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EXHIBITION ZAR 100

JOHANNESBURG, OCTOBER, 1969

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Mayor, Honoured overseas guests, ladies
and gentlemen,

The opportunity to address you on this historic occasion is a privilege for which I wish to thank the exhibition committee. This is not an ordinary national or international exhibition, but a festival which will be recorded in the history of philately in South Africa as ZAR 100, indicating the celebration of the centenary of the first postage stamps printed for use in the Transvaal or, as it was better known in those days, the ZUID AFRIKAANSCH REPUBLIEK.

Before I proceed, Mr. Chairman, allow me to convey to all of you present here, the most cordial greetings from our Minister, The Honourable M.C.G.J. van Rensburg, and also his best wishes for

a pleasant and successful exhibition and conference. I also wish to convey to you a special message of goodwill from the Postmaster General, Mr. Strauss, who at this moment finds himself in Tokyo as leader of our delegation to the 16th Congress of the Universal Postal Union. I have no doubt that whatever he is experiencing there today, is not preventing him from being with us in spirit. He also extends to you his very best wishes for a successful ZAR 100.

In passing through part of the exhibition hall on my way in, there was not much time to study or discuss the exhibits. That opportunity I hope to have later. However, it is quite clear from what I saw that the committees responsible for the organization did not spare themselves and have succeeded in offering something that promises to be a feast to one and all, philatelists as well as visitors who, although at first perhaps only curious, will end their visit as fully fledged philatelists

after spending a few hours among all these treasures. I must congratulate the Johannesburg societies who are hosts to the 1969 Exhibition and Congress on what they are giving us here. Setting up this exhibition must have taken them days and nights of planning. I would not be surprised to find that somewhere in their organisation Post Office people took part in their planning and deliberations. This would not be strange at all, for philatelists and philatelic societies in Johannesburg have, from what I have been told, always been closely associated with people in the employ of the Post Office, and that not only in the latter's capacity as the suppliers of these very much sought after square pieces of excitement, but also as planners and, one might add, sometimes as schemers. So, for instance, we find that the president of the first philatelic society formed in Johannesburg in 1894/95 was no one less than the Postmaster General of the ZAR himself, and to make sure of getting the treasures behind the steel doors of the post office strong rooms under their magnifying

glasses, the members elected the Postmaster of Johannesburg as chairman.

We find another instance of the close association between philatelists and the Post Office in what took place during the Johannesburg International Philatelic Exhibition (JIPEX) in 1936. The organisers asked for some Post Office recognition, but not actually in the form of a special stamp or stamps. They were quite surprised, therefore, when the Department announced the issue of stamps overprinted JIPEX. The reason behind this magnanimous gesture was that the Post Office had a big stock of booklet stamps on hand which were not selling well, and they thought the exhibition was a fine chance of getting rid of them. It seems that even in those days the Post Office was business-minded! As things turned out, the exhibition organisers were very pleased with the issue as it brought them a huge gate, even if many of the visitors were speculators rather than philatelists.

The rush at your post office counter here, and the mention of JIPEX, reminds me of a funny little incident which, I've been told, happened when long queues formed at the JIPEX post office counter. The special stamps were rationed and buyers had to queue up for them. There were several volunteer philatelists assisting the postal clerk at the counter. The Postmaster General was visiting the exhibition and wanted to buy a few JIPEX stamps; he marched straight up to the counter and asked for them. To his surprise he was politely told by one of the volunteer assistants, who did not know him, to go to the end of the queue. "But", he said, "I am the Postmaster General". The answer was, "It doesn't matter, even if you were the Archangel Gabriel you wouldn't get stamps here except in your proper turn". The Postmaster General went to the end of the queue.

In looking back upon the early days of organised philately in this country, one finds that relations between philatelists and the Post Office were excellent from the beginning. History would have it, however, that at one time those relations were distinctly chilly, as mentioned in the narrative on the history of the Philatelic Bureau which appears in your special ZAR 100 brochure, owing to friction which had developed for some reason or other. One often wonders what gave rise to this so-called lack of co-operation. Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that, while the Post Office did not provide special facilities for philatelists, the growing volume of work in our post offices prevented the officials from properly attending to their needs. It is just possible that the natural and insatiable inquisitiveness of the philatelists became too much for the overburdened officials. However, this interlude of bad feelings has been buried for good.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, today we are commemorating one of the important milestones in the postal history of South Africa, and the most important in that of the Transvaal. The coming of the postage stamp revolutionized the postal services in our country, and I consider this an opportune moment to look back on the road the postage stamp has come, and especially its eventful history in the Transvaal. I take it that the majority of philatelists present have made a thorough study of this subject and that there is very little we can add to their knowledge. However, it may be interesting, and also to the benefit of those of you who are not collecting and have not studied South African stamps of the early issues, again to mention some of the more important events.

