

# after independence — Nkangi

putting them in the grave. I asked myself a question: what is the national income per head?

What is the average income for every Ugandan a year? I asked Keith Muhakanizi (the permanent secretary, ministry of finance) and he said it was about sh2.8m per head. And you go and bury Mayanja-Nkangi because he is a VIP, you spend sh68m!

I have read in the papers that they budgeted sh800m for a carnival in Kampala. I think people who will hear what I am saying, especially those responsible will say Mayanja is going crazy (*tategera*), but I am asking myself the question: Did we send the British away to treat ourselves this way? I recently saw a picture of a young man suffering from some disease; he wanted about sh10m for treatment, but nobody would give it to him. Not even city council, but they spend sh800m on a carnival.

I gather each MP gets more than sh20m a month plus other allowances, but for 12 months an average Ugandan gets about sh3m. I am not saying they shouldn't get the money, I am simply saying what is happening to our sense of direction? When we got independence, we were saying to the British, "Go, let's do our things our own way." Sometimes we get disappointed that what we hoped to take place is not what took place. You hear today sh800m is being

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stolen in some ministry, sh600m in some department in Uganda. In 1961 when the British were still in control of the civil service in Uganda, it was dominated by Asians; I never heard money being stolen by civil servants.

What is happening now after we have sent them away? You can see what is going on. Until we change our hearts, we shall be killing, stealing and going on making wrong decisions about how the budget should be run. I recently heard that there were misunderstandings between the World Bank and the government of Uganda. I heard that we would borrow money and fail to put it to use. But we know or should know because we have got some intelligence that we will pay interest on that money.

So we keep the money, interest



The just concluded Kampala City Festival had a budget of sh800m

accumulates and then we say to lenders, "Sorry we failed to use the money. We needed feasibility study." So some lender will say, "But you should have done this before you came to ask for money." I am asking the question: Are we serious about what we are doing? When I was still the chairman of Uganda Land Commission, one evening it was raining. So I left at 5:00pm to go to my home.

My driver drove me to Ntinda. Along Jinja Road, traffic jam was so thick that at some point we were just there and we couldn't move. As I sat there in that car, I saw vehicles made in Japan, Germany, a bicycle from India, etc. So, the spirit said to me: "Do you know Mayanja Nkangi, even safety pins for your jiggers come from China?" I said to myself: "What is

Ugandan about me?" The only thing was what my mother gave me — the skin.

I said suppose there was another October 9. The President and his wife come and about 30,000 Ugandans go and celebrate at Kololo. But I have kept about 80 empty baskets somewhere out of view. Then I go to the President and say, "Mr President, Sir. Please ask everybody here who is wearing anything, whether shoes, underwear, a ring or earring, which is not made here to take it off and put it in those baskets. What would you see? Almost everybody, including the President and his wife would be naked. But what is this? That would be after about 120 years after the British had come here in April 1894. What have they been doing here all that time? What have we been doing

ourselves after about 50 years? We are still naked. We are not getting our priorities right. I know some of you will say, "Mayanja-Nkangi was also a minister here for 16 years." Yes, but I am saying we are still naked. We have to think again.

I am not saying everything is bad; I am saying certain things are questionable. We need to stand up and think again. If this is a good way, alright let's go ahead, but I don't think so. I think time has come for the leadership all over the place (to ask), how do we intend to govern this country? How do we prepare for the children coming after us? I used to have a teacher at King's College Budo who would say, "When you are denied responsibility you act irresponsibly." So I am one of those people now. I am not responsible...; I have no authority, but those who are in authority, God bless them.

I am asking them humbly as a Ugandan to re-examine the course. Recently somewhere a house caught fire and the owners said: "Go to the police. Let them bring the vehicles to put out the fire." The Police was not far from there. But the police said the vehicle was in tatters, so the house which had caught fire completely got destroyed. The same thing happened in Masaka and you spend the public funds the way we are doing? But then there is no medicine.

As told to Umar Kashaka