

21/8/84

ADDRESS TO CONVOCATION, AUGUST 21 1984

DR D S HENDERSON, VICE-CHANCELLOR

I SHOULD LIKE TO WELCOME YOU ALL HERE THIS EVENING TO THE 34TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONVOCATION OF OUR UNIVERSITY. ON YOUR ARRIVAL EARLIER, YOU WERE ALL HANDED A COPY OF THE AGENDA AS WELL AS A COPY OF THE ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1983.

I DO NOT PROPOSE THIS EVENING THEREFORE TO GO OVER THE GROUND WHICH IS ALREADY COVERED IN THAT PUBLICATION, AS I HOPE YOU WILL ALL TAKE IT HOME WITH YOU TONIGHT TO PERUSE AT YOUR LEISURE. I INTEND RATHER TO HIGHLIGHT CERTAIN TRENDS AND PATTERNS EMERGING AT OUR UNIVERSITY AS A RESULT OF CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE WORLD AROUND US.

2

SIXTEEN MONTHS AGO, WHEN I LAST REPORTED TO A MEETING OF THE CONVOCATION OF RHODES UNIVERSITY, I HAD AT GRADUATION THAT MORNING BEEN IN THE HAPPY POSITION OF BEING ABLE TO ANNOUNCE THE UNIVERSITY'S BIGGEST EVER SINGLE DONATION, HALF A MILLION RAND FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW RESIDENCE, GOLD FIELDS HOUSE.

TODAY IT GIVES ME EQUAL PLEASURE TO BE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE THE COMPLETION OF THAT BUILDING. GOLD FIELDS HOUSE NOW STANDS PROUDLY ON THE HILL AS PART OF KIMBERLEY HALL, READY TO TAKE IN ITS FIRST 79 STUDENTS.

ALTHOUGH WE HAVE SLIGHTLY MORE PRESSURE FOR ACCOMMODATION FOR FEMALE STUDENTS THAN FOR MALES IT WAS FELT THAT THE SOMEWHAT ISOLATED POSITION OF THE NEW RESIDENCE MADE IT MORE SUITABLE FOR MALES.

THEREFORE THE MEN FROM THE RATHER BETTER PROTECTED THOMAS PRINGLE HOUSE WILL BE MOVED OVER EN BLOC INTO GOLD FIELDS, WHILE WOMEN WILL BE ALLOCATED TO THE HOUSE VACATED BY THE MEN.



THIS WILL BRING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN RESIDENCE ON OUR CAMPUS TO JUST SHORT OF 2 000, OR 60 PER CENT OF OUR 1984 STUDENT TOTAL OF 3 389. THIS COMPARES WELL WITH OTHER UNIVERSITIES, SUCH AS UCT WHERE 18% OF 11 900 ENROLLED STUDENTS ARE IN RESIDENCE, AND WITS, WHERE A MERE 6,8% OF THE 16 536 REGISTERED STUDENTS ARE IN UNIVERSITY ACCOMMODATION.

IF ONE CONSIDERS THAT OF OUR 3 389 STUDENTS, 180 ARE ON OUR EAST LONDON CAMPUS, AND A FURTHER 297, MOSTLY POSTGRADUATES, ARE NOT IN ATTENDANCE IN GRAHAMSTOWN, THEN OF THE 2 830 FULL-TIMERS ACTUALLY ON THE CAMPUS EVERY DAY, OVER 70% ARE IN UNIVERSITY RESIDENCES. OF THE REMAINING 30%, 21% ARE IN DIGS AND ONLY 9% ARE LIVING IN THEIR OWN HOMES.

TO A VERY MUCH GREATER EXTENT THAN THAT AT OTHER UNIVERSITIES, RHODES IS HOME TO THE STUDENTS FOR THE DURATION OF THEIR ACADEMIC STUDIES HERE. FOR THIS REASON, THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH OUR STUDENTS LIVE ASSUMES A FAR GREATER IMPORTANCE THAN IT DOES AT OTHER COMPARABLE INSTITUTIONS.

THERE ARE VARIOUS FACTORS AT WORK WHICH HAVE ALREADY STARTED TO CHANGE THIS ENVIRONMENT, AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO IN THE FUTURE. IT IS THESE FACTORS WHICH I WISH TO MAKE THE MAIN THRUST OF MY MESSAGE TO CONVOCATION THIS YEAR.

PRIMARILY I MUST STRESS THAT ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE COUNTRY WE ARE FINDING OURSELVES IN INCREASINGLY STRAITENED FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. WITH EVEN MORE SQUALLY ECONOMIC WEATHER AHEAD, AND THE UNSUBSIDISED



COSTS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF SALARY INCREASES LATER THIS YEAR STILL TO BEAR WE WILL HAVE TO FURL OUR SAILS MORE AND MORE TIGHTLY AS WE HEAD INTO THE WIND. THE PERENNIAL RHODES DEBATE ON WHETHER TO EXPAND OR NOT BECOMES, IN SUCH A STORMY ECONOMIC CLIMATE, AN ACADEMIC EXERCISE, AS FUNDS FOR EXPANSION WILL JUST NOT BE FORTHCOMING.

THIS IS ONE REASON, THEREFORE, WHY THE NEW GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY FORMULA BEING INTRODUCED THIS YEAR COULDN'T HAVE COME AT A BETTER TIME FOR RHODES.

