Nusas Congress speeches '81

A call for democracy

Contents

Introduction

NUSAS Congress is one of the most important events on the NUSAS calendar. Students from different campuses get together to evaluate, to consolidate, and more importantly to determine new direction.

The speeches presented at the 1981 Congress had a crucial influence on the direction taken. Their high standard reflected the way in which speakers and topics were chosen. In reviewing the activities of 1981 it was felt that although 'democracy' had been explored throughout the year, we had not gone far enough.

The speakers chosen were all close to the student movement and aware of the problems it was facing. They were also able to situate the student movement within a broader context.

The speeches addressed themselves to the question of democracy in some depth, examining it at both a theoretical and a practical level.

A strong theme to emerge was the need to build a more powerful and democratic campus base to be mobilised in the fight for democracy both on and off campus. The speeches contain much of the logic behind this new emphasis. They therefore provide important background to an understanding of the NUSAS theme for 1982 – CAMPUS ACTION FOR DEMOCRACY.

It was felt that it was important to publish the speeches and to make them available to a wider audience. (Only the main speeches were chosen due to space limitations). Those who attended Congress will also find the collection of speeches very useful. They reflect many ideas, questions and problems pertinent to the student movement and indeed to the Democratic Movement as a whole. Hopefully they will be read and discussed. In this way, we can work towards a greater understanding of our own role and so in a small way advance the struggle for a democratic South Africa.

Jonty Joffe

Jonty is the present NUSAS President, elected at the end of 1981. He was Projects Officer on the 1978/79 Wits SRC and Seminars Chairperson the following year. After completing his B.A. he was elected NUSAS Reaseach Officer for 1981. In July Jonty became acting-President after President Andrew Boraine's activities were severely restricted by his banning order.

Congress opening address

Friends

I have opened most of the speeches I have given this year by pointing to the fact that I am only the Acting NUSAS President — the democratically-elected NUSAS President, Andrew Boraine, has been banned for 5 years.

I open this speech in an even more precarious position. Not only is Andrew unable to take on his rightful place at Congress — but the two NUSAS Presidents who preceded him, Fink Haysom and Auret van Heerden, are now in detention, under Section 22 and Section 6 respectively.

In many countries in the world, a student organisation would have to look at itself very carefully in the case of 3 consecutive leaders being forcibly removed by the government under which they live. After all, people are only jailed, people are only silenced if they have done wrong.

But South Africa is no ordinary country. In South Africa one does not have to do wrong to be detained without trial, banned for 5 years or be convicted and sentenced under the mass of security legislation.

In fact, quite the opposite is usually true. In the distorted country in which we live, to be banned or detained or sentenced is in many ways a complement, an affirmation of one's commitment to opposing the oppression and exploitation that is apartheid, and working for a democratic and just future.

So with all 3 of our past NUSAS Presidents now directly suffering the consequences of standing up and opposing apartheid we do not enter the 59th NUSAS Congress feeling that we have done wrong. We rather enter this congress with our heads held high, firm in the belief that ours is a just cause and one we will continue to work for, whatever the consequences.

The backdrop to this NUSAS Congress is a particularly dramatic one. South Africa is at the moment living through a period which sees the two opposing forces in our society pitched in battle against one another. On the one hand we have the South African State unleashing an incredible wave of repression — particularly at this stage in terms of detentions — against the Democratic Movement in the country. On the other hand we have the Democratic Movement gaining momentum and continuing to grow in the face of repeated attacks against it.

And I think that at the outset of this Congress, it is important that we briefly look at these two forces and then attempt to situate ourselves, as a constituent part of the Democratic Student Movement, as part of this dynamic.

The history of the Democratic Movement in South Africa goes back a long way — almost to the beginning of this century. But this has not been a smooth-flowing history. It has been a history which has gone through varying phases — at times, such as during the 1950s, reaching peaks of intensity and very seriously challenging the structure of power and control in South Africa. At other times, during the following decades the Democratic Movement has suffered the blow of vicious attacks by the Apartheid government. During the years 1960 to 1964 it has continued to exist only through the utmost dedication of a small group of people and the memories of a people longing to be free.

The decade of the 1970s was a fairly desperate one for South Africans. Whilst the massive strike wave of 1973 and 1974 and the nationwide student uprising of 1976 saw the majority of South Africans beginning to regroup and oppose apartheid on the basis of their united strength, it was only towards the end of the decade that the militancy generated once again began to take on the form of the Democratic Movement.

The past 2 or 3 years, however, have seen the Democratic Movement re-emerging in full swing.

If we look back at the past years, we see the re-emergence of a Broad Democratic Front organizing to oppose Apartheid.
I call this Front Broad for two reasons : firstly, it is broad in that it is composed of a vast range of organizations — trade unions, womens organizations, community groups, youth groups, student organizations and political organizations.
Secondly, it is broad in that it is a non-racial front — which does not call for a reversal of apartheid but rather for a totally non-racial future in South Africa.

I must also emphasize that the Democratic Movement has not emerged in isolation. It has emerged very much on the basis of a history of resistance to oppression and exploitation — and a consistant attempt to absorb and assimilate the lessons of that history.

It would be very wrong if we were to idealize the Democratic Movement for that will do nothing to take it forward. It is rather our duty to recognize both its strengths and its weaknesses. And it undoubtedly has substantial weaknesses. At the moment, whilst organization might be particularly strong in some areas of the country, it is very weak and divided in others.

Whilst some organisations and groupings have the depth of tradition to sustain repeated waves of repression others do not. And further, whilst some groups have carefully assimilated the lessons of a history of resistance in South Africa, other groups seem hell bent to repeat its mistakes and fall into the same traps as those before them.

The strengths of the Democratic Movement are far more marked, however. By simply looking at the past year, we can see the enormous strides it has made.

In 1971, when the Nationalist Government decided to launch massive celebrations for the 10th anniversary of the Republic of South Africa, very few groups took on the challenge of opposing the celebrations. It was actually only NUSAS (I think to our credit) and the Labour Party that organizationally opposed the celebrations. The events of this year were completely different. Throughout the country, democratic groups united to oppose the celebrations. I hardly need tell people here of the Anti-Republic Day activities in our own terms, we had mass rallies, marches, protests and, although it is something for which we should not really claim credit, we had "Flag burnings". (As an interlude. Possibly one of the saddest aspects of the campus activities, in retrospect any how, was the fact that Griffiths Mxenge was stopped by the security police on his way to address a meeting at Rhodes).

In general, the Anti-Republic Day activities illustrated the strength and growth of the Democratic Movement — with even Cliff Saunders and the SABC failing to conceal the extent to which the opposition far overshadowed the activities themselves.

I could continue to list and detail the gains of the Democratic Movement this year, but I probably do not need to do so. One needs only to open the commercial press (with all its own limitations) any day of the week to see the endless number of strikes, boycotts, student activities and political campaigns.

In terms of this Congress, it is probably important to point to the two most recent activities of the Democratic Movement — as they do possibly serve as the specific backdrop of the moment.

The first activity that I am referring to is the just-completed and enormously successful national campaign to boycott the elections of the South African Indian Council. On the grounds that the Council is simply a dummy institution imposed on the "Indian" community by the Nationalist Government, democrats throughout the country organized the community to boycott the elections. As most people know, the final election poll worked out at about 10 percent of registered voters, which is probably about 2 and a half per cent of all Indians — at a fair guess, few more than the extended families of the candidates actually voted.
(There was a fairly remarkable article in the star on polling day which claimed that "by midday two candidates in the SAIC elections were running neck and neck - both having polled one vote. The article just begged the comment or headline of "One man, one vote")

The second activity of the Democratic Movement which should serve as the backdrop to congress is the mounting opposition to Ciskei Independence.
On December 4th, the day after congress ends, the Ciskei will receive its so-called "Independence" from South Africa and become the fourth "independent" homeland — to form part of the jigsaw puzzle of apartheid.

It is important that we focus on the Ciskei during congress — both because the homelands form the very cornerstone of the migrant labour system on which South African society rests and because the issue has quite clearly been singled out by the Democratic Movement as a central one — especially in terms of the position and harassment of the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU) by the Ciskei security police and government (which it is very difficult to tell apart).

Having briefly looked at the Democratic Movement, it is important to look at the counter-force ie. the apartheid state, and particularly how it has responded to this movement.

Looking back at the performance of apartheid over the past year, we see that it has been one of crisis.

