

ADDRESS TO NUSAS CONGRESS 1968 by J. Daniel

Mr. Chairman,

Tonight I find myself in a position I neither expected to be in a year ago nor in fact, should I be in this position where for the second time in 3 years I deputise for the elected NUSAS President on the occasion of the Presidential report to Congress. In 1966, I stood in for the restricted NUSAS president of that year, Ian Robertson, and this year I do so for the deported NUSAS President-elect, John Sprack. But there is further reason why I should not be speaking to you tonight and that is that I should not be in South Africa at this time. Last year I was to have gone to the United States for further study but the Government refused me a passport. No reasons were given but I have no doubt it was because of what I did and said as acting-President after the banning of Ian Robertson. Therefore, when the President-elect, John Sprack, was deported last year, and I was invited to take over, I felt I had no choice. Let me make it very clear that I have NEVER regretted serving as head of this National Union, but on the contrary, have been proud of it though it has again reduced me to the status of being unworthy of a passport.

Mr. Chairman, I have to report on a year which has been characterised by fine triumphs and great personal tragedies. We meet tonight with our Hon. President dead, our President-elect and Advisory Panel Chairman in exile.

Chief Albert Luthuli died in an accident last year in the village of Groutville where he had lived <sup>a</sup> twilight existence under the cruellest conditions (since 1959). We mourn his death but are grateful that for 5 years this winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace was able to hold the position of Hon-President. Chief Luthuli was a man of nobility and compassion, of integrity and courage. A true Christian and a born leader of men. He was one of the finest men of our time and any civilised country would have recognised him as such.

The National Union suffered a severe setback in October last when the President-elect John Sprack was deported from South Africa, ostensibly because he had travelled on a British passport. The real reason was of course an attempt to

intimidate the Union. I need hardly add that it has been a pitiful failure. By taking such action against a young and brilliant person at the beginning of his career, the Government has only demeaned itself as given further proof that the spirit of intolerance and bigotry is still rampant in the Nationalist Party.

March this year saw the departure from South Africa on an exit permit of Dr. Bill Hoffenberg, Chairman of the NUSAS Advisory Panel and one of South Africa's most brilliant medical men. When Dr. Hoffenberg was banned last year, no reasons were given for it is not the custom of our Government to tell its victims why they were chosen. Let me say that to those who knew him Bill Hoffenberg was the personification of decency and humanity. Amidst the remorseless debasement of our public life, we were able to look to him as a symbol of courage and decency. It is a sickening thought that so outstanding a man had to leave, forced out by men in every way lesser than he.

I cannot conclude without mentioning the deaths this year of three very great men who have all in some way been connected with the National Union, viz. Prof. Z.K. Matthews, Dr. Martin Luther King and Senator Robert Kennedy. Each distinguished himself outstandingly in his own particular field, each was dedicated to the ideal of the common brotherhood of man and gave of themselves fearlessly to the attainment of that ideal. We mourn their deaths but know that their lives serve as an inspiration for the future.

The past year has also been one of triumph, however. Attempts to destroy the National Union have failed woefully. Its position at its centres has been challenged by self-styled moderate and reactionary student groups but these challenges have been overcome most strikingly at our largest centres, WITS and UCT. Amidst dissent within the ASB and defeat for that body at Stellenbosch, the National Union has emerged stronger than for some years. And now, Mr. Chairman, we must look to the future, examine the road down which we must travel and have a clear idea of where we are going.

THE STARTING POINT - We start off therefore as a Union

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which has been undaunted by continual pressure and intimidation and which has overcome a powerful, well-organised and well-financed, concerted internal opposition movement. However, we realise that the coming journey will be a perilous one.

The Government's authoritarian wrath is directed against the National Union. By every possible measure, bannings, deportations, passport refusals, harassment and intimidation of peaceful protesters, paid spies, the authorities are attempting to both deter future student leaders from an active role in NUSAS and to terrorise the present leadership and this will be the pattern in the future.

