

NUSAS NATIONAL DIRECTIVE FOR HEALTH

REPORT TO CONGRESS

CAPE TOWN, 1981

1. AIMS FOR 1981

At the beginning of the year we hoped to work in the following areas:

- i) Production and distribution of Fact Sheets. The main aim of the Health Directive is to make students, both medical and non-medical, aware of the broader context of health and the way in which the structure of our society results in poor health for the majority of people.
- ii) Establishment and running of a resource centre.
- iii) Co-ordination with other centres.

In these we were successful to a greater or lesser extent.

- i) The first 2 Fact Sheets - "Work and Health" and "Death and Disease in South Africa" have been produced and distributed and the 3rd is in preparation. We received positive feedback on the first Fact Sheet and hope that by this stage many of the initial technical problems have been resolved. Finance has been received from IMP and SSPT for the Fact Sheets.
- ii) The resource centre at Wits has yet to be efficiently organised. We have been offered the part-time services of a librarian by the Wits SRC. The U.C.T. resource centre has been established and is functioning well.
- iii) Co-ordination needs to be greatly improved. Meetings were held between members of the Cape Town and Johannesburg groups. Directive during the course of the year.
- iv) A reading group was established at UCT and attracted a number of people. Members of the group will be involved in the Directive next year.
- v) Members of the Health Directive were involved in organising the Medical Students' Council Conference at Wits and UCT. The Wits' topic was "South African Health - History of the Main Complaint" and at UCT was titled "The People and the Profession". Both were well attended.

2. CO-ORDINATION

To facilitate improved co-ordination between centres we recommend the election of one National Co-ordinator and several strong regional co-ordinators - one at each centre. Having one national co-ordinator will facilitate travelling between the campuses and more regular feedback between the centres.

Communication between the different Directives is also important and should be facilitated.

3. SUGGESTIONS FOR 1982

We suggest that during the coming year the Directive be involved in the following activities:

- Continued production and distribution of Fact Sheets.
- Preparation of slide and tape shows.
- Establishment of resource centre.
- Establishment of reading groups and publication of suitable reading lists.
- Organisation of seminars, workshops and perhaps a national conference.

RHODES CENTRE REPORT TO NUSAS CONGRESS 1981

1. ORIENTATION WEEK

1981 was the first time that a proper Orientation Week was held at Rhodes. The committee attempted to adopt an "orientation" approach rather than many of the old practices of the so-called Freshers' Reception committee of the past.

As a whole, the week proved to be fairly successful, highlighted by a sexism debate and a talk by Bishop Tutu.

One of the major problems to emerge was that of very limited recruitment for SRC sub-committee. As this was the first orientation week problems were to be expected but will hopefully be eliminated from the 1982 Orientation Week.

On an organizational level, orientation week was very successful and served as a springboard for the rest of the year.

2. POLITICAL ACTION

High profile activity on the Rhodes campus has not been too successful over the past year. Meetings to commemorate the 21st anniversary of Sharpeville, October 19, and to launch the NUSAS theme were all poorly attended. The July referendum, too, did not attract quite the usual level of interest, probably due largely to the weak opposition. The anti-Republic Day mass meeting was banned and only the two protest meetings against bannings and detentions, the Anderson meeting and general election evaluation were successful in drawing a substantial number of students. However, the latter two meetings certainly provided little in the way of new ideas and political input.

On the other hand lower profile activity met with more success. Seminars and debates on sexism, democracy, nuclear power, Wilson Rowntree strike, NUSAS, National Women's Day, etc., led to a far more in-depth probing of issues.

It thus appears that low-profile activity was more successful than high profile stuff and that high profile activity was not properly planned and presented (for example "Egoli" played to a packed house during the election). The chief reason for failing to get to grips with political issues at this level lay probably in our almost paranoid pre-occupation with affiliation.

3. ANTI-REPUBLIC DAY

Activities at Rhodes were necessarily limited due to the relative absence of off-campus groups taking up the issue in Grahamstown and the Eastern Cape. Despite the banning of the mass meeting (which nevertheless attracted over 700 people) the programme was successful in the issues raised in well-attended seminars on the apartheid republic and on Afrikaner nationalism, and at the organisational level.

Politically the issue attracted active support from unexpected quarters as well as much general support - the R.U. Chamber Choir refused to take part in some gig to do with the celebrations, and the Christian societies on campus got quite stirred up over the issue and it seems to have acted as a catalyst for more political action/support on their part.

