

SPEECH IN HONOUR OF CHIEF MINISTER L L SEBE, 28 APRIL 1979

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE ARE ASSEMBLED HERE THIS EVENING TO CELEBRATE THE HONOURING BY THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE OF A DISTINGUISHED LEADER OF HIS PEOPLE, THE CHIEF MINISTER OF THE CISKEI, THE RIGHT HONOURABLE DOCTOR LENNOX LESLIE WONGAME SEBE. IT IS FITTING THAT WE DO SO ON THE PREMISES OF AN INSTITUTION THAT BEARS HIS NAME, AND BOTH FOR ME PERSONALLY AND FOR THE INSTITUTION WHICH I REPRESENT IT IS A GREAT PRIVILEGE AND A PLEASURE TO HAVE BEEN INVITED TO BE PRESENT AND TO PLAY A PART IN THIS JOYOUS OCCASION.

I HAVE AN UNENVIABLE ROLE TO ENACT, FOR MANY OF YOU WILL HAVE BEEN WITNESSES THIS MORNING OF DR SEBE'S RECEPTION OF AN

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HONORARY DEGREE AND WILL HAVE HEARD THE MANY LAUDATORY THINGS THAT WERE SAID ABOUT HIM. YOU WILL HAVE NOTED THE MAIN MILESTONES IN THE UNFOLDING OF HIS CAREER, FROM HIS BIRTH NEAR KING WILLIAM'S TOWN, THROUGH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL AND ON TO LOVEDALE. AT EACH STAGE IN HIS FORMAL EDUCATION HIS STRONG PERSONALITY AND LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL EXHIBITED THEMSELVES NOT ONLY IN THE CLASSROOM, BUT ALSO ON THE SPORTS FIELDS AND IN HIS CONCERN FOR THE THINGS OF GOD AND HIS NEIGHBOUR.

AS HIS WORKING LIFE BEGAN HE RAPIDLY SHOWED RARE GIFTS AS A TEACHER AND MANY OF HIS STUDENTS HAD CAUSE TO BE GRATEFUL FOR THE EXCELLENT GROUNDING WHICH HE GAVE THEM.

PROMOTION TO A PRINCIPALSHIP AND FURTHER TO THE INSPECTORATE WAS RAPID AND INEVITABLE. THE SAME QUALITIES THEN BROUGHT THEMSELVES TO BEAR IN THE POLITICAL FIELD. WITH HIS BACKGROUND IT WAS NATURAL THAT HE SHOULD CONCERN HIMSELF INITIALLY WITH EDUCATION AND CULTURE. MANY OF THE FINE SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING WITH WHICH THE CISKEI IS BLESSED HAVE MUCH TO THANK HIM FOR. IT IS TYPICAL OF THE SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE AND THEIR LEADER THAT THE PRACTICAL SKILLS IN THE ESSENTIALS OF AGRICULTURE, COMMERCIAL SUBJECTS, THE TRADES AND TEACHER TRAINING HAVE RECEIVED PARTICULAR ATTENTION IN THE EDUCATIONAL SETUP IN THE CISKEI. WHILE SO CLEARLY RECOGNISING THAT THESE SKILLS ARE

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ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY AS A PLATFORM FROM WHICH TO BUILD THE FUTURE, CHIEF SEBE HAS NOT NEGLECTED THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE SELF-IMAGE OF A PEOPLE. HE IS ON RECORD AS SAYING

"MAKE NO MISTAKE, WE VALUE AND CHERISH OUR TRADITIONS, AND HAVE NO DESIRE TO DISCARD OUR OWN IDENTITY".

AS HAS BEEN THE CASE WITH THE JEWISH PEOPLE, WHOSE ACHIEVEMENTS IN ISRAEL HAVE EXERTED A STRONG INFLUENCE ON HIM, THE CHIEF MINISTER SEEKS TO BLEND ALL THAT IS BENEFICIAL IN MODERN TECHNOLOGY, INTELLECTUALISM, ECONOMIC STANDARDS AND PRIDE OF ACHIEVEMENT WITHOUT SACRIFICING THE SOUL OF HIS PEOPLE.

