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"FINDING EACH OTHER AS FELLOW-SOUTH AFRICANS THROUGH SPORT"

AN ADDRESS BY: - The Hon. M.G. Buthelezi -

THE ORANGES SPORTS STAR OF THE YEAR BANQUET: - FRIDAY

7TH FEBRUARY 1974: CARLTON HOTEL: JOHANNESBURG.

Distinguished Sportsman of the year, distinguished Sportsmen, distinguished guests. In the last couple of years I was supposed to attend your annual event, and I was for various reasons not able to do so. I am happy that I am today able to be with you. This is a happy event for most of you. This has bothered me, as I do not know what one should say to make you more happy as you celebrate, and I do not know what not to say, in order not to make you unhappy on your happiest day. Although I am going to say what I have to say in a flippant vein, that should not detract anything anything from its truthfulness. There is nothing more controversial about this Country than its Oranges and sports. Most of you travel extensively abroad, and I am sure you will agree with me that this is largely the case particularly in Europe. I cannot recall a single visit to Europe when I was not asked some question by representatives of mass media, and the public, about whether the boycotting of South African Oranges and Sports was a sound policy. Your great event is therefore controversial whether we like this or not, and as if you want to make it triply so, you have invited a controversial figure such as I am, to be your guest of Honour. So that from whichever side one looks at it, it seems all set up to be the "big squeeze", of the year. Judging from the number of guests this seems to be so, both figuratively and literally.

Nothing underlines the tragedy of this land, more than the fact, that even our sport has become so highly internationalised an issue, in order to highlight the racist nature of our South African Society. This becomes even more clearly a tragedy when one looks at the

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definition of "Sport", which the Oxford English dictionary defines as amusement, diversion, fun. From time immemorial man has always found that life cannot just be all work and no play, a fact summed up in our common saying that, "all work and no play makes John a dull boy". Apart from the relaxation one gets from sport, life is too short for one not to interpose its monotony with fun or diversion. Black children even before the advent of the Whiteman in Africa had Sports of various kinds. Young people and adults had some relaxation in various forms, as well. In ancient times in Europe and Africa there were controversial sports such as the Gladiators in Rome, and similar activities in Africa.

Sport has been a mixed blessing for Africans in South Africa. Without Sport we would spend all our time pondering on our plight as a group that is without any rights worth mentioning. This, I believe has aided us in keeping up a balance which has kept us going in spite of everything that is not so palatable in black life. In this connection one can only applaud the efforts of the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr. T.N.H. Janson for creating the Sport and Recreation fund for Africans. One has nothing but praise for donations towards the establishment of this fund from industries such as Anglo-American Corporation of S.A. Ltd., De Beers Corporation Ltd, Rembrandt Corporation Ltd., and the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Co. Ltd., and other industrialists and individuals, both white and black.

I have not come here to sit in judgement of the various efforts that are being made to enable the blackman to reach justice, and have his human dignity recognised even through sport. These efforts are known to all of you. Sport is one of the few activities which border on being a religion amongst whites, and that is probably why pressures that have been brought to bear on South Africa, in the field of Sport, have been more efficacious. We people of South Africa have behaved foolishly so much, so that our affairs have been

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internationalised through our failure to find universally acceptable solutions to our problems. I am not one of those South Africans who hold the view that these are purely domestic affairs, in which the World has no right to interfere. We are in the first place part and parcel of the international Community. We want to be accepted as part of the Western democratic World. Our norms have therefore to comply with universally accepted norms of a Western democratic Society. Without making a pronouncement tonight, as to which one of the methods used has caused cracks on racism in sport, the blandishments and gestures towards inter-racial sports have been about the only hopeful sign that racial discrimination in sport will ultimately disappear. It is true that there are many amongst us who think that even these hopeful signs amount to, too little, too late. Whatever one's views are, I do not think that these cracks should be underestimated, or overestimated. It is a fact that slight as they are, if we look at them as a dent on the racism edifice in our land, they have nevertheless robbed racism in South Africa of some of its mystique, which was kept intact by not having any sport contact of any sort between the races. Black people no longer long to play with Whites because they are Whites. Black people now, no longer want to tolerate being barred from any activity be it political, social or in sport, merely because of the colour of their skins. They do not think that concessions in the direction of scrapping the colour bar should be looked at as a favour that their White Countrymen, should shower on them in rations, depending on how generous they feel at a particular time. Those who believe in gradualism in this field, should step up their efforts towards equality or else black people will soon not accept mere crumbs of concessions, but full rights of participation on the basis of their full human rights and consonant with their human dignity.

