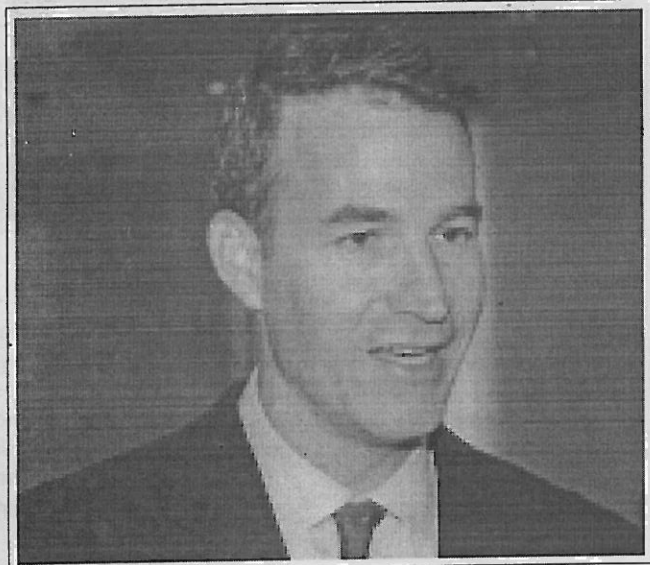


AES-SONEL:**New GM says he will not tolerate corruption**

Makes real threat by firing senior manager on grounds his post had become redundant

By Ntaryike Divine, Jr. in Douala



Will Brian Rich fulfil his many promises?

Brian Rich is the third American to head AES-SONEL following his 18 September confirmation at a Paris AES group board meeting. He succeeds Jean David Bile, the only Cameroonian to have headed the company created when the American multinational acquired a 56 percent stake in the state-run SONEL in 2001.

Bile, appointed board chair of the newly created AES Africa Power Company, APCO, took over AES-SONEL management in 2004 after two Americans failed to dispel what many considered a curse on the country's lone energy utility. A recipe of persistent droughts, a bloated workforce, rising energy theft, cultural barriers and several blunders by the American managers provoked frequent "AES Go Home!" protests.

In fact, in 2003, a delegation

of local chieftains were even turned back after they marched to the company headquarters in Douala to perform rituals aimed at chasing away evil spirits looming over AES-SONEL. The problems persisted as the company relied dangerously on a 90 percent dependence on age-battered hydroelectricity generation facilities.

And so when Bile was named manager, critics thought he was put there to mark time enough for the Americans to sell out and leave the country. It was the first time AES was staging a foray into Africa and the venture appeared doomed from the start. But Bile, a Sorbonne graduate who had worked at the company for 27 years, seemed to hold the magic wand. He cancelled plans to hike retail costs, arranged negotiated departure agreements for redundant workers, revamped the

billing system and launched a crusade against energy theft.

Bile largely succeeded.

That is the company Brian Rich, who doubles as APCO CEO, is inheriting. But he acknowledged he had other challenges to overcome. Addressing the press in Douala last Wednesday, 24 September at his first-ever outing as AES-SONEL GM, he said he would strive to consolidate the Bile achievements which he severally lauded; as well as reinforce an unfolding 500-million-dollar investment package.

"You will see results. Actions speak louder than words," Rich told reporters. He lived true to expectations with the announced sack of Frederic Renaut, until then director of the company's Central Operations Department. Sources based reasons for the sack on grounds that the post had become redundant and that Rich planned to henceforth relieve expatriates without world class experience in favour of nationals.

He said AES-SONEL had become the group's flagship project in Africa, justifying the decision by the parent company to host APCO in Douala.

He declared zero-tolerance in the direction of corrupt staffers and made real the threat with the reported sack of the company's director of operations during his first week in office. He also promised to complete work on the implementation of a new billing system, announced the rolling out of a customer call centre and consultations with trade union leaders. Rich served two years at AES-SONEL before his appointment.

Insufficient financial support:**Principal embarks on farming to raise funds for gov't school**

The principal of GHS Bafut says he has been pushed to raise money to run his school because government funding is largely insufficient

By Chrysantus Nchong in Bamenda

GHS Bafut principal, Chi Stephen, has said due to insufficient government financial support, he has embarked on farming to raise funds for the running of the school.