* Despite P W Botha's Total Strategy
* Despite the Carlton and Cape Town Conferences with big business
* Despite all attempts to crush opposition
* Despite the support of the Reagan Administration

Despite all these, and many more factors, the apartheid system is currently faced with crises on all fronts :

Laurie Nathan, UCT SRC President addresses Congress on the opening night.

* Economically, they have not even begun to come to terms with a high inflation-rate, massive unemployment rate and drastic skills shortage.
* Politically, both the Fascist Extreme Right-Wing and, far more importantly, the Democratic Movement, have failed to accept the legitimacy of government initiatives.
* Ideologically, despite all attempts by the SABC and SADF, they have failed to convince the majority of South Africans that although they might dislike apartheid, it is actually good for them.

Although these crises might encourage those working for change in South Africa — because although they are unpleasant to live through they illustrate the inadequacies of the existing system — they have also made the government desperate.
And a desperate power is a particularly dangerous one!

It is within this context that we have witnessed an enormous amount of State repression during the year. We do not need to look beyond our own ranks — in the student movement — to see the extent of this repression.

A few isolated examples of repression of students or those close to us, include :

* The detention of Andrew for 35 days
* The banning of Sammy Adelman and Andrew, as well as Firoz and Azhar Cachalia on Wits campus
* The banning of the Republic Day Rally on Rhodes campus
* The trial of 48 UCT students under the Riotous Assemblies Act
* The detention of Clive van Heerden and Keith Coleman, the editors of SASPU National, just over a month ago.

The list is endless....and at the same time only a minute proportion of the number of acts of repression against the trade union movement, community groups and Democratic Movement as a whole.

(By last week, the government announced that it now had 111 detainees. Whilst the SAIRR estimated the figure at being far greater, since then at least 20 more people have been detained, and, as far as I am aware, none released).

We must now ask the question of how NUSAS fits into all of this?

The years 1977 to 1979 were very important years for NUSAS. After the severe crisis the organization faced in 1976, 3 themes were launched with the intention of consolidating the organization, building structures on the campuses and developing a new generation of leadership. These 3 themes, "Africanization"; "Education for an African Future" and "Action on Education" provided us with an exceptionally solid foundation from which to launch into the 1980s.

At the end of 1979 the NUSAS President, Auret van Heerden (and I believe I can quote a detained person) claimed that it was now important for NUSAS to "look outward" and begin to once again participate in the broad political arena. The transition from being an introverted to an extroverted political force is one which I believe NUSAS has undergone particularly well.

During the last two years NUSAS has played an important role in the Democratic Movement in various ways.

Firstly, we have participated in national campaigns, such as the "Free Mandela Campaign" and the "Anti-Republic Day Celebrations" campaign.

Secondly, we have played a support role to other democratic organizations, most significantly in the Fattis and Monis, Meat and Wilson Rowntree boycotts and the support of the squatters at Nyanga Bush and at Kliptown.

Thirdly, we have begun to form part of a non-racial student movement in South Africa. I think that it is

important that I clarify what I am saying here. Over the past year or two, our relationship with other Democratic student groups, such as AZASO and COSAS, has increased markedly. However, this does not mean that we have any intention of synthesizing the organizations. The vastly different conditions on Black and White campuses necessitate that Black and White student groupings organize separately. But this does not mean that there is not opportunity for significant room for co-operation and for forming an alliance with one another over common issues. It is in terms of this alliance that I believe great gains have been made.

At the same time as participating and contributing to the Democratic Movement, NUSAS has also developed considerably on the campuses themselves. I would argue that we are at one of the strongest points in our 57-year history. Not only are 4 out of the 5"English" campuses affiliated to NUSAS, but students have elected strongly pro-NUSAS SRCs on each of these.

But our strengths must not make us complacent. It is crucial that we now consolidate the gains we have made to ensure that we continue to go forward.

There are a few significant problem areas that we are faced with and, at the outset of this congress, I would like to point to a few of these :

Firstly, whilst we have participated in campaigns and picked up many issues, we have often failed to pay adequate attention to organization and education on the campuses themselves. We have mobilized our support base, but we have not really organized it.

Although we have great support, not enough people are participating in organization and developing the understanding that will ensure that their commitment to democracy will be a life-long one.

A second problem area arises with our relationships with other groups. We have built very productive relationships with the progressive groups — be they Black students, trade unions or support committees. These relationships are, however, very complex and sensitive and we need to assess them very carefully so as to ensure their durability and continued productivity.

Thirdly, I feel that we have not emerged as a powerful enough force in the running of our universities. With last year's theme we focussed on the Anti-democratic aspects of all areas of society, except our own environment — the university campuses themselves.

There are currently many moves being made in terms of the South African universities, including the attempt by the SADF to establish military units on all campuses and the various commissions, recommendations and reports of the "liberal establishment" and the South African State. It is imperative that we develop a systematic response to these areas and advance the demands of democratic students in terms of these issues.

NUSAS Congress provides us with a unique opportunity to get together and share ideas. We have 6 days in which to assess our achievements over the past year and plan and prepare for the future.

NUSAS Congress can be a lot of fun, but it is also a serious affair. We live in a very serious country and have taken on a very serious task — that of working for change. We must have our fun and get to know each other, but the reality of the country in which we live should always be kept in mind.

There is something about this congress hall that looks very familiar. I suppose its got to do with the similarity with the 1978 congress held here in Cape Town. But there is also something very different. Personally, that difference is symbolized by a comparison which I can't help making with 1978.

In 1978, the NUSAS President, Auret van Heerden, on the evening of the 28th November, presented his brother Clive with a 21st birthday present - a book on Black jazz — in front of the whole congress. Those who know Clive can probably imagine his embarassment at the situation.

Well, it is now 3 years later and it it is once again the 28th November. Both Auret and Clive are sitting in prison cells, under Section 6, in solitary confinement.

Clive and Auret are only 2 amongst a whole host of detainees, 15 of which are today only experiencing their second day of incarceration.

For many of us who know people in detention, and for whom they are not just names, but possibly friends, lovers, associates or acquaintances, this is a difficult time. But, although it is a difficult time, that should in no way be allowed to deter our efforts and our activities.

The past few years have been relatively comfortable one's, particularly for white democrats in South Africa. If we are to read what is happening around us, we see that things are changing and we can predict that from now on we won't be having quite as comfortable a ride.

Joe Phaahla, AZASO President and Jonty Joffe, NUSAS President.

In the face of the existing attack on the democratic movement, it is important that we carefully consider our position and work at how we are not only going to continue, but how we are going to continue to grow. In ending this talk, in terms of the conditions under which this congress is taking place, I would like to make a few suggestions as to how we should respond to the brutality of apartheid and, particularly the current wave of detentions.

Firstly, we must not be intimidated.
One of the main aims of waves of repression is to intimidate and scare those who are not actually detained. We cannot allow to be intimidated. In fact, in the face of detentions, it becomes vital that we not only continue, but actually intensify our efforts. Although we acknowledge the power of the Nationalist government, we do not acknowledge it so as to withdraw. We rather acknowledge it so as to understand and anticipate it better so that we can continue to work productively.

Secondly, it is important that we never allow ourselves to become complacent. With enormous numbers of people detained each year, there is a tendancy for people to begin to ignore the repression and accept it as part and parcel of everyday life. That is something we must never allow ourselves to do. With each passing day, detentions become more, not less of a issue, and it is our responsibility to utilize every resource we have available to keep the issue in the public eye and ensure that people are educated about the horrors of the society in which we live.

Thirdly, we must carefully look at ourselves in the face of detentions. We must consider our own positins and our own commitment and begin to accept that if we plan to dedicate ourselves to a democratic future in our country, the road will not necessarily be an easy one.

But, if it is one in which we believe, then it is a challenge that we must accept and commit ourselves to for the rest of our lives.

This NUSAS Congress provides us with a unique opportunity. Whilst the broader community from which we come is under attack, in the form of an endless list of detentions, we have the opportunity not only to continue with our work, but to show the world that we are continuing.

It is within this context that I would like to send out a very clear message from this congress. It is a message which goes out to the rulers of this country:

- to P W Botha
- to Magnus Malan
- to Major Williamson

The message is that "for each one of us who you detain and for each one of us you take away, there are 10, 20 or 100 of us waiting right here to take their place."

