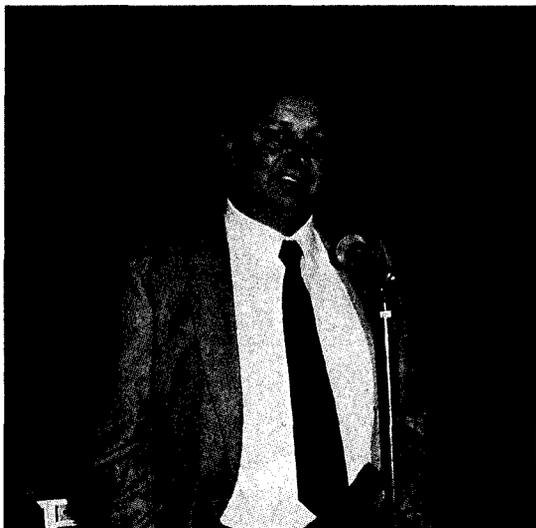


SPOTLIGHT

on innovations for the nineties

by L. LAMSLEY*

The Colloquium on Mining and Metallurgical Innovations for the Nineties, hosted by the OFS Branch of The South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy in Welkom on 9th and 10th September, 1987, was an unqualified success.



Mr B.C. Alberts, President of The South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy

Some 250 delegates attended the Colloquium, of which 136 were from 'out of town'. The organizers are very pleased that such great interest was shown by delegates from other parts of the country. It underlines the importance of such conferences being held on a regular basis to exchange ideas on innovations and technical progress.

The Colloquium was off to a flying start on the Wed-

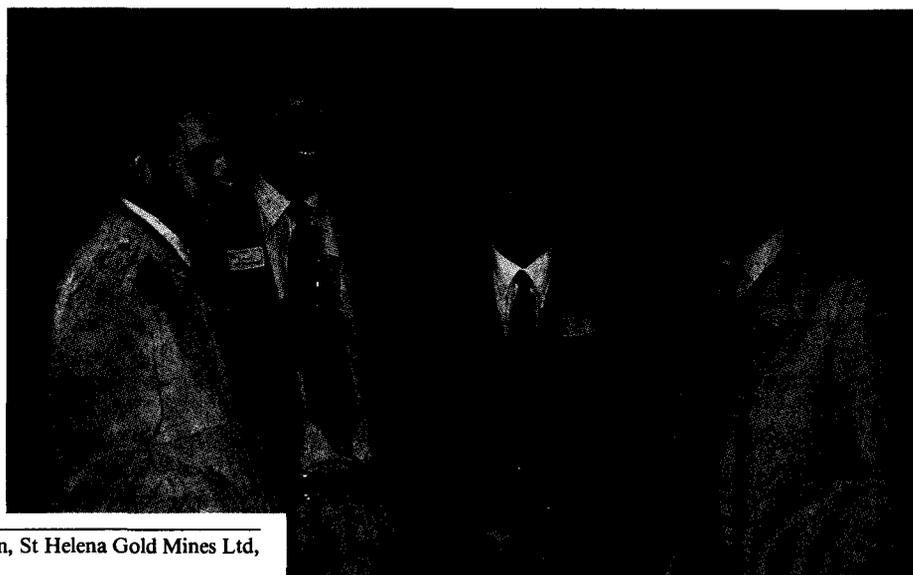
nesday evening, when the delegates were entertained to a welcoming cocktail party at one of the local hotels. Excellent fare was provided, and it was quite apparent that everybody thoroughly enjoyed it.

On Thursday morning the serious business opened at the Ernest Oppenheimer Theatre. SAIMM President, Ben Alberts, set the ball rolling with an opening address, which was followed by the presentation of the joint mining and metallurgical technical papers and discussions. A wide range of issues and topics were addressed by the various authors, including such subjects as noise and hearing in trackless-mining environments, computer simulations for the training of Black metallurgical operators, directional explosive devices and their application in mining, the non-explosive winning of gold-bearing



Mr Frank Egerton, Chairman of the OFS Branch

L to R: Dr T. Szendrei, and Messrs R. Gandy, N. Mayer, and J.A. Cruise



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quartzites using abrasive-entrained high-pressure water jetting, and many others too numerous to mention. The papers were of a high standard, evoking keen interest among the delegates, and the authors are to be congratulated on the high standard of their presentations.

The traditional banquet, held on the Wednesday evening at Gencor's Unicorn Club, was attended by 216 delegates, local dignitaries, and SAIMM staff. Unfortunately, late bookings for the banquet had to be turned down, and what an evening those delegates missed! The cost per person was an 'all in' arrangement, and the wine flowed freely deep into the night. Highlight of the evening was the status of the waiters and waitresses—all mine overseers, shift bosses, and lady staff from the St Helena Gold Mine, where the Branch Chairman, Frank Egerton, is General Manager. Their presence was completely voluntary and, dressed in their 'mine outfits' (all blue and white and the men in bow-ties), they provided five-star

treatment. The catering, which was of an exceptional standard, was undertaken by the Boy Scouts' Association, and the profit made is being used towards sending two scouts to the World Jamboree in Australia at the end of this year. Towards the end of the evening, a carnival-like atmosphere reigned, and everybody present enjoyed Free State hospitality at its very best!

Early the following morning, the delegates (some not so bright-eyed and bushy-tailed) were taken by bus on various mining and metallurgical visits to neighbouring mines. Visits of high interest were arranged, after which the delegates were entertained to luncheons.

And so ended a great colloquium. Important issues had been discussed, new knowledge and technical progress had been shared, and old friendships had been renewed. The delegates left for their destinations richer for having attended.



L to R: Messrs S. Stander, H. Eschenburg and P. Radcliffe (OFS Branch Committee members), and Mr F. Egerton (OFS Branch Chairman)

Technological development*

'The interweaving of the First and Third Worlds in South Africa should be seen as an opportunity for the Third World to develop far faster than would otherwise have been possible', said Dr P.J.D. Lloyd, outgoing President of The Associated Scientific and Technical Societies of South Africa (AS&TS), in his address to AS&TS recently. 'The First World should be confident in the strength of its technological resources, and should have both the vision and the statesmanship to help the Third World in its development.'

Dr Lloyd traced the influence of technology on society from the earliest social structures. Tribal structures had emerged as a result of agriculture; city states had had to develop food-storage, manufacturing, and trading skills; and the first nations, which emerged where there were adequate water supplies, were strongly religious in their structures. True nations required a marriage of agricultural technologies, communications, and trading technologies.

He saw the Industrial Revolution as being the harnessing of energy to improve the productivity of mankind. The computer revolution could be seen as the impact of

energy on information, and the process was continuing to this day.

He felt that urbanization should continue in spite of the risks of creating slums. Slum conditions had existed in every developing society, and had been cured within a few generations. They should therefore be seen as a necessary evil, offset by the benefits of urban living in terms of quality of life, the opportunities created, the increase in life expectancy, and the decrease in the birthrate.

While there were sectors of the population that believed tribal structures should be maintained, he felt that the time would soon come when tribal land could no longer be farmed inefficiently on a communal basis, but would have to be enclosed and the farmers given title to land. This would change the nature of tribal authorities, and would need planning to avoid social disruption.

'Finally', Dr Lloyd said, 'the concept of job creation by labour-intensive work is poor. So-called "capital-intensive" industries permitted workers to add wealth to the nation, whereas labour-intensive work, by its very nature, is unproductive and thus does not add wealth'. He held up SASOL, to whom AS&TS had just made its premier National Award, as an example of how a capital-intensive industry had created a huge number of peripheral jobs at low incremental cost.

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