

NEW WORLD NEWS

Vol 27 No 7 6 Jan 1979 8p



L to r: Kgati Satheke, Thomson Ramanala and Harris Hlongwane from Atteridgeville, with Stellenbosch student Danie Botha.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN YOUTH CONFERENCE REPORT PREPARED IN JOHANNESBURG

A TIME FOR NEW INITIATIVE

NEVER BEFORE has South Africa been under such pressure. Mozambique and Angola, once Portuguese buffer states, have become black-ruled nations harbouring guerrillas committed to struggle against white rule in South Africa. Rhodesia, where 200 people die each week, is committed to black majority rule, but seems to be on the edge of chaos. And South West Africa/Namibia is on the road to independence, albeit an uncertain road as it battles for international recognition.

Internally South Africa has been rocked by the corruption and cynicism revealed by the 'Information Department scandal'—a sharp blow to the self-confidence of the Nationalist Party, which celebrated 30 years in power last year. The student-inspired riots of 1976 have been followed by sporadic unrest across the country ever since and have led to a new militancy among urban blacks.

Explosive powers

Against this background over a hundred young people from Southern Africa met at St Peter's Seminary, Hammanskraal, near Pretoria, for five days shortly before Christmas. They came from Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, Namibia/South West Africa, Swaziland and various parts of South Africa to search for answers to the questions in their hearts and for how to bring change in their situations. Could injustice be cured without violence? Could the explosive power of Afrikaner nationalism and black nationalism, united and reconciled in a Christian revolution, be aimed at benefiting all, not preserving or furthering the interests of one group alone? If South Africans could find an answer to fear and bitterness, and learn to work together, could they teach something to the world which watches them so closely?

A black student leader commented at the opening session on the failure of major world conferences to bring any permanent answer to such questions. 'It is quite clear that the problem is essentially human. Can

we give ourselves wholly to the Almighty during the coming days to seek His mind for our different roles in this colossal battle? These challenging times call for a positive and living faith—a faith that can only be achieved by dwelling upon the certainties of God—a faith that is nurtured by a spiritual depth and that encourages not only good-will but God's will.

'Unfortunately, the actions of men reflect indecision, doubt, uncertainty and fear of the unknown. Strong leadership is required today in the moral and spiritual life of the nations of the world. A leadership that is not biased by colour, prejudiced by fear, or strengthened by brutal repression—a leadership that stems from the Cross, from mutual caring and feeling for all fellow men.'

Mark Swilling, a first year student from the University of the Witwatersrand, was one of those who called the conference. 'I felt it was up to us to take the initiative, to set out to answer the aspirations and needs of men's hearts,' he said. 'We represent different brands of nationalism but we come as fellow South Africans, to seek God's plan for our lives and our situation. We must see how we can channel this idea into our nation, how to make it regnant in the life of the nation.'

Kedmon Hungwe, a Rhodesian student, spoke of the need for change to start in the individual. 'People have resorted to mass murder to change the system as in Cambodia. But the only area where we have 100% control over change is in ourselves. It should be easiest to think of changing yourself because you are nearest to yourself.'

Pledge

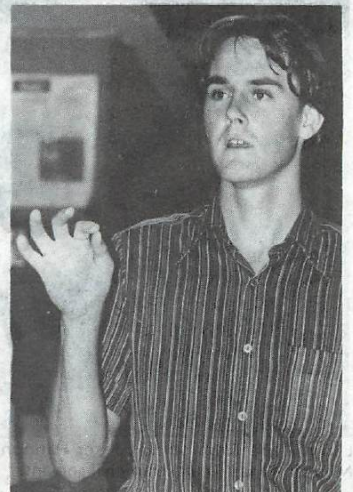
The ensuing days provided an opportunity for an honest and sometimes painful exchange of views across the colour line. One black student gave voice to questions current in his community: 'What does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ when one is black and living in a world of white racists? And what if they call themselves Christians? What has faith in Jesus to do with the struggle for the liberation of the black masses?' He had

come to the conclusion that people still needed God 'because of His love for us. His care and understanding, but more than that, we need Him for His guidance, especially where our intellect has failed. This must be coupled with love—love for our oppressor and love for our enemies. For in love burns the deep passion to fight, to endeavour, to explore and to keep searching.'

'I have learnt to love people I thought I would never be able to love in my life because I never really understood them,' an Afrikaans student from Stellenbosch said. 'I pledge my life for each and every one of you—in our country and the world. I sincerely believe God will give me the guidance and govern my life so that I will be used in His image to effect the kind of society He wants.' Another student, from the Rand Afrikaans University, had brought friends to the conference and said that he wanted to work to have more Afrikaans students at the next one.

