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Angry Reaction to Judge's Apology

SUNDAY TIMES REPORTER

A TRANSVAAL JUDGE, Mr. Justice C. J. Claassen, told me yesterday that the aftermath of his apology to the Basuto nation for his "former haughty attitude" to Natives had been "most unfortunate."

He had not intended his views to go any further than the pages of New World News, the organ of the Moral Rearmament movement, which has a circulation in South Africa of 1,300.

Front-Page News

The judge had not realised that New World News is sent to every newspaper in South Africa. His statement became front-page news and evoked angry Afrikaner reaction last week.

Mr. Justice Claassen was one of a party of South Africans who visited Basutoland on February 10 with a Moral Rearmament team.

They had been invited by the Resident Commissioner to give the Basuto nation their views of the principles of Moral Re-armament. The occasion was a welcome to the new United Kingdom High Commissioner, Sir John Maud.

Mr. Justice Claassen made a speech in which he said: "I realised that as an Afrikaner my attitude, particularly to the African races, has been one of indifference and superiority. Facing these absolute moral standards of Moral Rearmament meant that I had to apologise for that haughty attitude of the past.

"I should like to repeat that apology to the whole of the Basuto nation."

Mr. Justice Claassen told me that he stood by this statement, but that it had been intended only for members of Moral Rearmament. It was a thing of personal conviction and not intended as an attack on his people.

Afrikaners in political, church and educational circles have been outraged, an Afrikaans newspaper has reported.

Not Approved

Mr. Murray Gerber, a leader of the Nasionale Jeugbond, declared that the statement did not have the approval of White youth and that "we must not let our feelings of conscience get out of hand."

The Rev. C. G. Malan, of the Linden, Johannesburg, Gereformeerde congregation, said that "the Afrikaner has no reproach on his conscience."

Meantime, Moral Rearmament's Press agency has sent copies of the judge's speech all over the world.