

Odoki defends commission

By Vision Reporter

NO Lies are being told about the 1962 Constitution. The issue is not whether Ugandans participated but the level and depth of their participation is the major difference.

The Chairman of the Constitutional Commission, Mr Justice Ben Odoki, reacted yesterday to reports in *The Star* newspaper of Monday, December 11 that his team has during the on going constitutional seminar told the populace that no consultations were made as far as the 1962 constitution is concerned.

"No lies are being told about this constitution. People should know that we are fully aware of how the 1962 constitution was arrived at," he asserted in an interview with *The New Vision* in Kampala yesterday. During his recent working trip

to Britain, Mr Justice Odoki met with Mr H.W.R. Wade one of the three commissioners who drafted the 1962 Constitution. The other two were Mr Munster (Chairman) and A.H. Marshall.

In a chat with Mr Justice Odoki, Wade had revealed that

the job had been done in so short a time, because they wanted to keep Buganda within Uganda as clearly stated in their recommendations.

According to the commissioners' report issued by the

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Colonial Officer, London, dated June 2, 1961, people's views were collected within a period of 10 weeks. Commissioners began their work on January 16, 1961 and had by March 30 completed their work.

A list of submitted memoranda is contained in the Independence report of 1961. Some Ugandans, mainly the elite then went to London to discuss the constitution with the British in the Colonial Office. Alongside were advisors either British, Asians or high class Ugandans. The constitution was then approved after promulgation by the British.

"Today is the first time all are involved in formulation of the constitution. What we are concerned about is consultation of all," Mr Justice Odoki emphasised. He said that the situation today is different, with a structure of government open to the scrutiny of the people. "This is because of a revolution where the old order has been buried and instead a new one is thriving giving people opportunity to determine this new order," asserted Mr Justice Odoki.

He added that such a challenge to government is different from 1962 where Ugandans were under the influence of the British. "If we were free, we would not have gone to Britain," he said. He said that today, the commission's task is

to reach peasants at least to sub-county level. "The atmosphere and challenge are different, so let us not belittle the opportunity given to the people by comparing the issue to that of 1962," said the chairman.

"The issue today is coming out with a lasting, durable constitution, and not short term particular gains. Ours should serve both short and long term," he stressed.

The chairman said that the Commission will by this month complete district rounds where

it has been holding seminars. "We will then go deeper to follow up discussions at lower level to find out whether people have understood our motive," he revealed.

Thereafter, workshops will be held in municipalities and colleges. The chairman said that this is in effort to make people understand and appreciate national problems. A national consensus will at the final stage then be sought as all views are brought together.

"This is a process of persuasion and accommodation," Mr Justice Odoki said.