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JD/SB

February 1, 1968

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To: University Principals
Chairmen University Councils
SRC Presidents
Local Committee Chairmen
National Executive
Advisory Panel
Newspaper Editor
Political Reporters
Students Editors
Honorary Officers

Dear Sir/Madam

Open letter to Minister of Justice re:
Attacks on NUSAS

Attached is a copy of an open letter which has been sent to the Minister of Justice, Mr. P.C. Pelser. It was drawn up by the Standing Committee of SRC Presidents which met in Cape Town last week.

Yours sincerely

JOHN DANIEL
PRESIDENT

TO: The Honorable, The Minister of Justice,

Dear Sir

The National Union of South African Students is, in essence, no more than a confederation of the Student Representative Councils of all affiliated Universities.

The function performed by the NUSAS President at the Head Office is one of co-ordination and interpretation of policy.

Consequently, we feel that any actions taken against NUSAS indirectly become interpreted as being taken against affiliated Representative Councils.

We wish to bring the following facts to your attention and to the attention of the South African public:

- 1) In 1964, Mr. C.J. Driver then President of NUSAS, was held for 28 days under the 90-day detention clause. On his release, Mr. Driver was told by a member of the Security Police that there was no suspicion at all that NUSAS had been involved in extra legal activities.
- 2) In 1966, Mr. I.A. Robertson, then President of NUSAS, was banned in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act. A deputation from NUSAS met the then Minister of Justice, Mr. B.J. Vorster, in Pretoria to discuss the banning. In a statement issued after the meeting, the deputation stated, inter alia, "He did not, however, contest the fact that the activities of the National Union fall wholly within the law."

The Minister of Justice's explanation in the South African Parliament as to why he had banned Mr. Robertson met with considerable criticism. The leader of the Opposition, Sir de Villiers Graaff, said, "I wonder whether we cannot get the Honorable, the Minister to say that he is prepared to reconsider this matter in the interest of the general security of the people of South Africa and the general feeling that here is a possibility that an injustice may have been done."

The M.P. for Yeoville, Mr. Marais Steyn, said, "I personally am a little bit worried that there's too much misinformation on the facts which led the Minister to act in this particular case." The member for Houghton, Mrs. H. Suzman, stated, "The reason for the banning of Ian Robertson is one of the flimsiest and most fatuous explanations I have ever listened to."

- 3) In July, 1967, Dr. R. Hoffenberg, Chairman of the NUSAS Advisory Board was banned. This provoked widespread protests. In October you met a deputation from the University of Cape Town. Following the interview, one of the members of the deputation Professor J. Brock, issued a statement, a portion

of which read "With respect to the Honorable Minister of Justice, I must say that nothing he has said has given me any reason to believe that it (the banning) is justifiable in this sense."

- 4) In August, 1967, Mr. John Daniel, a former Acting President of NUSAS, was refused a passport to travel to the United States. No reason was given.
- 5) In September, 1967, Mr. J. Sprack, President-Elect of NUSAS for 1968 was served with a deportation order signed by the Minister of the Interior. In the deportation order, the Minister stated that he was not prepared to disclose the reasons for the serving of the deportation order.
- 6) In December, 1967, Mr. C.R. Ragaven, immediate Past President of the Students Representative Council of the University of Natal, Non-European centre, and a former Deputy Vice President of NUSAS, was banned. Again, no reason was given.

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With regard to these students we wish to make the following points:

- a) That in none of the abovementioned cases, have any of the individuals been arraigned on any charge before a court of law. In accordance with the present established form of justice in this country.
- b) Except in one case, no explanation was ever given for any of the actions taken by the Departments of Justice and Interior. In the case of the banning of Ian Robertson, the Minister of Justice did furnish an explanation in the House of Assembly. As we have pointed out above, this explanation was both factually incorrect and entirely unsatisfactory.
- c) There have been former office bearers of the National Union who have been involved in extra legal activities, but these students acted in their individual capacities and not as office bearers of NUSAS. In every instance, they were deprived by NUSAS of any status previously accorded and censured for their actions. Further, it has never been suggested in any public statement that NUSAS, as an organisation, has been involved in any extra-legal activities. In fact, the only two public statements in this regard which we have on record, make the point that all the activities of NUSAS have been within the law.

It has been a tactic of the Government to cripple organisations opposed to its policy by using arbitrary measures against their leaders. Therefore, we are forced to presume that a vendetta is being waged against the National Union of South African Students and student opposition as a whole. We are forced, further to conclude that this vendetta is being waged as a result of dissent and that in the absence of any contravention of the law, the Government is using "sneak tactics" in dealing with its opponents.

As student leaders who formulate the policy of the National Union of South African Students, we believe that it is the Government's duty to the public either to institute a Judicial Commission of Inquiry to examine the activities of the National Union or to abandon their crippling tactics. NUSAS has nothing to hide and it is quite prepared to submit its records to the scrutiny of such a Commission.

SIGNED:

Duncan Innes (President, University of Cape Town,
Students' Representative Council)
Mike Robinson (President, University of Natal, Pieter-
maritzburg, Students' Representative
Council)
Ken Jubber (President, Johannesburg College of Education,
Students' Representative Council)
Peter Harris (President, Rhodes University, Students'
Representative Council)
Mark Orkin (Vice President, Witwatersrand University,
Students Representative Council)
John Daniel (President, National Union of South
African Students)