.D should remain under the West Cameroon government in order to ensure the internal security of the state.<sup>51</sup> The force was different from the East Cameroon judicial police as far as criminal investigation was concerned. It strictly respected human rights during criminal investigations. In December 1963 Ahidjo signed another Decree No. 62-DF-442 which placed the Police under the command of the Federal Inspector of Administration and not the Prime Minister of West Cameroon.<sup>52</sup> The taking over of the revenue generating departments like customs led West Cameroon to rely on grants from the federal government to sustain its civil service. This was especially so because the Federal Constitution did not clearly define the manner of revenue allocation to the federated states.

Apart from federalizing the key services in West Cameroon, Ahidjo also decided to centralize all key appointments. On 15 November 1961, he issued a Presidential Circular which stipulated that all appointments of directors, assistant directors and heads of department would be done by the president of the Republic.<sup>53</sup> H.L.M Butcher, Chair of the West Cameroon Public Service Commission, in reaction to the circular asserted that:

The state of West Cameroon had a long experience of the proper working of a true federal constitution when it was part of Nigeria. East Cameroon had always been a single state and consequently is unable to realize how a federal constitution could be made to work satisfactorily. Their tendency has always been to take over direct control of more and more activities without consultation; and the strong suspicion is that the federal government is working towards the formation of a unitary state.<sup>54</sup>

Ahidjo also decreed that all appointments, promotions, demotions and transfers of SDO and DO were to be done in Yaounde. In October 1961, Ahidjo issued Decree No-61-DF-15 of 20 October 1961 dividing the federation into six

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<sup>51</sup> NAB File No Oa/a/1961/4, Creation of the Federal Civil Service, 178.

<sup>52</sup> Ngoh, "The Origin of the Marginalisation of former Southern Cameroonians", 4.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 20.

administrative regions. These administrative regions were under appointed Federal Inspectors who represented the federal government in all acts of civil life and in judicial matters.<sup>55</sup> West Cameroon was considered one of the six regions and its federal inspector was Jean Claude Ngoh. On 5 November 1964, Jean Claude Ngoh issued circular letter No 713/IFA/COC informing the chair of the West Cameroon Public Service Commission that the federal departments were authorized to recruit their own staff.<sup>56</sup> This was a problem to the West Cameroon Government especially because it caused many West Cameroon civil servants to abandon their services for the more lucrative federal services. The involvement of the Inspector of Administration in Federal services still controlled by the West Cameroon government often led to conflicts with the Prime Minister who, as a result, was considered in some circles of the public as a glorified puppet.<sup>57</sup>

Another step considered to be the death knell of the West Cameroon Civil Service was the federal salary scale<sup>58</sup> which placed federal civil servants and East Cameroon civil servants on salaries higher than those of their West Cameroon counterparts. As a result, many West Cameroon civil servants started scrambling to be integrated into the federal civil service. Prime Minister S.T Muna even raised an alarm by telling the federal government that “West Cameroon had crumbled financially and no civil servant wanted to remain with the West Cameroon state government”.<sup>59</sup> The high federal salaries caused civil servants to advocate an immediate takeover of the West Cameroon civil service by the federal government. By 1971, that is before the inception of the unitary state all civil servants in West Cameroon had become federal employees.<sup>60</sup>

The final collapse of the West Cameroon Civil Service was as a result of the Referendum of 20 May 1972, in which Cameroonians voted overwhelmingly for a Unitary State. The birth of a Unitary State in Cameroon Abolished the West Cameroon state as well as its civil service. Ahidjo’s task of creating a Unitary State which eventually ended the WCCS was enhanced by the support of some West Cameroon politicians, civil servants and a greater section of West Cameroon population especially in the rural areas. During the Referendum Campaign for a Unitary State S T Muna, for instance, told civil servants in Bui that the Unitary Government would solve the problem of payment of low salaries in West Cameroon.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ngoh (ed.) *Cameroon: From a Federal to a Unitary State*, 74.

<sup>56</sup> NAB File No Oa/a/1961/4, Creation of the Federal Civil Service, 85.

<sup>57</sup> Ngoh (ed.), *Cameroon: From a Federal to a Unitary State*, 154.

<sup>58</sup> Nkese, “Identifying the Anglophone problem”, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ngoh(ed.), *Cameroon: From a Federal to a Unitary State*, 169-170.

Also, A. N Jua said, a Unitary State would ensure that equal work would attract equal salary.<sup>62</sup> Many West Cameroon civil servants wanted a unitary state because it would harmonize their salaries with their counterparts in East Cameroon who had higher salaries. The civil servants therefore played an important role in the campaign for a unitary state.<sup>63</sup> The birth of a unitary system therefore led to the abolition of the West Cameroon Civil Service after close to eleven years of existence. Decree No74-138 of 18 February 1974 set up a public service of the United Republic of Cameroon under the authority of the President of the Republic. He was empowered by Articles 14 and 15 of the United Republic of Cameroon Civil Service Regulations to make appointments, promotions and control civil servants. He could also delegate these functions to any other government authority.

Article 17 of the regulations created the High Council of the Public Service and Joint Administrative Boards and Health Boards, to act as advisory bodies to the President in civil service matters. The unitary civil service was expected by the people of former West Cameroon to be a blend of the French and the British civil service systems inherited from its colonial past by East Cameroon and West Cameroon respectively. Unfortunately, just like in other French speaking countries, the French civil service tradition predominates. The West Cameroon civil service culture of accountability, political neutrality, anonymity, objectivity and professionalism thus disappeared.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the complications discussed, the West Cameroon Civil Service survived for close to eleven years. The civil service was relatively efficient during the early years after reunification because the culture of professionalism, political neutrality, anonymity, accountability and objectivity inherited from the British was still intact. By the mid - 1960s however, these attributes existed only in principle, as the civil service became a system of political compensation. The KNDP government of John Ngu Foncha not only weeded out its opponents from the civil service, but also filled many of the top positions with its supporters. The involvement of civil servants in party politics promoted other vices in the West Cameroon Civil Service such as corruption, nepotism, tribalism and squander mania. These problems, coupled with the very low salaries, led to disgruntlement not only by civil servants, but also by a greater section of the population especially in the rural areas, who needed services such as education, good health, motorable roads which ought to be provided by the West Cameroon Civil Service. When

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Nkese, "Identifying the Anglophone Problem, 13.

Ahidjo organized a Referendum on 20 May 1972, asking Cameroonians to vote for a unitary state, West Cameroonians had every reason to vote overwhelmingly for it. The results of the 1972 referendum which favoured the establishment of a unitary state was the final nail on the coffin of the West Cameroon Civil Service. By May 1972 it existed only on paper and today it is a subject of debate for both the advocates of Federalism and Unitary-decentralized systems.

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