

OPENING 28TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF S A PHARMACY STUDENTS FEDERATION
30 JUNE 1981

MR PRESIDENT, DELEGATES AND GUESTS, IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME TO WELCOME YOU TO RHODES UNIVERSITY, AND TO WISH YOU A FRUITFUL AND ENJOYABLE CONFERENCE.

THE FOUNDING OF ANY ASSOCIATION MAY BE SEEN AS A MANIFESTATION OF THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE FOUNDERS FOR THE CAUSE THAT THE ASSOCIATION IS INTENDED TO PROMOTE. IT IS ALSO A DEMONSTRATION OF THEIR BELIEF THAT THE OBJECTS OF THE ASSOCIATION ARE WORTHY, AND WILL REMAIN WORTHY, OF THE TIME AND EFFORT OF SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS OF MEMBERS. BUT IT IS ALSO A MANIFESTATION OF THE BASIC OPTIMISM OF MANKIND - THE PERENNIAL HOPE THAT NEW PLANTS WILL GROW AND THAT NEW VENTURES WILL PROSPER.

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THAT SUCH OPTIMISM IS OFTEN MISPLACED, IS PROVED BY THE MANY NEW ORGANISATIONS THAT NEVER GET OFF THE GROUND; BY THOSE THAT EXIST ONLY IN NAME; AND BY THOSE THAT LOSE THEIR WAY AND DRIFT INTO AREAS OF THOUGHT AND ACTION NEVER CONTEMPLATED BY THEIR FOUNDERS. THOSE WHO READ THE GOVERNMENT GAZETTE WILL KNOW THAT THE RATE AT WHICH NEW COMPANIES ARE REGISTERED IN SOUTH AFRICA OFTEN EXCEEDS AN AVERAGE OF FIFTY PER DAY. IF SO MANY ENTERPRISES COULD BECOME VIABLE AND DEVELOPING UNDERTAKINGS, THERE WOULD BE NO UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE WORLD, AND OUR FUTURE WOULD BE ASSURED. THE FACT THAT ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF REGISTERED COMPANIES SURVIVE FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME, POINTS AN ACCUSING FINGER AT THE MISPLACED OPTIMISM OF MANKIND.

IT IS CAUSE FOR REJOICING, THEREFORE, WHEN THE TEST OF TIME SHOWS AN ASSOCIATION TO HAVE BEEN WELL CONCEIVED AND WELL FOUNDED, AND STILL TO

BE SERVING MANY WHO WERE NOT PRESENT AT ITS BIRTH. AFTER AN EXISTENCE OF TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS, THE SOUTH AFRICAN PHARMACEUTICAL STUDENTS' FEDERATION HAS COME THROUGH THE TEST WITH FLYING COLOURS, AND ITS SUCCESS IS THE MORE REMARKABLE WHEN IT IS REALISED THAT, UNLIKE SOME PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS IN WHICH OFFICE BEARERS COULD CONTINUE TO SERVE AS SUPPORTING PILLARS FOR SEVERAL DECADES, YOUR FEDERATION HAS HAD TO DEPEND FOR ITS CONTINUITY ON A SUCCESSION OF STUDENT GENERATIONS, EACH LASTING FOR TWO OR THREE YEARS AT MOST. IT IS ALSO A GREAT TRIBUTE TO THE QUALITIES OF ALL THE OFFICE BEARERS IN THE PAST AND PRESENT THAT THEY HAD THE ABILITY, DURING RELATIVELY SHORT PERIODS IN OFFICE, TO CAPTURE THE SPIRIT OF THE ORGANISATION AND TO CONTRIBUTE SO WELL TO ITS CONTINUING ACTIVITIES. ON ALL THAT, I CONGRATULATE YOU MOST WARMLY.