In this country the use of postage stamps for the prepayment of postage on mail matter was authorised for the first time in 1846, but the stamps did not make their appearance until the

first of September, 1853. Those stamps were the famous Cape Triangulars which have long ranked among the foremost of the world's stamps in popularity with collectors. The last of the triangulars were printed in 1863, and new rectangular stamps were issued in 1864.

The development and settlement of the South African hinterland were accompanied by the postage stamp. The postal administration of the Transvaal was the last in South Africa to issue its own stamps. The use of postage stamps in the ZAR was considered by Postmaster General H. Jeppe as early as 1861, but was not approved by the Government at that time. In 1866 Postmaster General Lennox experienced serious difficulties when the Free State refused to accept Transvaal notes in payment of postage, and again recommended the use of postage stamps to the Government. Postmaster General Friedrich (commonly known as Fred) Jeppe took the matter further when, in 1867, he strongly recommended the use of postage stamps to the authorities and at the same time

obtained quotations for the production of stamps. Without first obtaining official approval, he accepted a tender from Germany for the supply, at a cost of about 50 ZAR pounds, of the necessary printing equipment. In Germany payment in ZAR notes was acceptable. He also had a quotation from England, where he could get six million stamps printed at a cost of 400 ZAR pounds - but the amount had to be paid in mintage. The "Volksraad" approved his acceptance of the German tender and made available 50 pounds in Transvaal notes. He expected the printing press and accessories to arrive in time to permit of the first stamps being put into use on the 1st January, 1869, but when the shipment was delayed, he decided to have stamps printed in Germany. He placed an order with Adolph Otto, a printer in Gustrow, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, his native town. Otto printed one penny, six-penny and one shilling denominations, and they reached Potchefstroom, at that time the headquarters of the ZAR postal services, in two parcels in August, 1869, and

February, 1870. Very few of these stamps were, however, actually used for the prepayment of postage as they were quickly disposed of to collectors and dealers in Europe.

The plates, printing press, gummed paper, dies, ink, etc., also arrived at about the time the first printings of stamps were received, and it would appear that the income from the sale of the first prints was applied towards defraying the cost of the printing equipment.

The printing of stamps in the ZAR was first entrusted to Mr. M.J. Viljoen, the then Treasurer General in Pretoria. He made four printings between April and July, 1870. On the 1st May, 1870, postage stamps were for the first time taken into normal use for the prepayment of postage in the ZAR.

The first printings were not very successful. Viljoen was described by some of the experts as "probably the worst stamp

printer on record". As a matter of fact, he hated printing and asked to be relieved of this duty. The work was thereupon entrusted to a printer by the name of J.P. Borius at Potchefstroom, who carried it out for four years. In 1874 Postmaster General Jeppe placed an order for one penny and six-penny stamps with P. Davis and Son of the Natal Witness in Pietermaritzburg. These stamps reached the Transvaal in September, 1874. They were printed from plates lent to Davis for the occasion. In 1875 the Government appointed a Stamp Commission in Pretoria to approve stamps before their issue to the public. Who actually printed stamps for the Commission is not known.

Some of the first stamps were imperforated and others rouletted. The first regularly perforated stamps were those printed by P. Davis and Son in Pietermaritzburg in 1874.

Soos u kan aflei, dames en here, het hierdie eerste posseëls wat ons vandag herdenk, reg van die begin af 'n veelbewoë bestaan

gehad. Interessantheidshalwe kan ons ook die volgende noem: Gedurende die eerste Britse besetting van Transvaal in 1877, is die aanduiding "V.R. Transvaal" op die voorraad seëls voorhande oorgedruk. Hierdie seëls is weer vervang met seëls waarop die kop van Koningin Victoria in profiel voorgekom het. Met die proklamasie van die tweede Republiek in 1881 is die waarde-aanduiding van laasgenoemde seëls weer deur die Republikeinse Regering in Hollands oorgedruk. 'n Nuwe druk is later weer van die oorspronklike plate van die eerste Republiek gemaak. Na die besetting van Pretoria in 1900 is die Republikeinse uitgifte weer eens met die letters V.R. T. en E.R. T. oorgedruk. Die laaste posseëls van die ZAR is op gekleurde papier in die kantore van "De Zoutpansberg Wachter" in Pietersburg gedruk.