The internal student opposition will be molly-coddled, offered legislative protection if they cannot achieve their ends, be praised continually by such persons as the Editor of "Die Burger" as "reformers, renewers and radicals" and receive vast amounts of financial support. And here, Mr. Chairman, I must refer to the allegations of "Die Vaderland" that NUSAS was financing its referendum campaign at WITS with outside financial aid. It is, of course, an old trick to accuse your opponents of measures which you yourself are employing and which you know are indefensible. The Vaderland should stop worrying about NUSAS' finances and instead examine the balance sheets of the Anti-NUSAS groups. That would be news, indeed.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, while our opponents can look forward to protection, we cannot. We will be castigated at every turn by Cabinet Ministers by Current Affairs, by the Editor of "Die Beeld" with such a delicate choice of words as "filth" and the .. .. Burger as "incorrigibles, opponents of healthy change".

We can expect more anonymous and filthy smear sheets, full of lies, distortions and libellous statements. And, here, Mr. Chairman, forgive me another observation. A few weeks ago, the Editor of "Die Burger" inferred that I was a "conditioned Pavlov animal". Well, Mr. Chairman, all I can say is that we must have had the same trainer as I noticed that this self-same editor last week passionately appealed to the Government to take drastic action against the authors of the recent smear pamphlet against the Nationalist Party. The attackers must be destroyed. A conditioned reflex action if ever there was one.

Further, Mr. Chairman, I have been very amused at the howls of outrage from the Government press at the effrontery of the authors in smearing the Nationalist Party. Such protestations of disgust from this same press which has for years been using similar tactics against its opponents and ignoring smear pamphlets at the expense of NUSAS, the Christian Institute and the L. P. and others. As a political columnist of a daily newspaper said last week "It is all a matter of who is smearing Whom."

But I am digressing. What I want to say to those of you who will lead the National Union in the future is that you must be prepared for a hard and precarious journey at considerable personal risk.

Then again we start our journey in a country obsessed and guided by considerations of racialism, in a country where racialism has been placed on a pedestal, elevated into an ideology and we start as leaders of a National Union which rejects racialism and if racialism is supposed to be part of our traditional way of life, then we aim to destroy it. Our policies are those of non-racialism from discrimination, of academic freedom, of democracy based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - policies of which no one need be ashamed. The fact that we have to defend these policies shows the extent to which our public life has been corrupted in this country.

#### WHERE ARE WE GOING?

In starting our journey, we must know where we are going? We are not apostles of apartheid or of communism; we seek the establishment of a non-racial democratic South Africa.

Of course, this is no easy goal and we may never see its achievement. The apostles of apartheid say that our goal is incapable of achievement; our reply is "rather our goal than your apartheid which is morally wrong, which is based on fear and prejudice, economically impossible, politically senseless in that it cannot be implemented. A corrupter of human beings and human values. Your nationalism is the nationalism about which Prof. Hans Kahn was speaking when he said

"A nationalism not tempered by regard for the overruling values of humanity and the rights of other peoples, grows morally sterile and politically dangerous to civil liberty and peace".

We are rather aiming at arriving at a place where all discrimination will be abolished, where the rule of law will be respected and where democracy can flourish. That is where we are going!

HOW DO WE TRAVEL ON THE ROAD?

Mr. Chairman, the essential question is how do we travel along this road we have chosen for ourselves.

Firstly, Mr. Chairman, we must maintain our independence. The path we choose must be our choice alone; we should not be arrogant enough to ignore advice or foolish enough to ignore threats, but let us not follow blindly or shy away unnecessarily. Our decisions must be ours alone irrespective of whether they enrage the government, the press, or the university authorities.

And further in making our decisions or in our activities we should not expect to hold a privileged position in the society. If we, NUSAS, concern ourselves with society, then society has a right to concern itself with NUSAS. I sometimes feel that far too much attention is paid to student affairs in this country, but this constant attention is a and we cannot complain about it. As a predecessor of mine, JONTY DRIVER, said:

"At no stage have we in NUSAS the right to demand to be left alone - if the scope of our interest is South Africa or the world, why then the world and South Africa have a right to watch, to praise and to criticise NUSAS. In demanding independence, we cannot expect isolation."

We hold our goal of a non-racial democracy as an ideal: we are not a political party seeking its end through the ballot box but a students union holding certain ideals and working towards the attainment of these ideals in our limited fields. It has become fashionable to castigate those of us who hold ideals whose attainment appears remote: we are called unrealistic, inflexible, doctrinaire or to again quote that of so-called enlightened nationalism, the Editor of Die Burger "the real conservatives".