DEFINING FOR MYSELF THE REASONS WHY AN ASSOCIATION SUCH AS THIS SHOULD BE SEEN AS SERVING A GOOD PURPOSE - WHICH I BELIEVE THAT IT DOES, I CAN THINK OF THE PRACTICAL SERVICES RENDERED TO ITS MEMBERS; OF DISCUSSIONS AT MEETINGS FROM WHICH OPINIONS EMERGE THAT SERVE AS VALUABLE FEEDBACK TO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE LECTURERS AND TO THE PHARMACY BOARD; AND OF CONTACTS BETWEEN STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS AND BACKGROUNDS WHO WILL SOON BE COLLEAGUES IN THE SAME PROFESSION. BUT THE MOST VALUABLE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUCH AN ORGANISATION IS THE INCULCATION IN ITS MEMBERS OF THE HABIT OF OBJECTIVE APPRAISAL, OF STANDING BACK TO TAKE A THREE DIMENSIONAL VIEW OF THEIR WORLD, AND OF TAKING AN INTEREST IN A WIDE SPECTRUM OF AFFAIRS EXTENDING FAR BEYOND INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS. THERE IS NO DEMOCRACY ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD THAT DOES NOT RELY FOR ITS FUNCTIONING ON MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE ACQUIRED THESE HABITS, FOR SUCH PEOPLE, DRAWN FOR

ALL WALKS OF LIFE, PROVIDE THE PERSONNEL FOR ALL ESCHELONS OF LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. THEY ALSO PROVIDE THE PERSONNEL FOR EVERY UNDERTAKING BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR WHICH SEEKS TO RENDER SOME SERVICE TO HUMANITY.

ANYONE WHO HAS HAD OCCASION TO OBSERVE THE ANATOMY AND HABITS OF A PIG, WILL KNOW THAT THIS ANIMAL CAN MOVE ITS HEAD THROUGH ONLY A LIMITED ARC, AND IT HAS BEEN CLAIMED THAT THE PIG DEVELOPED THIS LIMITATION BECAUSE IT FEEDS SO GREEDILY AND SELFISHLY THAT IT NEVER LOOKS UP TO SEE WHERE ITS FOOD COMES FROM, NOR LEFT OR RIGHT TO SEE HOW THE OTHER PIGS ARE FARING. THERE ARE FAR TOO MANY PEOPLE WHO DO THEIR WORK WITH SUCH INTENSE CONCENTRATIONS ON THE PROCUREMENT OF MAXIMUM INCOMES, THAT THEY NEVER LOOK UP TO SEE WHERE THEIR HEALTH, THEIR TRAINING AND THEIR ABILITIES COME FROM NOR TO LEFT OR RIGHT TO

SEE HOW THEIR FELLOW MEN ARE DOING. BUT YOU, WHO HAVE LEARNED TO COME TOGETHER FOR DISCUSSIONS IN WHICH YOU RISE ABOVE YOUR INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND TAKE AN OVERVIEW OF MATTERS AFFECTING MANY PEOPLE, YOU SHOULD NEVER BE IN DANGER OF LOSING THE WIDTH OF VISION THAT YOU ARE NOW MAKING YOUR OWN - AN ATTRIBUTE THAT WILL NOT ONLY ENRICH YOUR OWN LIVES, BUT WILL ALSO BE A BOON TO YOUR COUNTRY.

WE LIVE, IN SOUTH AFRICA, WITH THE STRANGE PARADOX THAT WE HAVE ENOUGH MEN AND ENOUGH POWER, BUT NOT ENOUGH MANPOWER. THIS SITUATION HAS BEEN CAUSED IN PART, BY RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION AND, FOR THE REST, BY A FAILURE TO EQUIP SO MANY POTENTIAL WORKERS WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL THAT WOULD ENABLE THEM TO MAKE AN ADEQUATE CONTRIBUTION TO OUR ECONOMY. THE DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM ARE MOST VISIBLE TO US AT THE LEVEL OF UNSKILLED LABOUR, WHERE THERE IS AN EXCESSIVE POTENTIAL WORK

FORCE AND CHRONIC UNEMPLOYMENT. WHILE WE CAN, AND MUST, PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING FACILITIES THAT WILL ENABLE ALL MEN TO REALISE THEIR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL, WE WILL ACHIEVE NOTHING BY DOING SO ONLY AT THE LOWER LEVELS OF OUR MANPOWER PYRAMID, FOR WE CANNOT TRAIN AND INCORPORATE MORE SKILLED WORKERS INTO OUR ECONOMY, UNLESS THE PROCESS PROCEEDS PARI PASSU WITH THE PROVISION OF MORE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, AND FOR THIS WE ARE DEPENDENT ON ADEQUATE MANPOWER AT THE VERY TOP OF THE PYRAMID, WHERE NEW ECONOMIC ENTERPRISE IS GENERATED.

