

RHODES UNIVERSITY GRADUATION ADDRESS

FRIDAY 11 APRIL 1986



MR CHANCELLOR, HONOURED GUESTS, RESPECTED COLLEAGUES, GRADUANDS AND DIPLOMANDS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GRADUATION EXERCISES SUCH AS THESE WE SHALL BE CELEBRATING TONIGHT AND TOMORROW ARE IMPORTANT SYMBOLIC EVENTS IN THE ONGOING COMMUNITY LIFE OF A UNIVERSITY. THIS OCCASION IS PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY IN THAT IT IS THE TENTH SUCCESSIVE YEAR IN WHICH YOU, MR CHANCELLOR, HAVE PRESIDED OVER THE FESTIVITIES. THE UNIQUE COMBINATION OF DIGNITY AND PANACHE WITH WHICH YOU ADDRESS YOUR TASK, COUPLED WITH THE INTENSE INTEREST AND PERSONAL COMMITMENT WHICH YOU AT ALL TIMES EXHIBIT IN THE GENERAL WELL-BEING OF RHODES UNIVERSITY ARE UNIVERSALLY ADMIRERD AND DEEPLY APPRECIATED. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE HAVE BEEN SINGULARLY BLESSED IN OUR ASSOCIATION WITH OUR CHANCELLOR AND MRS MACKENZIE.

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ALTHOUGH THE UNIVERSITY IN 1985 HAD MARGINALLY MORE REGISTERED STUDENTS THAN IN 1984 AN APPARENT STATISTICAL VAGARY HAS EXERTED ITS INFLUENCE IN THAT LAST YEAR'S RECORD FIGURE OF 846 DEGREES, DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES GRANTED HAS RISEN DRAMATICALLY TO THIS YEAR'S 921. THIS IS AN INCREASE OF ALMOST 9% AND IT CANNOT BE LONG NOW BEFORE THE FIGURE PASSES THE 1 000 MARK. OUR CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RECIPIENTS, ON TONIGHT'S OCCASION THOSE FROM THE FACULTIES OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCE, AND OUR FELICITATIONS TO THEIR PARENTS AND SUPPORTERS ARE THUS PARTICULARLY WARM AND SINCERE.

NO SOUTH AFRICAN NEEDS REMINDING OF THE TRAVAIL AND TURMOIL WHICH OUR COUNTRY IS CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING. A COMBINATION OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL PRESSURES IS FORCING ON US ALL PERSONAL REASSESSMENTS AND AGONISING NATIONAL REAPPRAISALS, ESPECIALLY IN THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL



AND ECONOMIC FIELDS. TO SOME, IN ALL LIKELIHOOD THE MAJORITY, MINDS ARE NOT BEING CONCENTRATED SUFFICIENTLY EXPEDITIOUSLY, WHILE TO OTHERS THE EXTERNAL VERITIES ARE BEING DISSOLVED MORE RAPIDLY THAN THE MORNING MIST. BE THAT AS IT MAY, THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT EDUCATION IS AT ONE OF THE CUTTING EDGES OF THE PRESENT UPHEAVALS. WHILE TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, NOTABLY UNIVERSITIES, HAVE NOT BEEN RIGHT IN THE EYE OF THE HURRICANE, WE HAVE NOT ESCAPED UNSCATHED, AND NOR INDEED SHALL WE IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

I SHOULD LIKE TO FOCUS THIS EVENING ON SOME OF THE SPECIFIC DIFFICULTIES WHICH ARE COMING TO THE FORE. THE FIRST AND MOST READILY QUANTIFIABLE, THOUGH NOT THEREFORE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT, IS THAT OF FINANCE. APART FROM OUR ACCUSTOMED MONETARY CONCERNS NEW EXPENDITURE REQUIREMENTS HAVE ARISEN. FOR EXAMPLE, ATTENTION HAS HAD TO BE DEVOTED

TO GREATER SECURITY OF BUILDINGS. INSURANCE COVER FOR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES HAS RISEN DRAMATICALLY. BECAUSE OF A HIGHER LEVEL OF PETTY CRIME AND MOLESTATION, EVERY UNIVERSITY HAS HAD TO DEVOTE MORE RESOURCES TO MORE, AND MORE VISIBLE, PATROLLING OF ITS CAMPUS.