But let me remind these critics that the Christians in the days of Roman persecution were idealists, so too were those Germans who clung to democratic ideas in the days of Nazi tyranny. Their prospects for freedom were remote at the time, and yet their ideals triumphed and so too will ours in South Africa. 6/

and so too will ours in South Africa. As Robert Kennedy said in Cape Town

"Each time a man stands up for an ideal . . . . ."

And let me say, too, to those who criticise us for not taking part in the South African dialogue that our non-participation is not our fault. It is they who destroyed, splintered and excluded the voices of non-racialism and not us - who voluntarily opted out. And if we do not participate in the dialogue it is because one cannot converse with the deaf; it is a reflection on them and not on us.

In travelling our road, we must concern ourselves not only with those matters that concern us directly as students but with all matters which concern us as members of society and when I say all matters I do not refer to South Africa alone but to matters all over the globe, Rhodesia and Viet Nam included.

I offer this then as a direction for NUSAS in the future. NUSAS must continue to provide benefits for its students with tours and loans, discounts and scholarships and so on; benefit the community with welfare and educational projects. These benefits and educational projects should not be regarded as a smokescreen for any other activity - these benefits are a normal activity of any trade union. With the knowledge of the dreadful conditions and schools, townships etc., we cannot in all good conscience sit back and do nothing about it. Hence we should encourage students to participate in Showco and WITSCO, Operation Snowball, Rand Bursary Fund, Kupugani and so on.

NUSAS must continue to work for more efficient forms of student government through regular conferences on such things as student bookshop schemes, student insurance schemes, student editors meetings and so on.

And essentially, Mr. Chairman, NUSAS must continue its educational role. It must serve as a highly efficient training-organisation for effective leadership students must be educated in the harsh realities of our society.

Possibly the most important contribution that the National Union can make to this country is to ensure that every year there emerge from the universities students who are firmly committed to the principles which NUSAS espouses, and who can make use of the leadership training they have had to carry these ideas through into the community beyond the universities. It is indirectly through means such as these rather than through direct political action that NUSAS can hope to influence the course of events in South Africa.

At the same time the campuses at large must be educated. The Wits referendum to my way of thinking showed quite clearly that NUSAS's greatest problem was ignorance, not only of NUSAS itself, but of South Africa as a whole. It is up to the SRCs in conjunction with the NUSAS Local Committees, as well as with other organisations if necessary, to initiate long-term education programmes on the campuses. Unless this is done, we can never hope to stem the tide of conservatism that must grow on the campuses just as it grows in the country at large.

And so I call on this Congress to expand the seminar programme and provide more opportunities for inter-racial student contact.

And when I say this I do not mean we must exclude the students of the Afrikaans centres or their representative body, the Afrikaanse Studente Bond. That body is no friend of NUSAS and has shown itself as a body dedicated to our destruction, but that is no reason to cast them aside completely or to abandon altogether attempts to make contact with them. And now that there are signs of new thinking amongst Afrikaans students, let us hold out the hand of friendship. And if it is cast aside, extend it again and again confident in the knowledge that one day it will be grasped.

That then is the road we must follow: working for our students and for all the community, offering our hand to all and casting no one aside and above all proclaiming our ideals FOR NUSAS STANDS OR FALLS BY WHAT IT BELIEVES IN AND IS NOT PREPARED TO PLAY THIS DOWN FOR ANYONE. Our powers are limited and there is little we can do to change the rigid status-quo of present-day South Africa. Nevertheless, NUSAS has a very essential role to play in South Africa, and our

most effective weapon is TRUTH. We know that apartheid is morally wrong; we know that the similarities between human beings are greater than their differences, that discrimination is an insult to man's dignity and cannot form the basis for any just and stable social order. Therefore, because truth is great and must ultimately prevail, we must continue to say these things however bleak the future may seem.

#### CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, by long association with NUSAS is nearing its end. It began at Wits and ends at Wits, and in 3 weeks I leave South Africa on an exit permit: not never to return for I know that one day we in this hall and countless others like us will be serving South Africa together. I have been proud of this National Union and have confidence in the coming new student leadership. I say to you:

"GO FORWARD WITH STRENGTH AND PRIDE, DIGNITY  
AND COURAGE."

Remember always Woodrow Wilson's words:

"THE HISTORY OF LIBERTY IS A HISTORY OF  
RESISTANCE".

I wish you well.