

5/9/84

CORIC : 2ND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING : 5 SEPTEMBER 1984

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I SHOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR THE PRIVILEGE YOU HAVE ACCORDED ME IN INVITING ME TO ADDRESS YOU ON THIS OCCASION MARKING THE CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF WORK COMPLETED BY CORIC. ON READING THE BACKGROUND MATERIAL SUPPLIED TO ME I WAS STRUCK BY THE PRACTICAL, DOWN-TO-EARTH APPROACH ADOPTED, BY THE LOCAL INITIATIVE SHOWN BY MEMBERS OF THE MAIN TARGET COMMUNITY, AND BY THE DEGREE OF SUPPORT OF BUSINESSES AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS.

THE ANOMALOUS EMPLOYMENT POSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA, IN WHICH WE FIND MANY SKILLED JOB POSITIONS GOING BEGGING, FOR LACK OF PEOPLE WITH THE NECESSARY SKILLS TO FILL THEM, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME AN ARMY OF

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UNSKILLED AND PARTIALLY SKILLED PEOPLE CANNOT FIND WORK, IS SO WELL KNOWN TO ALL OF US PRESENT TODAY THAT IT HARDLY NEEDS ANY EMPHASIS FROM ME. THE SITUATION ADDS FUEL TO INFLATION, OVERCOMMITMENT AND INEFFICIENCY AT THE TOP, WHILE CONTRIBUTING TO FRUSTRATION AND UNREST AT THE LOWER LEVELS. THE NEED FOR ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS CORIC, WHICH ADDRESS THEMSELVES TO THIS PROBLEM IN A DIRECT AND PRACTICAL WAY, CANNOT THEREFORE BE GAINSAID. ONE OF THE DIFFICULTIES HIGHLIGHTED IN YOUR FIRST ANNUAL REPORT IS THAT ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES ARE GENERALLY VISIBLE TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY. THE WORK DONE BY CORIC IN BRINGING A MUCH GREATER SPECTRUM OF CAREERS TO THE NOTICE OF HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS, AND THE SUBJECT CHOICES NECESSARY TO PREPARE ONE FOR SUCH CAREERS, IS DESERVING OF THE HIGHEST PRAISE. I WAS ALSO STRUCK BY THE SMALL NUMBER OF BLACKS REPORTED AS ASPIRING TO THE COMMERCIAL AND TECHNICAL OPPORTUNITIES. THE FETISH OF

MATRICULATION EXEMPTION, FOLLOWED BY PREPARATION AT A UNIVERSITY, AS BEING THE ONLY RESPECTABLE CAREER PATH, HAS BEEN WITH US FOR FAR TOO LONG, AND HAS DONE INCALCULABLE HARM. THERE ARE INNUMERABLE SATISFYING AND REWARDING OCCUPATIONS, FOR WHICH HIGH ACADEMIC TRAINING IS NOT A PREREQUISITE, AND IN WHICH IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES MANY OF THE VACANCIES CANNOT BE FILLED. IT IS MOST GRATIFYING THAT CORIC IS ASSEMBLING AND DISTRIBUTING INFORMATION IN THIS FIELD.

THERE IS ONE ASPECT OF THE WHOLE PROBLEM ON WHICH I SHOULD LIKE TO VENTURE A FEW REMARKS, BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT ENLIGHTENMENT IN THIS AREA MAY WELL PROVE TO BE A PREREQUISITE TO THE ENHANCED SUCCESS OF CORIC'S EFFORTS IN THE FUTURE, NO MATTER WHAT INDIVIDUAL CAREER OPPORTUNITIES MAY BE UNDER DISCUSSION. FROM MY OWN OBSERVATIONS, AND FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH MANY OTHER PEOPLE WITH SIMILAR EXPERIENCES, IT