INCREASINGLY, OUR NORMAL SOURCES OF INCOME ARE COMING UNDER STRAIN. HIGHER FEES ARE PLACING A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION OUT OF REACH OF MANY ASPIRANT STUDENTS. DONORS, TOO, ARE FINDING THEIR OWN RESOURCES HAVING TO STRETCH FURTHER. FINALLY GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE PRIORITIES ARE SHIFTING MORE TOWARDS DEFENCE AND THE INCREASING UPLIFTMENT OF BLACK EDUCATION. TRADITIONAL WHITE EDUCATION WILL NO LONGER ENJOY SO LARGE A SHARE OF THE CAKE. UNIVERSITIES RECEIVE THEIR SUBSIDIES BY



MEANS OF A FORMULA, WHICH, WHATEVER ITS DEMERITS MAY BE PERCEIVED TO BE, IS NOT UNGENEROUS IN ITS PROVISION, IF EVER IT WERE TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN FULL. UNFORTUNATELY, NO MORE THAN 85% OF THE PROVISION HAS YET BEEN RECEIVED BY THE UNIVERSITIES. IN RHODES' CASE THIS REPRESENTS A SHORTFALL OF SOME THREE MILLION RANDS. THE INITIAL INFORMATION FOR 1986 WAS THAT THE SHORTFALL WAS TO BE 20%; AFTER THE MOST STRENUOUS OBJECTIONS THIS WAS ROLLED BACK TO THE NOW CUSTOMARY 15%.

IN THE LIGHT OF THIS SITUATION, COUPLED WITH ANTICIPATED INFLATION CREEPING UP TO 20% AND THE DEVASTATING EFFECT OF THE WEAK RAND ON THE PRICE OF BOOKS AND SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT, ONE OF THE INITIAL RESPONSES OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL WAS TO RAISE FEES BY APPROXIMATELY 20%. CLEARLY THERE IS A LIMIT AS TO THE AMOUNT THAT CAN REALISTICALLY BE

GARNERED FROM THIS SOURCE. COSTS HAD ALSO TO BE ADDRESSED. THE MOST CONSPICUOUS OF THESE IS UNDOUBTEDLY SALARIES AND ASSOCIATED BENEFITS. BETWEEN 1981 AND 1985 SALARIES AND FRINGE BENEFITS HAVE VARIED BETWEEN 75 AND 77% OF EXPENDITURE, OF WHICH 47 TO 49% WAS ATTRIBUTABLE TO ACADEMIC EMOLUMENTS. IN 1985, FOR EXAMPLE, THE FORMULA MADE PROVISION FOR 248 FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT ACADEMIC POSTS, WHEREAS THE ACTUAL COMPLEMENT WAS 269. THUS, EVEN IF THE SUBSIDY HAD BEEN GRANTED IN FULL, RHODES ACADEMIC STAFF WAS 8,5% IN EXCESS OF WHAT THE FORMULA COULD SUPPORT, UNLESS OTHER UNIVERSITY EXPENDITURES WERE CORRESPONDINGLY CURTAILED. UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, THEREFORE, RHODES IS NOMINALLY LIVING MORE THAN 20% BEYOND ITS MEANS IN RESPECT OF ITS ACADEMIC STAFF. EXPENDITURE ON MAINTENANCE AND EQUIPMENT CAN OBVIOUSLY BE CURTAILED IN THE SHORT TERM, BUT OVER ANY EXTENDED PERIOD SUCH A POLICY IS FOOLHARDY IN THE EXTREME. FURTHERMORE, THERE IS



