

Draft approved subject to

1) correction of minor typos.

2) According to 'phone book it's called the Technical Institute. Check the exact title of the institution (I believe the word "Grahamstown" doesn't actually appear in it) and amend appropriately where I have put question marks.

→ SH 6/10/86

DRAFT

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S SPEECH AT THE GRAHAMSTOWN TECHNICAL COLLEGE RECEPTION
FOR NATIONAL SECRETARIAL COURSE STUDENTS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1986

Mrs Brandt and members of the College's Board of Management, Mr Hall, students completing the National Secretarial Certificate course, parents and friends: I am honoured, as a representative of the other institution across the valley, to have been invited to address you today.

Universities are sometimes labelled as ivory towers, populated by misty-eyed idealists pontificating in polysyllabic phrases without reference to the realities of the world around them. This is a somewhat harsh judgement, made usually by people who do not understand what a university is or how it operates.

The business of a university is knowledge, its preservation, propagation and extension. The concept of the modern university goes back to Paris in the 12th and 13th centuries. A university is a place where any subject with an intellectual content is, in principle, part of its ambit. A university is a community of senior members who teach and junior members who learn as all the members interact with one another. Knowledge is considered primarily for its own sake and only secondarily as being applicable in various useful professions. This is why research is an important part of a university's business.

Institutes

? Technical Colleges and Technikons are sometimes labelled as Orwellian factories, producing technocrats programmed for narrow career paths, populated only by students who could not 'make it' to a university. This judgement is equally unfair because it is not founded on fact. The value of the type of training offered by institutions of technical education is obvious to anyone who understands the importance of commerce and industry to the continued life of a country.

The characters and purposes of both universities and technical colleges are far more complex than might appear at first glance, and both offer educational opportunities that should be seen as complementary rather than antagonistic.

In our present situation in South Africa it is important that we understand this, because education in this country has become the centre of political debate - much of it emotional and ideological. It is nevertheless of vital importance for the healthy economic, cultural and social development of this land that this debate continues until we have a system of education that provides for our needs.

α This country has many and varied natural resources, the most valuable being its people. Unfortunately, many of our people have, over the years, been left in an educationally raw or partially-processed state because they have not received appropriate education or training. This situation will not be remedied overnight, but both technical colleges and universities have a vital part to play in providing an answer to this problem.

We should regard secondary and tertiary education as preparation for leadership roles. We have a great need for wise and well-informed leadership in politics, public administration, education, community life, the churches and the media. But let us not forget the need for bold and imaginative leadership in the wealth-producing activities of commerce and technology.

Unless more of South Africa's obvious potential wealth is made attainable, the good life we would like to see for all of us will elude us through lack of resources. There is a shortsighted tendency to believe that the goose will go on laying the golden eggs come what may. This is not so, particularly in these times of sanctions, embargoes and boycotts.

The industrial and technical goose requires very careful and specialized care and feeding by highly educated men and women. One of our highest priorities, therefore, in secondary and tertiary education must be the provision of properly trained manpower for our vital industrial base.

We are fortunate in that we already have a healthy tradition on which to build. The University of South Africa has established a world-wide reputation over decades in providing education for those who cannot afford more conventional means of furthering their education. Our East London Division, which provides part-time degree courses in commerce, education and social work, is the result of our belief that there are

many capable of higher education who cannot undertake full-time studies for various reasons.

Recently we have seen the creation of Technikon RSA and perhaps the time is now ripe for High School RSA, to give a second chance to those who did not have the initial opportunity for a more orthodox education. We should also take into account the exciting and increasing potential of computers and television in the provision of supplementary education.

X We have daunting problems to overcome in evolving a rational education
X system in this country, and existing, well-established schools, technical ^{institutions} ~~colleges~~ and universities have a vital role to play in this evolution.

X Successful educational institutions can and should play the same role in the educational system as a whole as an inspired individual does in lifting the morale and performance of a sporting team. In this way, the effect of an individual or institution can be multiplied many times over, until the point is reached where an otherwise impossible task becomes within our grasp.

Another difficulty which we will have to face is that we are moving out of the era when the 'Education for jobs' approach was acceptable. Many of those currently experiencing the educational process will have to make their way in a world where a great many jobs have simply disappeared.

It has been estimated that early in the next century, with the wider application of automation and robotization, sufficient material goods will be capable of being produced by only ten percent of the potential labour force. A good education will undoubtedly improve the individual's position in the labour market, but there will not be jobs for all. Much increased leisure for all, with a large number of people never finding work is a very plausible scenario.

Educationalists, industrialists and politicians will have to hammer out a solution to this problem before it overtakes us.

I turn now to the purpose of our gathering today - to honour the young ladies who are completing the one year course for the National Secretarial Certificate.

In years gone by you ^{may only have} ~~would have~~ learned only shorthand and typing, because they were regarded as the only training needed for successful secretaries. Your course has included much more than that, because you will need to be more than typists. The cartoons depicting nubile secretaries taking dictation while perched on their bosses' knees are now so outmoded as to be museum curiosities.

If any office is to run efficiently, the secretary needs to understand the principles of office management and apply them intelligently. Not only will you type, file and keep appointment books and diaries, but you will need to look ahead to foresee problems and take action to avoid them. ^{The secretary} ~~He or she~~ needs to understand the pressures under which

his or her employer operates and do everything possible to alleviate them. Secretaries are not only in the business of processing documents in various ways, they are part of a human team working together towards a common goal.

The word 'secret' needs only three letters to transform it to 'secretary', which brings me to another important attribute of the successful secretary. Confidentiality is of vital importance and you will have great responsibility in this area, whether you are a lowly junior in a large office, or private secretary to the Managing Director. Whatever passes through your hands, typewriter or word-processor does not belong to you. It belongs to your employer and your duty is to maintain confidentiality, however unimportant the document may seem to you.

Perhaps none of you have the psychological block about computers that is manifested by many slightly older people. If you have, however, now is the time to deal with it, because with the rate at which the information explosion is progressing, there will be ever more computer applications in ever more fields - particularly offices.

Computers and word-processors may be somewhat daunting to start with, but they have certainly removed the drudgery of re-typing from the lives of countless typists. So welcome them as friends who will free you to use your working time more creatively.

As you take your places in the world of work, remember that you have received a valuable training at this technical ^{institute} college. Keep abreast of new developments in office equipment and office management

techniques. Keep alert and interested in what is going on around you and learn as much as you can about the organization for which you work, so that you are a well-informed asset to your employers.

I wish you all happy, productive and interesting working lives, and I close with the hope that this technical ^{institute} college will continue to produce efficient, well trained secretaries.

D. S. HENDERSON
Rhodes University.