

The Star

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Moral Re-Armament stories—I

BECAUSE THERE WAS NOT A SINGLE STRIKE
A MINE WORKERS' UNION ORGANISER HAS

Collected £24,000 in union dues this year

EARLY this year a well-known Mine Workers' Union organiser, whose work covers some of the Rand's biggest mining areas, astounded his hearers by announcing that he had collected £24,000 in union dues for the current year, whereas for the previous year the dues had totalled a mere £757.

The reason, he explained, was that not a single strike had been called in his area for a year, as compared with the almost weekly strikes of former years which, when called, had cost the Union £8 per head per week.

When as an unprejudiced observer, I undertook a "one-man committee of inquiry" to investigate what tangible results were to be found of Moral Re-Armament's impact on the national life of South Africa, this story from Johannesburg's gold mining area was only one of innumerable facts which were made available from many different spheres of life.

Ideologies

THE brief and isolated reports that have appeared in the South African Press of the activities of Moral Re-Armament have given little hint of the practical applications of its ideologies.

by

Corrie Dreyer

Rather the emphasis invariably has been on the V.I.P.s attending the movement's meetings and conferences, so that accounts of them have read like snippets from some social register.

It is common knowledge by now that politicians, leaders of industry, high military officials, educationalists, social workers, etc., all have testified, on M.R.A. platforms, to the new start in life they have received under the impetus of the M.R.A. ideology.

While such voluntary statements, made by high-ranking personalities, must stir more than an ordinary curiosity, the crux of the matter, as far as the general public is con-

cerned, lies in the answer to the question—how deeply, if at all, are these altruistic people applying their change of heart for the betterment of the country?

Delegation

SUCH facts as those given above concerning the gold mining industry, derive from the association of both workers and their leaders with the M.R.A. ideology.

The Chamber of Mines, which undertook the cost of sending a delegation of its own representatives to Caux (European headquarters of M.R.A.) reports that there is a 100 per cent. change in the relationships between itself and the Mine Workers' Union as a result of M.R.A. influence.

Personalities such as Mr. Paul Visser, President of the Union, and Mr. R. P. Erasmus, Vice-President (and formerly "Kommandant-Generaal" Erasmus, who led the 1922 strike when over 700 lives were lost), declare that they have found a new way whereby disputes can be amicably settled, with employer and employee meeting on a common ground and considering matters in the light of the M.R.A. ideology.

A fight

THIS change of heart was graphically described by Mr. Erasmus on one occasion. After seeing the M.R.A. play, "The Forgotten Factor," it came to him that people were annihilating one another in the world. "I once saw a fight between a baboon and a bulldog," he said. "At the end the baboon lay dead, and the dog had to be destroyed."

There have been, naturally, many moving episodes at M.R.A. meetings, when former enemies decided to sink their differences and hatred. Typical was the reconciliation effected between a former British soldier, now resident in Johannesburg, and an agricultural official who, since the South African war, had grieved bitterly over the memory of a sister lost in the concentration camps.

The influence on South African racial strife of such men pledging themselves to help build a new age

for the country no doubt will be slow in making itself widely felt, but at least it is worth recording that the seed has been sown.

Repercussions

THE more impressive contributions towards the evidence I sought were the active repercussions in industry, agriculture and other relative spheres. Into this category must fall the testimony made by Mr. Roland Kingwill, Chairman of the Farmers' Association and the Soil Conservation Committee for the Willows District in the Cape.

Mr. Kingwill pioneered the system of rotational grazing in his area, and after coming into contact with M.R.A. he decided, through applying the principles it advocated, to reduce his stock by one-third. As a result, recovery of his land, which he had expected to take five years, has taken place in three.

"Unless we can find a way to touch the hearts of the farmers, soil erosion cannot be stopped," he said. "I have often felt tempted to leave this country and go to the Argentine or the Rhodesias. But with Moral Re-Armament, South Africa has the greatest opportunities of all."

Settlers

SIMILAR evidence came from one of the 1,000 settlers at Vaalhartz, near Kimberley, who described how the application of Moral Re-Armament was beginning to bring a basis of unity on which farmers' co-operatives could work and reduce the settlers' expenses.

For the benefit of those who are beginning to suspect that what is written here is likely to take the shape of a paean of praise of M.R.A.'s work in South Africa, it must be pointed out that these are undeniable facts available to any enquirer.

They emerge, ordinarily, only in testimonies given at public meetings and are recorded in the movement's literature when necessary. For what it is worth, this is a statement of what actually is happening in South Africa to-day.