A young black militant, who was Secretary of the Student Representative Council of Atteridgeville, Pretoria's African township, and led the students out on riot, articulated the sacrifices made by many black leaders for the liberation of their people. Many were

INITIATIVE contd p4



Robin Burness, medical student, University of Rhodesia.

Christians must be society's conscience

Afrikaans theological student

WE ARE TALKING about change, but we are faced with two groups of people who have certain prejudices built into them.

For the white man to accept change means breaking with a lot of things which have been part of himself. It is difficult enough for individuals to change within themselves—how much more difficult for a people to change. That concerns black and white equally.

The whites have a lot to lose. The main reason among most whites for resisting change is fear of losing what we hold precious and dear. But there are also a growing number of whites who realise that if we don't change, we will lose what we love. On the side of the black people there are few who would not welcome change, as it would benefit them.

The motive behind both these groups is selfishness—this is the danger. On the basis of self-interest they are doomed to failure.

I admire the courage of my black friends. I admire the intense way in which they have involved themselves with the problems of our country. For that I respect them.

Inexcusable

I want to say something about the Afrikaners, my people. The Afrikaner will be responsible for making any change that is going to come in South Africa. He is not certain that all these changes will be good for all the people involved. He sees the example of what has happened in Angola. It makes him fear that the same thing might happen in South Africa. Even if he is prepared to make a lot of sacrifices for a just

society, he still won't make those sacrifices if he believes, and fears, that the whole society might end up in chaos.

Then there is the fear of Communism. There are a lot of people who see Communists under every bush, but at the same time there is also a very real threat.

Afrikaners have admitted many of the wrongs in the situation. They were inferior, but then they built themselves up into a proud nation which has political and economic control. The Afrikaner sees himself as the maker of our society. Because of this he has some sort of superiority feeling. It is inexcusable and wrong. One of the main reasons this can go on is that there is an immense lack of communication and knowledge. If we could increase our knowledge of the blacks, a lot of things would fall away. It is important that we talk to each other, but it is Christ who will bind us together.

Rudder

Many Afrikaners are against what they call an unnecessary guilt complex 'because we are not so terribly wrong'. But whether you are only a little guilty or very guilty, you are still guilty.

The average Afrikaner who lives on the *platteland* (the rural areas) believes that to have people mixing is a threat to God's plan. It is a very big reality in our situation. It is a false belief, but the fact is that it is a belief.

Now I would like to speak as a Christian. I want to see the society that I live in change, and become a just society. I want to see every man, black, white, rich, poor, intelligent, stupid—whatever his characteristics—have the right to be a human being. For this society I want to give myself; I want to give everything that I have. That is what I believe God's will for man is.

When I throw myself in with this work for a new society, I want to be sure that I can trust the group and ideology I move with. I want to be sure that I am going all-out for a

just society, not just another unjust society. I am not prepared to go with anybody, black or white, who puts out his hand for a new society, if that person's motives are selfish. The biggest change I as a Christian want to strive for is the realisation of the coming of the Kingdom of God on this earth.

Basically what I want for my country is leaders who listen to God and live out their faith, and even more than that a people who want their leaders to listen to God, who do God's will rather than man's will.

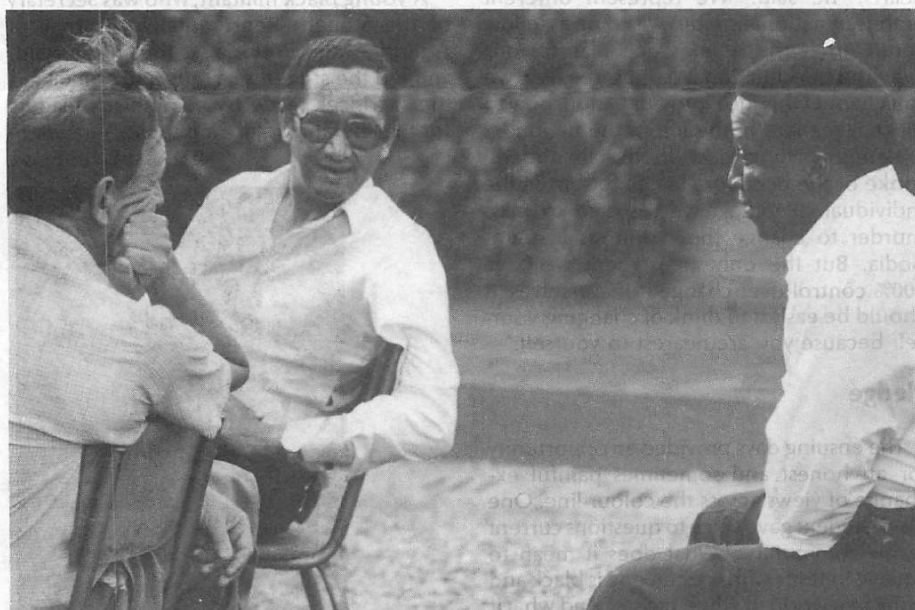
I cannot present a blueprint to God of what I want to see happen. I must be prepared to throw myself in with God's plan. His body consists of all people who seek to do His will only and to obey His commandments. If we are Christians and live as Christians and as God wants us to live, our influence will reach all spheres of life.