Silent tribute to detainees

Staff Reporter

MORE than 400 people attending the official opening of the 59th Nusas congress at the University of Cape Town on Saturday observed a minute's silence for those detained in South Africa and in tribute to slain Durban lawyer Mr Griffiths Mxenge.

Mr Mxenge, a former member of the African National Congress and Robben Island prisoner, was buried on Saturday afternoon at Rayi location in Ciskei.

Calling for the minute's silence, the UCT SRC president, Mr Laurie Nathan, said it was also being observed in "the context of a history of oppression and resistance".

As delegates and observers stood, Mr Nathan said "We dedicate this moment to all the men, women and children who suffer the brutalities of the apartheid State every day of their lives, to all those people who with great conviction and immense courage have fought against these brutalities, and to those who have been silenced — banned, detained, killed or in exile."

Delegates and observers then read out in unison: "In the face of the current onslaught against all those working for democracy, we reaffirm our commitment to actively participating in the struggle for a future just society in which the people govern."

Welcoming participating students to the congress, Mr Nathan said it was being held with a "sense of solidarity and purpose".

"Our SRCs are strong. Rhodes University is once again reaffiliated and we are being recognized as participants in the national non-racial struggle for democracy."

But the mood of the congress was tempered by "repeated acts of State repression". These included the banning of two Nusas executive members, its president, Mr Andrew Boraine, and the University of the Witwatersrand SRC president, Mr Sammy Adelman.

In addition, "the massive detentions of the past few months and those of the 15 people detained last week are indicative of the brutality with which the State maintains control and of its desperate attempts to contain those that resist it".

Nusas demand on detainees

Staff Reporter

DELEGATES and observers at the opening of the Nusas congress on Saturday voted unanimously in favour of the unconditional release of all detainees in South Africa.

The statement voted on read: "The most recent attack on those who are working for a democratic future for all South Africans does not weaken our commitment to this goal.

"Rather it further strengthens our determination and unites us against those who uphold the present evil system. We remain opposed to legislation that allows for the removal and silencing of democrats — to aspire to a free and equal society is no crime.

"We demand the unconditional release of all those in detention."

Anne Mager, UWO, addresses congress on the opening night.

Nusas praises slain attorney

By TONY WEAVER

SPEAKERS opening the annual Nusas congress at the University of Cape Town on Saturday attacked detentions, paid tribute to slain Durban lawyer Mr Griffiths Mxenge and spelt out the role of organizations "working for democracy in South Africa".

Mr Jonty Joffe said he was the acting Nusas president because of the banning earlier this year of the president, Mr Andrew Boraine.

"I open this speech in an even more precarious position — not only is Andrew unable to take his rightful place at this congress, but the two Nusas presidents who preceded him, Fink Haysom and Auret van Heerden, are now in detention under Section 22 (of the General Laws Amendment Act) and Section Six (of the Terrorism Act) respectively."

He said that in South Africa no crime had to be committed before one was detained or banned. "In fact, quite the opposite. In the distorted country in which we live, to be banned or detained or sentenced is in many ways a compliment — an affirmation of one's commitment to opposing the oppression and exploitation that is apartheid and working for a just and democratic future."

To applause, he said the message he hoped would go out from the congress to the rulers of South Africa was that "for each one of us you detain and for each one of us you take away, there are 10, 20 or 100 waiting right here to take their place".

Mr Joffe said there were two opposing forces operating in South Africa at the moment. "On the one hand we have the democratic movement, gaining momentum and continuing to grow in the face of repeated attacks against it."

'Repression'

On the other hand was "the South African State unleashing an incredible wave of repression — particularly at this stage in terms of detention — against the democratic movement in this country".

The immediate past president of the [illegible] Natal (Durban) SRC, Mr Julian Baskin, paid tribute to the slain Durban attorney and former ANC member and Robben Island prisoner Mr Griffiths Mxenge. He said Mr Mxenge's contribution to the recent resurgence of the "progressive non-racial movement" was integral.

There was only one answer to the question of how a man who always smiled, had a great sense of humour and who worked tirelessly for justice and unity could suffer such a cruel and brutal death.

'A challenge'

It was that the "forces that murdered him are the forces of injustice and disunity". Mr Mxenge's death must be seen as a challenge to all.

Mr Baskin asked that "the spirit of Griffiths Mxenge live for ever and the power flowing from that spirit hasten the day of a truly democratic non-racial South Africa".

[illegible] executive member of the [illegible] Women's Organization (UWO), Ms Ann Mager, said the aim of each particular struggle is to advance people's understanding that [illegible] the problem exists [illegible] particular [illegible] struggles in [illegible] with each other.

[illegible] through the [illegible] a place will be created for all democrats and that unity is forged on the anvil of the struggle.

State's aim is 'to silence'

Staff Reporter

BANNINGS and detentions were part of the "State's intention to suppress progressive thought and silence those working for a just and democratic society", a Nusas resolution adopted last night said.

Security legislation in South Africa was implemented in so "broad and arbitrary a fashion that the State can effectively silence anyone opposed to it" and served to legitimize the injustices and oppression on which the apartheid State is based.

In the resolution, adopted unanimously, Nusas noted numerous current trials of students, the ongoing detentions of students, graduates and past Nusas office bearers and the bannings this year of Nusas president Andrew Boraine and of the Wits SRC president Sammy Adelman.

In addition more than 150 people were currently detained, a large number of people were banned and there had been a dramatic increase in the incidence of political trials.

The union expressed its support for students currently facing trial under security legislation and expressed solidarity with victims of security detention.

It demanded the unconditional release of all detainees and the unbanning of the banned and said the union would continue to oppose "a State whose survival necessarily depends on such repressive laws".

In the face of the State's attacks [illegible] democrats [illegible] themselves to continue working [illegible] democratic [illegible].

Students as 'workers' allies'

IF STUDENTS were directed by "progressive leadership", they could become a "significant ally of the working class movement", Nusas was told last night.

The president of the Azanian Students' Organization (Azaso), Mr Joe Phaahla, spoke on the "role of students in the struggle against exploitation and national oppression".

[illegible]

Joe Phaahla

Joe is the President of the Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO), a national black students organisation which has committed itself to "a non-racial democratic society free of exploitation". Apart from being a national student leader, Joe has played a strong leadership role in different areas on his own campus, Durban Medical School. He was the 1980/81 head of his residence house committee and a member of the SRC.

The student movement in the struggle for democracy

I. GENERAL ANALYSIS

Broadly speaking, the struggle in our country is between those who enjoy the wealth of the country and those who work to produce this wealth but do not enjoy it. This is not very much different from other struggles which have been waged in many other parts of the world. What causes the superficial differences between struggles waged in different parts of the world is the nature of means used to maintain the unequal distribution of wealth. The means used are for example, the political system. While Mozambicans struggled against colonialism, we are struggling against apartheid.

While we have the two main camps in conflict viz. the haves and the have nots, there is also a significant group of people who stand in the middle. These are the people who can fall either on the side of those who own the wealth or those who are deprived. In the South African situation those who control the wealth are a white minority supported by a privileged white community. In order to strengthen its position, the group which controls the economic and political system also co-opts a few blacks by giving them privileges denied to the majority of the black people. The division is further enhanced by providing privileges based on the criteria of racial classification. Together with small businessmen whose aspiration is accumulation of wealth, black intellectuals serve as a pool from which supporters of the status quo are promoted through granting of privileges to live a better life than the rest of their people.

The struggle for justice, democracy and a fair distribution of wealth throughout the world has shown that:

1. The conflict is primarily between those who control and enjoy the wealth and those who produce the wealth but don't enjoy it.
2. That the privileged middle of the road group is torn apart with a few supporting the exploited and the majority supporting the exploiters.
3. That in situations where racism is used to further divide the people:
   i) Even the privileged from the dominated group will support the struggle in large numbers except for a few who get completely assimilated into the status quo.
   ii) That the majority from this privileged group are only against the system in as far as it prevents them from getting more privileges and only a few want to see a complete change of the status quo.

The role played by intellectuals in the struggle can be very crucial to the outcome of the conflict. If the arena of struggle is dominated by those who only oppose those aspects of the system which prevents them from ascending, then what emerges is a compromise with those who own and control the wealth. On the other hand if the struggle is spearheaded by those who seek to create a democratic order the result is a social order free of inequalities.

