

Completers' Social: Mr. S. C. MOKHELE'S Speech.

1st October, 1949.

The Principal, Lecturers, Ladies and Gentlemen! My duty tonight is to say a few words in thanking the last two speakers; and also I am to say a few words to my people, particularly to those who are leaving College this year.

The last two speakers have shaken me; and I am sure they have moved this house in two diagonally opposite directions. I am not going to say along which direction they have moved me. Some of us in this house are pleased and inspired with what they have revealed to us while some of us are displeased and probably disgusted with what they have said. But if we realize that theirs was not necessarily to please or to displease anybody but to state the truth of their existence as they see it, we shall have done them a world of justice.

My fellowmen, you are now leaving behind your school days; you are leaving the College which up to now has given you mental nourishment and much physical protection. It has, indeed, so shielded you from the incessant and cruel political storms that are raging wild only a couple of hundreds of yards from where we are, that quite a number of us are not aware of what they have to face as soon as they turn their backs from the College gates. In a way of cushioning you against shocks, I feel bound to indicate a few things that are sure to confront you, especially here in South Africa. For some of us, after the brilliant, happy, almost care-free scholastic years, go out into the outside world with hopes and expectations of the joyful and almost luxurious days as they have been here and in some such similar institutions. They go out only to find things radically different, and in despair, they are lost among the sad pleasure-seekers of our lot, whose best friend is the bottle, and whose money is best spent in the most worthless joy-seeking adventures.

When you go out of this place you will be jumping into a sea of politics. Many men and women fear politics; some get frightened even of the word "Politics". The word has become almost an insult when it is associated with one. But I wish to tell you that We live not without politics. Our fear is sometimes due to our timidity, but in most cases it is due to the fact that we are not only biological specimens, but are also political specimens. Much of our socio-cultural aspect of our existence is nothing but politics. We must open our eyes to this fact that man can be considered to exist and to be under the direction of three forces - the bio-physical forces; the socio-cultural forces; and the Spiritual forces. By bio-physical forces we shall understand the purely biological forces and the physical environmental forces. By the socio-cultural forces, we shall understand at least for tonight, the social and cultural forces due to man's own activities within man's own society - which forces, though born from the activities of the society, tend to control, to direct, and to re-inforce the society to face the future and to adjust itself to the present. By the Spiritual forces I do not want us, at least for tonight, to think of the Spirit usually referred to in the Churches - "the Spirit of holiness" which help us into the "next world" of which nobody can speak with certainty. Tonight I speak of the spiritual forces which emanate from the ever-burning desire of man, or a family, or a race, or even a nation, to support itself; to protect itself from any destructive forces; and to perpetuate itself through time and space. As far as I can observe, these are three forces operating and determining man's activities of his society, his race, or even his nation. And the linking factor between these forces is POLITICS - which may be inter-personal,

inter-family, inter-societal, inter-racial, or inter-national. Because (1) when one begins to think of one's spiritual forces in relation to one's socio-cultural forces (including those due to man's own material achievements and developments), one begins to enter political thought. (2) When one speaks one's thoughts about the spiritual forces in relation to the forces of man's socio-cultural needs and developments, one speaks POLITICS. (3) When one tries to find out the whats, the whys, and the hows about interaction and the influence upon each other of the spiritual forces, the socio-cultural forces and the bio-physical forces that control and almost pre-determine his existence, one enters political philosophy - Democracy, Socialism, Communism, Whiteman's Superiority of the Gobineaux; White superiority and supremacy in South Africa are among the current political philosophies. And it is the political philosophies that disclose and dictate to us our purpose in life, both as individuals and as a people. (4) And finally, when one acts according to the dictates of one's political philosophies, one enters political activities. Hence I feel bold tonight to suggest that since there can never be a living man without political thoughts, talks and philosophies, all men of all races and colours are politically active, both as individuals and as a group. Our activities may differ in degree of intensity, but we are all politically active, all the time and at all places. It is true that the degree of activity for any person or group of persons may vary with circumstances; but we are active politicians, sometimes unaware. That is why, in my opinion, there can be and should be considered completely free of political activities. The educational institutions for both White and Black, the Church, some supposed purely social and cultural clubs, are in the final analysis nothing but houses of politics. For, indeed, if somebody should come here after I have spoken and contradicts, or even supports what I have been saying, the same will be speaking politics; or if somebody were to come up now while I am addressing you and try to pull me down from this platform as speaking nonsense, the same will then be acting politics against me on behalf of himself or of some other group of persons. Indeed, if anyone of us should find himself victimized for what we are saying tonight, even as Lovedale has just been doing, the College will be acting politics. The sum total of all these is an effort to adjust man to man, race to race, and nation to nation; relations that breed politics in man's society.

One of the very first things we must be clear of is just what our purpose is in life. This is dictated to us by our political philosophies, but usually we consciously refuse to accept the purpose given to us in that way.