IT IS TRUE THAT THE APEX OF THE FLUID MANPOWER PYRAMID WILL EVENTUALLY ADJUST ITSELF TO ACCOMMODATE THE ENLARGED BASE, AND THAT INCREASED NUMBERS AND INCREASED COMPETITION AT LOWER LEVELS WILL ACCELERATE THE UPWARD MOVEMENT OF THE BEST MATERIAL WITHIN THE PYRAMID, BUT THIS

TAKES MORE YEARS (AND EVEN GENERATIONS) THAN WE CAN AFFORD. WE NEED THE ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, AND HENCE A BIGGER OUTPUT FROM THE TOP LEVELS OF MANPOWER, IMMEDIATELY. HOW CAN THIS BE ACHIEVED?

IF A GIVEN NUMBER OF WORKERS PRODUCE A CERTAIN OUTPUT WHICH MUST BE INCREASED THERE ARE THREE WAYS OF DOING IT. YOU CAN INCREASE THE NUMBER OF WORKERS, OR THE AMOUNT OF WORK PERFORMED BY EVERY WORKER, OR THE SCOPE OF THE FUNCTIONS PERFORMED BY EVERY WORKER. AT LOW LEVELS OF EMPLOYMENT, WHERE NO GREAT TRAINING IS REQUIRED, THE OBVIOUS SOLUTION OF ENGAGING MORE WORKERS IS QUITE ACCEPTABLE, BUT NOT SO AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF WORK WHICH ONLY SOME CAN REACH, AND WHERE LENGTHY TRAINING OR VAST EXPERIENCE ARE THE TOOLS OF TRADE. FOR A SHORT TERM SOLUTION OF OUR PROBLEM WE MUST THEREFORE TURN TO THE

ALTERNATIVE MEASURES OF INCREASED INDIVIDUAL OUTPUT AND A WIDER RANGE OF FUNCTIONS. WE MUST ASK EVEN THE FOREMOST LEADERS IN INDUSTRY, WHO ARE ALREADY CONTRIBUTING SO MUCH TO OUR ECONOMY, WHETHER THEY CANNOT DO MORE: WHETHER POSSIBLE NEW VENTURES THAT THEY MAY VIEW WITH DISDAIN BECAUSE OF LOW PROFITABILITY, SHOULD NOT BE LAUNCHED AFTER ALL IF THEY WILL PROVIDE ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT. AND IN THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF PROFESSIONAL WORK AND EMPLOYMENT, SHOULD WE NOT ALSO ASK WHETHER AN INCREASED OUTPUT OR A WIDER SCOPE OF ENTERPRISE WOULD NOT PROVIDE A MORE FLUENT AND EFFICIENT SERVICE AND A SAVING OF MANPOWER TO THE BENEFIT OF THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY?

IN THE FIELD OF THE HEALTH SERVICES, FOR EXAMPLE, THE AVAILABLE FACILITIES HAVE BECOME TOTALLY INADEQUATE FOR OUR PRESENT DAY REQUIREMENTS. IN SOME OF OUR LARGER CITIES, YOU HAVE TO WAIT FOR MORE

THAN SIX MONTHS, AFTER MAKING AN APPOINTMENT, TO SEE YOUR DENTIST. DOCTORS WILL NOT VISIT THE HOMES OF THEIR PATIENTS EVEN IN THE CENTRAL SUBURBS, LET ALONE IN THE OUTLYING TOWNSHIPS, AND SERIOUSLY ILL PATIENTS HAVE TO BE SUBJECTED TO THE INCONVENIENCE AND DANGER OF BEING TRANSPORTED TO A SURGERY. WHEN ONE SEEKS THE REASONS FOR THIS ALARMING COLLAPSE IN MEDICAL SERVICES, YOU ENCOUNTER TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT: SOME WILL CLAIM THAT THERE ARE TOO FEW PRACTITIONERS TO PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC, WHILE OTHERS CONTEND THAT MASSIVE INCREASES IN FEES HAVE MADE IT UNNECESSARY FOR PRACTITIONERS TO DO AS MUCH AS IN THE PAST AND THAT THEY CAN NOW CHOOSE TO PERFORM ONLY THE MOST CONVENIENT TYPES OF WORK AND LEAVE THE REST. BUT WHATEVER THE TRUE REASONS MAY BE, THE PRESENT SITUATION CANNOT BE TOLERATED IN A COUNTRY WHICH HAS INVESTED SO MANY MILLIONS IN THE TRAINING OF ITS MEDICAL PROFESSION.

