

THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
KWAZULU BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES

A MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION

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AND CHIEF MINISTER OF KWAZULU; PRESIDENT OF
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FOUNDATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

HOLIDAY INN, ULUNDI. THURSDAY : 9TH JULY 1992

Mr Master of Ceremonies; Honourable Ministers present; the
Honourable Deputy-Minister of Economic Affairs, Inkosi Biyela and
other Honourable Deputy-Ministers present; our guest speaker Dr
John Hanks; the Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs, Mr
Mkhwanazi and other senior KwaZulu officials; the Director and
members of staff of the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources;
distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

All of you I am sure are here because you have agreed to join us as
we celebrate together, the first ten years of the existence of the
Bureau of Natural Resources. Thank you so much for joining us. I
wish to thank in particular our guest speaker, Dr John Hanks, whose
presence really adds special lustre to this occasion because of Dr
Hanks's contributions to the world of environmental conservation.
It is indeed a great honour to have him here with us tonight as our
guest speaker. His presence alone makes this a very special
occasion.

It was former British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, who once said
that 'a week is a long time in politics'. He made this comment
apparently during a time of crisis and in reaction to press
speculation as to whether he would still be in office after a week.

If a week is a long time in politics then ten years in
conservation, in a decade which has seen the worst political and
social upheaval in South Africa this century, is a very long time
to survive.

I am sure that many of you here will know some of the onslaughts
and difficulties which the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources has
faced in the past decade.

Because of its relation to the KwaZulu Government, itself a target
for every opposition group, it was perhaps expecting too much that
the KBNR would not be targeted by the extreme left-wing and the
red-greens with their covert destabilisation programmes.

Despite a lot of dirty tricks and attacks on it by these groups,
ably supported by fringe newspapers such as the Weekly Mail, the
KBNR has not only survived its infancy well, but is beginning to
thrive as an adolescent.

Without wishing to add controversy to the menu before us tonight, I also have to say that it has not escaped my attention that the KBNR tends to be treated as the poor cousin by its sister conservation organisations. It is a very common fault of regimes or organisations who have been on the scene for a long time to assume that they should automatically remain top dog despite changing political and social circumstances. I must also say that a conservation organisation in Africa, headed by a Black government and a Black Minister such as the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources, also faces a lot of scepticism and even ridicule from those who think Blacks are naturally anti-conservation and are against the preservation of the environment.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you look at the KBNR's insignia you will see that it has the words "KwaZulu Conservation" printed on it rather than "KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources". The purpose of this was to establish firmly in the public mind that to us in

KwaZulu, conservation is the most important ingredient of our mission.

It is also meant to emphasise that KwaZulu Conservation is a new, dynamic and eminently (suitable) ethic which, despite the circumstances of this time, can never be allowed to flounder nor be swamped by traditionally based ethics.

What I am saying is that KwaZulu Conservation, which in essence is a form of conservation devoted to the people and the land, will not be strangled at adolescence either by the extreme left or our political enemies or by elder organisations.

In the nineteen sixties when the current government sought to divide Natal and KwaZulu into two entities it set in place a pattern of environmental imbalance which touches us all, even to this day. Although KwaZulu and Natal share an ecologically integrated region, the central government forced upon us two administrations and two different conservation bodies.

The Natal Parks Board, created in 1947, moved rapidly to fill the conservation vacuum in Natal. To the extent of its statutory muscle, the NPB moved rapidly to consolidate and create over seventy game, nature and recreation reserves. Beyond this it also struck out boldly into the privately owned farming areas when it created the conservancy concept, a move which united groups of farms into conservation entities. It is interesting to note that the Bureau's current Director originated this concept which has resulted in over 700 000 ha of private land being given conservation status.

Despite these internationally recognised achievements on the part of the Natal Provincial Administration, it unfortunately did not help us in KwaZulu, except to provide a limited but welcome number of jobs. Thus, for many years KwaZulu's deprived communities, which in almost every instance adjoin or completely surround Natal's game reserves, simply had to look onto land wealthy in wildlife and natural resources without any tangible benefits. This situation although slightly improved, is still broadly the same.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to say today quite emphatically that if conservation development benefits only those who can enjoy recreation and those who already have full stomachs, there is little chance of it surviving into the 21st century in its current form.