VIRTUALLY NO PROSPECT OF AN IMPROVEMENT IN GOVERNMENT FUNDING. INDEED, I HAVE HEARD ESTIMATES AS HIGH AS A 30% REDUCTION IN PUBLIC SECTOR FUNDING OF SO-CALLED WHITE EDUCATION. A WIDELY ACCEPTED RULE OF THUMB IS THAT A RESEARCH OR TEACHING INSTITUTION SUCH AS A UNIVERSITY HAS ITS FINANCES OUT OF BALANCE IF MORE THAN 2/3 OF ITS COSTS ARE DEVOTED TO FUNDING STAFF. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE COUNCIL HAS TAKEN A CONSERVATIVE AND PRUDENT POLICY DECISION TO AIM AT A REDUCTION IN REAL TERMS OF 10% OF ITS TOTAL SALARY EXPENDITURE, AND HAS INVITED THE ACADEMIC STAFF TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW THIS MAY BE EFFECTED WITH THE LEAST DISADVANTAGE TO OUR TEACHING AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.

THE OBVERSE SIDE OF ANY DIFFICULTY REPRESENTS A CHALLENGE. UNIVERSITIES, UNLIKE BUSINESSES, ARE NOT TEMPERAMENTALLY ATTUNED TO REDUCTIONS, OR EVEN RE-ALLOCATIONS OF RESOURCES. HOWEVER PAINFUL THE ADJUSTMENTS MAY BE I AM CERTAIN THAT RHODES WILL EMERGE A LEANER AND FITTER INSTITUTION. WE SHALL HAVE TO CONSIDER SERIOUSLY, FOR EXAMPLE, THE SUGGESTION OF PROFESSOR JACK DE WET, EMERITUS DEAN OF SCIENCE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN, THAT SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES TEND TO OVER-LECTURE THEIR UNDERGRADUATES. A TEN TO FIFTEEN PERCENT REDUCTION IN AVERAGE CONTACT HOURS WOULD IN EFFECT PAY OUR STUDENTS THE COMPLIMENT THAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF READING MORE EXTENSIVELY AND ANALYTICALLY, AND OF COMING TO GRIPS WITH A LIMITED AMOUNT OF COMPUTER BASED REVISION EXERCISES. WHO KNOWS, IT MAY EVEN PUT A CRIMP IN THE PERCEPTION OF A CERTAIN MEASURE OF HEDONISM, OR FUN CULT, WITH WHICH OUR STUDENTS ARE REGRETTABLY, MAYBE EVEN UNFAIRLY, LINKED IN THE



POPULAR MYTHOLOGY. THERE MAY WELL BE A MODICUM OF WISDOM IN THE NURSERY APHORISM THAT "ALL WORK AND NO PLAY MAKES JACK A DULL BOY". WE COULD CERTAINLY MOVE A FAIR DISTANCE ALONG SUCH A ROAD BEFORE A SURFEIT OF DULL JACKS AND JILLS BECAME ONE OF OUR HALLMARKS.

A PERIOD BESET WITH DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS OFTEN BRINGS TO THE FORE ANY LATENT HESITATIONS AND SELF DOUBTS AS TO THE VERY PURPOSES OF AN ENTERPRISE. UNLESS ONE RE-EXAMINES THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES FORMING THE INNER CITADEL WHICH MUST BE DEFENDED AT ALL COSTS SUCH DOUBTS CAN WREAK MORE HARM THAN INADEQUATE RESOURCES. I TAKE IT AS AXIOMATIC THAT THE NON-NEGOTIABLE RAISON-D'ÊTRE OF A UNIVERSITY SUCH AS OURS IS KNOWLEDGE - ITS PRESERVATION, PROPAGATION AND EXTENSION. THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE IS AN UNDERTAKING FRAUGHT WITH PROBLEMS. BECAUSE OBJECTIVITY IS SOMETIMES ELUSIVE, AND IN MANY CASES ONLY TO BE APPROACHED

