

18 JUN 1969

SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE THE PRIME MINISTER
AT A PITSO HELD IN QUTHING, ON SATURDAY, 7TH
JUNE, 1969

Since the Basotho National Party was started in 1959, I was fortunate as the leader of this Party to be intimately associated with all constitutional changes from the time the defunct National Council was advisory to the British High Commissioner until it was changed to become a Legislative Council to comply with the wishes of the Basotho. I was at the pre-independence conference, elected by the Basotho people to lead them to responsible government and finally to independence, which we have now achieved.

Through this transitional period Lesotho - like other emerging countries of Africa - has encountered many economic, political and constitutional difficulties. Democracy succeeded although it had a monarch at the head; but the survival of monarchy in this country will depend to a very large extent on the performance of those who hold this office from time to time. The people, on their side, have already indicated their readiness to accept the concept of monarchy as long as the monarchy adjusts itself quickly to the ever-changing circumstances and neither obstructs nor is antagonistic to democracy. Along with monarchy is the institution of traditional chieftainship, which requires some checks and balances if it is to operate satisfactorily in our modern political structure.

Our monarch is the symbol of Basotho unity and as such he must be high above party politics. The role of the monarch is to accept a government given him by the people and he should speak through the voice of his government. He reigns and his government governs. It is for these reasons that he enjoys many immunities; for example, he does not pay tax and he cannot be accused in any court of law; this explains the civil list of R24,000 voted by Parliament every year.

In the same manner the continued existence of the institution of chieftainship will also depend on the performance rendered by chiefs. Amongst the manifold functions and duties of chiefs as servants of the people is the maintenance of law and order but I doubt how many of them perform this duty, which they quite often shirk and pass on to the police. One of their important

functions.....