For those of us in leadership positions in South Africa today, we constantly have to suppress our natural instincts to conserve with the urgent need to provide natural resources and job opportunities and self enrichment programmes for the ordinary people of this land.

In the early nineteen seventies I saw with my own eyes the dangerous vacuum which resulted from an ecologically divided Natal and KwaZulu. Legislatively and politically it was not then possible to call on the Natal Provincial Administration to help us with our conservation problems.

As a result I created a section to deal with conservation in KwaZulu and placed it temporarily in the Department of Agriculture and Forestry. However, I found that conservation and agriculture were not good bedfellows, so in 1982 I moved to have the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources created.

By its very name the KBNR was set on a path which drove it headlong into a people-orientated conservation body. Spawned in a region of poverty, the KBNR had to come to grips with reconciling its drive to set land aside as game reserves with the needs of the rural communities surrounding or adjoining them. We dared not allow a repetition of the traditional conservation pattern whereby the affluent sunbathed on green lawns in rest camps while over the fence masses of people struggled to find protein, woodfuel and thatch for their homesteads in grossly over-populated so-called "native reserves".

In 1982 the KBNR started out with a budget of about R400 000 and a staff of 150 personnel. It only had one reserve under its control and its influence was marginal to say the least. Now, 10 years later, it has a budget of 21 million rand and over 600 staff, of whom 120 are officers comprising roughly 50:50 black officers and white officers.

Dynamic and adaptable, the KBNR has created or re-proclaimed over 20 game and forest reserves, a number of community conservation areas and has educated and influenced tens of thousands of KwaZulu's inhabitants in the cause of conservation. It has become nationally and internationally known as a conservation body with a highly relevant and progressive policy of sharing. People benefit in tangible ways from the KBNR policy physically, culturally and spiritually. The word "ezemvelo" is a household word in KwaZulu today thanks to the KBNR.

To really make an impact and to ensure that KwaZulu's total environment survives into the 21st century, the KBNR needed its autonomy. Its leaders, realising that their task of influencing development and sustained use of natural resources could not be achieved if they remained as a branch of the Department of Economic Affairs, sought departmental status for the KBNR.

It is a measure of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly's satisfaction with their past performance and confidence in their future that I am happy to announce that the KwaZulu Government has decided to create a Department of Natural Resources later this year.

Given the international recognition of the fact that environmental matters are a central issue in today's world, I feel we should take our rightful place as one of the most promising regional conservation authorities in South Africa. The KBNR's current policies not only accord closely with the world conservation strategy, but in some ways they are ahead of them.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to allude to current political developments and their effect on this region of Natal and KwaZulu.

As is well known, the KwaZulu Government has striven hard over many years towards the unification of Natal and KwaZulu. The Buthelezi Commission, the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba initiative and the current CODESA initiative all bear witness to our sincerity in this respect.

Obviously when the day comes when some form of federation is instituted for the Natal/KwaZulu region it is going to affect the

futures of the Natal Parks Board and the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources.

We have to work towards that day when a new conservation dispensation is inevitable or we will be caught flat-footed. However, I must say categorically that the rather simplistic view which is current in conservation circles in Natal that somehow this can be done simply by amalgamation of the Natal Parks Board and the KwaZulu Bureau of Natural Resources without any change to the former's structure will not happen.

We have to plan for a newly created, newly named, newly structured environmental organisation which inculcates the most desirable and pertinent ethics of both organisations. In both these conservation organisations we have two solid rocks on which to build very solid future conservation of our environment in this Region.

In spite of the enormous problems we have, some of which come from genuine misunderstandings and others which are generated by our friends from the radical left, we have achievements we can well be proud of. I think here of the fact that we have during our ten-year existence given more than 10 Black Rhino to the Kruger National Park. I am also very proud of the Tembe Elephant Park, which remains a jewel in spite of the enormous problems I have referred to. There are other trophies that we can show in the ten years of our existence.

For conservation to succeed into the 21st century this organisation will have to have as its basis the total environment which integrates the economic and social realities of our times. I wish to add my felicitations to the Director of the Bureau, Mr Steele, and all the staff of the Bureau, for having done such a magnificent job for us. We are aware as I have already mentioned that it has been no mean task if one looks at the attacks they have had to endure from so many levels. This Bureau has survived a vicious campaign of vilification, both here and abroad.

My congratulations on a job well done. Thank you.

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