

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT TO CONVOCATION 11 APRIL 1980

MR PRESIDENT, MR CHANCELLOR AND FELLOW MEMBERS OF CONVOCATION, THIS IS NOW THE FIFTH OCCASION ON WHICH I HAVE HAD THE HONOUR OF ADDRESSING YOU AT YOUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. ON EACH SUCH OCCASION IT IS MY PRIVILEGE TO REVIEW THE PREVIOUS YEAR AT RHODES. AS I ASSEMBLED MY THOUGHTS TO DO SO I REMINDED MYSELF THAT, ALTHOUGH I IN COMMON WITH ALL OF YOU, HAVE VERY LARGE AMBITIONS IN THE ABSTRACT FOR OUR ALMA MATER, MY CONCRETE AMBITION FOR EACH SUCCEEDING YEAR IS A RELATIVELY MODEST ONE, NAMELY

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THAT RHODES SHOULD BE A BETTER UNIVERSITY THAN IT WAS ONE YEAR PREVIOUSLY. AS THE CHINESE PHILOSOPHER REMINDS US "A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND KILOMETERS BEGINS WITH THE FIRST STEP." EACH INCREMENTAL STEP THEREAFTER BRINGS US CLOSER TO BECOMING FIRSTLY AN EXCELLENT UNIVERSITY AND ULTIMATELY A GREAT ONE. WE SHOULD NOT AND CANNOT REMAIN CONTENT WITH BEING MERELY A GOOD UNIVERSITY. IN THIS CONTEXT I CAN FAIRLY REPORT THAT THE YEAR 1979 WAS ONE MORE POSITIVE STEP ON THAT LONG JOURNEY.

LAST YEAR I MADE REFERENCE TO THE EXCEPTIONAL STABILITY OF OUR ACADEMIC STAFF, IN SPITE OF THE UNSETTLED TIMES IN WHICH

WE LIVE. ALTHOUGH IN 1979 WE CONTINUED TO EXPERIENCE A RELATIVELY LOW TURNOVER, WE REGRETTABLY LOST THE SERVICES OF A NUMBER OF VERY SENIOR PEOPLE. THIS WAS PARTICULARLY NOTICEABLE AMONGST OUR PROFESSORS, OF WHOM EIGHT LEFT OUR SERVICE IN 1979, FIVE OF WHOM TOOK UP POSTS ELSEWHERE. OF THOSE WHOM WE LOST LAST YEAR I SHOULD LIKE TO PAY A PARTICULAR TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR ROLF BRAAE, WHO DIED IN SEPTEMBER AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF ILLNESS BRAVELY AND PATIENTLY BORN. I FELT PARTICULARLY CLOSE TO HIM SINCE WE HAD BOTH PROFESSED THE SAME SUBJECT, COMPUTER SCIENCE. FOR THIS REASON I HAD COME TO KNOW AND APPRECIATE LONG BEFORE I RETURNED TO RHODES HIS GENEROUS PERSONALITY,

PUCKISH SENSE OF HUMOUR, DEEP COMMITMENT TO MUSIC, GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND HISTORY, NOT TO MENTION HIS DEVOTION TO HIS SUBJECT AND HIS STUDENTS. I SHALL CONTINUE TO MISS, AS SHALL WE ALL, HIS ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT.

EXTENSIONS TO OUR ACADEMIC PROGRAMME HAVE INCLUDED A NEW MASTER'S DEGREE COURSE IN LIMNOLOGY AND A NEW UNDER-GRADUATE COURSE IN ECONOMIC GEOLOGY. THE FIRST WILL PROVIDE SPECIALIST TRAINING IN THE STUDY OF LAKES, RIVERS AND WETLAND SYSTEMS, WHILE THE SECOND ACKNOWLEDGES THE PENETRATION OF ECONOMICS INTO AREAS IN WHICH THE NEED FOR

THIS DISCIPLINE HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN EXPLICITLY ENCOUNTERED. BOTH DEVELOPMENTS ILLUSTRATE AN INCREASINGLY PERCEIVED TREND TO RELATE KNOWLEDGE IN PREVIOUSLY NOT DIRECTLY RELATED DISCIPLINES IN NEW WAYS TO MEET THE CHANGING DEMANDS OF OUR SOCIETY.

THE MOST FAR-REACHING ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT HAS, HOWEVER, UNDOUBTEDLY BEEN THE AMENDMENT OF OUR PRIVATE ACT TO ENABLE US TO OFFER CLASSES IN EAST LONDON. AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE SOLID SUPPORT OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND OF THE GENEROUS COOPERATION OF THE TECHNICAL COLLEGE WE SHALL BE IN A POSITION TO START LECTURES IN 1981

LEADING TOWARDS A FIXED CURRICULUM BACHELOR OF COMMERCE DEGREE DESIGNED TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THOSE STUDENTS WHOSE CHIEF INTEREST IS IN THE ACCOUNTING FIELD. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THE INITIAL ENROLMENT WILL BE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF 25 STUDENTS. IN REGARD TO THE PREPARATIONS FOR THIS VENTURE I MUST PAY PARTICULAR TRIBUTE TO THE EAST LONDON AD HOC COMMITTEE ON TERTIARY EDUCATION UNDER THE DETERMINED CHAIRMANSHIP OF MR ASHTON CHUBB, AND TO THE TWO UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEMBERS FROM EAST LONDON, MESSRS C K ROWLAND AND J A YAZBEK.