II. THE S.A. CONTEXT

The South African situation is one in which racialism is used as a tool to divide those who do not own and control the wealth of the country. All people classified as "white" have political and economic privileges. This strategy ensures that a large majority of whites support the status quo. Black people have no political rights at all and to further sub-

divide them, economic privilege again based on race is used as a tool. As noted in the general discussion, economic privileges are further granted to a few among the already divided politically deprived black majority in order to make them more easily controlable.

STUDENTS' POSITION

A. WHITE STUDENTS

White students are born into the privileged group in the South African conflict. Their upbringing and education is geared towards shaping them for positions within the already privileged community. However the fact that they are still in a preparatory stage for roles they are expected to play in the ongoing conflict affords them an opportunity to make a choice. Ultimately, after processing they will fall into 3 groups: 1)the group which will support and strive to maintain the status quo; 2) the group that will call for liberalisation of the status quo without questioning its fundamental structures; 3)the group that will throw its lot behind the large majority of deprived black people in seeking to eradicate inequality from its roots.

B. BLACK STUDENTS

Black students are generally speaking part and parcel of the oppressed black majority in the country. It is however out of this group that those in power create allies to help control the voteless and exploited black majority. As a group, black students can either simply strive to eradicate the barriers which prevent them from climbing the ladder of social division or alternatively they can throw their lot behind the efforts of the large majority of exploited black workers to eradicate inequality in all respects. The fact about the alternative roles which black students can play is well illustrated by the history of the involvement of black intellectuals and students in the South African struggle. At some stages, eg. the beginning of the A.N.C. Youth League and later in the sixties in SASO, black students challenged political deprivation without much attention to economic deprivation. However on both occasions later, i.e., in the fifties in the case of post-Youth League and eighties in the case of post-SASO, black students faced the reality of the situation and threw their energy behind the black exploited workers. In the case of the eighties it was after the traumatic experiences of the 1976 uprising that black students came to appreciate more clearly the need for solidarity in action under the leadership of the workers. The past few years has shown very clearly that black and white intellectuals can use the privileges open to them to further the workers' struggle.

MORE RECENT LESSONS TO THE STUDENT MOVEMENT AND THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

1980 SCHOOL BOYCOTTS

The 1980 school boycotts left no doubt about the fact : black students have learnt alot out of the 1976 popular uprisings. Whereas the 1976 boycotts were more of spontaneous mass protests, the 1980 boycotts were more organised conscious mass actions. There was more conscious organisation and the issues at stake were more clearly outlined than was the case in 1976. The need to change the entire political and economic system in order to establish a democratic order was more clearly expressed than was the case in 1976. Closer links between students and parents who constitute the bulk of the work force were forged in the struggle itself through consultation than through coercion. Very conspicuous in the 1980 boycotts was the involvement of white students here and there. There were however also mistakes made in 1980 in many areas from which we need to learn, eg. the prolongation of the boycotts leading to disunity in the ranks of the black students themselves.

1981

1981 saw the strengthening of the direction already taken in 1980. Students came to play a positive complementory role in the workers' struggles of 1981, eg. Wilson-Rowntree, Leyland etc. The nationwide rejection of the Republic Day celebrations witnessed forging of closer links in action between black and white democrats.

As we say good-bye to 1981 and we enter 1982 we witness a major onslaught by those in power on the broad democratic front that has emerged in the past few years. The high-handed actions of the state are coupled with attempts to co-opt a more significant number of people from the ranks of the oppressed into their apparatuses. The variety of Commissions appointed by the state, ranging from the De Lange to the Rabie and Steyn Commissions illustrate the above points very clearly.

What is needed now is a clear understanding on the part of those engaged in struggle of the nature of the forces in conflict, the shapes being assumed and the alliances being forged. It is important that the nature of the democratic front should also be clearly understood so that this front can pose an effective challenge to the status quo. It is going to be increasingly more important in the coming times that we understand very clearly the difference between a democratic non-racial alliance and a liberal multiracial jargon. Non-racial alliance involves unity in purpose and action while multiracialism involves unity in diversity of purpose and actions.

In the coming times we will increasingly have to:

1. Strengthen our existing organisations and forge closer links of all democratic organisations.

2. Draw more people into the democratic front including whites who have come to accept the righteousness of our demands.

3. Withstand attempts by those in power to weaken us through the carrot and stick method of co-option coupled with repression.

Long live the democratic front!

Graeme Bloch

Graeme is a former UCT student. He was actively involved in a number of different areas within the student movement. He was a founder member of SSD (Students for Social Democracy) and edited the UCT student newspaper, Varsity. In1975 he was Wages Comm Coordinator on the SRC. He was detained in 1976 after student solidarity protests and was banned for five years later that year. His banning order was lifted shortly before Congress.

Student initiatives in the university

I don't know if it is possible to dedicate a speech to an individual, as it would be to dedicate an article. Nonetheless, I would like to do so tonight.

On this occasion, and with the particular topic on which I must speak, it seems both appropriate and necessary to pay tribute to your President, Andrew Boraine. I've seen some of his work within the student movement, his tirelessness, and the courage with which he's faced up to the State's actions. Increasingly, I am beginning to know him as a friend, too. His name has already been mentioned on many occasions at this Congress. It is a sign of the respect that many more people feel towards Andrew and his work, that I would like to add a tribute as well. Very little needs to be or can be said : stand firm, Andrew, and know that we are with you. Our greatest contribution to your own freedom will be to continue with the struggle that is still yours, to build a free, democratic South Africa.

In paying tribute to Andrew, it is also important to know that tribute is being paid to the student movement as a whole, to NUSAS in particular, to the work that so many of you have put into building your organisations to the point they have reached today. The student movement has been knocked often, has stumbled, has often responded badly. But in the end, it has always bounced back. In the last few years, in particular, NUSAS has answered the challenge that the people have put in front of it — you do not need me to tell you of the proud place that you occupy today in the broad democratic movement. That white students, and their representative organisations, can stand side by side with the finest of the people's organisations themselves, is a fitting indication of the success of your work and the importance of the student movement.

I therefore hope that it is with modest intentions that I speak to you today. I've been asked to talk about student initiatives in the universities themselves, on activity within this site, and on problems and questions of student organisation. Before I do so, I think it's important to know the limitations of this talk. Firstly, I speak as an outsider. While I have tried to follow closely the directions and ramifications of student activitity, it is obviously neither possible, nor would it be desirable to engage in any sort of detailed discussion of the day-to-day problems of organisation on your campuses. So I speak as an outsider, and thus some of the things I have to say may not relate to your own experiences. Questions may have been resolved years ago. Issues may already be dead.

This talk is meant then, in the narrowest sense, to be an occasion for throwing around a few ideas. Please take it as such — reject, discuss, question, and use the talk as an occasion to clarify your own ideas, as a time to analyse the particular places that each one of you occupies, on the campus and as a student in society. If the talk can stimulate a discussion, it has served its purpose — it's very much up to you, then, to concretize and make more meaningful what I have to say.

The general purpose of the talk is, quite simply, to help in stepping back a little from the hustle of your day-to-day activities. It is not enough to see the many lessons which we have learnt and absorbed from the past — let us also analyse those that might yet be important; let us explore not only the things we have achieved but also look a bit more closely at the dangers and limits of the area within which we operate. In short, let us also criticise ourselves, openly and as objectively as possible, in order that we are better prepared to avoid mistakes in the future, and

better able to learn from those that will still inevitably be made.

The paper is divided into 3 sections: to be more accurate, 3 1/2 sections. In the first part, I want to look more closely at the importance of student activity, of what it is that makes organisation on the campus valuable. I want to argue that the question of internal education, is the most important priority of all, but that needs a lot of qualification.

Practical gains must be subject of a clear understanding of the boundaries of one's activities. Section 2 of this paper looks, in more structural terms, at the specific nature of the campus as a site of struggle. I look at the bourgeois university, and the constraints and limits of operating within this arena.

But all structures have limits and contradictions. In the third part of this talk, I want to examine some historical experiences, mostly Cape Town based; but the purpose is to put problems into their context, to understand the links between factors, and so to examine where best we act in changing circumstances and in different periods. This section is both quite abstract and quite concrete. It asks how things have changed, how they are changing, how the various campuses differ from each other, and how we can take account of our own specific circumstances to solve the general problems that we are all confronted by. The main areas I look at in this section, are firstly, relations between student bodies on a campus and "questions such as democracy and organisation"; and secondly, the relation between these bodies and their base, between the politically aware students and the broad campus, and also again, "questions such as democracy and organisation".

