

South African Federation of Leather and Allied Trade Unions

Presidential Address to the 6th Annual General Meeting



Mr. L. Allen, Federation President

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my particular privilege and pleasure to welcome you to this the Sixth Annual General Meeting of the South African Federation of Leather and Allied Trade Unions, and, in doing so, it is more than gratifying to note that our organisation still remains fully representative of all racial groups. If we are to remain so, the co-ordination of our activities becomes vitally necessary.

In spite of many trials and tribulations, this Federation has achieved its sixth year of existence. These six years have sufficiently consolidated our strength so that we could look

forward to the future with much optimism and confidence.

It is not my intention to review the activities of the Federation, but I would like to make a few observations, which I do with a sense of great pride. Our Federation is the mouthpiece of the leather workers of South Africa. In spite of difficulties and restrictive legislations, it has grown from strength to strength. Its importance to us has been proved beyond any shadow of doubt by the part it has played in rendering valuable service to leather workers in general.

I make bold to say that, apart from the Employers' Association, the Government also recognises our Federation as a channel for consultations and negotiations with the authorities. This, undoubtedly, is a great achievement. It is all the more so when it is realised that we have been threatened with the loss of our democratic rights by the many restrictive measures aimed at depriving mixed trade unions of their true status.

At the very outset, I want to recall the very successful wage negotiations concluded in October last year. Mr. Scheepers, Mr. Bundhoo and myself pooled our resources and planned a new technique in the method of approach to the negotiations with the employers. On the eve of the commencement of the negotiations we had a very successful social evening and film show where the employers were present. At this stage I wish to

convey to the Moral Re-Armament Organisation my sincere thanks, and the thanks of all the leather workers in South Africa, for showing their wonderful film: "The Forgotten Factor."

This film touched the very hearts of the employers, and I say this without any fear of contradiction, that it was this forethought on the part of the officials, together with the dynamic opening speech at the negotiations by Mr. Scheepers, on behalf of the workers, that paved the way for the most successful wage agreement in the annals of the National Industrial Council.

Today, there is chaos in the world. Nations are up in arms against each other, fighting for selfish interests. In fact, the whole world today is faced with serious problems, problems that are threatening the very existence of mankind. Everywhere, the tendency is to think in terms of violence and brute force as being solutions to our problems. These prevailing conditions of tension, stress and uncertainty could easily be overcome if we take cognisance of the teachings of that wonderful film "The Forgotten Factor" so ably depicting not "Who is Right" but "What is Right."

Coming back to our industry, you will no doubt agree with me that there is a terrific boom in the trade, and with the present goodwill and co-operation existing between the employers and employees and the forethought of the employers in stabilising our industry on a sound productive and economic basis, and through the magnificent part played by this Federation, this boom, giving full employment to our people, will continue.

Our membership, in all branches throughout the Republic, has grown by leaps and bounds, but I have one



Mr. L. C. Scheepers, Secretary Federation of Leather Trade Unions

regret, and that is there appears to be a marked lack of interest in trade union affairs among the ordinary members of the rank and file. Allow me to sound a note of warning that, unless we do something about this lack of interest, I see a bleak future for our organisation. It must ever be borne in mind that no organisation could thrive without adequate support from all its members.

An organisation such as the Trade Union Council of South Africa deserves the wholehearted co-operation and support of all workers in the Republic of South Africa.