ASYMPTOTICALLY, THERE ARE THOSE WHO WILL ABANDON IT ALTOGETHER AND PURSUE INSTEAD SOME DOGMATIC WILL-O-THE WISP. OTHERS EVEN DESPAIR OF REASON AS THE FUNDAMENTAL INSTRUMENT OF KNOWLEDGE. FREEDOM OF SPEECH, CIVILITY AND EVEN PERSONAL SAFETY ARE INCREASINGLY UNDER SIEGE, AND NOT ONLY FROM THE TRADITIONAL QUARTERS. THE ENEMY IS OFTEN IN OUR MIDST. SPEAKERS ARE DENIED A HEARING, INDIVIDUALS ARE PHYSICALLY ATTACKED FOR EXPRESSING UNPOPULAR VIEWS, AND BOOKS, PAPERS AND OFFICES ARE SET TO THE TORCH. TRUE ACADEMIC LIFE BECOMES HAZARDOUS UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, AND UNIVERSITIES MUST BE UNEQUIVOCAL IN THEIR CONDEMNATION OF SUCH ACTIONS. I WAS RECENTLY DISCUSSING SOME OF THESE EVENTS WITH A YOUNG MAN WISE BEYOND HIS YEARS. HE OBSERVED THAT CENTRAL ACADEMIC VALUES HAD ALWAYS BEEN UNDER ATTACK, SOMETIMES VEHEMENTLY AND AT OTHER TIMES LESS SO, FROM ONE QUARTER OR ANOTHER. HE ADDED THAT NOBODY HAD PROMISED THAT THEIR DEFENCE WOULD BE EASY OR PAINLESS. TO UNDERSCORE



THE POINT I RECENTLY CAME ACROSS AN ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE OF ST THOMAS CANTELUPE, WHO WAS APPOINTED CHANCELLOR OF OXFORD UNIVERSITY IN 1262, A TIME OF PARTICULAR ACADEMIC LUSTRE FOR THAT UNIVERSITY. UNDERGRADUATES, WHO WERE DIVIDED INTO OPPOSING CAMPS OF NORTHERNERS AND SOUTHERNERS, WERE ALLOWED TO CARRY ARMS. THOMAS HAD TO CONFISCATE A WHOLE ARMOURY OF WEAPONS FOR MISUSE. WHEN PRINCE EDWARD CAMPED NEAR THE CITY THE CHANCELLOR HAD RECOURSE TO "GATING" THE WHOLE UNIVERSITY. THE YOUNG GENTLEMEN RETALIATED BY BURNING DOWN THE PROVOST'S HOUSE AND EMPTYING THE MAYOR'S CELLAR.

INCIDENTALLY, ST THOMAS WAS NOT THE ONLY 13TH CENTURY OXFORD CHANCELLOR TO BE CANONISED. TWENTIETH CENTURY VICE-CHANCELLORS, CLEARLY FAR MORE EQUIVOCAL FIGURES, STILL SURELY STAND IN NEED OF THE SAINTLY VIRTUES. PERHAPS THEY SHOULD CONTENT THEMSELVES BY ASPIRING TO BEATIFICATION RATHER THAN CANONISATION.

A THIRD AREA OF SHARP CONTEMPORARY CONCERN IS WHAT I MAY CALL THE QUESTION OF ACCULTURATION. RHODES HAS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF THE MOST DIVERSE STUDENT BODIES, GEOGRAPHICALLY, ETHNICALLY, EDUCATIONALLY AND RELIGIOUSLY OF ANY SOUTH AFRICAN RESIDENTIAL UNIVERSITY. FURTHERMORE, THE INTERACTION IS NOT LIMITED TO A "9 TO 5" REGIME. OUR STUDENTS WORK TOGETHER, EAT TOGETHER AND LIVE TOGETHER TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY. I DOUBT WHETHER THERE IS ANY OTHER INSTITUTION IN THE COUNTRY WHERE BLACK AND WHITE YOUNG PEOPLE IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS MEET AND LIVE A COMMUNAL LIFE TOGETHER ON TERMS OF FORMALLY COMPLETE EQUALITY. IT IS AN AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL CONCERNED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT CAN BE MADE TO WORK. OF COURSE WE ARE SMALL AND ISOLATED, BUT IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES THESE FACTORS ARE ASSETS RATHER THAN LIABILITIES. SOUTH AFRICANS OF ALL PERSUASIONS NEED EVERY RAY OF HOPE THAT IS AVAILABLE. EVEN THOUGH WE ARE SMALL, LET THAT BE NO DISCOURAGEMENT. EXAMPLES ARE INFECTIOUS.



IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT THERE ARE DIFFICULTIES, DISAGREEMENTS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS. WHO COULD HAVE IMAGINED THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN OTHERWISE? GREAT CREDIT IS DUE TO STAFF AND STUDENTS, BLACK AND WHITE, THAT THESE DIFFICULTIES AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS HAVE NEVER ONCE ENGENDERED AN UNMANAGEABLE CONFRONTATION. WHITES HAVE NOT ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD AND APPRECIATED THE VASTLY DIFFERENT LIFE EXPERIENCES AND PRE-SUPPOSITIONS OF BLACKS, AND VICE VERSA. FORTUNATELY OUR STUDENTS ARE DOING A MAGNIFICENT JOB ENLIGHTENING ONE ANOTHER.

AS ONE DELVES BENEATH THE SURFACE A LITTLE IT SOON COMES TO THE FORE THAT SOUTH AFRICA'S ETHNIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IMPLIES ALL TOO OFTEN THAT FOLK SYMBOLS AND MYTHOLOGY ARE DIVISIVE RATHER THAN UNIFYING. EVERY AMERICAN CAN JOIN IN THE THRILL OF PRIDE WHEN HE SEES THE STARS AND STRIPES UNFURLED ON THE FOURTH OF JULY. NON-AMERICANS

TEND TO FORGET THAT A HARD FOUGHT REVOLUTION AND A DEVASTATING CIVIL WAR LIE BEHIND THAT NATIONAL SYMBOL. THE CURRENT SOUTH AFRICAN FLAG WAS ONCE A BITTER ISSUE BETWEEN ENGLISH- AND AFRIKAANS-SPEAKING WHITES. WHAT SIGNIFICANCE CAN IT HAVE FOR BLACKS? ABOUT AS MUCH AS THE 31ST MAY IS THE PROBABLE ANSWER. AS ONE TURNS ONE'S ATTENTION TO THE 1ST DAY OF THAT SAME MONTH, THE SHOE IS DEFINITELY ON THE OTHER FOOT.

SYMBOLS, HEROES AND FOLK MYTHS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF IDENTITY. NO PEOPLE HAS EVER BEEN ABLE TO DISPENSE WITH THEM. WE MUST SURELY, ALL OF US, STRIVE FOR A DEGREE OF MATURITY WHEREBY WE RESPECT THE SYMBOLS WHICH WE DO NOT SHARE, REJOICE IN OUR OWN SYMBOLS IN A NON-EXCLUSIVE STYLE AND START IN ON THE NOURISHING OF COMMON ONES.



FULLY ACCEPTED COMMON SYMBOLS REALLY ONLY COME INTO THEIR OWN THROUGH A LONG PROCESS OF SHARED EXPERIENCES. THAT SELF-EVIDENTLY REQUIRES TIME AND SLOW RIPENING. FORTUNATELY A SOURCE OF RAW MATERIAL IS AT HAND WITH WHICH TO LAY THE FOUNDATIONS: THE VIRTUALLY UNIVERSAL INTERNATIONAL MEANS OF COMMUNICATION. BY A STRANGE IRONY OF HISTORY ENGLISH HAS EVOLVED FROM BEING THE LANGUAGE OF IMPERIALISM TO THAT OF FREEDOM, IN ADDITION TO ITS UNASSAILABLE POSITION AS A LINGUA FRANCA. MUSIC TOO, HAS LARGELY BROKEN FREE FROM ITS PARTICULARISTIC ORIGINS TO BECOME A SECOND MEDIUM OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION, THIS TIME MORE AT A LEVEL FEEDING THE EMOTIONS AND SENSIBILITIES. MUSIC, MORE THAN VIRTUALLY ANY OTHER MEANS OF EXPRESSION, IS PERCEIVED GENERALLY SPEAKING AS BEING NON-THREATENING, EVEN WHEN BEING PARTICULARISTIC. WE CAN ALL ENJOY OUR FAVOURITE POP GROUP, JAZZ, CLASSICAL OPERA, CHORAL WORKS, REGGAE OR A COUNTRY AND WESTERN BALLAD WITHOUT FEELING