My last half-section is a kind of hotch-potch of some issues on the horizon, some issues I couldn't fit in elsewhere, and trying to find a dignified way to conclude the paper, so that we can move into discussion, and then into the bar.

ACHIEVEMENTS

If we're looking at the achievements and value of working on campus, it's easiest to start with the most visible. These need little argument.

* The student movement has contributed directly to the various campaigns run as part of the broad democratic front -- the Free Mandela Campaign, anti-Republic Day, anti-SAIC. Sometimes this participation has been merely by passing a motion of support; at other times, the special place of the university has been taken advantage of, as when anti-Republic meetings were held largely on the campuses, with a broad group of organisations asking the campuses almost to spearhead the campaign. This kind of work, mobilizing campus as a whole, is a direct political contribution, in direct challenge to the apartheid state.

* Secondly, students have done valuable support work. Wilson-Rowntree is one obvious example — this kind of support has been material, as when pamphlets and stickers are printed or money is raised; and, secondly, ideological and propogandistic, publicising, explaining and researching, in general boosting and expanding support campaigns. This support work has also been crucial in showing democrats outside the campus that they need to pay more attention to students, and student dynamics. For example, it was only really after Fattis & Monis in '79, and then the Meat Strike, that Cape Town unions acknowledged the importance of the broad student movement, rather than just of one or 2 individuals.

SMALL GROUPS

* Linked up with the above 2 largely off-campus roles, is a third. Small groups of students have worked in a committed, painstaking way to build up links and even to directly participate in organisation of communities and workers. Literacy campaigns are one example, or Delta at Rhodes. And we all know the key role that the early Wages Commissions played in the setting up of the progressive union movement. The work of students in these sort of areas is crucial — it gives individuals an understanding of the realities, the compromises, the strategies and tactics of organising the people, it gives them a feel for the texture and fabric of the lives of the masses. Students in these spheres have also not been an elitist vanguard either — they've often played an important role in telling campus as a whole about what they've learned.

* A less tangible role has been the intellectual and theoretical role of students. Sometimes this has taken the form of research; sometimes this has involved developing coherent critiques and analyses — of Crossroads, of liberal organisations, of the university. This has spilled into wider society — and is one of the arenas which many off-campus people still need to acknowledge. It is the student movement that has done much to challenge our conceptions of women's struggle, or which has told us that personal support and comradeship, and even the most private aspects of one's life and life-style, are also politcal matters. Campus has much to teach off-campus people about more democratic ways of functioning, and more constructive ways of holding debate.

* The last point I want to make about the value of the student movement, in a way encompasses and encloses all the others. None of the above activities would be possible if students were not reproducing themselves, providing a new framework for people passing on their knowledge, maintaining their leadership of campus as a whole. Student politics above all, is the major arena for the creation of democrat in our community. Nearly every life-long commited democrat in Yeoville, in Berea, in Grahamstown or in Observatory, has had some contact with student politics on the English campuses. The finest of these democrats, the most astute politically and theoretically, have been those whose training ground has been student politics in one form or another.

Virtually the most important aspect of activity on campus I want to argue, is enabling people to learn. And what they learn is not just knowledge of a theoretical kind, for example, how the pass-laws work or what SAAWU is. Along with this, just as important, is the hidden knowledge: how to organise, how to speak, when to call a meeting, how to run one, when compromises must be made, how to work democratically. In short, the campus is a training

ground where democrats may learn on the one hand, what it is that is needed to make South Africa a democratic state, and on the other hand, they can learn to think and act politically, so that these aims may be achieved with all the limits and possibilities within which we live. But a warning: these skills can be a two-edged sword, a way of controlling and dominating if we're not aware of our limits. Up to now, campus has been a place for experimentation and learning from our mistakes; but we are entering an era where our mistakes may be more costly as the stakes are higher. At the same time, we must never lose sight of the primary need for experimentation, for self-education, and for the wealth of learning that comes from the concrete experience of struggle on the campus.

But what sort of place is the campus, what kind of arena is it? What are its structures, its limits, its possibilities. There are 2 aspects here — (1) the bourgeois university itself, and (2) the students, the constituents, who come from a socialised environment, and whose experience is now going to be shaped by the structures of the campus as well, and by the struggles going on there.

Let's start off with the university. The university is there to make leaders of us all, to teach us to plan and direct our society. Above all, it tries to tell us that those who use their heads have a right to exploit and control those who use their hands, that mental labour is somehow more valuable and privileged than manual labour, and that it is only a privileged few of us who are entitled to the learning and training that is needed. This is the division that structures our society, and our university. It is a bourgeois university in a capitalist society. Even its most technical training, engineering or medicine, for example, carry within them the means to reinforce the divisions and hierarchies of our society.

From this flows the university as sausage-machine, as knowledge factory. Why else could anyone think that it is possible to learn in an enclosed kraal up on the hill, somehow above and outside of society? Why else do courses keep us away from society, or when they do let us near it, they keep us away from the exploited majority? If we do talk to anyone, we talk to heart surgeons or businessmen, but we don't tour the decaying rural areas or urban slums, or talk to the workers and ordinary people who live and work in degradation and poverty. Why else but to maintain the myth of people's inevitable division into rich and poor, are our courses split and fragmented into a hundred separate disciplines, so that we can never see society as a whole, and understand the indissoluble link between poverty and wealth, as 2 sides of the same coin? Why else, but to stop us discovering the power of collective action, are our universities hierarchised and authoritarian — professors, tutorial and exam systems, administration, SRC bureaucracy — if these don't crush our creativity and questioning, they incorporate and bog us down. Nowhere do they teach us to participate and govern ourselves.

The bourgeois university teaches us to rule — whether we use technology or ideology.

But in a society based on division, it is only a minority who benefits. Where there is a ruler, there are the rules. Oppression begets struggle; and in a very particular way, this contradictory unity exists in the university. The attempt to achieve fixed aims happens in a contradictory and less-than-coherent way. It is these cracks that we must discover, prise open and use to our advantage.

If the university is your terrain or arena, students are your base. Into the bourgeois university, they carry their own charateristics. They come from comfortable middle-class backgrounds, sheltered and priviliged. For 6 months out of the year, for a short 3 or 4-year period, they dabble with ideas, and lead a doubly isolated life in this way. Usually they are white, though this is changing in a profound way that I'll talk about later.

All these aspects of our background work against us: fickle, afraid of hard work and adversity, fond of in-

tellectualising, used to giving orders rather than receiving them, with secure futures carved out for us, it somehow seems that both structure and constituent base reinforce an immutable situation.

CONTRADICTIONS

Yet out of this, the student movement has learned to build and to grow. What students have done, is to turn parts of the university from standing on their head, back onto their feet, by exploring, exposing and utilising the contradiction within the university. I don't want to go into the precise places where you can locate these contradictions -- in any case, that needs a much more detailed knowledge of conditions on each campus. What I rather want to do now, is explore how to organise so as to be more powerful. I want to pose some questions about ways of getting yourselves together to more successfully move forward. This in itself will show us the location of many of the major contradictions of interest to us.

The best way to look at these questions is to move straight into a couple of historical illustrations. I'll try not to get carried away by fond memories and nostalgia.

The first question I want to look at is one of maintaining progressive leadership on the campus. This can be illustrated by the experiences I know best, activity in 1976.

But let me tell a story that brings out a few things. About 2 months after the Soweto schoolchildren finally broke open a period of years of submission, Cape Town's African townships began reacting. On August 11, a young schoolchild was shot dead in a peaceful demonstration. Xolile Mossi's death set Cape Town burning. On campus itself, after weeks of discussion and campaigning, tension was running high. People understood the issues; at a mass meeting called on August 12th, pressure was strong for students to march off-campus to show their support for the townships. At this point, the moderate president of a moderate SRC, tried to stall things, by speaking his usual boring platitudes. Subsequently, a large number of people marched anyway and were arrested.

This is really where my story comes in. I was detained for 2 weeks and while in detention, a security policeman began reading to me a word for word transcript of the speech I'd made on August 12th. Then he flipped over the page, to 2 pages of single-spaced dense print. Shaking his head he turned around to me and said: "That SRC President of yours; he sure talks a hell of a lot, but he doesn't SAY very much does he."

PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP

The point is simply this, it is only progressive leadership that really has anything to say to students as a whole in the South Africa of today. In '76, we were able to explain what was happening in the world outside the campus, to show why it was no threat to us, and to encourage students to take their lead from the initiatives of the people. These kinds of points made sense out of confusion in the minds of most students, and turned what could have been seen as a threat into a challenge.