It would perhaps be both interesting and helpful to some of you to hear what purpose in life the dictates of my political philosophy have almost forced upon me - my purpose is a simple one. It is to concentrate all my learning and all my energy in such activities that will render things better for the Africans in Africa - their biological home. Mine is to help in the efforts of my people to regain Africa for the Africans; to free my people from the destructive forces of foreign and cruel enslavement; to help in the building up of an AFRICAN NATION: Self-supporting, Self-protecting, Self-perpetuating, and owning the land - the land of their forefathers. And I would strongly advocate for our adopting this as our most pressing purpose to be fulfilled in our time. All of us have to face the problem. We must put our energies to carry out that purpose; all our studies in all the departments must be directed towards this problem which faces the African people of our time. Having some such purpose in life, we should study with care and determination to acquire knowledge as a very necessary means to an end. Such a purpose

should motivate us into purposive learning. It should inspire in us a sense of duty, obligation and responsibility.

If you should take service to the needs of the Africans and for the sake of humanity for your purpose, you will escape being an odd social figure as most of our educated men with all their wonderful degrees have so far proved to be. So far the educated Africans have acquired education only to go and pose big and important to their less fortunate fellow Africans. They have studied hard hoping that their degrees will at once make them great men - respectable and respected by all Black and White. They had hoped that their high education would raise them out of the most illiterate, the backward, the exploited African masses and make them acceptable and admirable in the eyes of Europeans. Most of them have failed, and if you go out with that idea, you are sure to be disappointed. We must remember that education, yes the degrees we carry out of Fort Hare, still leave us Africans. By themselves they are incapable of making a man or a woman great. They can give one a chance to serve his people and humanity at large; they can enable him to serve, probably more efficiently - but education or the degrees by themselves do not make a leader, or a respectable man out of anybody. It is the service to which you direct your knowledge and the way you use your knowledge that enable us to see the man behind the degree. We must not forget that a man's greatness comes to the world as a reflection from his own society with its own socio-cultural standards and peculiarities. The African graduate must never forget that he is internationally not judged by his own group taken as a whole. The Fort Hare graduate has as his background what is commonly called "the red native". Those are Africans. You say shun them in their difficulties; you may go across to join other groups; but you are judged by them. As a people you belong to their level of development, and care is to use our knowledge to improve our lot. The Fort Hare men and women, the African intellectuals have so far stood aside to watch the masses of African suffering - indeed one can best illustrate their position this way: They are like passengers seated most comfortably in the first-class water tight cabins of a sinking ship, where they are enjoying the luxuries that surround them. But the ship is sinking. Other passengers are trying to see how to save the ship and how to save themselves. Water is entering every where excepting in our intellectual cabins. Nevertheless the ship is sinking. Our African National ship is sinking in the stormy sea of politics. It is high time the African intellectuals came out of the intellectual cabins - for the ship does not only sink with the "red natives" as a separate people (as we seem to think); it is sinking with us - illiterate or graduate. Some of us love praise from across the colour line; some of us like to be patted on the shoulder from across the colour line for what they do. You may get such favours, but the man who pats you and ill treats your brother just round the corner, does not really love you. He does not really praise you. In fact he might be laughing at your foolishness and stupidity as you turn your back from him.

My dear friends, go to those people! They are your people. You belong to them. It does not matter what degrees you have. Be with them. Talk to them and encourage them on. So far they are neglected. They are despised by the foreigners. It becomes more painful when you too, the people whom they rightly consider as being the same with themselves, neglect them, despise them and pass them by the road without a word of greeting, even to the very old. They expect greetings from you. They value those few kind words, words of goodwill. They also feel that after all said and done, they are also people. The European attitude towards them always disappoints them. It disappoints us. Europeans despise them. They almost consider our people a type of domestic animal that is a bit more inert than the other types, and which unfortunately has features so similar to the "asters". It is a distressing fact. When you consider how much of their pleasure and luxury is due to the cheap and patient labour of our people, then you feel more disappointed. We have to admire them that please them. We are told how it is surprising that we cannot keep ourselves neat and clean. But do you

people ever reflect upon a European lady crossing a street with everything she has on, well washed and ironed - does she not look very clean? Yes she does. But again remember that it is the Black hand behind it all. The very people she despises so much have made her look so nice. They have contributed much to her increased pleasurable ways of living and all for very little money in return. For what these workers get is almost just as much as the slave-owners of old paid towards the maintenance of their slaves. If there is any difference, it must be very little indeed.