He told reporters in Bafut on 18 September while rendering account of his stewardship since his appointment in 2004 that he plants plantain and fruit trees and sells the harvest to raise income for the school.

Chi Stephen announced that he has personally established two plantations,

one for plantain and the other for fruit trees. Already, 1000 plantain suckers have been planted, he said.

The principal explained that the meagre government financial support to the school was because of its low enrolment.

He, however, disclosed that government recently constructed two classrooms in the school, and the PTA has set up two laboratories, which he said was still insufficient.

Chi said the main problem faced by the school's administration was persistent

late coming by students. But he was happy that the performance of the students at certificate examinations has continued to improve over the years.

In the recently published GCE results, GHS Bafut scored 75.9 percent at the Ordinary Level and 69 percent at the Advanced Level, with many students appearing on the honours roll of the GCE Board.

The GHS Bafut principal also praised his staff for the enormous sacrifices they have been making over the years.

Guard escaping with Biya's money held at Unity Palace

He was intercepted on the third floor of Wardolf Astoria hotel in the US where the president is putting up for the UN general assembly as he tried to escape with the president's heavy-loaded suitcase of money

By Ojong Steven Ayuk in Yaounde

A close military aide of President Paul Biya, who attempted to escape with an important sum of the president's money during his current stay in the US, has been flown back to the country. Reports say he is being held at the presidential guard detention cell at Unity Palace.

The presidential guard, whose identity we got simply as Lieutenant Emame, is reported to have been intercepted when he was suspected of trying to escape with the president's usually heavy-loaded suitcase of money on the third floor of Wardolf Astoria hotel in the US, where the president is lodging as he attends the 63rd UN general assembly.

Le Jour newspaper reported that the man who has visibly always been a loyal, docile and an unsuspecting character was picked up thanks to the Swiss security men who alerted the presidential security at the hotel of suspected movements by a vehicle outside the hotel building.

And a prompt investigation by the security soon revealed that the vehicle was about to be used by the lieutenant who was planning to escape with the



The President was almost left francless in the US

president's billions of FCFA.

Back in the country, he was whisked off at the airport by presidential security men in plain clothes and conveyed straight to the detention cell at State House.

The lieutenant is said to have won the president's trust and confidence that allowed him to

enjoy the dignity of the president's closest errand boy. Sometimes he was bearer of the president's confidential mails, we learnt.

He has since his incarceration been interrogated several times by interrogators of the presidential guard and the judicial police.

Bamileke association rewards academic excellence

A US-based Bamileke association dubbed "La Famille Bamileke de Dallas" (LAFABA) offered diverse prizes to students of Bamileke origin in the West province for their outstanding performance during the last academic year

By Tendong David in Bafoussam

Students of Bamileke origin resident in the West province who excelled during the last academic year have been awarded various prizes. The reward comprising text and exercise books among others was given by a US-based Bamileke association codenamed "La Famille Bamileke de Dallas" (LAFABA).

Speaking during the prize-award ceremony in Baham recently, the president of LAFABA, Kwame Honoré, said the association would spare no

effort in encouraging and upholding the integrity of education in Cameroon. This, he said, by encouraging youths through awarding prizes to those who excel.

Kwame Honoré expressed satisfaction with the teachers who, he said, painstakingly carried out their duties in honesty and congratulated the recipients on their excellent performance.

He revealed that the project, which started in 2003, is an annual event aimed at offering text and exercise books to

hardworking pupils, sports equipment to the schools and didactic materials to teachers to ease their work.

He told *The Herald* that so far his association has been to five of the eight divisions of the West province. He urged the teachers and parents to partner with LAFABA in giving the children a sound moral and academic upbringing.

Presiding over the ceremony in Baham, the Divisional Officer for Baham Central, Kuemo Simon, said the occasion was a special one in the lives of the recipients, stating that the prizes would push the students and even those who did not receive any to double their efforts in bookwork.

The Sub-Inspector for Basic Education for Badjoun subdivision, Fotso Madeleine, expressed joy with LAFABA for supplying corrugated iron sheets to complete the roofing of a classroom that was destroyed by wind and for the supply of water pipes that has eased the connection of pipeborne water to pupils of Houa primary school.



The schoolchildren are utter gratified