

AIESEC NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING DINNER
TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 1982

I esteem it a great privilege to have been invited to address you this evening and to welcome you formally to Rhodes University. I hope that you will be able to make full use of the facilities of our campus, of which we are all very proud.

I have always had a warm regard for AIESEC because, apart from its international dimension, it is, as far as I am aware, the only student organisation represented on virtually every campus in South Africa and associated neighbouring countries. Your decision to extend your activities to Technikons is also to be applauded.

Other student groups have attempted this, but have fallen foul of one or other of our great national cleavages: English versus Afrikaans, or Black versus White. Why has AIESEC been able to succeed? I believe because:

- (1) It fills the concrete, practical need for international exchange, traineeships and liaison between business and university life.
- (2) It at all times exhibits a positive, constructive spirit. It does not expend emotional energy finding fault and condemning but concentrates on getting on with the job and doing that eminently successfully.

I should like to congratulate you on your achievements in promoting greater understanding over the past quarter century.

Today, with constitutional schemes seemingly popping out of every crack and fissure, there is more discussion than ever on the role government, any government, ought or ought not, to play in our lives. Do not concern yourselves: I have no intention of regaling you with a party political speech tonight, but let us rather for a moment take a strictly practical, international overview of the role of government in our lives, especially in our potential business lives.

What countries can be said to be performing best today, in the sense of providing for the material and social uplift of their people? There is a wide consensus that they are those countries which are not overly concerned with the mathematically exact division of an existing cake, down to the last crumb, but rather those which are making strenuous efforts to expand the size of the cake. Economists have repeatedly commented on the remarkable performance of a group of Asian countries - Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore (to a lesser extent Thailand and the Phillipines) and above all - Japan. What is so special about Japan, from which the others have tended to take a lead? Do the Japanese have some inherent capacity for superhuman labours, far in excess of us lesser mortals? No! Without proper circumstances they are reputed to be just as lazy, unprogrammed and fun-loving as the rest of us.

The basic factors for success appear to be:

- (1) Stable government with a positive attitude to enterprise (Note, I do not say free or private enterprise - just enterprise - more of that anon.) Different styles of government are represented from near dictatorship in South Korea to swinging laissez-faire in Hong Kong, Puritanism in Singapore but one thing they have in common: decades of stability.
- (2) Government provision of adequate infrastructure.
- (3) Under conditions of such encouragement the people in a remarkable way have seized the opportunity for enterprise.

What about South Africa? Certainly we have a very stable government which has provided by and large an excellent infrastructure and ensured conditions for the exercise of enterprise - for those not constricted by the system. In my view, the greatest obstacles to prosperity for all in South Africa are the barriers to the easy exercise of enterprise bearing down on so many people. Remove these, and we should have a surge of prosperity that we should find it hard to believe possible.

The greatest contribution EC can make is to continue to help foster a general climate conducive to the encouragement of enterprise. You have done a great deal already.

Such enterprise need not be limited to private sector capitalism. Study after study has shown that people are not primarily motivated by money - it is about No.5 on the list of motivators. I am not proposing that there is anything wrong in wanting to make money, but merely that it can be an overrated pastime, cf Chesterton's remark "I do not envy millionaires their money; after all they must be allowed to have some fun". The most important motivator is to have a meaningful occupation, with a chance to achieve. This can happen in a university, SAR (SATS), GPO, ESCOM and as well as AAC, Barlows or Gencor.

Nonetheless, as far as job creation is concerned, the new business entrepreneur has the greatest role to play. Its a risky venture, only 1 in 10 survive, but that 10% really is the new growth to fuel the economy and make a dent in unemployment. All giants started this way, through the efforts of usually one man. Consider some of the obvious examples:

de Beers	Rhodes
AAC	Sir Ernest Oppenheimer
Rembrandt	Anton Rupert (R20 capital)
IBM	Thomas Watson

These are the real heroes and do-gooders.

I hope that AIESEC continues to make it a firm priority to encourage enterprise. There is no reason why this cannot start even during your student days.

I must emphasise that successful enterprise does not imply sitting loosely to morals and ethics. All the truly great entrepreneurs have not found it necessary to cut moral corners and step over other people's bodies on the way up. In fact, enterprise is our moral duty - consider the Biblical parable of the talents.

My message to AIESEC is:- Continue in your international bridge building. Live up to IBM's motto "World peace through world trade". Help create a climate where as many people as possible are able to aspire to owning their own property - houses, cars, furniture and household goods, and resources for education and travel. Such people with much to lose make very poor disciples for revolution and destruction.

To show that commercially oriented people are not devoid of the finer feelings of life I debated whether to leave you with a poem or a prayer. I finally decided, that since many of you will probably be travelling, in many cases overseas, that a prayer would meet the circumstances better. Art Buchwald, the American humorist, has noted that some countries are now totally inundated by tourists. The Greek Orthodox Church even went so far, he avers, as to ask the monks and nuns to recite a prayer like this every morning and evening:

"Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on the cities, the islands, the villages of our orthodox fatherland, as well as the holy monasteries which are scourged by the worldly touristic wave. Grace us with a solution to this dramatic problem and protect our brethren who are sorely tried by the modernistic spirit of these contemporary Western invaders".

Buchwald says its only fair that tourists should get equal time with God, and he has composed a prayer for tourists. Some excerpts:-

"Heavenly Father, look down on your humble obedient tourist servants who are doomed to travel this earth, taking photographs, mailing postcards, buying souvenirs and walking about in drip-dry underwear.

We beseech you, O Lord, to see that our plane is not hijacked, our luggage is not lost, and our overweight baggage goes unnoticed.

Give us this day divine guidance in the selection of our hotels, that we may find reservations honoured, our rooms made up and hot water running from the taps (if at all possible)

Give us the wisdom to tip correctly in currencies we do not understand. Forgive us for under-tipping out of ignorance or over-tipping out of fear. Make the natives love us for what we are, and not for what we can contribute to their worldly goods."

Ladies and Gentlemen, take particular care to remember to say your prayers on your travels. In that way you can be sure to return safely to your studies!