

# MRA MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

MAKING a World Difference" was the theme of the World Conference for Moral Re-Armament held at the Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., from June 15 to June 18, 1985.

The emphasis was on experience not theory, on formal exchanges not speeches. The aim was to find further steps which we can narrow the gaps between rhetoric and reality, in our own lives and then in the world.

Issues that were dealt with were of peace-making, freedom, hunger and community life. Particular attention was given to the link between personal decisions and global concerns.

Examples from different parts of the world illustrated that the solutions of many complex problems were simpler than we thought. A change in attitude and motive could lead to far-reaching consequences, bringing hope where there was despair, and where there was

the conference drew 300 people from 30 countries. They came from farmers and businessmen to some of the most involved in the struggle for change in South Africa and central America.

The conference included members of parliament, ambassadors, former cabinet ministers, monks, industrialists and trade union leaders, journalists, students and

## MENTION MADE

Welcoming the delegates at a banquet on the first night special mention was made of my presence from South Africa.

He said: "At this stage I wish to extend a special welcome to Mr Das Bundhoo, National president of the 30 000 strong South African Federation of Leather Trade Unions. You will see more of him during the course of the conference" said the president.

This was followed by a very warm applause. From that moment onwards I became a focus of attention and was kept busy responding to invitations by various groups of people from various parts of the world.

When I told them that my union always maintained the principle of one job for the job and that we catered for all races, they were surprised.

Still greater was the surprise when I told them that I held the position of president of the National Industrial Council of the Leather Industry of South Africa for three consecutive terms.

I told them of the mutual trust we had created between employers and employees in the industry and we had set a pattern for other industries in South Africa.

They noted with great interest that our Industrial Council was now advancing loans to workers to purchase their



Mr Das Bundhoo, president of the South African Federation of Leather Trade Unions was one of the few South Africans at the Moral Re-Armament conference in Washington D.C. He recounts here his experiences at the conference. Since returning from the conference, Mr Bundhoo has learnt of his appointment to the Natal Museums Board.

own homes at a very low interest rate.

I also addressed the main conference and told them how my trip to Washington was made possible. That when I was clear that I should go and I completely surrendered to God, the very next day miracles happened. My full airfare was paid for. I told them of the part played by my employers and the encouragement and support received from them as well.

Muriel Smith, Broadway star and singer took the platform after me. To everyone's surprise she stood still for a few seconds and with tears rolling down her cheeks said, "I don't know what to say....The gentleman before me from South Africa has given us the answer for South Africa and the world."

## DISCUSSIONS

During one of the sessions on informal diplomacy — South Africa was highly featured. Leading the discussions were persons like Chester Crocker and British M.P. Jim Lester.

The strategy of disinvestment was discussed. Dr Crocker said that the US was very concerned with what was happening in South Africa and his government's interest was in a constructive change.

The process of change was visible and recent events within the country have been responsible for these changes. Majority of Whites are also behind this change. He pointed out some of the areas where changes had taken place.

Trade union recognition and the right to join a trade union is perhaps one of the greatest changes of recent times. US has spent \$ 30m for the training of blacks — to build bridges. But of course the question is what we do to accelerate the process of change?

trust between rival groups. With this belief in what is right, change would be normal for men and women who have faith. The reality can be tested by anyone at any time.

Today it is the healing of suspicion and bitterness. It is fear and frustration and the feeling of meaninglessness that call for cure and the cruelty that can spring from them.

Most of the world's deepest ills are beyond legislation. Changes in structure, needed and often imperative as they are, can leave the deepest forces in peoples' lives in bondage still.

Something much more in life is needed if life is to be worth living, if we are to have satisfying goals to aim for, if we are even to be able to enjoy our own family life.

We must therefore go to the root and the root is man himself. And it is the men of faith who know how to go to the root.

It is our ancient calling to bring God's miracle factor to bear in human nature itself, starting with our own and then going out to everyone. He leads us too, so creating the new man and woman who can create the new society under God's leadership.

We from South Africa have decided to spread this message of change by means of a national conference in Mariannhill during October this year and perhaps launching an international conference within 18 months.

(1) We do not accept the Homelands and,

(2) We reject and condemn forced removals and detentions without trial.

Therefore the US plan for constructive change is perhaps the only practical thing that is being done.

"We cannot isolate South Africa. We must open our channels. We need more involvement. We have to open up more and more channels of communication.

"Thousands of blacks are employed by American companies in South Africa. And the Sullivan Code is already making great changes in the lives of the work force. Power is already in the hands of the Blacks with the purchasing power. There is the power of the trade unions to organise and ask for their legitimate rights in bargaining and the government does realise this" ... he said.

"Which other country is backing up its beliefs in a constructive way? It is only the USA.

Mr Jim Lester MP (UK) said that what is best for South Africa is not necessarily our own interests. If we stand for democracy and liberty then let this be the same for all. The British attitude to sanctions is that it does not work."

A film "One Word of Truth" based on the Nobel Prize speech by Alexandra Solzhenitsyn and ably narrated by Bob Courtenay, was shown at the conference.

After the showing of the film a panel of judges asked for questions and comments. After various speakers I summed the theme of the story thus: "That violence is linked with untruth and lies. That one word of Truth outweighs the whole world." Mahatma Gandhi said, "Truth is God and God is Truth."

## BUILD TRUST

Truth and righteousness could build

## Talk of the Bazaar by The Faquir