There are amongst us others who have always been suspicious that encouragement of black sports is motivated towards channelling black energies towards play, instead towards efforts to liberate themselves.

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There are others who believe that we must play sports of various kinds, but who are worried that preoccupation with sporting activities should not preclude setting aside time for political activities and other efforts at black self-upliftment at grass-roots. As much as it would be wrong to reserve all our energies for political activities only, they argue that it is wrong to be so obsessed with sporting activities as to have no time or place for other activities geared towards self-upliftment. Sport should not be allowed to be ^a kind of opium, in the sense in which Marxists view Religion. An example of the Afrikaners who have been political animals since the last century is quoted, as people who adore sporting activities, who are religious, and at the same time highly political. Sports are excellent but we should be careful about our priorities.

I am sorry that I have come here and failed to be a 'Sport'. I know that people do not expect one to come to an event like this one and speak in such sombre tones, as I have used in addressing you. Believe me, this emanates from the deep affection for my black brothers everywhere. This also flows from my deep respect for the dedication and seriousness of purpose, our Sportsmen have displayed over the years. This flows from my deep sense of duty to Africa, and to all Africans. It is a duty to South Africa and to all South Africans, regardless of race, colour or creed.

Having applauded the consciencisation of the public towards providing funds for Sports, it is important for me to emphasize that it is equally in the interests of South Africa, if the White public, both in the public and the private sectors, should show the same sensitivity and responsibility in sharing everything they have with their black fellow-South Africans in the interests of all. I mention this in a speech of this sort, as I fear that if I don't efforts in providing recreation and sporting facilities only, will appear not only as a sop to blacks, but also as an ineffectual palliative to our plight as blacks.

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I wish to congratulate all our Sportsmen who distinguished themselves in 1974. I congratulate in particular the Oranges Sports Star of the year and his runner-up. We are proud of your efforts and Sportsmanship. Strange as it might seem, we may sooner find each other as fellow-South Africans and members of the human family through Sports. You have already proved in various ways, as much as our black brothers have been doing for several decades in the United States of America, that we are as good as anyone else, regardless of race. You have proved that we need not be any other colour than black before we can prove equal to any other Sportsman, given the chance and the same opportunities. Do keep it up in 1975 and please do remember the things I have said tonight, ours is an on-going battle for human dignity and human rights. It would be false to think that we can win this only on one front. There are several fronts and Sport is one of them.

I congratulate the South African Cooperative Citrus Exchange for taking the initiative to arrange this event yearly. They are playing a very important role in boosting the morale of black Sportsmen. I wish to congratulate distinguished Sportsmen who are not black, who have come to give such lustre to this glittering occasion. We thank them for their moral support in the past and in future. Their names will not be forgotten for serving South Africa through their interest in black sport, at this crucial time.

I, above all thank the South African Cooperative Citrus Exchange for inviting me, and I thank each and every one of you for your tolerance of me. If I have sounded offensive do please forgive me in the knowledge that I love South Africa and all her peoples too much, to talk in any other vein, than this one. Fiddling as you know is an acceptable pastime, but you all know that the human family has no forgiveness for those who fiddled while Rome was burning. I could not dare to do the same. I pray that I have caused no one any constipation mental or physical. May God bless you and yours, and all your activities in 1975.