WOULD SEEM THAT NOT ONLY ARE MANY CAREER OPPORTUNITIES NOT VISIBLE TO BLACK ASPIRANTS, BUT THERE IS ALSO A DISTINCT LACK OF A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT, FOR LACK OF A BETTER TERM, I SHALL CALL "BUSINESS CULTURE". I DO NOT WISH TO SUGGEST THAT BUSINESS CULTURE IS TO BE REGARDED AS SUPERIOR TO, OR COMPETING WITH, OTHER EXPRESSIONS OF CULTURE WITH WHICH SOME PEOPLE MAY SEEM MORE AT HOME. A MUTUAL HELP, COMMUNITY-SUPPORT FORM OF CULTURE, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS MANY ATTRACTIVE FEATURES COMPARED WITH THE SELF-ADVANCEMENT AND RUTHLESSNESS THAT HOSTILE PARTIES ARE SOMETIMES FOND OF ATTRIBUTING TO THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT. THIS MAY WELL BE TRUE, BUT IT IS ALSO AN UNAVOIDABLE FACT THAT IT IS THIS SAME MUCH-MALIGNED BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT THAT PROVIDES THE BULK OF THE DESIRABLE WORK OPPORTUNITIES. IF THE PEOPLE WE ARE TRYING TO REACH DO NOT POSSESS A REASONABLY RELIABLE ROADMAP OF THE TERRITORY WHICH THEY ARE TO NEGOTIATE, THEY MAY WELL BE AT EVEN MORE OF A DISADVANTAGE THAN NOT KNOWING OF THE EXISTENCE OF CERTAIN

SOME OF THE FEATURES OF THIS BUSINESS CULTURE HAVE ALREADY BEEN WIDELY RECOGNISED AND DISSEMINATED. TAKE TWO EXAMPLES: FACILITY WITH MANIPULATING NUMBERS AND COMPETENCE IN COMMUNICATING, ESPECIALLY IN ENGLISH, THE LIGUA FRANCA OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS. JUST ABOUT EVERY IMPORTANT FACET OF BUSINESS IMPLIES QUANTIFICATION: BUDGETS, MARKETS, MEASUREMENTS OF PHYSICAL QUANTITIES, AND SIMPLE ARITHMETIC MANIPULATIONS OF THE BASIC DATA, FOR EXAMPLE. IF MORE THAN ONE PERSON IS ENGAGED IN A TASK THEN THEY MUST BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN ORDER TO CO-OPERATE EFFECTIVELY.

THIS MUCH IS OBVIOUS, BUT WHAT MAY NOT BE SO APPARENT ARE A NUMBER OF EQUALLY IMPORTANT, BUT OFTEN INARTICULATED FACTS OF BUSINESS CULTURE. I AM REFERRING HERE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE TO THE OFTEN UNSPOKEN AND TACITLY ASSUMED COMMITMENT TO A FAIRLY STRENUOUS FORM OF DISCIPLINE.

IF ONE IS TO PROSPER AND BE OF VALUE TO AN EMPLOYER THEN PUNCTUALITY, SOBRIETY, A NEAT PERSONAL APPEARANCE, POLITENESS AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL, NO MATTER HOW ROUTINE AND REPETITIVE AT TIMES, SIMPLY HAVE TO BE OBSERVED. LEST THIS BE CONSIDERED TRITE, BORING AND NOT WORTHY OF EMPHASIS, I ONCE HEARD IT WELL SUMMED UP IN A SINGLE SENTENCE: "FAITHFULNESS IN SMALL THINGS IS ITSELF NO SMALL THING". IN MY EXPERIENCE I HAVE FOUND THAT PEOPLE WHO CANNOT ADHERE TO DEADLINES, DO NOT MAINTAIN AT LEAST A MINIMUM STANDARD OF PERSONAL APPEARANCE, OR WHO THINK NOTHING OF ARRIVING LATE FOR OR EVEN MISSING APPOINTMENTS, ARE SIMPLY NOT TO BE RELIED UPON TO DELIVER ANY ACCEPTABLE STANDARD OF WORK.

EVEN MORE SERIOUS THAN LACK OF FEELING FOR THESE SURFACE MANIFESTATIONS OF BUSINESS CULTURE IS AN ABYSMAL INCOMPREHENSION OF



HOW BUSINESSES ARE RUN OR WHAT THEY ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE. IN SOME RECENT RESEARCH WORK COMPLETED AT UNISA IT WAS MADE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF UNSKILLED WORKERS BELIEVED THAT BUSINESSES WERE RUN ALMOST ENTIRELY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR AND HIS IMMEDIATE ENTOURAGE. PROFITS IN THEIR VIEW WERE DEVOTED ALMOST ENTIRELY TO BONUSES FOR THESE PRIVILEGED FEW, WHILE WORKERS HAD TO BE CONTENT WITH THE SCRAPS THAT FELL FROM THE RICH MEN'S TABLE. THE CONCEPT OF HOW CAPITAL WAS RAISED TO FUND A BUSINESS WAS ENTIRELY FOREIGN TO THEM. THE VERY EXISTENCE OF SHAREHOLDERS WAS UNKNOWN TO THEM. THE IMPORTANCE OF GREATER PRODUCTIVITY WAS ENTIRELY UNCONVINCING, SINCE THIS MERELY SERVED TO SWELL THE BANK BALANCES OF THE "FAT CATS" EVEN FURTHER. NO LINK WAS SEEN BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL EFFORT AND ULTIMATE REWARD IN THE FORM OF PROMOTION OR GREATER PAY PACKETS.

