



Mr Sam Pono, Mr Conrad Hunte and chairman Mr Sandy Stretton at Friday night's MRA meeting in Queenstown.

Man's inhumanity to man...

"YOU can achieve something here in South Africa which has never been achieved anywhere else in the world.

"South Africa can lead the world out of darkness into light and heal the spirit of man."

If you're wondering where and when those inspiring words were spoken I have news for you. They were spoken right here in Queenstown on Friday night and I count myself privileged that I was there to hear them.

And they were spoken by a black man—a sportsman of international renown; a man of great humility and deep Christian conviction; a man with a delightful sense of humour which enables him to laugh at himself instead of at others; a man who is, like the Master he so selflessly serves, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

The man was Conrad Hunte, cricketer and Christian extraordinary.

Alas, however, I was one of a mere handful of Queenstonians who went along to St Michael's church hall to hear Mr Hunte's message of hope for the future of my country — and, alas again, whites were very much in the minority.

That the white people of Queenstown are apathetic is hardly in dispute. They have proved their apathy beyond any reasonable doubt in innumerable ways and on countless occasions in the past.

PERPLEXED

But I felt for a farmer friend who had travelled 80km to the meeting when he asked despairingly: "What exactly does one have to do to awaken the (white) people of Queenstown to the realities of the racial situation in South Africa today?" And, like jesting Pilate, he would not stay for an answer — not that I had one ready to hand, for I was as perplexed as he.

Conrad Hunte had come to Queenstown with a message of hope for all South Africans—black, white and brown. Queenstown was privileged to be able to listen to a man who has travelled the world both as distinguished sportsman and a confirmed Christian.

Queenstown was honoured that this man, who, in seven short weeks in South Africa, has had 150 interviews with Cabinet Ministers, financial and business magnates and leaders in every field, should stop over here.



MR CONRAD HUNTE... cricketer and Christian extraordinary.

But Queenstown went about its business with its head in the sands of apathy — as usual.

Happily, however, Rotarians had a chance to hear Conrad Hunte; so did the staff and boys of Queen's College; members of the African community, too, were lucky and so were the fortunate few—far too few — who went along to St Michael's on Friday.

SUSPICION

Perhaps the fact that Mr Hunte was leading a Moral Re-orientation (MRA) team kept people away. Perhaps, for some obscure reason unknown to me, there is some suspicion surrounding MRA. Perhaps, because it involves itself in man's inhumanity to man and the important — but uncomfortable — issues of our time MRA is seen by some as a vaguely political organisation to be avoided like the plague. Perhaps...

All that, of course, is arrant nonsense. MRA transcends all racial and political barriers and simply sets out to make this unhappy world a better place for all to live in.

Is there anything wrong in that — even if, in order to do so, many petty prejudices and tried traditions have to go by the board?

And in South Africa at present racial prejudice is the name of the highly dangerous game we are playing.

For that reason it was particularly pleasing that some members of the

Queenstown branch of the South African Institute of Race Relations took the trouble to go along to hear Conrad Hunte on Friday.

It was a pity, however, that the Christian Churches were hardly represented on what was a truly Christian occasion. The only white minister present was from 100km away. Unless and until the Church is seen to be actively and openly involved in the crisis situations of our time people will continue to say it is irrelevant in such situations.

MESSAGE OF HOPE

But for those who, for whatever reason, missed a unique occasion Conrad Hunte left a message of hope. I was lucky enough to spend more time than most with him and feel compelled to pass on some of the things he had to say.

"The spirit of man has got to be healed," says Mr Hunte, "so that he will recognise the forces of division in other people — and also in himself.

"And so that the oppressed, when they achieve the just reward of their struggle will not in turn become the oppressors."

Surely there's a message of hope for all South Africans there?

"Man must not cause violence to his neighbour so that he himself might live. Rather he must cause violence to himself in order that his neighbour might live," Mr Hunte believes.

And, as the eldest of nine children whose father earned 70 cents a week ("quite a wizard my father was," he says with that infectious laugh of his) he had a word for most of us:

"A new family will build a new nation and a new nation will build a new world," he says.

"And build your life on honesty, purity, unselfishness and love," is another message he passes on.

SOWETO

After spending two days in the "ferment and disorder" of Soweto, "where the human spirit was crying out for fulfilment" and where "conditions are more than the human spirit can bear" and after talking to the parents of children killed and the children of parents killed in the township riots, Mr Hunte had this to say:

"My spirit was shattered by the emotional shock of Soweto, but I did not take sides.

"I went on in due course to Stellenbosch where there was order, peace and beauty and a sense of history — what a contrast to Soweto.

"Christ spoke to me there and said 'I did not hold man's sin against man. You have to know and understand the suffering Christ.'

"My own spirit was healed and I saw then that Soweto and Stellenbosch are two realities of South Africa and that South Africa needs them both," Mr Hunte said.

And by the most radical transformation in the attitudes and motives of both South Africa could yet surprise the world, he said.

Through the discipline of listening to the inner voice a new society could spring up in South Africa, he added.

"But that society," he believes, "will have to be colourful, classless, character-built and Christ-inspired."

As a South African I have always had hope for the future of my country. Now that Conrad Hunte has come and gone I have more hope than ever.

I have more hope for Queenstown, too. Mr Hunte met with some civic leaders of Queenstown's African community and said he was pleased to have had an insight into the problems of the community that is theirs and Queenstown's.

I believe that the future of that community is as dear to the black and brown citizens of Queenstown as it is to me and mine.

And I believe that if they and theirs and me and mine heed Mr Hunte's inspiring message we have nothing to fear in the future.

This was a weekend I will never forget. It was the weekend I met Conrad Hunte — a truly committed Christian.

A final thought. Accompanying Mr Hunte on his

visit were a Queenstown African, Sam Pono, who has given his life to MRA, and Mr Hunte's South African hosts, Mr Bremer Hofmeyr and his wife Agnes who, in spite of the fact that her parents were murdered in the Mau Mau atrocities in Kenya, now devotes her life to the promotion of racial harmony and understanding.

This was the message the Hofmeyrs left for me in the form of a Christmas card:

"When lines are drawn and bullets fly
When burning townships light the sky
When hatred drowns out pity's cry —
Christmas star, O Christmas star
Bearing radiance from afar
Shine on the foolish race of men
Bring sense and sanity again."

Yes, it was a memorable weekend. I doubt if I shall know another like it.

SANDY GREIG