COMPROMISED BY THE SPECIFIC NATIONALISMS WITH WHICH THEY MIGHT ONCE HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED. IT IS INDEED A HAPPY COINCIDENCE THAT THE TWO MEN TO WHOM WE SHALL BE PAYING TRIBUTE IN A SPECIAL WAY THIS EVENING HAVE MADE THEIR RESPECTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS IN THESE TWO FIELDS. SYMBOLIC TOO IS OUR GATHERING IN THIS AUDITORIUM IN A BUILDING DEDICATED AS A LIVING MONUMENT TO THE CONTRIBUTION OF THOSE WITH ENGLISH FOREBEARS, NOT LEAST OF WHOSE CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMON WEAL IS THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

WE CAN MAKE A START THEN WITH WHAT IS A COMMON HERITAGE IN WHICH ALL CAN PARTICIPATE WITH, AT WORST, NON-NEGATIVE ENGAGEMENT OF THE EMOTIONS. ON THIS CAN BE, AND IS BEING BUILT, LAYER BY HARDWON LAYER, A SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE, A SHARED SOUTH AFRICAN MUSICAL CORPUS. TO THESE CAN BE ADDED INPUTS FROM DRAMA, THE ARTS AND OTHER CULTURAL



UNDERTAKINGS. IT IS A GREAT PITY THAT UP UNTIL THE PRESENT SPORT CANNOT BE INCLUDED IN THIS LIST. IN THE COURSE OF TIME A SIGNIFICANT THESAURUS OF COMMON INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCES WILL HELP TO LOWER THE BARRIERS WHICH KEEP US APART. RHODES, PARTICULARLY WITH ITS OUTSTANDING TRADITION OF MULTIFACETTED ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, ITS LONG-STANDING ACTIVITIES IN ART AND DRAMA AND MORE LATTERLY, ITS UNIQUE ARCHIVAL MATERIAL RELATING TO AFRICAN MUSIC, IS IN A STRONG POSITION TO PLAY ITS PART. THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS, TOO, HAVE A NOTEWORTHY ROLE TO ASSUME. IT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR EXAMPLE, THAT NEARLY 30% OF NEW BLACK STUDENTS ENTERING RHODES THIS YEAR RECEIVED THEIR SECONDARY SCHOOLING IN PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS. NEARLY 16% IN FACT COMPLETED THEIR HIGH SCHOOL YEARS WITH WHITE CO-PUPILS, WHEREAS 8% WERE AT LONG ESTABLISHED AND HIGH PROFILE PRIVATE SCHOOLS. ONE CAN THEREFORE PROGNOSTICATE THAT WITHIN A FEW YEARS A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF OUR BLACK STUDENTS WILL HAVE SOME

SHARED BACKGROUND WITH THE WHITE STUDENTS, EVEN BEFORE THEY ARRIVE HERE. FURTHERMORE, SINCE NEARLY 25% OF WHITE RHODES STUDENTS HAVE ATTENDED NON-STATE SCHOOLS, THEY TOO WILL HAVE ENCOUNTERED BLACK PEERS. THIS IN ITSELF WILL TEND TO AMELIORATE THE "US VERSUS THEM" SYNDROME.

IN MAKING THESE REMARKS I AM NEITHER ADVOCATING SOME FORM OF CULTURAL IMPERIALISM NOR SUGGESTING THAT REDUCTIONS IN PERCEIVED SOCIAL DISTANCE ARE SUBSTITUTES FOR URGENT POLITICAL ACTION. I AM ADVOCATING, RATHER, THAT AFTER THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS ARE RESOLVED (AS THEY SURELY WILL BE) OR EVEN PREFERABLY, PARI PASU WITH THE POLITICAL PROCESS, WE MUST LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER AND LIKE IT, OR AT WORST, NOT ACTIVELY DISLIKE IT. THE WHITE, ENGLISH-SPEAKING SECTION OF OUR COMMUNITY, WITH WHICH RHODES UNIVERSITY UNTIL RECENTLY WAS ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY IDENTIFIED, HAS OFTEN BEEN HELD UP TO RIDICULE AS BEING POLITICALLY