4. PROJECTS COMM.

The first term raised the problem of what roles the NUSAS local committee and the SRC should play. The SRC Projects Comm. was only set up at the beginning of the second term and incorporated NUSAS local comm. members as well as new people. Projects Comm. then took on the role of organizing together with the local comm., both high and low profile activity.

While the first term was dominated by Orientation Week, by-elections and the referendum, the second term was free for Projects Comm. activities. While recruitment had been slow in the first term, the second term saw new people involved and the anti-Republic Day programme saw Projects Comm. working at its best.

The third term was again dominated by a referendum and also by the SRC elections when a number of people who had been involved in Projects Comm. and the student press were elected. Thus Projects Comm. activity decreased and Edcom and Wages Comm. structures were established, drawing people out of Projects Comm.

The fourth term saw little high profile activity as the new SRC started laying the ground for 1982 and winding down to exams. Wages Comm., Edcom., and the law and health directives are slowly taking shape.

A continuous activity of Projects/Wages Comm. for the second half of the year was the Wilson-Rowntree strike and boycott. This activity was again limited by the absence of off-campus support. On campus the issue was not very well received and we only managed to raise just over R500!

5. RESIDENCE LIAISON

The residence reform committee, despite much work, failed to achieve significant reform of the residence rules due to the conservative and non-student control of the residences and despite overwhelming student support. A residence food comm. was also set up to assist with student grievances. This area of SRC work has now been placed under a new and specific SRC portfolio in order to further co-operation between residence students and the SRC.

6. FACULTY COUNCILS

As yet these exist in theory rather than in practice. However, preparation work has been done to activate the councils next year and a few faculties are ripe for increased student participation in faculty matters.

7. STUDENT PRESS

The Rhodes student press has seen quite a few changes in staff and style as well as the appearance of a Christian society based newspaper which emerged out of a more partisan political attitude on the part of the Christian societies and out of the influence of SUCA on Rhodes campus.

Rhodeo, the official SRC publication, has become a more campus appealing newspaper. Unfortunately Rhodeo got the SRC into a defamation suit with an ex-SRC member which looks like being rather costly. A motion proposed in the university senate to impose a "covert" form of pre-publication censorship on Rhodeo was roundly defeated in October.

Oppidan, facing financial problems, has lost campus appeal through lack of campus news.

Co-operation with both Rhodeo and Oppidan has been quite good over the past year.

In the second term an SRC mouthpiece, SR Scene was started. It seems to have provided a useful form of contact between the SRC and the rest of campus in providing information as to general SRC activity, especially areas which do not generally receive much publicity in Oppidan and Rhodeo.

The SRC has recently acquired its own printing press. Hopefully by the end of 1982 we will be fully equipped to print/publish Oppidan, SR Scene, Rhodeo, etc.

Rhodeo No 5 1981 has been banned for distribution and Inquiry, produced by 1980 journalism students and focussing on the schools boycott in Grahamstown in 1980 was banned for possession.

8. SRC ELECTION

In the wake of the political blunder made by the 1980/81 SRC during the March referendum and after the successful referendum in July this was the next test and obstacle.

However, the election results were certainly satisfying - all seats went to NUSAS supporters except for the four contested residence seats. The composition of the new SRC represents a clear vote of confidence by the electorate in the political direction initiated by the previous SRC. This was important as the 1980/81 SRC was in a sense a "pathfinder" - exploring avenues hitherto unknown to SRCs at Rhodes. There is some cause for concern in the somewhat lax approach to the SRC election by the NUSAS bloc in the face of a heavily contested set of elections. The composition of the new SRC appears to have some potential for conflict. Rhodes could be in for interesting times.....

9. INFORMATION SCANDAL

While intimidation and harassment of individual students by the security police has continued throughout the past year, it was discovered in mid-year that since Dr Henderson became Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University, the university has on a regular basis passed on "pro forma" information concerning Rhodes students to the security police at the request of the latter. (The admin's defense was that this was an improvement on the policy of the previous V.C. and that the university could not take a strong stand on this issue as it might endanger the presence of black students on campus and in the residences!) Considerable support from both staff and students was mobilized against admin, largely by the Academic Freedom Committee. Council failed to take a definite policy decision on the matter but left Henderson to use his initiative, which he maintains will and has ended such co-operation.