IN THIS RESPECT I FOUND PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY THE INTEREST WHICH DR SEBE DISPLAYED IN THE WORK OF OUR INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH DURING A VISIT TO RHODES UNIVERSITY. NOT ONLY IS THIS INSTITUTE CONCERNED WITH IMPORTANT QUESTIONS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUT IT ALSO HAS A SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE HISTORY AND POETRY OF THE XHOSA-SPEAKING PEOPLES. FURTHERMORE IT HAS RECENTLY EMBARKED ON MAJOR UNDERTAKINGS IN AFRICAN MUSIC AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES. CHIEF MINISTER, LET ME ASSURE YOU ONCE AGAIN OF OUR READINESS TO MAKE THE RESEARCH FACILITIES OF OUR UNIVERSITY AVAILABLE IN THE STUDY OF SPECIFIC MATTERS OF INTEREST, IF CALLED UPON TO DO SO BY YOUR GOVERNMENT.

UNIVERSITIES RESERVE A PARTICULAR PLACE OF HONOUR FOR OUTSTANDING FEATS OF SCHOLARSHIP. YET IT WAS NOT FOR HIS SCHOLARSHIP THAT THE MAN WITH WHOM WE ARE CONCERNED WAS SINGLED OUT TO-DAY. HE RECEIVED THE ACCLAMATION OF THE UNIVERSITY, THAT UNIVERSITY WHICH HAS PRODUCED SO MANY OF TODAY'S LEADERS OF AFRICA, FOR HIS WISE, DEDICATED, BALANCED AND CONCERNED LEADERSHIP. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, ANY EXCEPTIONAL HUMAN ATTRIBUTE IS A RARE GIFT. WE RIGHTLY SHOWER PRAISE ON DEDICATED SCHOLARS FOR THEIR SPECIAL INSIGHTS, AND WE ENTHUSE, SOMETIMES OVERLY SO, OVER EACH EPOCH-MAKING SPORTING ACHIEVEMENT. THE RAREST ATTRIBUTE OF ALL,

HOWEVER, IS THAT MOST ILLUSIVE OF QUALITIES, TRUE LEADERSHIP. MANY ASPIRE TO LEADERSHIP, BUT THEY DO NOT NECESSARILY HAVE THE BEST INTEREST OF THEIR PEOPLE AT HEART. THEY ARE OFTEN CONCERNED WITH QUESTIONS OF FAME AND PRESTIGE, UNBRIDLED POWER OR MISAPPROPRIATED WEALTH.

THE POET HENRY AUSTIN DOBSON PUT WELL THE HOLLOWNESS OF SUCH SHALLOW AMBITIONS IN THESE LINES

"FAME IS A FOOD THAT DEAD MEN EAT, - I HAVE NO STOMACH FOR SUCH MEAT. THEY EAT IT IN THE DARK AND SILENT TOMB WITH NE'ER A FRIEND TO SHARE THE GLOOM."

MANY UNFORTUNATE EXAMPLES STAND BEFORE US, BUT ON THIS HAPPY OCCASION WE DO NOT WISH TO PURSUE THAT GLOOMY SUBJECT, EXCEPT

TO NOTE THAT THE OBJECT OF OUR ATTENTION TONIGHT IS NOT OF THAT BROTHERHOOD. HE HAS DEMONSTRATED AMPLY, BY WORD AND BY DEED, THAT HE DOES INDEED HAVE THE TRUE INTERESTS OF HIS PEOPLE AT HEART, AND THAT THOSE INTERESTS ARE BEST SERVED BY DOING ALL IN HIS POWER TO EXTEND THEIR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, TO DEVELOP THEIR AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL POTENTIAL AND BY ACCEPTING THE OUTSIDE HELPING HAND, WILLINGLY AND GENUINELY OFFERED.

IN HIS STATEMENTS AND IN HIS ACTS DR SEBE HAS DEMONSTRATED BEYOND CAVIL HIS CONCERN FOR THE MATERIAL, EDUCATIONAL, CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL ASPIRATIONS OF THE PEOPLE HE LEADS. HE UNDERSTANDS

