

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE UNIVERSITY

PUBLIC ARE TO BLAME

RECTOR APPEALS FOR GREATER FINANCIAL SUPPORT

THE DUTY TOWARDS THE PLATTELAND

An outline of the broad African policy which was being followed by the University of Pretoria was given by Mr. G. Moerdyk, chairman of the Council of the University, in a speech delivered at the official opening of the University year last night in the City Hall.

It was the first time the University had held this function outside the University. But the innovation proved to be successful, for it was attended by a great number of people.

Mr. Moerdyk envisaged the whole of the African continent as the field to which the University would be expanding its research activities, which would be conducted along South African lines.

The rector, Mr. C. F. Schmidt, spoke of the shortcomings of the University, which, he said, were not intellectual, but material. A good deal of blame for this undesirable position attached to the public, who had not supported the University as well as they might have done.

ELOQUENT APPEAL

He made an eloquent appeal to the public to support them in the task of preserving Afrikaans art and culture, not solely for the Afrikaner, but for the benefit of the whole South African nation.

Both Mr. Moerdyk and Mr. Schmidt laid stress on the fact that students trained at the University of Pretoria would be fully bilingual.

Mr. Moerdyk said that there was never a time when the relative economic value of knowledge was so highly estimated as to-day. The attitude of the world towards values was gradually changing, and the idea of the sanctity of private property was vanishing. In the past hundreds of families had lived secure in the knowledge that they would inherit property. To-day that security had disappeared. Succession duty and other taxes often made property a liability instead of an asset.

VALUE OF MONEY



Mr. G. Moerdyk.

the sons and daughters of the districts. They are the rulers of tomorrow. If we look to the present generation of rulers, then we see that the majority of them come from the districts. This applied to all spheres and walks of life."

WRONG IMPRESSION

But a university could not afford to uproot the children of the platteland and send them back as snobs (meneertjies) who had lost their sympathy with the platteland and were dissatisfied with their surroundings. In this way people would lose all confidence in them, and they could not be useful although they had the necessary knowledge to be useful.

"Our policy is to send these students back whence they came—the platteland," said Mr. Moerdyk, "but after they have gained valuable knowledge without losing their sympathy for the platteland.

"Why this is so often looked at from its negative side, I do not know. Because it is our desire to be constructively Afrikaans it should not be accepted from the negative side



Mr. C. F. Schmidt.

Another blot on the University was the library, which was not really a library. There was a danger that the floor might crack, and the books fall through. The room was dark, while the function of the University was to spread light. How could the University truly fulfil its role with a library where students could not read without danger to their eyes?

The laboratoria of the University were also totally inadequate. Students were always cramped for space. The position was so bad that during the last examinations the professors were suspicious that some of the candidates had copied their answers from each other because they were sitting so close to each other.

In the course of the ordinary University work they still managed to cope with the situation. But during the examinations the position was almost untenable.

Did his audience know that last year there was a professor who had to move from room to room because the University could not supply him with a classroom? asked Mr. Schmidt. Such a position should never be allowed to exist.

The same conditions existed as far as the extra-mural faculty was concerned. There students almost had to sit on each other's laps, and the professors did not know what to do.

"Do you not think that my complaint is justified?" asked Mr. Schmidt. "Do you not agree that the public of the Transvaal and Pretoria should have done something for this University? Are there not a few rich people on the platteland who are prepared to say: 'Here is my cheque for £10,000'? And are there not a few rich men in Pretoria who will present the University with a cheque for £50,000?"

NO NEGLECT OF ENGLISH

"They keep in the background because at one time there was a regrettable and unfortunate misunderstanding.

"But I do wish to assure our English-speaking friends in Pretoria and elsewhere that the University of Pretoria was not neglecting English. The

liability instead of an asset.

VALUE OF MONEY

Even the value of money was not what it had been. It was subject to the most sudden and violent fluctuations. In some powerful countries money to-day only had a quarter or a fifth of the value it had before the Great War.

In this respect South Africa had suffered comparatively little. This might be due to the fact that South Africa had been on the winning side. But after the next world war, which was inevitable, it was almost certain that South Africa would not be in such a favourable position.