As individual Christians I believe we should stand up for what is right. A big ship is steered by a small rudder. That is how I see our task. We, as Christians in society, should be the rudder and the conscience of society. We should be able to restore the Cross to it and get the ship headed in the way God wants it to go.

Liberation

As Christians, black and white, we will have to start standing for what we believe is right, striving for Christ's image to be remade in man. We must start showing South Africa and showing one another that the things we have been talking about can be put into practice in our lives.

I believe sincerely that if we decide, if we don't fear, if we can trust one another, then God will use us. I want to see my people liberated, because Christ wants to liberate them, from their fears, from their own misconceptions and prejudices. I don't want to see my people destroyed. Here we have the potential to liberate people instead of destroying them.



L to r: Cape Town author, Peter Hannon; Franklin Sonn, President of the Cape Teachers' Association; and Mbulelo Jonas, Transkeian civil servant.

ALL PHOTOS BY EDWARD HOWARD



After a public apology, a Soweto community leader talks with a West Rand Administration Board official.

ON THEIR RETURN to Salisbury the Rhodesian participants reported on the conference to Rev Arthur Kanodereka, who was working across party and racial lines to bring the changes essential to peace and was tragically assassinated on 18 December.

One of those present writes: 'He spoke of his change and challenged us to face the Cross and to love our enemies.'

Next week's NWN will be dedicated to him and to those who continue his mission.



A Rhodesian student speaks at Hammanskraal.

People who can speak the truth

Black community leader

I HAVE LIVED in Soweto as long as I can remember. We lived in the same typical matchbox houses. From an early age I was aware of suffering caused by hunger and starvation. It affected me. Our mother, who worked as a domestic in the white suburbs, struggled to bring us up and to educate us.

During my school years the bare facts concerning the discrepancies of South Africa unfolded. In geography we learnt what a wealthy country South Africa was. I began to wonder how people could suffer when there was so much in this, the country of our birth. In the middle of my high school years I left to work to help support the family. That was when I first came into contact with whites in industry. Everything revolved on a master/servant relationship—it made me feel that I was nothing in my own country. This created a lot of bitterness in me.

Then came the student riots in 1976. There was chaos. It was painful to witness such a loss of life among those so young. Events at that time entrenched my hatred for the white man. When all was quiet again in Soweto I went back to my job but I found I was so filled with hatred that I could not work. So I just left and started my own business. I wanted to work amongst my own people, so I started a drama group for some of the youth.

Detention

At that time there were many students not going to school. Crime was on the increase and it wasn't safe to walk around at night. There was a very tense atmosphere. Many students wanted to leave the country to continue their education elsewhere. Some asked me for help. The police got to hear of this and I was arrested at the beginning of 1977. I went from one prison to another and underwent various forms of interrogation. Eventually, after five months, I was taken to Pretoria and told I was going to be charged—for sending students for guerrilla training.

In detention I prayed. I don't know why, but I really prayed. There were three of us

Another student had spent nearly two years in detention. He said that the time at the conference had given him the courage to face up to the things that were wrong in our country. I was Accused No 2, regarded as the king pin, the leader of the so-called 'terrorist group'. Everything was pointing at me. Mentally I was preparing myself to go to Robben Island for five years. I decided to leave everything in the hands of God and after that I felt encouraged—I was even beginning to feel that the sooner it happened the better. But the case did not hold and I was discharged. I could not believe it when they said, 'You are free.'

When I came out my heart was filled with the desire for revenge. At home everything was a mess. While I was away my wife had had problems, bills hadn't been paid, and so on. This built even more hate. Yet I felt as time went on that I could not go on like this. Surely there was some way of making South Africa a place for everybody, where all could share in the benefits. My conscience would not let me believe that there was no answer to these things.