10. RELATIONS WITH ADMIN AND TEACHING STAFF

Relations with admin have improved slowly over the year (see section on finance). After the info. debacle admin. realized that the SRC did indeed have campus support and admin's attitude changed markedly. This carried over onto the new SRC's relations with admin.

Senate failed to make a policy decision to prevent exams being written on 16 June in future but gave an assurance that the matter would be dealt with at the administrative level. No exams are to be written on 16 June 1982 or 1983 according to the dates of terms etc. for these years.

However, if these improved relations are merely a more sophisticated attempt at co-optation such attempts are likely to fail in part because of greater co-operation between staff and students. There is much staff dissatisfaction with the university administration and despite the academic drain from Rhodes a number of academics both senior and junior, are sympathetic to the student movement and a number of them are keen to forge stronger links.

11. STUDENT REPRESENTATION

As yet we are not represented in any form on Council and only have limited representation on Senate - three observers with speaking rights, an agenda which is divided into restricted and unrestricted sections and the student observers are only allowed to be present during the unrestricted section; observers are bound to keep senate matters confidential! However, it does seem that the situation might improve as conflict within Senate is mounting. We are slowly getting reps. onto more Senate sub-committees.

At the moment we are trying to get an improved student disciplinary code through Senate and also representation on disciplinary panels as a result of heavy and conservative judgments and large student dissatisfaction over the past year.

12. FONS

A lot more work needs to be done to build FONS up in Grahamstown and the Eastern Cape and to bring in new academics, etc.

13. RAG

Relations with Rag are okay and always seem to get better as the year goes on. There is a possibility that drummies will be abolished because of the expense this incurs to Rag!

14. RHODES MUSIC RADIO

RMR is expanding into the residences next year and again relations are good.

15. FINANCE

Over the past year the SRC budget has increased from an effective amount of R22 000 to R40 000. (This figure excludes salaries of SRC permanent staff which are paid by admin.) This put us on a par with the 1981 Durban and Pietermaritzburg budgets and will enable us to play a far more effective and active role on campus. As far as 1981 is concerned it seems that we will go into the red to the tune of over R1 000.

16. STUDENT SERVICES

- 1) SASTS is now operating from the SRC offices and sales have trebled.
- 2) The NUSAS/SASTS swift life scheme is operating on a small scale on campus through the SASTS sales officer.
- 3) A vacation employment scheme is operating as from this vac. It has been co-ordinated with other NUSAS campuses.
- 4) Library hours were extended for both mid-year and end-of-year exams.

17. CONTACT WITH OTHER CAMPUSES AND OFF-CAMPUS GROUPS

Contact with UCT and Wits has been extensive in terms of co-ordination and projects (e.g. academic freedom lecture, women's movement seminar, press statements, and day to day advice). Hopefully relations with Durban and Pietermaritzburg can be built up over the next year.

Contact was made with the 1981/2 UPE SRC and a working relationship established. There has also been contact with SUCA locally and with Polstu to a very limited extent.

As far as non-student groups are concerned, the main contact has been with SAAWU in East London in regard to the Wilson Rowntree strike/boycott. The relative absence of progressive off-campus groups in Grahamstown severely limits broad-based political activity (as does the obsessive paranoia of the local police). However, groups such as the Black Sash and the S A I R R are potential allies and links need to be forged here.

18. RELATIONS WITH HEAD OFFICE

These have certainly been fruitful but have not been unproblematical. Now that the affiliation obsession is over both Rhodes and 131 Lower Main Road need to clearly mark out a working relationship. The last six months have seen the emergence of conflicts and tensions within the NUSAS camp at Rhodes and in some part over the role of Head Office on Rhodes campus.

19. "STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC FUTURE"

While the open-ended nature of the theme and its accessibility have facilitated mobilisation of campus, the theme has not been without its problems. The main problem seems to have been precisely the lack of clarity of the theme, made worse by an especially dramatic year for NUSAS. In the March referendum the question of democracy was used against the SRC.

Since 1981 has been dominated by two referenda, SRC elections, anti-Republic Day activity and emotive political activity including responses to bannings and detentions, and although all this has no doubt increased support for and the strength of NUSAS in the short term, consolidat-on and internal education on campus has been neglected. This has in fact allowed for problems of organisation and direction to develop.

Thus it is imperative that the next year at Rhodes sees priority given to consolidation on the campus in general, to co-ordination of activities, development of viable sub-committees and organisational structures, internal education, and the turning of passive support for the student movement into active support.