THIS QUESTION OF THE VALUE SYSTEM WITHIN WHICH BUSINESS WORKS IS IN MY VIEW AS IMPORTANT IN CAREER ADVICE AS THE PROPAGATION OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES THEMSELVES. UNLESS THE TARGET GROUP OF CORIC'S ACTIVITIES CAN BE ENLIGHTENED ABOUT THIS THEY WILL FIND THEMSELVES IN MANY CASES NOT ADVANCING IN THEIR CHOSEN CAREER PATHS AS THEY MIGHT HAVE HOPED. THE CORRECTION OF MISCONCEPTIONS AND THE FILLING OF KNOWLEDGE GAPS IN THIS AREA IS A LONG-TERM PROJECT. PROGRESS WILL BE SLOW, AND THERE WILL BE MANY MISUNDERSTANDINGS. I AM CONVINCED, HOWEVER, THAT IT CAN PROVIDE A SOLID FOUNDATION ON WHICH THE CAREER INFORMATION ITSELF CAN HAVE A FAR GREATER EFFECT.

I WAS VERY IMPRESSED TO SEE ON THE COVER OF YOUR 1983 ANNUAL REPORT A LOGO OF A MAN CLIMBING A LADDER, WITH THE SLOGAN "STRIVE FOR SUCCESS". THE POINT ABOUT A LADDER IS THAT IT HAS A BOTTOM RUNG AS

WELL AS A TOP ONE. ALL EXCEPT A VERY FAVOURED FEW HAVE TO START ON THE BOTTOM RUNG. TOO FREQUENTLY AMBITIONS OUTFRAN BOTH ABILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES, AND PEOPLE HAVE UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED. IN THIS WAY, BY SETTING THEIR SIGHTS TOO HIGH INITIALLY THEY SCORN THE VERY REAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ARE POSSIBLE. IN THE CAREER FIELD WE HAVE ALL MET INDIVIDUALS WHO MAKE THIS MISTAKE. CORIC ITSELF HAS CERTAINLY NOT FALLEN INTO THAT TRAP. IN THE LAST TWO YEARS TWO RUNGS OF CORIC'S OWN LADDER HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY NEGOTIATED. THE LADDER ITSELF IS FIRMLY EMBEDDED INTO THE GROUND AND PROPERLY BRACED AGAINST THE WALL. I SHOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE YOU ON WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN ACHIEVED, IN COMMUNITY SUPPORT, IN BUSINESS SPONSORSHIP, IN THE GATHERING OF INFORMATION AND IN THE PRESENTATION OF MATERIAL IN THE SCHOOLS. A WONDERFUL AND PROMISING START HAS BEEN MADE.

NO PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE DEDICATION OF INDIVIDUALS. THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF YOUR CHAIRMAN, HAVE MADE SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS IN A VERY SHORT TIME. ONE CAN HAVE THE FINEST BOARD OF TRUSTEES IN THE WORLD, OFFERING ALL THE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT, BUT IF THERE IS NOBODY TO PICK UP THE BALL AND RUN, THEN ALL THEIR EFFORTS ARE IN VAIN. MISS OLIVE DLEPEN AND HER STAFF HAVE SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY AND CAPITALISED ON THE SUPPORT THEY HAVE RECEIVED. TO THEM, AND TO HER IN PARTICULAR WE OFFER OUR HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, EVERYBODY CAN BE PROUD OF WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. AFTER CORIC HAS MOUNTED ONE OR TWO MORE RUNGS OF ITS LADDER I SINCERELY HOPE THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO EXTEND ITS ACTIVITIES BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE PORT ELIZABETH AREA. THERE CAN BE NO

DOUBTING THAT THE WORK WILL BEAR FRUIT, THE FULL EFFECTS OF WHICH MAY NOT BE FULLY REALISED FOR SOME YEARS. THE TASK THAT IS BEING ATTEMPTED IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO THE LONG-TERM WELLBEING OF ALL OUR PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY OF OURS. I SALUTE CORIC ON THIS IMPORTANT MILESTONE IN ITS HISTORY. MAY THERE BE MANY MORE TO FOLLOW.

D S HENDERSON