

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS : OPENING OF GOLDFIELDS HOUSE

① 1985



HONOURED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

TODAY WE CELEBRATE THE OPENING OF GOLD FIELDS HOUSE, AN EVENT THAT BRINGS MUCH JOY, NOT LEAST TO THOSE IN THE UNIVERSITY'S ADMINISTRATION WHO JUGGLE WITH BEDS AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH YEAR IN AN ATTEMPT TO HOUSE NEW STUDENTS. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE GOLD FIELDS FOUNDATION WHOSE GENEROSITY HAS GONE SO FAR TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE. THIS IS NOT, HOWEVER, AN ISOLATED EVENT; THE CONNECTION GOES BACK A LONG WAY.



TWO

GOLD FIELDS OF SOUTH AFRICA, THE COMPANY FOUNDED BY CECIL JOHN RHODES IN 1888 HAS PREVIOUSLY HAD A BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY. IN 1976 THE COMPANY GAVE THE UNIVERSITY ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST COMPLETE COLLECTIONS OF DOCUMENTS, BOOKS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND MEMORABILIA RELATING TO CECIL JOHN RHODES. THE COLLECTION, WHICH WAS STARTED AS THE RHODES MEMORIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, IS PART OF THE CORY LIBRARY FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND IS NAMED THE GOLD FIELDS COLLECTION. IT IS FREQUENTLY CONSULTED BY RESEARCHERS.

DR W J BUSSCHAU, CHANCELLOR OF THIS UNIVERSITY FROM 1966 TO 1976, WAS ONE OF MR PLUMBRIDGE'S PREDECESSORS AS CHAIRMAN OF GOLD FIELDS OF SOUTH AFRICA - ANOTHER STRAND IN THE FABRIC THAT BINDS US TOGETHER.



THREE

ALTHOUGH MR PLUMBRIDGE IS NOT AN OLD RHODIAN, HE SPENT SOME OF HIS BOYHOOD YEARS IN GRAHAMSTOWN AS A PUPIL AT ST ANDREW'S COLLEGE BEFORE GOING ON TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN. WHILE AT ST ANDREW'S COLLEGE, HOWEVER, HE WROTE RHODES EXAMINATIONS DURING HIS POST-MATRIC YEAR, SO WE CAN TAKE SOME CREDIT FOR PART OF HIS EDUCATION. A RHODES SCHOLARSHIP LATER TOOK HIM TO OXFORD - AND AGAIN WE SEE THE GROWTH OF THE FABRIC OF ASSOCIATION WITH CECIL JOHN RHODES.

FOUR

JUST OVER 80 YEARS AGO THE RHODES UNIVERSITY COLLEGE WAS FOUNDED BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT. THIS WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GENEROUS GRANT FROM THE RHODES TRUSTEES. THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BEGAN WITH FIFTY STUDENTS, AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY'S RESIDENTIAL SYSTEM WERE LAID WITHIN THE FIRST DECADE OF ITS EXISTENCE.

EIGHTY YEARS ON WE HAVE OVER 3 500 STUDENTS REGISTERED AT RHODES AND THE RESIDENTIAL SYSTEM HAS HAD TO GROW OVER THE YEARS TO KEEP PACE, EVEN THOUGH TIMES SOMETIMES SEEMED DARK. ONE OF THESE DARK TIMES WAS LIGHTENED BY A FURTHER GRANT FROM THE RHODES TRUSTEES, WHICH ASSISTED WITH THE BUILDING OF THE OLD ARTS BLOCK AND SEVERAL NEW RESIDENCES AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR.



FIVE

WHEN THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OPTED TO BECOME AN INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY IN 1949, THE RHODES TRUSTEES WERE AMONG THOSE WHO RESPONDED TO AN APPEAL FOR FUNDS.

NOW THAT WE CAN SEE HOW THE FABRIC OF ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN WOVEN OVER THE YEARS, IT IS TIME TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TO THE GOLD FIELDS FOUNDATION FOR THE GENEROSITY WHICH HAS MADE POSSIBLE THE BUILDING OF GOLD FIELDS HOUSE, THUS ADDING TO THE LONG ASSOCIATION I HAVE SPOKEN OF. THE FACT THAT GOLD FIELDS HOUSE IS PART OF KIMBERLEY HALL IS A HAPPY COINCIDENCE, REMINDING US ONCE AGAIN OF THE CONNECTION WITH CECIL JOHN RHODES.

SIX

AND NOW I MOVE ON TO THE BRICKS AND MORTAR OF GOLD FIELDS HOUSE. WE OWE A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO PLANNED AND BUILT THE HOUSE. JOHNNY BOWLES CONSTRUCTION WORKED EFFICIENTLY TO MEET DEADLINES, ALTHOUGH THEY STRUCK SOLID ROCK WHEN DIGGING THE FOUNDATIONS. THE SITE FOREMAN, MR VERNON MILLS, DID A WONDERFUL JOB OF KEEPING TO SCHEDULE DURING VARIOUS STAGES OF THE BUILDING PROJECT. MR AUSTIN JONES, ONE OF OUR RESIDENT ARCHITECTS PRODUCED AN INNOVATIVE DESIGN WHICH TOOK INTO ACCOUNT BOTH ECONOMY AND THE COMFORT OF STUDENTS. GREAT CARE HAS BEEN TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT GOLD FIELDS HOUSE BLENDS WELL WITH THE OTHER BUILDINGS IN THE AREA BY MATCHING BRICKS, ROOF TILES AND OTHER DETAILS.



SEVEN

FROM BRICKS AND MORTAR LET US MOVE TO THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF GOLD FIELDS HOUSE - THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE. I SHOULD LIKE TO ENCOURAGE YOU, THE STUDENTS WHO ARE THE FIRST OCCUPANTS OF GOLD FIELDS HOUSE, TO BUILD UPON THE LONG TRADITION THAT HAS BEEN OUTLINED TODAY. YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO START AFRESH, USING WHAT IS GOOD FROM THAT TRADITION TO FORM THE BASIS FOR THE TRADITION THAT WILL DEVELOP OVER THE YEARS.

IN THANKING THE GOLD FIELDS FOUNDATION FOR THEIR GENEROSITY, I FEEL IT IMPORTANT TO MENTION OUR GRATITUDE TO THE MINING INDUSTRY AND THE WORLD OF BUSINESS IN GENERAL FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF RHODES UNIVERSITY, ESPECIALLY IN THESE TIMES OF ECONOMIC STRINGENCY. THEIR SUPPORT GIVES EVIDENCE OF THE VALUE THEY PLACE ON EDUCATION, AND PARTICULARLY HIGHER EDUCATION.

8

EIGHT

'UPON THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY THE FATE OF THIS COUNTRY DEPENDS', SAID BENJAMIN DISRAELI IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN 1874. WHAT WAS TRUE IN BRITIAN 111 YEARS AGO IS VITALLY TRUE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA TODAY. WE THANK THE GOLD FIELDS FOUNDATION FOR THIS VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO OUR EFFORTS TO PROVIDE AN EDUCATION FOR PRODUCTIVE AND USEFUL LIVES.

I ASK YOU NOW TO RISE WITH ME AND DRINK A TOAST TO THE GOLD FIELDS FOUNDATION.