THEIR NEED TOO FOR HUMAN DIGNITY AND FOR FREEDOM. ON THIS LAST CONCEPT OF FREEDOM I SHOULD LIKE TO ADD A FEW WORDS. EVER SINCE MOSES CONFRONTED PHAROAH WITH THAT EPOCH-MAKING DEMAND "LET MY PEOPLE GO", EVERY HUMAN GROUP HAS ASPIRED TO FREEDOM. WHAT A SAD COMMENTARY IT IS ON HUMAN NATURE THAT NO SOONER DO WE, EITHER AS INDIVIDUALS OR AS PEOPLES, GAIN OUR FREEDOM, OFTEN AFTER LONG-DRAWNOUT TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS, THAN WE ABUSE THAT VERY FREEDOM BY TYRANNIZING OVER OTHERS, AND SACRIFICING THAT HARDWON FREEDOM TO LUST FOR POWER, RICHES OR THE DEMANDS OF OUR BASER INSTINCTS. DR SAMUEL JOHNSON, THAT GREAT 18TH CENTURY BRITISH MAN OF LETTERS, HAD THIS PENETRATING OBSERVATION TO MAKE CONCERNING THE INHERENT WEAKNESS OF THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE. "SIR", HE SAID, "IT IS REMARKABLE HOW THE LOUDEST

WHELPS FOR FREEDOM COME FROM THE DRIVERS OF NEGRO SLAVES". ONE OF THE GREATEST FREEDOM-LOVING PEOPLES OF THE WORLD, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, SOME TWO CENTURIES LATER, ARE STILL LIVING WITH, AND BATTLING AGAINST THAT FATAL INITIAL FLAW IN THEIR CONCEPT OF FREEDOM.

ONE OF THE REASONS WHY THIS ABUSE OF FREEDOM OCCURS, I AM CONVINCED, IS THAT IN FIGHTING SO RELENTLESSLY FOR FREEDOM, WE MAKE OF FREEDOM AN END IN ITSELF AND NOT A MEANS TO AN END. FREEDOM IS NOT AN ULTIMATE LIKE BEAUTY, TRUTH OR LOVE, NOR IS IT SOMETHING PRACTICALLY USABLE, LIKE EDUCATION, FOOD OR MONEY.

YOU CANNOT EAT FREEDOM OR SPEND IT. NEGATIVELY SPEAKING, IT IS ABSENCE OF OPPRESSION, DEPRIVATION OR WANT. THE ONLY SAFE WAY OF PRESERVING FREEDOM IS TO EXERCISE IT, NOT BY SEEKING ADVANTAGE FOR OURSELVES, BUT PARADOXICALLY BY VOLUNTARILY LIMITING OUR NATURAL TENDENCIES TO SEEK SHORT-TERM SELFISH ADVANTAGES FOR OURSELVES. ABSENCE OF DEPRIVATION OR WANT, VIEWED POSITIVELY, GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE OF SERVICE TO OUR FELLOW MEN. IN THIS WAY ONLY DO WE HAVE A FIRM GUARANTEE OF PRESERVING OUR OWN DIGNITY AND FREEDOM AND AT THE SAME TIME ENHANCING, INSTEAD OF DIMINISHING, THE FREEDOM AND DIGNITY OF OTHERS.

ONE OF THE MOST DEMANDING, AND THEREFORE THE MOST REWARDING, WAYS OF SERVING OTHERS IS THROUGH THE BURDEN OF ENLIGHTENED LEADERSHIP,

WHAT THE PEOPLE OF THE MIDDLE AGES USED TO CALL "NOBLESSE OBLIGE". THIS QUALITY IS EXHIBITED VERY GRAPHICALLY WHEN THE POPE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH REFERS TO HIMSELF AS "SERVUS SERVORUM DEI" - THE SLAVE OF THE SLAVES OF GOD.

CHIEF MINISTER LENNOX SEBE DEMONSTRATES IN FULL MEASURE THIS GRACIOUS QUALITY OF NOBLESSE OBLIGE. TO MY MIND, WHILE WE DO NOT REMAIN UNMINDFUL OF ALL HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PAST AND PRESENT, FOR WHICH WE HAVE HEARD SUCH WELL MERITED PRAISE TODAY, WE HONOUR HIM PARTICULARLY FOR PLACING BEFORE US SO CONSTANTLY THE IDEAL OF

SERVICE. I INVITE YOU THEREFORE, IN THE TIME-HONOURED MANNER,
TO RISE AND JOIN ME IN A TOAST TO OUR NEWEST RECRUIT TO THE
HIGHEST ACADEMIC RANK, DR L L SEBE, CHIEF MINISTER AND LEADER
EXTRAORDINARY OF HIS PEOPLE.

D S HENDERSON

28/4/79