THE OLD FORMULA, AS I'M SURE YOU ALL KNOW, REWARDED GROWTH IN STUDENT NUMBERS, AND PROJECTED RATHER THAN ACTUAL GROWTH AT THAT. THE NEW FORMULA, DESPITE SOME GROWTH-LINKED COMPONENTS, AWARDS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, BOTH BY STUDENTS AND BY STAFF.

WE QUALIFY, FOR EXAMPLE, FOR APPROXIMATELY R10M OR HALF OUR SUBSIDY ALLOCATION ON A STUDENT COUNT BASIS AND FOR THE OTHER HALF ONLY FOR THOSE STUDENTS WHO PASS THEIR EXAMINATIONS. MEANWHILE, PUBLICATIONS BY ACADEMIC STAFF ATTRACT SUBSIDY AT THE RATE OF R5 000 FOR EVERY REFEREED ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN A RECOGNISED JOURNAL.

ONE OF THE CRITICISMS THAT HAS BEEN LEVELLED AGAINST THE NEW FORMULA SYSTEM IS THAT IT COULD ENCOURAGE TEACHERS TO CONCENTRATE MORE ON THEIR RESEARCH THAN ON THEIR TEACHING. I SHOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY OF POINTING OUT THAT AN INCREASE OF 20 PER CENT ON OUR PRESENT PUBLICATION RATE OF APPROXIMATELY 100 PER YEAR WOULD REPRESENT AN INCREASE OF INCOME OF JUST R100 000 WHEREAS IF EFFORTS BY OUR LECTURERS COULD PUSH THE AVERAGE STUDENT PASS RATE UP FROM ITS CURRENT 77 PER CENT, WE WOULD RECEIVE AN ADDITIONAL R100 000 FOR EVERY 1 PER CENT.



THIS FACTOR ALONE ALSO HIGHLIGHTS ANOTHER CHANGE IN OUR STUDENTS ENVIRONMENT, WHICH AGAIN IS, I FEEL, TO OUR ADVANTAGE.

STEADILY INCREASING APPLICATIONS FOR PLACES AT THE UNIVERSITY, AND THE ATTENUATED GROWTH RATE RENDERED NECESSARY FOR ECONOMIC REASONS, AS I HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED, HAVE MEANT THAT ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS CAN BE BASED MORE AND MORE FIRMLY ON ACADEMIC MERIT. A TOTAL OF 903 NEW UNDERGRADUATES WERE REGISTERED AT RHODES THIS YEAR, WHILE ANOTHER 400, OR 44%, HAD TO BE TURNED AWAY USING THEIR MATRICULATION RESULTS AS THE BASIS OF THE SELECTION PROCESS. THERE HAS ALSO BEEN A 25% INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF BLACK, COLOURED AND INDIAN STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY THIS YEAR IE. THE OTHER THAN WHITE COMPONENT OF THE STUDENT BODY HAS RISEN FROM 11,8% LAST YEAR TO 15% THIS YEAR, ANOTHER FACTOR LEADING TO A CHANGING STUDENT ENVIRONMENT. OUR BLACK, COLOURED AND INDIAN

STUDENTS ARE MORE EVENLY DISTRIBUTED IN ALL THE FACULTIES THIS YEAR, AS A RESULT OF GOVERNMENT'S MORE ENLIGHTENED ATTITUDE TO ALLOWING ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS IN MOST AREAS TO BE BASED ON ACADEMIC MERIT. AT THE SAME TIME THAT ADMISSIONS TO THE UNIVERSITY HAVE BECOME FIRMLY PEGGED TO ACADEMIC PROWESS, WE HAVE ADOPTED A FAR MORE STRINGENT APPROACH TO THE ENFORCEMENT OF REGULATION G I BIS, WHICH CALLS FOR THE EXCLUSION FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ANY STUDENT WHO DOES NOT PASS THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF COURSES AT THE END OF THE YEAR.

WHEN ONE IS WORKING WITHIN THE FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK OF A PERFORMANCE RELATED SUBSIDY SYSTEM, THE ADVANTAGES OF INCREASED ACADEMIC ABILITY IN THE STUDENT BODY BECOME VERY OBVIOUS.

WHETHER MORE INTELLIGENT STUDENTS WORK HARDER, OR WHETHER THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THEIR PLACES WILL BE TAKEN BY OTHERS IF THEY DO NOT



PERFORM ADEQUATELY IN THE EXAMINATIONS ACTS AS A SPUR TO LEARNING, IT IS CLEAR THAT STUDENTS ON THE RHODES CAMPUS TODAY ARE, IN THE MAIN A WELL-BEHAVED AND FRIENDLY GROUP OF HARD-WORKING YOUNG PEOPLE. THERE ARE OCCASIONS, SOME PREDICTABLE, WHEN STUDENTS' REACTIONS ARE LESS THAN IMPECCABLE, BUT I AM FREQUENTLY TOLD, BY PEOPLE BOTH IN AND OUT OF GRAHAMSTOWN, THAT STUDENTS BEHAVIOUR, TAKEN ALL IN ALL, HAS IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY IN RECENT YEARS. THE NECESSITY OF PASSING EXAMINATIONS IN ORDER TO ENSURE CONTINUED ATTENDANCE HAS CONCENTRATED STUDENT MINDS TO A WONDERFUL EXTENT. ALL OF US, PRESENT AND PAST MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY, WILL SURELY APPLAUD THAT.

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