DURING THE YEAR NO NEW PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN TERMS OF COMPLETE NEW BUILDINGS WERE INSTITUTED. WE CONCENTRATED OUR ATTENTION ON REMODELLING AND ON INCREMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS, IN SOME CASES QUITE EXTENSIVE ONES. WITH THE JUST COMPLETED REMODELLING OF BOTHA HOUSE WE ARE WELL PAST THE HALF-WAY MARK IN OUR PROGRAMME TO MODERNISE THE FIVE RESIDENCES WHICH ARE MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS OLD. WORK IS DUE TO START VIRTUALLY IMMEDIATELY ON COLLEGE HOUSE AND THEREAFTER ONLY THE WORK ON THE TOP TWO FLOORS OF MILNER HOUSE WILL REMAIN. PARTICULAR MENTION SHOULD ALSO BE MADE OF IMPROVEMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN IN THE PHYSICS DEPARTMENT AND IN ENLARGING THE AVAILABLE

STAGE AREA IN THE THEATRE. CURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS ARE DIRECTED TOWARDS A MAJOR BUILDING PROGRAMME TO COMPLETE THE SECOND QUADRANGLE AND PROVIDE IMPROVED ACCOMMODATION FOR THE DEPARTMENTS OF ENGLISH, GEOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY, THE COMPUTING CENTRE AND THE PRINTING UNIT.

ATTENTION SHOULD ALSO BE DRAWN TO EFFORTS TO MAKE RESIDENCE COMMON ROOMS MORE ATTRACTIVE VENUES WITH A WARM AND HOMELY ATMOSPHERE. SO FAR 13 SUCH COMMON ROOMS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED, WITH VERY PLEASING RESULTS. THE "VIP" APARTMENT IN THE UNION BUILDING HAS RECEIVED SIMILAR TREATMENT AND WE MUST NOW TURN OUR EYES TOWARDS

UPGRADING SOME OF THE HOUSING USED BY THE UNIVERSITY FOR THE TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION OF NEW STAFF.

DURING 1979 WE SAID FAREWELL TO NO FEWER THAN FIVE HALL WARDENS. THIS TURNOVER IN WARDENING STAFF HAD THE POTENTIAL OF INDUCING CONSIDERABLE INSTABILITY, WHICH HAS FORTUNATELY BEEN MINIMISED BY THE EXCELLENT STAFF WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ATTRACT AS REPLACEMENTS. THE VASTLY IMPROVED ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE TO WARDENS HAS UNDOUBTEDLY HAD A VERY BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON BOTH RECRUITMENT POTENTIAL AND MORALE.

IN CONTINUATION OF OUR RESIDENCE RATIONALISATION PROGRAMME THE DOMESTIC STAFF HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLY REDUCED THROUGH RELOCATION TO OTHER DUTIES AND A PROPER TRAINING SCHEDULE AND IMPROVED EQUIPMENT HAS CONTRIBUTED TO INCREASED EFFICIENCY. THE INTRODUCTION OF SELF-SERVICE IN SOME HALLS AND THE REQUIREMENT THAT ALL STUDENTS MAKE THEIR OWN BEDS HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED WITH PATIENCE AND GOOD HUMOUR, AND WITH NO APPARENTLY LASTING ILL-EFFECTS. WITH THE CONSOLIDATION OF LILLIAN BRITTEN HOUSE INTO ST MARY HALL, MILNER INTO HOBSON HALL AND ATHERSTONE INTO JAN SMUTS HALL WE NOW HAVE EIGHT MAJOR

HALLS AVERAGING APPROXIMATELY 200 STUDENTS EACH. AS A CONSEQUENCE THE ORGANISATION AND CONTROL OF THE RESIDENCES IS ON MUCH MORE MANAGEABLE LINES.

STUDENT NUMBERS IN 1979 SHOWED ONLY A MARGINAL INCREASE OVER THOSE IN 1978 AND JUST NUDGED OVER THE 2800 MARK. THIS IS A TREND THAT MUST NOW BE ANTICIPATED AT ALL THE SO-CALLED WHITE UNIVERSITIES FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE DECLINE IN BIRTHRATE AND A VIRTUALLY SATURATION ENROLMENT OF WHITE STUDENTS CAPABLE OF BENEFITTING FROM A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION. A VERY SATISFACTORY ASPECT OF STUDENT ENROLMENT HAS BEEN THE

INCREASE IN BLACK AND BROWN STUDENTS WHO EXCEEDED A HUNDRED IN 1979, AND PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS ARE THAT WE HAVE MORE THAN 150 IN 1980.