Partly this is easier these days, as the state's legitimacy erodes daily and its coherence is replaced by vacillating and erratic indecisions. Also, the people themselves are posing a clearer alternative that includes all people in a non-racial democratic future. But we can't just rely on outside events to keep students politicised, and nor can we first talk to students in times of crisis, when we want them to attend mass meetings for aims that only we understand.

To take the experience of '76 again: NUSAS had helped destroy itself with alienating top-heavy leadership, and both NUSAS and the SRC were firmly in the hands of moderates. In setting up a political association, SSD, a group of people clearly saw our task as reestablishing progressive credibility on campus. We handed out pamphlets (we were much more genteel then) protesting when Koornhof opened a conference on academic freedom at UCT; we joined in supporting changes to residence rules for women, exposing the patriarchal and authoritarian nature of the university; we stood for SRC primarily in order to publicise our views and used it as a platform to talk to a variety of groups; in short, we tried to show the campus that we actually WANTED them to hear what we had to say. They might not agree with us, but we still spoke a language directly to them, in terms they could respect. I think it was as a result of that, that campus as a whole responded so magnificantly, under progressive direction, when at last the tide began to change in June-August '76.

CAMPUS BASE

In short, if you're going to operate on a campus, then start from a real faith in your base, the mass of students. By all means know their limitations — many will only attend a mass meeting and not a follow-up seminar course, many will appear apathetic and uninterested for most of the year. But there is no place for cynicism if leadership understands the limits of its base, and appreciates the necessity for interaction at whatever level people are willing to contribute. It is only by mobilisation on a mass level, in any case, that you are able to reach that smaller group of people who will commit themselves in a longer-term way. Only by working with students as a whole, will you be able to bring a smaller committed group to the belief that the politics of progressive activity is important and worth sustaining.

This brings out another lesson of activity in '76 — we failed dismally, I think, to pay any attention to this deepening process that allows organisation to be sustained. We were so busy trying to lead campus as a whole, that we paid no attention to consolidating and developing our own ranks. It took Fink Haysom and 3 years of rebuilding NUSAS to really recover from this error. In a funny kind of way, I think that people today could benefit from examining our mistakes carefully.

Let's put it this way. The interaction with campus as a whole is an incredible self-educative process. You're forced to define your audience, to be clear about your issues, to carefully plan and work through your strategies. These are questions that should be concerning all committed student progressives not just a few leaders. In extending the number of people who

Graeme addresses a packed congress hall.

confront these issues, we will immeasurably strengthen and build students' understanding and organisation.

It seems that this is one of the major tasks of leadership. Work at a really basic level with those people who are interested in learning. Create an atmosphere and a style of working in which all can participate. For example, when you produce a publication, its major goal need not be to produce a brilliant once-off publication. Rather work with a group of people, going openly step-by-step through problems and issues. Experiment, make mistakes, and meet to correct them as part of an ongoing process. This is democracy at work — it's far harder for leadership, far more painstaking and slow, but its the most strengthening. It will build and consolidate — it will help solve some of the problems with how to involve the large numbers of people who often come forward after campaigns. It will also allow an increase in experimentation and creativity as people depend on themselves for things to get done and grow in confidence. And in the long-run, it will produce fine and stronger democrats for the long struggle ahead.

I think it's also important to know the limits of one's own organisational forms to use some jargon. The job of an SRC isn't that of a Wages Comm, isn't that of the Women's Movement, isn't that of NUSAS head office. While everybody needs a general understanding of what's going on, a focus of activity does influence and structure the things that you see as important. Every organisation has its own imperatives, that narrow and blinker it to an extent. But this can be immensely constructive — it means that the student movement as a whole has deep roots in a variety of areas. It means there are a variety of bases: and if relationships are structured carefully, this can give the student movement the ability to react flexibly; in essence, to move across the terrain of the university and know its boundaries.

Let's look at Fattis and Monis in 1979. Today we are clear what the significance of Fattis and Monis was. It smashed down any narrow conceptions of where the struggle can occur. For the first time in many years, the community emerged as a site of struggle. Links grew between community and factory, as twin aspects of the lives of the oppressed. Links were forged between students and the community, and between white and black students. Questions such as the nature of a boycott, and the power of a united people, were put clearly on the agenda.

It just so happens that these kinds of shifts are never quite so obvious at the time. At that time, in '79, NUSAS and SRC were running an education campaign that had been planned long in advance. It was only a small group of students, with community contacts and a perspective drawn from experience of interaction with the community, who saw the challenge that was being put forward.

Their demand was to cancel part of the lecture program on education, and hold a mass meeting about an off-campus issue. But there were objections. Firstly, the issue didn't seem generally important; secondly, people thought the campus wasn't interested in mass meetings, as indicated by the small numbers coming to the ecuation program; thirdly, quite reasonably, the SRC was reluctant to interrupt a program that fitted together well.

There were moments of tension, blackmail, hard work, preparation and talk — in the end, the SRC reluctantly allowed the issue to be taken up. The effects were stunning and changed the whole fabric of campus activity. Media became more immediate and direct; unionists came onto campus; there was active work for people to do; there was a sense of power, of purpose, of value in one's specific role as a student, and eventually there was victory.

Now I'm not in any way trying to criticise the SRC. In fact, once the significance of what was happening became apparent, the SRC responsed magnificently. In the end, it was ONLY the SRC that could expand and generalise the Fattis & Monis campaign on campus, only the SRC that could speak and act on behalf of all students. This is the other side of my point:

at times, it is only specialised areas that will understand the general significance of specific events and changes; but it is necessary for this to be brought to the attention of progressive students on a wider basis, and to understand which bodies can take forward the struggles in the best way.

I'm saying there MUST be a kind of tension between bases on the campus. For example, Projects Comm. must be more interested in its 10 new students than in the general relationship of Head Office with the wider public. This must be accepted; and then, these differences must be structured so that they can be constructive. Democratic co-ordination is needed, but in which different areas can bring out their specialised knowledge for the benefit of everyone; and if necessary, it must be possible for a minority to argue against the opinions of everyone else, so that creativity, experimentation and flexibility are encouraged. Once again, we touch at the heart of questions of democracy, of open debate, of comradely disagreement and of collective responsibilities to each other, and to the movement as a whole.

I want to end by saying a few words about more general developments on the campuses. It strikes me that we've moved forward immensely. In 1976 we were overwhelmed when the UWC President sent informal and personal encouragement to us as we demonstrated on De Waal Drive. Today the AZASO President directly and officially encourages us to keep on organising ourselves.

If there are advances, there are also new pressures. One of these can be seen in a number of different phenomena that paradoxically have the same general root. On the one hand, the De Lange Commission shows quite clearly that a divided education system cannot be an equal one, and an unequal education system will not produce the graduates of a high enough calibre to meet the so-called manpower needs of the developing capitalist system. On the other hand, the aptly-called White Paper seems to reject even this mildly reformist program, and pushes for the extension of university apartheid with the less aptly-called 'Vista' University. At the same time, universities such as UCT are preparing for a growing influx of Black students, and giving support to the most radical departments, because they reckon these "relevant" courses will be one way of absorbing and containing the expected militance of this new intake.

I don' think these disparate reactions are that hard to understand. There are pressures that cannot be resisted, and there is confusion in the ranks of the rulers. The liberal universities may attempt to buy off; the state may try and partially stem the tide by continuing to separate, and of course to repress.

But the demands that they are trying to blunt are at the moment, more than can be handled by the system as it stands. Above all, there are real pressures, from below, for democratic control of every aspect of people's lives. One of the effects is to intensify the pressures on the campus — we saw a taste of this, with the anti-Republic and Koornhof mobilisations at Wits.

In particular, black students are coming out of communities with growing self-awareness, organisation and power. They're putting forward these elements on the campuses themselves, and will increasingly do so in the future.

This will put immense demands on the student movement as a whole to react consistently, courageously and with careful planning and follow-through. We're going to have to examine really carefully how we can push forward demands in every site on campus how we can extend and develop our activities and contributions. As the university itself strains under the pressures, we must also show up its own inadequacies, and more aggressively put forward our own vision of the kind of university that could cope with the people's damands. We need to shift the debate about the universities much more onto our own ground, and we need to take the universities on by concretely organising to expose its inadequacies. We need to make specific demands on the university and push these forward, to link our own par-

Students 'part of struggle'

Staff Reporter

THE student movement must always attempt to further democracy and democratic organization in all its activities and prepare a path which "moves alongside and with the people".