Dit is dus geen wonder nie dat hierdie eerste ZAR-posseëls 'n besondere plek in die geskiedenis van filatelie in Suid-Afrika

inneem, en dat ons ons daarom heeltemal geregverdig voel om die eerste druk op so 'n waardige wyse te herdenk.

Wanneer 'n mens 'n terugblik werp op die geskiedenis van posseëls, nie net in Suid-Afrika nie, maar oor die hele wêreld, begin dit duidelik word waarom die stokperdjie van seëlversameling die verbeelding van mense aangryp. Dit is ongetwyfeld so dat posseëls die uitbeelding is van alles in 'n volk se geskiedenis — sy verlede, sy hede en in baie gevalle ook sy toekoms. Na 'n land se vlag, is sy posseëls sekerlik sy belangrikste nasionale simbole, en afgesien van hierdie belangrikheid is daar die interessantheide van die drukprosedures, herdrukke en afwykings wat die filatelis in ekstase bring.

Oor die filatelis en filatelie is al baie geskryf en gesê, en daar is min wat ek kan byvoeg. U hou elke jaar 'n groot nasionale uitstalling en dit verg sekerlik baie moeite en ook heelwat

onkoste en opoffering, maar nogtans is dit elke jaar van hoogstaande gehalte en deeglik georganiseer. U ywer moet menige buitestaander diep beïndruk soos dit my beïndruk het. Dit is duidelik dat seëlversameling vir u meer as 'n blote stokperdjie is. Dit lyk vir my na 'n soort van leefwyse. Dit is aanprysens=waardig, want enige mens wat sy hart en siel sit in dit wat hy doen kan nooit misluk nie; hy moet sukses behaal. U is die getuienis van hierdie stelling. U kwyn nie; u beweging het nie doodgeloop nie maar gaan inteendeel van krag tot krag. Waarin u sterkte lê, is moeilik om presies te bepaal. Dit moet 'n besonder prikkelende gees wees wat u saamsnoer en aanspoor om u stokperdjie dag in en dag uit met soveel entoetiesme en ook opoffering te beoefen. Oor wat die saam=bindende gees is, wil ek nie probeer filosofeer nie; dit sal vir my feitlik onmoontlik wees om presies te omskryf waarom mense posseëls versamel. Ek wil nie voorgee dat ek 'n antwoord sal vind nie, maar moontlik is dit die drang van die mens om te leer,

te weet en te verstaan. Nader aan die waarheid miskien, is dat dit verstandelike oefening verskaf, want dit vereis 'n groot mate van konsentrasie en vinnige waarnemingsvermoë. Dit kan feitlik op enige plek en enige tyd beoefen word en dit vereis nie duur en spesiale instrumente nie. Dit is ook 'n sosiale stokperdjie wat persoonlike kontak tussen mense meebring en aanmoedig. Dit het sy eie taal en ken geen grense nie.

Ons weet almal dat posseëlversameling 'n besliste opvoedkundige waarde het want, soos ek reeds gesê het, dit beeld 'n land se geskiedenis uit – die verhaal van sy volkshelde, sy mense, sy besittings en sy groei. Vir die filatelis is sy stokperdjie van dag tot dag gevul met verborge skatte wat gesoek en gevind word. Van onskatbare waarde is ook die afleiding wat gemoedsrus en -vrede bring – iets wat vandag in ons onstuimige en moderne wêreld so noodsaaklik is.

My raad aan u is : Gaan voort met wat u beoefen, betrek nog meer mense daarby, maar betrek daarby veral die jeug, want hulle het nodig wat u kan bied. Ons het die bewyse dat al meer ouers hulle kinders beïnvloed om 'n seëlversameling te begin; dit is 'n goeie teken. Opmerklik is ook dat die getal jongmense wat die uitstalling besoek stadig maar seker aangroei en dat hulle nie maar net vlugtig deurstep nie, maar met werklike belangstelling die seëls en ander items besigtig. Ons jeug het sulke leersame, absorberende en opbcuende tydverdriewe nodig in wat andersins vir hulle 'n verwarrende en ontwrigtende wêreld is, en u maak 'n grootse bydrae in hierdie verband.

Van amptelike kant wil ek sê dat die Poskantoor sal voortgaan om deur sy Filatelieburo in Pretoria aan filateliste hier en ook in die buiteland soveel hulp te verleen as wat redelik moontlik is. U is altyd welkom om daar aan te klop as daar enigiets is waarmee ons moontlik kan help. Tussen die Poskantoor en filateliste,

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