OUR STUDENTS CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY IN A WIDE RANGE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ENDEAVOURS. A RESPONSIBLE AND ENERGETIC SRC WERE MATCHED BY AN EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE AND ENERGETIC RAG COMMITTEE, WHO PRESIDED OVER ACTIVITIES WHICH BROUGHT IN A RECORD R48 300 AVAILABLE FOR DISTRIBUTION TO CHARITIES. THE EFFORT INVOLVED IN SUCH A STUPENDOUS ACHIEVEMENT IS NOW

PERCEIVED BY THE RAG COMMITTEE ITSELF AS NOT BEING SUSTAINABLE BY STUDENTS WHOSE MAJOR COMMITMENT MUST OF NECESSITY BE TO THEIR ACADEMIC PURSUITS. I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE 1979 RAG EFFORT WILL COME TO BE SEEN AS A HIGHWATER MARK UNLIKELY TO BE SURPASSED FOR SOME YEARS TO COME. MUCH AS ONE MAY REGRET THIS, RAG ACTIVITIES MUST BE SEEN FROM A PERSPECTIVE THAT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT STUDENTS ARE HERE PRIMARILY TO STUDY.

AS IS THEIR CUSTOM RHODES STUDENTS TRADITIONALLY PARTICIPATE IN A WIDE SPECTRUM OF SPORTS ENERGETICALLY AND ENJOYABLY, WHETHER THESE BE INTRAMURAL OR PITTED

AGAINST OUTSIDE COMPETITION. OUR DEGREE OF SUCCESS IN THIS LATTER FIELD IS NOT ALWAYS AS GREAT AS ONE MIGHT WISH, BUT THIS DOES NOT PURTURB ME UNDULY. THE SAME REMARKS, MUTATIS MUTANDIS, APPLY TO SPORTING ACTIVITIES AS TO THE RAG ENDEAVOURS TO WHICH I HAVE ALREADY REFERRED. THAT OUR SPORTS ARE SO WELL ORGANISED, SO MANIFESTLY ENJOYED AND SO WIDELY PARTICIPATED IN IS A GREAT TRIBUTE TO OUR SPORTS OFFICER, MR BRUCE SMITH, AND THE SPORTS UNION TO WHOM HE REPORTS.

GRAHAMSTOWN AND RHODES UNIVERSITY LEND THEMSELVES ADMIRABLY TO THE CELEBRATION OF ANNIVERSARIES, AND NO

REPORT ON THE EVENTS OF 1979 WOULD BE COMPLETE WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF RHODES UNIVERSITY COLLEGE. THESE CELEBRATIONS CULMINATED IN A SPECIAL GRADUATION CEREMONY IN SEPTEMBER AT WHICH THREE DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THIS CONVOCATION, DOCTORS HUGH CHAPMAN, FRANCIS HEWITT AND DONALD SOLE WERE SINGLED OUT FOR SPECIAL HONOURS BY THE UNIVERSITY. ONE METHOD OF RECKONING OUR AGE TAKES US BACK TO THE FOUNDATION OF ST ANDREW'S COLLEGE IN 1855, ANOTHER TO THE START OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN GRAHAMSTOWN IN 1878, A THIRD TO THE FOUNDING OF RHODES UNIVERSITY COLLEGE IN 1904, AND FINALLY, THE MOST ORTHODOX, TO THE

INSTITUTION OF RHODES UNIVERSITY IN 1951. BY TAKING ANY ONE OF THESE FOUR CARDINAL DATES AS POINTS OF REFERENCE WE ARE IN THE PLEASING CIRCUMSTANCE OF NEVER HAVING TO WAIT UNDULY LONG FOR THE ADVENT OF YET ANOTHER HAPPY OCCASION FOR REMEMBRANCE.

SO MANY EVENTS JUSTLE US FOR PARTICIPATION DURING GRADUATION WEEKEND, AND THUS I MUST NOT COMPEL YOUR ATTENTION AT ANY GREATER LENGTH. I SHOULD LIKE THEREFORE TO CONCLUDE BY RECORDING MY APPRECIATION TO THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL, THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS, THE STAFF AND STUDENTS,

AND NOT LEAST, MEMBERS OF THIS CONVOCATION, FOR THEIR STEADY SUPPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY DURING THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS. THE YEAR 1979 MAY NOT BE REGARDED IN RETROSPECT AS PARTICULARLY SPECTACULAR, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY IT WAS A HAPPY AND SUCCESSFUL ONE, MARKED BY STEADY, SOLID ACHIEVEMENT. AT LEAST IT WAS THUS PERCEIVED BY YOUR VICE-CHANCELLOR, AND FOR THIS I SHOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY THANKS AND GRATITUDE FOR THE WIDESPREAD AND GENEROUS SUPPORT I HAVE ENJOYED FROM SO MANY QUARTERS.

D S HENDERSON
VICE-CHANCELLOR
11 APRIL 1980