Speaking to delegates at the annual Nusas Congress at UCT on "Student initiatives in the universities", Mr Graeme Bloch said student politics was one of the most important training grounds for "future democrats".

Mr Bloch, who was recently unbanned, dedicated his talk to the banned Nusas president, Mr Andrew Boraine, saying: "Stand firm, Andrew, and know that we are with you. Our greatest contribution to your own freedom will be to continue with the struggle that is still yours, to build a free, democratic South Africa."

Paying tribute to Mr Boraine was also a way of paying tribute to the student movement as "in the past few years in particular, Nusas has answered the challenge the people have put in front of it."

Proud place

He said it was unnecessary for him to tell Nusas of "the proud place you occupy today in the broad democratic movement".

"That white students and their representative organizations can stand side by side with the finest of the people's organizations themselves, is a fitting indication of the success of your work and the importance of the student movement."

Students had an important contribution to make in the "struggle of the broad democratic front", whether it be through intellectual, material and symbolic support or by mobilizing other students and recruiting them into the "democratic ranks".

At the same time, close links should be maintained with "community struggles", understanding the conditions under which most South Africans live to get a feel "for the texture and fabric of the lives of the masses".

'Exploiters'

University degrees should not be seen as an entrance certificate to the ranks of the "exploiters" but rather as a tool for understanding and changing South African society.

The knowledge thus gained should not be used in an elitist way, but should rather take direction from the "people's struggles" and the needs of the country.

He condemned the division which capitalism created between mental and manual labour, separating intellectuals and technically skilled persons from the masses. This division inevitably led to an elitism which divided society into rich and poor.

In a similar fashion, the hierarchical nature of the university militated against collective action, "crushing creativity and questioning".

Cape Times 3/12/81.

Nusas vote to support workers

Staff Reporter

THE most important struggle in South Africa was that of the working class, delegates to the Nusas Congress at UCT were told last night.

Motivating a motion condemning "State repression of trade unionists" and the unwillingness of employers to negotiate with unregistered unions in the Eastern Cape, a UCT delegate, Ms Margot Linn, said it was important that students "align themselves with progressive movements".

The motion, which was adopted unanimously, noted the "rapid growth of the non-racial and independent trade union movement in the Eastern Cape", particularly that of the South African Allied Workers' Union (Saawu).

However, repeated detentions and "repression of trade unionists and workers" continued to take place.

The motion said the "workers' struggle is central to the broad struggle for a democratic South Africa" and workers had the right "to organize themselves free from the harassment of the State and management".

Nusas expressed "continued support for the workers and their democratically-elected representatives".

Zora Mchlamakulu, GWU organiser, calls for the rejection of Ciskei 'independence'.

ticular site with the struggles that are taking place at all levels, amongst all sectors, in South Africa today.

The struggles that will involve you, as the student movement, are immensely exciting. They're immensely important. I'm sure you also know how dangerous they can be. You are called upon to display self-sacrifice and commitment of a qualitatively new kind. If we are on the road to a society in which the people will govern, we're also on the most difficult and dangerous stretch. There will be casualties; and it gives me a feeling of strength to know that despite this, and fully aware of it, you as a student movement are prepared to meet this challenge.

My first real radicalising "experience", or awareness of a political event, was when police beat in the heads of UCT students on St George's Cathedral in 1972, and I also was aware of the demands of the black consciousness movement to go it alone. It was only four years later, that a generation grew up moulded on Soweto and its lessons. Many of you here will probably remember the effects of Soweto while you were at school, and it is that experience that perhaps helped launch you on a path that moves alongside and with the people. Those who arrive on campus next year will prbably not remember a period when there have not been popular struggles on a mass level, by people fighting to sieze control of the day-to-day aspects that affect their lives.

I point these things out, because it strikes me what a rapidly changing period we're living through, and it strikes me how much more the student movement of today is forged in the knowledge of this wide-ranging people's struggle.

If we are talking about ways of learning from each other, if we're talking of strengthening each other, of building a unity through struggle in our own particular arenas, if we're talking of an awareness that each part of the movement depends on the others, then its also important to know that we're not doing it because of some vague, abstract principles.

Above all, it is the concrete ever-growing power of the people, the justice of their cause and the knowledge that it is also our cause that unites us in this struggle and drives us forward. There is a pride in knowing that we have a place to fill, and NUSAS and the student movement as a whole can be justifiably proud of the way in which you have risen to this challenge.

Mike Evans

Mike is NUSAS Research Officer for 1982. He studied at UCT from 1977– 1980 where he completed his honours degree in CAGL. He has been involved in SSD, YCS (Young Christian Students) and the Labour Research Committee (LRC). In 1981 he was employed as research officer for the Cape Town branch of the LRC'

Students and the broader community

I have been asked to address you today on the subject "Students and the Broader Community" — on white student involvement in community issues, on the problems related to this involvement and on the limitations of student action. But first, let me say something of my own limitations.

This talk, to a large extent is based on discussions with students from the different campuses. I myself have not been directly involved in any of the major off-campus events or issues in which students have played some role this year. As a result, I have had to rely on other peoples experiences and their analyses of particular situations.

I have also had to rely on examples from the Western Cape to a greater extent than I would have liked. Nevertheless, I feel that the student community as a whole can learn a great deal from the localised experiences of particular campuses.

Lastly, there are areas of student involvement which I have largely ignored. Most significant of these, is student involvement in overtly political campaigns — particularly the Free Mandela campaign, the anti-Republic Day campaign and the recent anti-SAIC campaign.

A. INTRODUCTION

Before discussing the specifics of student involvement in the community, I want to make one point which situates what I have to say alongside Graeme's talk of yesterday.

Graeme essentially dealt with oranisation and involvement within the university. And although my focus is on off-campus student involvement, I want to stress that I see solid on-campus organisation as at least as important as community involvement. Indeed, the 2 are directly related: on-campus organisation requires an understanding of the dynamics of the broader struggle, while off-campus involvement requires a solid organisational base on campus.

I stress this because there has over the past year been a slight tendency on some campuses to see what's happening off-campus as "the real struggle." Campus then comes to be seen as little more than a training ground for future "relevant involvement" off-campus. I would argue that this positon (i.e., that activities should take the shortest route to off-campus involvement) is both theoretically and strategically inadequate.

It is theoretically inadequate because it sees the struggle for a free and democratic South Africa as something which happens "out there", and ignores campus as a very definite site of struggle.

And it is strategically inadequate because it ignores the importance of exploiting contradictions within the power structure in order to further the struggle. One of these contradictons relates to the fact that most white males have to spend 4 years in the defence force fighting for a cause in which they don't necessarily believe.

On the liberal campuses themselves very definite contradictions exist. The university structure allows the student body very little power, residence laws are outdated and sexist and the education provided generally prepares one to play a dominant role in society. Around these and other issues struggles have been, and can be fought. As Graeme said yesterday, we need to "prize open the cracks."

B. HISTORY

Having said that, and in a sense situated my own position, I want to move on to examine briefly the last decade of off-campus student involvement. Here, 3 phases can be distinguished.

1. Early 1970s

The first phase covers the period from 1971 until about 1976. In 1971 the first Wages Commission was established in Durban by a small group of committed activists. Similar bodies were set up at Wits and UCT, and all three took the decision to involve themselves directly in the labour field. Over the next few years these students, working together with older unionists and some academics were instrumental in establishing trade unions and worker advice bureaux.

It was in Durban that students played the greatest role. The Wages Comm did research into the wages and working conditions of campus workers and other employees in the area; pamphlets and workers' newspapers were put out, worker education was organised and a workers' benefit society was established. At the same time some students got directly involved in organisational work in what were later to become the TUACC unions (Trade Union Advisory and Co-Ordinating Council, which was later to affiliate to FOSATU).

However, there were definite limitations to this type of involvement. The main problem related to the fact that the process of involvement was dominated by a small core of activists. There was little attempt to develop a mass base on campus, although it must be added that the establishment of any mass support base during that period would have been far more difficult than today. Students as a whole were less politicised, and their complacency had yet to be shaken by the mass uprisings of 1976/7.

The dominant role of a few core activists not only had the effect of failing to penetrate or even influence campus as a whole, but it also opened the way to heavy state repression. The bannings in 1973 and the constant harrassment and intimidation, had the effect of destroying on-going involvement, since new leaders and new activists were not being produced from within the student movement.