Dear friends, when you go out, you will also find in the field with purposes opposed to yours - following political philosophies such that you will have to conquer first before you can do anything - I mean conquer them within yourself, or else they will be disturbing psychological factors. We have here in South Africa such fantastic political philosophies as "South Africa the Whiteman's country", "White or European civilisation is doomed in the hands of natives"; "Apartheid"; "Whiteman's vertical supremacy must be maintained if western civilisation is to live in Africa"; "Whiteman's intellectual superiority"; and a host of others like that. I shall not spend much time on these, but in passing I must make these remarks:

The Africans would do themselves a world of good if they neglected all these as political fallacies which have unfortunately enslaved those Europeans who love to deceive themselves as being fundamentally and biologically and radically different from the African. We must remember that the shape of the nose, or of the lips, or even the length of the hair do not express anything directly connected and influencing man's intellectual abilities. One fact the Africans must, however, accept and that is, the Europeans and even the Indians are ahead of us as a people, and even that is only in as far as man's material development is concerned. But it would not be accurate to see two 1949 Buick cars - one from and the other black in colour. One of the cars runs ten miles ahead of the other. Shall we take it that this car is necessarily superior to the one behind it? and probably the superiority is also expressed by its colour? This would be a foolish conclusion. One car is only ahead of the other. In fact the one behind might even be a better car in certain respects. So my friends! Europeans as a people are materially ahead of the Africans. We are capable of catching up with them. We will catch up with them, and we might even surpass them. The Africans, as a people, have the same opportunities as the Europeans have as a people.

Another interesting political fallacy you will have to face is that the "western civilisation being doomed in the African hands." There is really nothing in this idea. If we stop a little to think, we will realise that civilisation is like an international relay-stick. It passes from nation to nation. The duty of every nation seems to be to improve on it before passing it on to the next nation. Nation after nation receive it one from the other, improve on it vigorously, the nation gets tired, as it were, and reluctantly has to pass it on to the next nation. The latter also have to improve on it and reluctantly pass it on to the next. It seems to have gone on like that down the ages, through time and space. The people of Africa have now to prepare themselves to take their second round in the improvement of the civilisation they can be said to have given the first run. The Europeans (races) have to do the handing down to us. They have to give the international relay-stick - CIVILISATION so much improved upon since last we had it. They are reluctant, hence these political fallacies with which they want to justify their reluctance to hand over, although signs of their being tired are quite evident. So people prepare yourselves for what humanity expects you to do for its cause.

You will meet really confusing situations. You will have observed how much filtering is made in schools of our best men. You will see men who claim to be Christians - followers of the

good man - you will find in the Institutions where you would expect much good - there you find the concentration of the worst things. Here I will not give examples; you only need to look round, you will see much more than you can explain. You will see evil all around you, but as long as it is not perpetrated by a Blackman you will be expected to keep quiet and to not as though you see nothing. No sooner will you get here than will you see the corruption of authority, you will see to what extent it is true that your rights do not go beyond the limits of your night.

I have grown up in Basutoland under the English. I have now spent some time here where the Afrikaner people are predominant. At first I was made to take the Afrikaner as a man from whom all the evil against my people came and should be expected; but now I have studied these groups and to me they are the same. As far as the Blackman is concerned, they have exactly the same attitude, which can be summed up as follows, as far as I can deduce:

1. Let us form a Union of South Africa against the Blackman.
2. How can the Afrikaners help us to be clean and healthy while they (the Africans) should remain dirty and disease-stricken; and yet remain satisfied.
3. How can the Africans help us to become rich while they (the Africans) remain poor, and yet remain satisfied.
4. How can the Africans help us to fill our stomachs with the best, while they (the Africans) should remain a hungry people; and yet remain satisfied.
5. How can the Africans help us to increase in numbers while they (the Africans) should remain reduced; and yet remain satisfied.

The first of these can be considered as solved. But the other four are not quite solved. When Europeans in South Africa speak of the Native problem, it is when they are confronted with the above aspects of their existence in this country. And the fifth item is being solved by both scientific methods based on economic as well as by direct ruthless shooting of Africans by the Europeans which can be taken as legalised in some cases.

Before I close, I must make reference to our women, especially our Port Hare women. They seem to be without purpose in life. Their aim seems to be pleasure, and pleasure only. They are very particular about their being respected because of their high education. As I have already said, it is not the name or the degree that makes a man or a woman. It is the material of which one is made that matters.

My dear fellowmen and fellow-women, go among our unfortunate brothers, work amongst them, remember that you are a degree man or woman but that that is not because you are the most intelligent of them all. No you will be erring. You have been the most fortunate, but not necessarily the most intelligent ones. In fact a moment's reflection will enable you to remember the brilliant boys and girls with whom we have learned in schools, but, who, due to circumstances, could not get the fortune or even the misfortune of the University learning.

Go ye unto them and work. You will be disliked and liked for serving your people. You will be purposely misrepresented. Your ways will be purposely misunderstood. Your sayings will be distorted. Like one of my own authorities giving me a testimonial and saying that I am still trying to get a footing in the Christian religion. Yes, I am not trying to find any footing at all; if he had only cared to know, he should have asked me. To do good is my religion and I require no other. I will dissociate myself with those that speak good and act the opposite as most of the Christians do.

Yes, you will get such deliberate misrepresentations. But I end up by saying to you: Let us go to the backward African masses and fellow workers of public service with no weapon but reason and truth; recognising no authority, no king, but our own consciences, no judge but time; we may fall in our struggle, but we must never retreat.

Africa's Cause must triumph!

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