HOW MUST THE POSITION BE REMEDIED? WE COULD ESTABLISH MORE MEDICAL SCHOOLS AND PRODUCE MORE DOCTORS, IN THE HOPE THAT GREATER COMPETITION WILL LEAD TO GREATER EFFICIENCY, BUT CAN WE AFFORD TO DRAW MORE PEOPLE INTO THE MEDICAL FIELD WITHOUT HURTING OTHER PROFESSIONAL FIELDS THAT ARE ALSO LOOKING FOR MORE PRACTITIONERS? I DOUBT WHETHER THIS CAN BE DONE WHILE ALL PROFESSIONS AT PRESENT DRAW THE MAJORITY OF THEIR MEMBERS FROM A RELATIVELY SMALL SECTOR OF THE POPULATION, AND ARE ALL AFFLICTED BY A SHORTAGE OF SUITABLE MANPOWER.

THINKING ALONG THESE LINES, THE MIND INEVITABLY BEGINS TO FOCUS ON THE PHARMACEUTICAL PROFESSION. NOBODY WILL DENY THAT THE PHARMACIST IS A HARD WORKING PERSON WHO OPENS HIS DOORS AT AN EARLY HOUR AND STAYS OPEN LATER THAN MOST OTHER BUSINESSES. IN TERMS OF HIS TOTAL WORK LOAD AS COMBINED PROFESSIONAL PRACTITIONER AND TRADER, NOBODY COULD

CALL HIM A LOAFER. AND YET, IN HIS PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY, AND IN TERMS OF HIS PROFESSIONAL WORK ONLY, HE IS UNDOUBTEDLY GROSSLY UNDEREMPLOYED. HE HAS BEEN TRAINED AT A GREAT COST IN TIME AND MONEY TO PERFORM IMPORTANT PROFESSIONAL DUTIES, AND IN ACTUAL FACT HE PERFORMS THOSE DUTIES FOR A RELATIVELY SMALL TOTAL PERIOD PER DAY AND DEVOTES THE REMAINDER OF HIS TIME TO TRADING, WHICH COULD BE HANDLED BY ANYONE OF NORMAL INTELLIGENCE. I CAN WELL CONCEDE THAT, IN A VERY SMALL TOWN, IT IS BETTER TO HAVE A PHARMACIST AUGMENTING HIS INCOME BY TRADING, RATHER THAN NOT TO HAVE A PHARMACIST AT ALL, BUT SHOULD THIS BE ALLOWED TO HAPPEN IN LARGER CENTRES? IF NOT, WHAT ALTERNATIVES WOULD BE OPEN TO US?

IF IT WERE TO BE SIMPLY DECREED THAT THE PHARMACIST SHOULD RESTRICT HIMSELF TO THE ESSENTIAL DUTIES OF HIS PROFESSION, THE NUMBER OF

PRACTISING PHARMACISTS WOULD PROBABLY DWINDLE, OVER THE YEARS, TO LESS THAN HALF ITS PRESENT STRENGTH RELATIVE TO THE SIZE OF THE POPULATION. WHILE THIS WOULD ALREADY YIELD THE BENEFIT TO THE ECONOMY OF LESSENING THE PROFESSION'S DEMANDS ON HIGH LEVEL MANPOWER, IT WOULD RESULT IN SOME INCONVENIENCE TO THE PUBLIC BECAUSE OF GREATER DISTANCES BETWEEN PHARMACEUTICAL OUTLETS.

ARE THERE NO PROFESSIONAL FUNCTIONS AT PRESENT PERFORMED BY OTHERS IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC HEALTH THAT COULD BE PERFORMED BY THE PHARMACISTS SO AS TO UTILISE ALL THEIR TIME FOR PROFESSIONAL WORK? TO PERFORM, WITH THE NECESSARY TRAINING, THE WORK OF A HEALTH INSPECTOR, FOR INSTANCE, COULD HARDLY BE BENEATH THE DIGNITY OF PEOPLE WHO AT PRESENT WILLINGLY DO THE WORK OF GENERAL TRADESMEN. AND, TO BE A LITTLE BOLDER, DOES THE UNDEREMPLOYMENT OF THE PHARMACIST OF PROFESSIONAL WORK

NOT HOLD THE KEY, PERHAPS, TO THE SOLUTIONS OF OUR MANPOWER PROBLEM IN THE MEDICAL FIELD?