INACTIVE AND POSSESSED OF ONLY TWO PASSIONS: MAKING MONEY AND PLAYING GOLF. BEFORE THE MORE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED SCOFF TOO LOUDLY, THEY SHOULD PAUSE TO REFLECT THAT SOMEBODY HAS TO CREATE THE WEALTH WHICH THE POLITICIANS DISPENSE WITH SUCH CAREFREE ABANDON. IN THE VERY PROCESS OF MAKING THEIR MONEY THEY HAVE MADE ENORMOUS CONTRIBUTIONS IN DEVELOPING COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, IN AGRICULTURE AND MINING. ANY GOVERNMENT, BE IT THE PRESENT ONE, OR WHATEVER REPLACES IT, WILL DO WELL TO REFLECT BEFORE HARMING THESE GEESE WHICH LAY THE GOLDEN EGGS.

THE NOTORIOUS POLITICAL DISENGAGEMENT OF THE ENGLISH IS IN REALITY BASED ON SOUND COMMON SENSE, AND IS IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES TO BE REGARDED AS AN ASSET RATHER THAN A LIABILITY. THE ARITHMETIC PLACES THEM IN A NO-WIN SITUATION, BOTH WITH REGARD TO THE AFRIKANERS SINCE 1948 AND WITH REGARD TO THE BLACKS. HAVING BEEN RUTHLESSLY BOWLER-

HATTED FROM ANY MEANINGFUL SHARING OF THE LEVERS OF POWER SINCE 1948, THIS COMMUNITY HAS HAD A GENERATION OR MORE TO LEARN THAT THERE IS A LIFE AFTER POLITICAL DEATH, NOT NECESSARILY ALL UNPLEASANT EITHER. A SECOND TIME ROUND MAY NOT BE THAT MUCH MORE TRAUMATIC. THE ENGLISH EXPERIENCE IS ALSO SOMETHING FROM WHICH THE AFRIKANER SECTION MIGHT DRAW SOME COMFORT. WHEN THE TWO MAIN POLITICAL PROTAGONISTS FINALLY REACH A STANDOFF OR STALEMATE POSITION SOME UNDERSTANDING BUT NOT POLITICALLY OVERHEATED CONCILIATORS AND ARBITERS COULD PLAY A VERY USEFUL ROLE. ENGLISH SPEAKERS AFTER ALL HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING ABLE TO CALL ON A LONG AND NOT ALTOGETHER UNSUCCESSFUL POLITICAL HISTORY. IT HAS OFTEN BEEN REMARKED THAT BRITAIN WAS SPARED THE AGONIES OF THE EQUIVALENT OF A FRENCH REVOLUTION THROUGH A FORTUNATE COMBINATION OF JOHN WESLEY'S METHODISM AND EDMUND BURKE'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.



IN AN ARTICLE ENTITLED "THE MIDDLE GROUND"? BY DENNIS AUSTIN, WHICH APPEARED IN THE LATEST ISSUE OF OPTIMA, BURKE IS QUOTED IN THE FOLLOWING TERMS:

"ALL THAT WE CAN DO, AND ALL THAT HUMAN WISDOM CAN DO, IS TO PROVIDE THAT CHANGE SHALL PROCEED BY INSENSIBLE DEGREE. THIS HAS ALL THE BENEFITS THAT MAY BE IN CHANGE WITHOUT ANY OF THE INCONVENIENCES OF MUTATION. THE MODEL WILL, ON THE ONE HAND, PREVENT THE UNFIXING OF OLD INTERESTS AT ONCE: A THING WHICH IS APT TO BREED A BLACK AND SULLEN DISCONTENT; A GRADUAL COURSE, ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL PREVENT MEN, UNDER LONG OPPRESSION, FROM BEING INTOXICATED WITH A LARGE DRAUGHT OF NEW POWER, WHICH THEY ALWAYS ABUSE WITH A LICENTIOUS INSOLENT".