Knowledge was the only fixed asset remaining, which, in addition, was not liable to taxation.

When a student came to a university, said Mr. Moerdyk, he did so to gain knowledge, the sole possession of which was not sufficient. It should be paired with the ability to make use of such knowledge. It had been said that it was better to have some knowledge than no knowledge at all. This was brought out in the past, when all education had been purely theoretical. But even purely theoretical education had its value, as it broadened the mind.

PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

In older times, continued Mr. Moerdyk, professors had almost exclusively taught classics. Philosophy and Latin had been the beginning and end of practically all studies. To-day the study was being expanded to more practical subjects, like agriculture, domestic science and architecture.

But to apply the scientific knowledge gained, it was necessary to possess practical knowledge.

"What I mean by practical knowledge," said Mr. Moerdyk, "is the development of an Afrikaans technique to solve our typical problems. We have problems relating to our soil, water, drought, diseases and many more, problems which are eventually South African. To solve those problems along lines indicated by the conditions in South Africa, that is what I call an Afrikaans technique.

"The second essential is the ability to apply knowledge gained through studies, and this is primarily dependent upon the condition of the mind. At a university we have to create a spirit sympathetic towards

from its negative side, I do not know. Because it is our desire to be constructively Afrikaans it should not be accepted from the negative side that we are anti-English. This is not the case. The University of Pretoria emphasises the teaching of English. In the present circumstances it would be folly to disregard this. It would indeed be extremely foolish to allow any student to take up the battle of life who was not proficient in English.

"Therefore, I appeal to sympathetic English-speaking persons to contribute to the University funds in order to strengthen further an already strong English Department. I can assure them that their contributions will be used exclusively for that purpose.

OUR PROBLEMS

"South Africa is a small portion, but the most important, of the great African continent, whose problems are our problems. The mastering of our diseases will have beneficial effects for the whole continent. The adequate solution of our problems simultaneously represents the solution of African problems.

"There is an infinite difference between our problems and those of Europe and other countries," concluded Mr. Moerdyk. "If we conscientiously attempt the solution of our own problems, we will not only be better fitted to help ourselves, but will be in a position, superior to that of any other institution in the world, to be of service to the whole of Africa. That is our purpose and that is the field of our activities."

SHORTCOMINGS

Mr. Schmidt, who was greeted with applause, said that he wished to speak about the shortcomings of the University, for which in reality the public was responsible. Their shortcomings were not spiritual, but material.

There were certain material features about which the University was pleased. This year they had a large number of students, so big that they could not accommodate them all.

This brought out the first shortcoming—the lack of accommodation. This year the University authorities had to run from pillar to post to find vacant houses. But the position might easily arise that they could not find any houses, and, therefore, they wanted more hostels.

lish-speaking friends in Pretoria and elsewhere that the University of Pretoria was not neglecting English. The University fully realises that if its students are not bilingual they will be left behind, while the bilingual man is successful.

"At the same time, I want to point out that you cannot have a University with a '50-50' policy, as you would have to have classes in each language. That would be tantamount to having two universities—and we cannot even afford to pay for one university. To my mind, therefore, a '50-50' basis is so much nonsense.

"But I firmly believe," continued Mr. Schmidt, "that one day we will have a united nation in South Africa. Never will Afrikaans eradicate English, nor can English ever be the only language and people in South Africa. But out of these two roots there will grow one tree, which will be the South African nation.

"Why do our English friends refrain from supporting a South African institution. We do not wish to preserve Afrikaans art and culture solely for the benefit of Afrikaans, but for the benefit of the South African nation.

"If, therefore, we wish to foster and aid the expansion of the University we must have money," concluded Mr. Schmidt. "Shortly we will be appealing to the platteland to help the University. But in the meantime, on behalf of the University of Pretoria, I appeal to all our friends to support a worthy cause, the University of Pretoria."

The function was opened with prayer conducted by Professor S. P. Engelbrecht, and Professor Gerrit Bon gave several organ numbers. The evening was concluded with a dance held in the Berea Hall.