Quite unexpectedly I met some people from Moral Re-Armament a few weeks ago. They talked about change, but it was a change I could not understand. I believed then that the people who needed to change were the whites and here were these people saying that change should start with me. It didn't make any sense.

Vision

They then invited me to come to this conference. I was not keen to come. I thought it would probably be another of those meetings where whites get together with blacks but at the end, when the talking is over, everyone goes home the same, facing the same problems. But I thought to myself, 'Join your enemy, know what he thinks. You can always go home again and say it was all nonsense.'

But here I have met people I would never have talked to. I have found that we share a lot in common. We are only divided by a wall of colour. I have heard white people being genuinely honest, people who can speak the truth. I am so taken with all this. I feel a different person.

There is that very strange thing of saying sorry to a person, I want to say to all the whites, I am sorry for the hate I have had. Apologising to your enemy, you clear the way with God. I have caught a new vision of South Africa here, something that all of us can strive for.

Newcomer's surprise

HARRY ADDISON has worked with Moral Re-Armament since meeting the idea through a South African Rhodes scholar at Oxford in the nineteen thirties:

To me as a newcomer to South Africa, it was a complete surprise to find at this conference both kinds of militant—young black African nationalists and Afrikaner students—meeting in a spirit of complete frankness and genuine personal friendship, with the result that there was a real meeting of minds and hearts.

I have been to a good many conferences. But never have I seen such reality, such realism in facing stubborn facts and profound issues, such sincerity in the expression of deeply felt and firmly held convictions, and such a passionate determination to arrive at a radical and permanent solution as I have seen during these past few days. Almost all the speakers were turning in the same direction in their search for the solution—to the Christian faith which in this country still seems to be a living part of your tradition. As I listened, one insistent question kept coming to me—could that Christian faith, rediscovered in the lives of individuals, reinterpreted as a philosophy of life in every way, and fearlessly applied at every level of the national life of this country, not only provide a solution for your own problems, but also provide the pattern of a new society in the world? If you could do that here, then you would have something which would be an answer to a world which is desperately seeking one.

Opposites united

KEDMON HUNGWE, Physics graduate, University of Rhodesia:

At Hammanskraal I saw the growth and birth of a new Southern Africa. I saw opposites united when people realised that ultimately it is better to bury their differences than to bury their loved ones. I saw the breaking up of pride as men honestly confessed what they felt and feared. I saw the burning of a new revolutionary fire as the young men promised to take the country by storm for Christ. I saw an openness about family life, private life and political life. The ground has been prepared at Hammanskraal for a major offensive against wrong.

In my own life my passion for the transformation of society increased. I felt a great love for this country, and a desire to give all to make it what God has always intended it to be.

When I was young I always wondered how my mother could produce a cake out of things like heat, salt, sugar, eggs, water. But she always did it. We can be too cynical to realise that God can make a united nation out of Afrikaners, English, the Coloureds and Blacks. Dirty water and rotten eggs cannot make a good cake. In the same way I have realised that bitterness, dishonesty, greed and selfishness are the true barriers to a new social order.

INITIATIVE contd from p1

now in detention or under banning orders. 'They were selfless and laid down their lives, future and everything they have for their calling. They took the hardest decision that they could take, and are now paying the price for it.

'I was not laying down my life for my ideals. I was not prepared to change my ways for the sake of my calling,' he said. 'I am called to lay the foundations of the new society these men were fighting to create—but by caring enough to change people. Violence is not going to solve all our problems. We know what we are fighting against, but we must know what we are fighting for.

'For my part, it demands sacrificing glory, ego and self-satisfaction—to sacrifice and utterly destroy doing things exclusively for the personal glorification and satisfaction of myself,' he continued. 'The call is demanding and I pray to God that I live up to it. My plea to you this morning is to ask each one of you to seek out the role you are meant to play and set out to fulfil it to the maximum. We must sacrifice today to be able to enjoy tomorrow.' The conference had been the greatest week in his life, he said. 'Monumental. For me came a new commitment.'

A colleague of his told how some of them had been prepared to go overseas for ten years for guerrilla training. 'In the same way we must be ready to sacrifice to receive training in the ideas we see here. This is a commitment not for a week but for life.'

Come and see

The Rhodesian group, including several students from the university, took an evening seminar on their country. They brought alive the daily realities and sufferings of their people. One girl's brother had been abducted by the guerrillas and taken to neighbouring Botswana. Given the choice of returning home or staying there he chose to stay. Another said that since she left her country to visit South Africa she had felt safe for the first time in months.

