



THE ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND,
MR. B. L. BERNSTEIN

at the Special Graduation Ceremony in the Civic Theatre,
Braamfontein, on Wednesday, 10th August 1966
to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the foundation
of the City of Johannesburg and the 70th Anniversary
of the establishment of the South African School of Mines,
Predecessor of the University.

This occasion marks the inauguration of the University's contribution to the events and festivities which will take place in the City to mark the 80th anniversary of the founding of Johannesburg. It is therefore fitting that we should meet tonight in the Civic Theatre and that we should honour two citizens of Johannesburg, the one for his outstanding contribution to the industrial development of the country, the other for a most significant contribution in the field of civic administration and local government. Mr. Stratten's address later tonight will be the first in a series of public lectures, which will be given every week at the University from August 15th for six weeks, on the theme "The Witwatersrand : Between Past and Future", and the speakers will include eminent scholars and authorities.

The origins of Johannesburg and the University stem from the town of Kimberley, for it was the pioneers of the diamond fields who first established the gold-mining industry upon which Johannesburg was to be founded, and it was in Kimberley that the South African School of Mines was first established, which later became the University of the Witwatersrand. And while the City is celebrating its 80th anniversary, the University is at the same time celebrating its 70th anniversary. Anniversaries are somewhat meaningless unless they mark achievement of some sort; happiness in the personal field, and progress and maturity in the public field.

There can be no doubt that Johannesburg has reason to be proud of its achievements. Seventy years ago two great South Africans had little confidence in its future. When consideration was being given to the extension of the railway line into the Transvaal, President Kruger felt that it should be built east of Johannesburg to Pretoria, and that Johannesburg should be served by a branch line. At the other end of the country John X. Merriman dismissed Johannesburg as a 'sink of iniquity'. Many today think of it only as a concrete jungle. However it does lead the country in many fields related to finance, industry, commerce, and technology, and it has contributed substantially with men and achievement to the advance of the South African economy. Those are the material fields. The question does remain — has Johannesburg a soul. It certainly has the most generous community in the country; it is fast developing those cultural activities which mark a mature society, and it has always taken a lead in the social sciences. In a country which is bedevilled by chauvinism and parochialism, Johannesburg has a happy mixture of peoples of varied racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds, and is a melting pot of conservative, liberal and neutral opinions. It is, in fact, far less exclusively devoted to Mammon than some of its critics will allow. To be absolutely objective, it has all the virtues and vices, all the promise and shortcomings, of a large metropolis, and its influence on the South African scene is both substantial and constructive.

The University has always been closely identified with the City, and the city fathers have been its most generous benefactor. Our growth has, to some extent, been parallel to that of Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand. In 1924 when I entered the University as an undergraduate, there were 1,150 students, today there are 7,900; in 1924 there were 108 staff members, today there are 493: our investment in buildings and equipment amounted to R926,000 in 1924, today the comparable figure is R11,850,000. We are growing at a very rapid rate and the problem which con-

cerns all of us who are involved in its affairs is, not only how to finance this rate of expansion so that we can keep our doors open to all men and women who are qualified to enter the University, but how also to achieve and maintain the highest standards of quality in our teaching and our research work. Those are the bread and butter aspects of our development. There are other aspects which I don't think business and professional men of the city fully appreciate. They are sometimes rather impatient with the University for apparently diverting its activities from the task of producing graduates. If the University has a soul, it is centred in its conception of what a University ought to be. And what ought it to be? Not merely an automated device for assembling the current demand for potential engineers, lawyers, doctors, architects, accountants and teachers; not a mouthpiece for some current ideology, or doctrinaire teaching, or political thinking; not a monastic storehouse of knowledge to be jealously guarded and carefully rationed; and not, as some undergraduates might think, merely a playground for the light of heart, and a forum for the quick of tongue; but rather as the late Adlai Stevenson once described it: "the archive of the Western mind, the keeper of the Western culture, the guardian of our heritage of freedom, teacher of our teachers, the dwelling place of the free mind". I know that it has become fashionable in some quarters to deride and deprecate such concepts as out-worn sentimental generalities. We at this University do not regard those concepts as mere empty pious phrases. We believe they embrace the essentials of education as opposed to indoctrination. We believe that they represent the very essence of academic freedom which was gradually accepted by the Western world as it moved from the confines of medieval thought into the broader expanses of modern thinking. We maintain that we have the right to decide for ourselves "who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and to whom it may be taught". You are all aware that we have stood firm in our defence of those freedoms in the past, and will continue to do so in the future.

But let us remember when we talk glibly about freedom, that the privilege of freedom itself demands discipline, responsible action, and a respect for the views of others. We must not become unduly emotional about these freedoms, nor arrogant, so that they become a tyranny of the mind. These freedoms must never be abused; they must be nurtured to further our principal reason for existence: and that is to provide a place where young men and women may acquire knowledge and trained minds, and acquire that critical and enquiring quality of mind, which is so essential if they are to become responsible thinking men and women capable of making a contribution to the society in which they live. **We are well aware of our responsibilities in these matters. We do not require the heavy hand of state legislation to remind us or to coerce us.**

In conclusion I would like to say just this: I hope that the University and indeed Johannesburg will always remain a dwelling place for the free mind; and where in the last resort, when men differ, and differ even violently and irrevocably, finally they will agree to differ; for that is the only mature way of living with one another.

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