

MRA Conference

Youth at the Helm in Africa of Tomorrow

"Every day is as merry as Christmas," was a remark overheard on the campus of the University of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland. Here, at Roma, in this majestic mountain amphitheatre, was held in the first fortnight of the New Year the Conference for Tomorrow's Africa, writes Derek Gill, a former Editor of the Daily Rep., and now News Editor of the Pretoria News, who has been attending this MRA conference.

They had come from the North—as far away as Zambia—from the great Southern Universities, from the townships of Johannesburg; a cross-section of the vital youth of the sub-continent.

One of the delegates was a prince of the Royal House of the Swazis, one a representative of the National Youth Club of Rhodesia, others were executive members of the student university bodies. Black and White and Coloured were there; but on the campus where the critical issues of Africa were faced, colour faded to the background, as character came to the fore.

WEALTH OF TALENT

The conference programme was tightly scheduled. A wealth of talent, and the kind of enthusiasm that youth possesses in such abundant measure, was revealed as soon as the "workshops" got under way.

There were three main workshops—Drama, the Press and Homecrafts. They were geared, as was the whole conference, to answering in a practical way the problems which are dragging so much of Africa to despair and new darkness.

KEYNOTE

Bremer Hofmeyr gave the keynote address. "What I want to see," he said, "is a group of Africans, of whatever colour, who are ready to commit themselves to see that Africa is really free — those who will face the truth, that when men and nations disarm morally, freedom sickens and dies. Here, in this conference, let us find the men and women who, starting with themselves, will live for the moral rearmament of this continent and all God's earth."

SIGNPOSTS

Bremer Hofmeyr then pointed the signposts to Tomorrow's Africa, "men who will answer the attempts to split humanity on colour, and unite it on character. And let us make a continent where human need is put before human greed, where obedience to God is put before every other call and pressure."

Two leading Basutoes, Mr. Joel Mohapeloa, who has been Secretary to the Paramount Chief, and Mr. Charles Chakela, Chairman of one of the three major political parties and a member of the Basutoland Constitutional Committee, begged for help in laying the foundations for Basutoland's anticipated independence.

RESPONSE

The response was immediate. The Drama workshop at once began to rehearse ideological plays to be taken into Maseru and other towns of the Protectorate. A mark of the zeal was that rehearsals started at 6.30 a.m.

In the Press workshop, university students and high school scholars turned out a daily newspaper, carrying local and international news from the very first day.

In the Homecrafts workshop, the women were shown how to prepare meals with artistry — one of the social graces earnestly sought by all womanhood.

LECTURES

In the lecture room, talks were given on the great issues of the moment. Men and women of knowledge and experience gave graphic pictures of countries like Zambia, Basutoland, Rhodesia and those further North.

There were talks on Citizenship, Soil Conservation, Economics. Often the most interesting feature of the lectures was the searching, intelligent questions put to the speakers afterwards.

This conference has proved that the Youth of Africa, thirsty for the reality of a mighty purpose, have the dare, imagination, creativeness and faith to play their fullest role in pioneering the Africa of Tomorrow.