



RHODES UNIVERSITY

ADDRESS TO CONVOCATION, AUGUST 21, 1985

Mr President, and fellow members of Convocation, this is the ninth year in which I have had the pleasure of addressing you at your annual meeting. I use the word 'pleasure' sincerely, as it does indeed afford me much pleasure to speak to you, for two reasons.

Firstly, like any proud parent, I always enjoy an opportunity to talk about the achievements of the University. Secondly, it is a pleasure to address an audience of Rhodes graduates whose interest in the affairs and welfare of their alma mater must equal, if not exceed, my own.

In my address five years ago, I talked of my ambitions for Rhodes to become, firstly, an excellent university, and ultimately, a great one. I described the achievement of that ambition as a long journey. I am pleased to be able to tell you that a number of important milestones on that journey were passed in 1985.

One of the most important of these was the figure of 3 500 students which was exceeded for the first time. Included in this number are approximately 250 students at our East London branch and 3 000 full-time students in Grahamstown.

Last year I reported that Gold Fields House in Kimberley

Hall had been completed. This year it was occupied by the first intake of 79 men students. This brings the total number of students accommodated in residence to almost 2 000, which is approximately two thirds of our full-time enrolment.. Gold Fields was formally opened on February 20 by Mr Robin Plumbridge, Chairman and Chief Executive of Gold Fields of South Africa.

Continuing on the theme of construction, I am delighted to report that the Quad II project has been completed save for the landscaping which will be finished by the year's end. After a lapse of more than three years we shall once again have unrestricted access to the central area of the campus.

There are unlikely to be any more major building projects for some time, though the programme of remodelling and renovating existing buildings will continue. In this regard, improvements mainly to the ablution facilities of Cory, Matthews and Phelps houses have been made this year. It is hoped that similar steps can be taken to John Kotze, Olive Schreiner and Beit without undue delay.

By the beginning of next year we hope to have improved the facilities of the Great Hall by roofing in the verandah. The additional covered space thus created will be most welcome for examination purposes and student functions and will also be used for dining facilities for the junior staff.

As part of the continuing programme for beautifying the University we have engaged a Johannesburg landscape architect to draw up a master plan for whole campus, beginning with the

library and radiating outwards. The plan will be debated in the normal way once it is completed, will take into account the main features of the original Mallows Plan, but will be considerably more detailed. As funds become available, aspects of the overall plan like treeplanting, vehicle and pedestrian traffic and parking will be implemented.

You will perhaps have noticed that the last prefabricated building on the campus, which housed the printing unit, has been removed. It is now being used as a community centre by the coloured people of Port Alfred.

It is also gratifying to note that despite the drought, visitors to Rhodes continue to comment on the attractive appearance of the campus.

Among noteworthy milestones passed this year in the academic life of the University was the decision to go ahead with the PLATO system, which is one of the most sophisticated computer-based learning systems available.

In July Rhodes committed itself to purchasing the hardware to run PLATO and a computer-based learning unit has been established which has a library of about five thousand lessons in a wide variety of subjects. We hope also to make PLATO available to organizations in the Eastern Cape. A company and an educational organization in Port Elizabeth already have terminals linked to the system and another is on trial with a large concern in East London.

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research has changed its methods of allocating research funds. Applicants are more stringently vetted than previously and larger awards made to a smaller number of researchers. Relative to size, our researchers fared creditably in the awards made this year. Eleven members of staff were classified as eligible for comprehensive support grants from the Council's main research support programme and received funding. Of the eighteen researchers who qualified for partial support from the same programme, nine were awarded grants.

Important changes have been made in bursary and scholarship awards. Very few undergraduate scholarships awarded on academic merit are available, and the University Council has accordingly agreed to provide ten University Scholarships of two thousand rands each. The University Trust Scholarships are also to be upgraded and increased from two awards to four. An academic award scheme for students entering Rhodes for the first time has also been introduced. Awards will be made to students who obtain A symbols in higher grade subjects and to those who attain an A aggregate.

A new loan and bursary scheme for entering students, whereby bursaries derived from the University's resources will be awarded as loans, will be introduced in 1986. These loans may then be wholly or partially converted to bursaries depending on academic performance. Since 'scholarship' is the business of a university, these attempts to reward and encourage true scholarship are very important.

The Patrick and Margaret Flanagan Scholarship was awarded for the first time to Miss Veronica Franke. A Master's graduate in music from the University of Cape Town, she will be studying for a DPhil degree in Musicology at Christ Church, Oxford.

Despite the sombre economic conditions, an important goal was achieved this year in the financial field. The value of our endowment fund rose above ten million rand. The passing of this milestone is due largely to the invaluable support and advice of the Board of Governors to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude.

Those among you who represented Rhodes on the sports field will be glad to hear about a major policy change affecting the sporting scene. The recommendations of the ad hoc committee on sport at Rhodes, chaired by the Vice-Principal, Professor Brommert, were accepted by the University Council. Recommendations which will be implemented immediately are the award next year of sports bursaries to students of outstanding sporting and above-average academic ability; the provision of improved coaching (in the light of the Intervarsity results this would seem very necessary); and the installation of heating in the University swimming pool. Other capital projects such as the provision of additional sports fields will be tackled on a long term basis.

The visit to the University by delegates to the recent conference of headmasters and headmistresses of private schools brought to light the number of students at Rhodes who attended

private schools. Approximately seven hundred and twenty-five students, which constitutes about twenty-five percent of the full-time student body, are former pupils of private schools. Add to this the growing percentage of black students, the Zimbabwean student body and the number of students from the Transvaal and you have a picture of the tremendously diverse student population at Rhodes. This diversity is one of the strengths of our community. Students at Rhodes are forced to rub shoulders with people from a wider spectrum of backgrounds than at any other university in South Africa. This experience is of particular value to the education of the individual student.

It is ten years since I returned to Rhodes as Vice-Chancellor, and nine years since I gave my first address to this gathering. I wish to conclude, therefore, with a suitably pertinent quotation from Edward Holyoke who, on his deathbed at the age of 80, after 30 years as president of Harvard said:

'Any man who wishes to be humble, and mortified, let him become president of Harvard College.'

He said that in the first half of the eighteenth century when Harvard College was about as old as Rhodes is now, and probably a great deal smaller.

D S Henderson
VICE-CHANCELLOR