UNDER THE EXISTING LAWS AND ETHICAL RULES GOVERNING HIS PROFESSION, THE PHARMACIST MAY NOT DIAGNOSE AND MAY NOT PRESCRIBE MEDICINES FOR HIS CLIENTS, ALTHOUGH ANY LAYMAN MAY FREELY DO SO, PROVIDED THAT HE MAKES NO CHARGE FOR HIS SERVICES. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE MANY MEDICINES IN THE PHARMACY WHICH THE PHARMACIST CANNOT SUPPLY TO ANYONE EXCEPT ON THE PRESCRIPTION OF A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER. THIS RULE NOT ONLY COMPELS PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC ILLNESSES TO PAY FOR UNNECESSARY VISITS TO DOCTORS FROM TIME TO TIME, MERELY TO PROCURE REPEAT PRESCRIPTIONS FOR DRUGS THAT THEY WILL USE TO THE END OF THEIR DAYS, BUT THE COST OF THEIR ILLNESS IS INCREASED BY THE PROFESSIONAL FEES CHARGED ON PRESCRIPTIONS. EVEN WHEN IT COMES TO MEDICINES THAT MAY

FREELY BE SOLD OVER THE COUNTER, MEDICAL AID SOCIETIES, WHO PAY IN PART FOR MEDICINES SUPPLIED ON PRESCRIPTIONS ONLY, COMPEL THEIR MEMBERS TO VISIT DOCTORS UNNECESSARILY. THIS TAXES THE TIME OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AT THE EXPENSE OF PATIENTS GENUINELY IN NEED OF THEIR SERVICES, PUSHES UP THE COSTS OF MEDICINES THAT COULD HAVE BEEN BOUGHT MORE CHEAPLY WITHOUT A PRESCRIPTION, AND CONSTITUTES POINTLESS EXPENDITURE WHICH MUST INCREASE THE COST OF MEDICAL AID SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP.

WHY SHOULD PHARMACISTS NOT BE GIVEN A THOROUGH TRAINING IN DIAGNOSIS AND PERMITTED TO DIAGNOSE AND PRESCRIBE FOR THOSE WHO SEEK THEIR SERVICES? WOULD THIS NOT RELIEVE THE MEDICAL PROFESSION OF ENOUGH OF ITS LOAD TO PERMIT IT ONCE AGAIN TO PROVIDE THE FULL SERVICE, INCLUDING HOME VISITS, THAT THE PUBLIC NEEDS? AND WOULD IT NOT ALSO

PERMIT THE PHARMACIST TO DEVOTE A FULL WORKING DAY TO WORK THAT IS WORTHY OF HIS TRAINING AND CAPABILITIES? WOULD IT NOT ALSO BE A BOON TO THE PUBLIC TO HAVE ADDITIONAL PORTS OF CALL AVAILABLE IN HOURS OF NEED?

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO WILL CONTEND THAT A PHARMACIST WHO CAN PRESCRIBE THE MEDICINE ON WHICH HE MAKES A PROFIT WOULD BE LIKE A MAGISTRATE WHO IS ALLOWED TO DERIVE HIS INCOME FROM THE FINES THAT HE IMPOSES. BUT THIS OBJECTION FALLS FLAT ON ITS FACE WHEN WE NOTE THAT DOCTORS ARE AT PRESENT PERMITTED, IF THEY CHOOSE TO DO SO - AND MANY DO, TO PRESCRIBE AND TO SUPPLY MEDICINES TO THEIR PATIENTS AT A PROFIT. IS THERE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT DOCTORS ARE BORN WITH STERNER CONSCIENCES THAN PHARMACISTS?

FOR MANY YEARS NOW, THE MAN IN THE STREET HAS RECEIVED FAR LESS THAN HIS DUE ENTITLEMENT, WHILE THE INTERESTS AND PREROGATIVES OF SO MANY SECTIONS OF OUR ECONOMY HAVE BEEN PROTECTED AND PROMOTED AT HIS EXPENSE BY PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS, COMMERCIAL ORGANISATIONS AND MARKETING BOARDS, TO NAME BUT A FEW. IT IS TIME THAT THE ORDER OF THINGS IN OUR SOCIETY BE REVISED SOMEWHAT WITH THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE ORDINARY CITIZEN IN MIND - EVEN IF IT MEANS THAT SOME HOLY COWS WILL HAVE TO DISAPPEAR.

MAY I LEAVE THESE THOUGHTS IN YOUR MIDST AS I DECLARE THIS CONFERENCE DULY OPENED.

D S HENDERSON

30 JUNE 1981