

Pc 1/1/27/10

ANNEXURE A.

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE RT. HON. JAN HENDRIK
HOFMEYR.

by Mr. J.D. Rheinalt Jones.

at meeting of the National Executive Committee of the National Council of Churches

It is a great privilege to have been asked to express what must be in the minds and hearts of all of us this morning - the sense of loss which we have sustained through the death of our late President. My association with Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr began when he was still a schoolboy, and it became closer when he was a University student: we were associated together in Student Christian Movement Camps where under the leadership of Oswin Bull and his wife, a number of young men, who now occupy positions of outstanding responsibility in the community, of whom Hofmeyr was one, met together for fellowship, and mixed fun with earnest thought and prayer; in that Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr took his full part.

He was always ready for fun; he would play "bok-bok" and any other game that was going like anybody else, despite his handicap of near sight. But even then one was profoundly impressed by his character and personality. I can best express it by saying that our late President was a man "grounded in principle". At that age his mind was mature. He was about eighteen years of age; he already had his Master's Degree, and his pockets were bulging with papers. They were papers which he was working for his "Onze Jan" Life of Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, his relative. Anyone who reads that biography must be very much impressed, more especially when it is realised that it was written by a youth of eighteen.

Not long after his return from Oxford he became a professor at the new University College of Johannesburg and a little later was appointed its Principal. Through his instrumentality I was invited to assist in helping to build up that University. In all the years our association has been a close one, and always there was this very profound impression made on me of a man "grounded in principle". He was a man nothing could corrupt. I have known situations where he could have taken advantage of his position for personal gain: on no occasion did he do so. On one occasion he was urged to go overseas, the funds being provided for a holiday, but he said that those/

those funds were not provided for that purpose, and he would not take advantage of them.

He reminded me of what John X. Marriman said of Sir James Rose-Innes "he ^swas a great fellow, but he is so upright that he bends backwards". Sometimes we felt that Hofmeyr was so very upright that he bent backward. In all things he was scrupulously careful to maintain his own integrity. Yet despite his great academic distinctions, he was a simple man in his approach to life. It is a striking fact that all organisations with which he was closely identified were organisations which I believe, if properly supported, could make profound difference to the moral and spiritual life of this country and to the relationships between races. The organisations in which he was concerned were The Student Christian Movement, Toc H., The Institute of Race Relations, the Y.M.C.A. and the School for Social Work that bears his name. These were the ones in which he held office in one way or another.

We have been privileged to have had his leadership at a very difficult time when he never spared himself in the task to which he set himself.

The words of Sir Henry Wotton on "The Character of a Happy Life" sum up Mr. Hofmeyr's character:-

"Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill...
Whose conscience is his strong retreat..."

I think those words express, more than anything that I can say, the character of Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr. To-day we mourn his loss, we mourn his leadership; but I believe that his loss is a call to us to bend our shoulders to greater energy and devotion than ever before, bearing in mind the ideals which he held, the character which he had, and the devotion which he gave to the cause to which we are now committed.