THE AUTHOR GOES ON TO SUGGEST THAT THE SOUTH AFRICA OF 1986 CANNOT AFFORD THE "INSENSIBLE DEGREE" IN BURKE'S PRESCRIPTION: SOME CONSIDERABLE ACCELERATION WILL BE NECESSARY AND A CLEAR DEFINITION OF DIRECTION IS LONG OVERDUE. HAD WE MADE A BETTER AND LESS SHORTSIGHTED BEGINNING IN 1910, WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ENJOY THAT LUXURY. BRITAIN'S POLITICAL MODERNISATION DID PROCEED IN INSENSIBLE DEGREES OVER 78 YEARS FROM THE REFORM ACT OF 1832. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT WE ARE 76 YEARS FROM UNION: WOULD THAT WE HAD USED THE TIME AT OUR DISPOSAL AS WISELY.

RHODES UNIVERSITY DERIVES ITS ACADEMIC NORMS FROM THE AGE-OLD AND WELL-TESTED UNIVERSITY TRADITION DATING BACK AT LEAST THREE QUARTERS OF A MILLENNIUM. IN 1517 WHEN MARTIN LUTHER NAILED HIS FAMOUS NINETY-FIVE THESES ON THE CHURCH DOOR IN WITTENBERG THERE WERE OVER



SIXTY FLOURISHING UNIVERSITIES WHICH STILL EXIST TO-DAY, WITH A CLEARLY ESTABLISHED HISTORICAL CONTINUITY. OF HOW MANY POLITICAL STRUCTURES CAN THAT BE SAID? ONE OF THE VERY FEW IS THE MANX PARLIAMENT ON THE ISLE MAN, BUT ARE THERE MAJOR ONES? THE BASIC FORMULA OF TRAINING PEOPLE FOR PROFESSIONAL CAREERS AND OF THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE FOR ITS OWN SAKE HAS WITHSTOOD VIRTUALLY EVERY VICISSITUDE AND TRIAL KNOWN TO MAN. I HAVE OUTLINED SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES FACING OUR ACADEMIC COMMUNITY IN THIS CRUCIAL TIME IN OUR COUNTRY'S HISTORY. I HAVE SUGGESTED BY IMPLICATION THAT RHODES BEST SERVES THE DEEPER AND LONG TERM INTERESTS OF THE WIDER COMMUNITY BY CONTINUING TO BE ITSELF, AND BY SENDING OUT EACH YEAR HUNDREDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE, SUCH AS WE SEE BEFORE US THIS EVENING, TO SERVE THE COUNTRY AND INDEED TO INCREASE THE POTENTIAL WEALTH OF THE LAND AND

ITS PEOPLE, SO THAT OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL CAN BE BROUGHT A STEP NEARER TO FRUITION. I HOPE THAT AS PART OF THEIR INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE THEY CARRY WITH THEM A HEALTHY SCEPTICISM OF THE ALLEGED BENEFITS OF GRANDIOSE AND ALL-EMBRACING POLITICAL BLUEPRINTS. A LEADING COMMENTATOR IN A MAJOR AFRIKAANS LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT THE AFRIKANER VOLK HAD TO GO THROUGH THE APARTHEID EXPERIMENT IN ORDER TO SATISFY THEMSELVES THAT IT DID NOT WORK! MY WORST NIGHTMARE FOR SOUTH AFRICA IS THAT SOON A DIFFERENT SET OF RULERS WILL IMPOSE ANOTHER RIGID SYSTEM, ONLY TO COME ULTIMATELY TO THE SAME CONCLUSION.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE BEFORE US TONIGHT FACE A FAR MORE UNCERTAIN AND HAZARDOUS FUTURE THAN THAT WHICH CONFRONTED THEIR FATHERS AND



MOTHERS. WE HAVE OFFERED THEM OF OUR BEST, AND THEY HAVE RISEN TO THE OCCASION. THEY LEAVE US WITH OUR BLESSINGS AND CONGRATULATIONS. MR CHANCELLOR, AS THEY PROCESS BEFORE YOU I AM CERTAIN THAT YOUR GRACIOUS AND CHARISMATIC TOUCH WILL IMPART TO EACH ONE OF THEM A FINAL FLOURISH OF WISDOM AND ENTHUSIASM.

DEREK S HENDERSON

II APRIL 1986