

condemned the intimidation of students wishing to attend lectures, the disruption of lectures and the barricading of entrances to the University.

Part of the reason for the ambivalence (and not just the SRC's) was that no-one seemed to know exactly from which political faction the activist students or the workers came. The students, indeed, seemed to be a particularly leaderless and amorphous grouping.

The test that UCT now faces is whether it will take firm disciplinary steps against the disrupters. In 1986, at the time of the Conor Cruise O'Brien affair, the student disrupters were given only nominal punishment. Perhaps many believe that similar behaviour will ultimately receive similar treatment. But I am not so sure.

The anger among the lecturing staff who had to contend with gangs of invading thugs is considerable. Some were shocked and frightened by the experience, like a young woman colleague who bravely persevered with her lecture despite threats to 'get her'. (Later in the day she found that her car tyres had been slashed).

A widespread view among the staff is that they were directed to go ahead with classes, with no effective physical protection. 'I felt like a Kamikazi pilot,' said one.

There cannot be a serious problem

with the identification of disrupters. Press photographs clearly identify many; lecturers and other university officials can identify a number of others. If, after the process of law, disruption is proved against individuals they should be expelled. Nominal punishment in the name of 'reconciliation' not only will not be reconciliation, it will also compound the problems UCT will have to face in the future.

Should the University have taken a far tougher line right from the start? In some respects, yes. But this is easy to say in the white heat of anger at the disruption or with the wisdom of hindsight. It is no easy task running a volatile, multiracial institution with a population of 14000, nearly one-third of whom are other than white.

The authorities declined to call in the police because to do so would have alienated a large segment of student opinion which, while not necessarily unsympathetic to the strike, certainly opposed the disruptions. Moreover, the sight of police removing barricades or arresting disrupters would have inevitably polarised racial attitudes on the campus. One regrets to have to say this, but it is true.

The strategy appears to have been one of avoiding any actions that would have increased student support for the strikers, thereby allowing the foolish

actions of the strikers and their (tiny) student following to increase their own isolation.

If you live in a university for a long time, as I have done, you come to recognise just how fragile an institution it is, and how necessary peace and tolerance are to the scholarly life.

For many the events at UCT have been a gloomy foreboding of 'the new South Africa'. Is their gloom warranted?

Personally I doubt it. As I have suggested, university communities are not necessarily typical microcosms of the wider society: they have a more volatile mix of inhabitants than virtually any other institution.

Secondly, the TGWU behaved with an intractability and truculence that is hopefully becoming rarer among unions.

More importantly, the strike and the accompanying disruption showed, however dimly, that there exists a large middle-ground of students of all races who deplored the disturbances and wanted to get on with their work.

A number of black students were intimidated into boycotting lectures, but rather more were not.

Obviously you can't read too much into this but it did something to strengthen my view that the overwhelming majority of South Africans devoutly want peace. ●

Any colour, as long as it's white

- JO STIELAU

THE TIDE which toppled the Berlin Wall, the Soviet Communist Party and the gates of Victor Verster Prison dribbled ignominiously into our staff room last term in the shape of Model B.

Originally, Model B was touted as "letting blacks in" but the secret at the parental polls was that a 'Yes' vote was the only way of keeping Them out. The reasoning behind this was that when They "took over", our schools would be safely "open" to all races and "closed" in terms of our admission policy. To tarry in admitting blacks would be to have Them force it upon us. Our schools would be nationalised along with our homes and cars if we weren't covered by flexi-plan B. So Model B's admission policy was debated between scones ("thanks to the Home Economics ladies") upon the wicker chairs which snag our tights. The lunatic left, easily identified by ethnic bracelets, herb teas and home-

spun knitting in progress, led the floor with the usual niceties: Pupil Potential, Affirmative Action and Avoiding Discrimination. The Principal thanked them for their observations. The raving right were more interesting, if no less predictable, with a call for hair tests (not the pencil this time) for lice, blood tests for AIDS, financial checks and an affidavit to the effect that the pupil would not cause political unrest, boycott classes, denounce the prefect system, insist on using difficult-to-pronounce names or smell offensive in class. The Principal thanked them for their observations. The Principal herself observed that Standards and Traditions should be upheld at all costs — including the cost of blazers, ties, seasonal sports equipment and decent swimming attire. Discussion was opened to the floor and among the fears voiced were the problems of black taxis misbehaving in the school parking

lot, militant Muslims demanding separate toilets under our Christian roof and black boys loitering after black girls at the front gate. Somebody suggested that these boys might loiter after, God forbid, white girls — there followed an appalled silence . . . You can have Model B, like Ford's Model T, in any colour as long as you're white. However, the doors of learning are also open if you are pretty rich, speak good English, play reasonable hockey and tennis, have own transport, are free from AIDS and lice, are prepared under oath to retain your Hymen Intacta.

And . . . oh, by the way, WELCOME to our school!

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