Military call-up was a sensitive issue among black and white, they said. The young white Rhodesians there all had a military commitment. Blacks would be called up for the first time from January. This had provoked considerable unrest. A lecturer from the university told how one of his students had already fled the country rather than serve in the Rhodesian Army.

Although representing different groups and aspirations, the Rhodesians came with a deep desire to find an overriding unity and aim. A white medical student said that although he realised that society had always been wrong in Rhodesia he had been afraid to attempt to change it. 'I feared a loss of privileges and seeing what we have built up being completely destroyed. I am sorry.'

A high school student from Bulawayo

said, 'The conference doesn't end here but in the hearts of people back home.' This view was echoed by an African student from the University of Rhodesia: 'It is not enough to say the right words and to go back to what we were doing before. We must go the whole way. Our aim is more than Southern Africa. We should be able to call the whole world and say, "Come and see the society we are building."'

Stage set

Another student had spent nearly two years in detention. He said that the time at the conference had given him the courage to face up to the things that were wrong in his life. One was deep-rooted bitterness. 'Now we should try to see the politicians and Government officials in our country and tell them how we have found reconciliation between ourselves. If we have, I don't see why it couldn't start to happen on a national scale. We may not produce fruits overnight, but we must take some message to them.' The Rhodesian group presented a play, *Turning Enemies Into Friends*, based on the true story of a black Methodist minister and his white farmer neighbours.

Discussion abounded. But it was clear to all that discussion alone would not bring the necessary change. As one black student put it, 'The stage is set. It is for us to play our part. The most important thing is to manifest practically what we have lived here. We must go out and put things right in our homes. I am going to stand and fight beside my white friends whatever others may do.'

One young white had just completed the two years' military service required of all whites, which he had spent as an army lieutenant in Namibia. He described the alternative society that he wanted to see: 'One based on the standards of honesty, purity, love and unselfishness and on Christ's law. One that is not just for the few, but one with a part for everyone, that will act as a model.' He committed himself to realise this vision in practice.

Stunned

'My head is a bit hard,' confessed a student who has just graduated from the University of Rhodesia. 'The idea of Moral Re-Armament as a revolution has taken a long time to sink into my head. Fear and insecurity—these have been stopping me from doing the best I can. I need to commit myself. This is a desperately serious revolution.' He has decided to give a year to work with Moral Re-Armament without salary.

For some it meant starting at home. A teacher from the homeland of Bophuthatswana decided to open his home as a start in his area. A young white Salisbury accountant said, 'I have had great visions of the society I would like to see but I have been pretty

much a dictator in my own home.' He had written to his wife to apologise.

An official of the West Rand Administration Board, the Government body which administers Soweto, attended one meeting. A Soweto resident spoke: 'I have hated this man and what he stands for,' he said. 'But here I have discovered what South Africa should be like. I am sorry. I have come to one decision—that where we as God's children fight one another, this must come to an end.' In the stunned silence that followed he and the official shook hands.

Cornelius Marivate, a lecturer at the University of South Africa, speaking on the theme of 'Reconciliation, the road to reconstruction', told how he had found reconciliation with a man from whom he had been bitterly divided. 'The best revenge is changing your enemy. To do that we need a plus power. We cannot on our own really change. We need an extra power, a new spirit, a new outlook, a willingness for Him to work in and through us.'

Freedom

On the last evening of the conference different groups presented drama, songs and poems. Franklin Sonn, President of the Cape Teachers' Association and a leading figure in the Coloured community, said afterwards how moved he had been by what he had seen. 'It is such a joy to come into a community where you just see people as people. I have seen stereotypes broken down here. People are meant to be instruments of God and to establish and maintain the tenets of love, endurance, peace and understanding which were expressed this evening.

'Listening to people committing themselves here, I couldn't help thinking of those words "freedom isn't free". Freedom is such an emotive word. It lives with us. It lives particularly with people who have had to struggle for their identity, as with the Afrikaners. They calmly packed their things and trekked up to the North and in their hearts burnt one desire: freedom. Across many parts of the world it is still an emotive word. However, once people ascend to freedom they tend to reverse the process and to subject other people to the same measures against which they have protested so much.'

The fight for the vote and economic dispensations must never be relinquished, he said. But that alone would not bring freedom. 'Freedom will never be achieved without the truths you are expressing and living here. Never stop striving to change things. Do not lose your zeal to battle and to pursue the things you feel we ought to have in this country. But do it in such a manner that you illustrate all your ideas in the spirit of the greatest revolutionary, Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross.'

JEAN SUTHERLAND