A second problem resulting from this early student involvement in the labour field relates to the students' own analysis of their position in society. Although they did play a very important role in setting up working class organisations where none previously existed, there was a failure on the part of some students to recognise the necessity for working class leadership to develop out of the working class itself. As a result, relationships of dependence were in some cases established. The problem of dependence was compounded by the fact that for long periods of the year students were inactive or at least less committed due to exams, vacs etc.

2. 1977 — 1979

The second phase runs from 1976/7 to early 1979. This was a period of consolidation for the progressive white student movement. The emphasis was on building campus organisation and support, developing new leaders and sophisticating students analysis both of society as a whole and of their positon in society.

While there was little off-campus involvement during this period, the process of consolidation meant that when off-campus links began to be forged from 1979 onwards, this occurred from a position of greater strength than was the case in 1971. Not only was the organisational base on the campuses far stronger, but also white students as a whole had a far clearer understanding of their own role in the struggle for a democratic South Africa.

3. 1979 — 1980

The trigger for off-campus student involvement was the Fatti's and Moni's strike of 1979. Although the strike was relatively small (only 88 workers initially) and Cape Town based, it had important implications for the student movement nationally. Throughout the country progressive students boycotted Fatti's and Moni's products for 6 months and raised funds for the strikers. Equally important as far as the student movement was concerned, were the lengthy discussions and debates about the role of students in off-campus struggles.

In Cape Town, white students involved themselves directly in a community issue for the first time in many years. Together with students from UWC and from some black high schools, over a hundred white democrats took part in a blitz on penisula supermarkets. They packed trolleys with Fatti's and Moni's products and refused to pay for them at the tills. They stuck "boycott Fatti's and Moni's" stickers on Fatti's products and left trolleys of pasta standing around in the aisles.

The Fatti's and Moni's strike (and boycott) was thus an extremely important event in the history of white student involvement, for not only did it represent a very definite change in direction, but it also opened up important channels of communication between white students and the oppressed communities.

These links were to be further strengthened in the following year, 1980. It is important always to examine student involvement in the community in the context of the changing dynamics of struggle in society as a whole. In this regard 1980 was the year in which the militance and unity of the oppressed masses reached greater heights than in any of the previous 20 years. Strikes, bus boycotts, the massive school boycott and political campaigns (such as the Free Mandela Campaign) occurred throughout the country. Whereas in 1976 the uprisings were dominated by the students, 1980 saw all the popular classes unite in struggle against the apartheid state.

And it was during the meat strike (and subsequent boycott) that student involvement in the community reached new levels. As with the Fatti's and Moni's boycott, students again played a key role in fundraising, but now new areas of involvement were opened up. In the Western Cape, with community organisation still in its embryonic stages, students were required to give a certain amount of initiative in the area of writing pamphlets, printing, etc. This was at least partly a result of the General Workers

Union actively drawing students in on the Support Committee, in a far more direct way, than was the case with Fatti's and Moni's. This more direct involvement of students became particularly important when the state cracked down on labour, student and community leaders.

On UCT campus as well, the meat boycott saw students playing an expanded role. Over 50 people regularly attended Support Committee meetings, and a number of fairly successful mass meetings were held.

In other areas, the Meat Strike saw the concretisation of links with the community. Whereas the Fatti's and Moni's boycott had served mainly to open up new areas of discussion, the Meat boycott saw students playing a more involved role. In Johannesburg, for example, concerts organised by RAM (Rock Against Management) were used both to raise funds and increase awareness.

C. 1981 INCREASED COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Having examined in a very scanty fashion the recent history of student involvement in the broader community, I want to discuss in a little more depth some of the activities of the past year.

1. Wilson Rowntrees

And here I will begin with what is in some senses the most significant strike of the year, the Wilson Rowntrees strike. Once again, my focus is largely on the Western Cape.

Since most people here will be aware of the various ways in which students expressed their support, I am going to focus exclusively on the problems faced by white students at UCT.

The first problem related to the suspicion with which some community groups viewed white student involvement. Whatever the basis for such suspicion — in other words whether it resulted from genuine experiences of white domination, adventurism, fickleness etc., or whether it was a manifestation of a certain racism — the fact remains that the suspicion was real. And the result was that white students had to be extremely sensitive so as not to antagonise potential support bases for the boycott.

A second and related problem relates to the role that white students played on the Support Committee. 1980, as I have said, saw the mass involvement of community groups in the meat boycott. In 1981, however, many community groups were actively consolidating and organising at a grassroots level. Most of them therefore did not take up the Wilson Rowntrees boycott with the same vigour as they had the meat boycott. Thus after 2 months students were forced to play a very crucial role, particularly as far as printing was concerned. Given the students ready access to a printing press, this was acceptable; but what also happened was that often students came to dominate the writing of the pamphlets as well. Tasks such as the production of cartoons and posters, which might well have been handled in the community, began to be carried out by white students. As a result white democrats in Cape Town to some extent controlled both the mental and manual side of a key aspect of the boycott.

A final problem relates to the way the boycott was taken up on the UCT campus. Here the main initiative and energy was put into the production of pamphlets and posters, and not into the issue itself. As a result ways of bringing the Wilson Rowntrees issue directly on to Campus were ignored till quite recently when sweet raids and guerilla theatre were organised so as to challenge the student body.

One area in which UCT students might have participated to a greater extent was in their own white community. In Johannesburg, for example, guerilla theatre was done in the middle of town, streets were pamphleteered and schools, youth groups, Habonim groups, etc. were challenged to take up the boycott.

This last problem raises the question of the basis of student support for community struggles. Our basis of power should not be through our control of skills and resources, but through our ability to take up issues on campus. If the former is our basis of power, then we serve only to perpetuate the mental/manual divisions which characterise our society.

Before leaving discussion of student involvement in the labour sphere, I want to refer to a couple of the

questions raised yesterday concerning boycotts in general, student/trade union relations, etc.

Firstly, and as Graeme suggested yesterday, the student movement does have a certain autonomy when it comes to decision-making. This is not to suggest that students should act on their own initiative, or that they should decide on their own whether to repond to community needs; rather, it is to suggest that each off-campus involvement should be considered not only in terms of the dynamics of the community, but also in terms of the internal dynamics of the university itself.

In this regard it becomes important for constructive discussions to take place between student groups and labour and community leaders, and for the latter to realise the limitations of on-campus organisation. Such disscussions have taken place in a number of centres this past year.

Secondly, response to community issues can take place on a number of levels. There is, for example, a definite distinction betweeen an expression of support and solidarity on the one hand, and active organisation on the other. To site an example: this year the Wilson Rowntrees boycott was taken up by progressives on all the campuses. Now if another boycott had been initiated by a 2nd trade union, students would have had to debate the feasibility of taking up such a boycott. And if they decided that it was unstrategic to take it up, they might simply have passed a motion expressing solidarity, without committing themselves to active involvement.

2. Nyanga Bush, etc.

We move now to a totally different type of student involvement, and I refer here to the type of involvement where the primary demand is for immediate relief work. The obvious example of this is the recent Nyanga Bush situation in Cape Town, where over a thousand people squatting alongside the Nyanga Administration Board offices, had their homes demolished and were deported to the Transkei. There is no time to examine this incredibly complex issue in any sort of depth, and so here I am merely going to take up a couple of questions relating to student involvement in the issue. Once again, though, there are no clear-cut answers to these issues. A number of people in Cape Town are reviewing the whole question of progressive involvement in the Nyanga Bush issue in some depth. This process of structured review is an important one, and could, I believe, be advantageously implemented in the student movement on a more organised scale than it generally is.

The fundamental problem which confronted progressives in the Nyanga Bush issue was the total absence of strong community groups alongside which they could measure their involvement. As a result, involvement in the issue was characterised by confusion rather than by sure direction.

The problems began with the early intervention of a couple of opportunistic community workers, who helped set up a 'Bush Committee', which was supposedly the body representative of the squatters. Unfortunately, however, the 'Bush Committee' was entirely male-dominated and allegedly consisted of people who were not themselves threatened with deportation. Most, if not all of them had permanent rights to remain in the urban area, and lived in the adjacent townships. They were therefore not the democratic representatives of the Bush people.

The support work was soon taken up by 2 groups of people. An emergency committee consisting of representatives from churches and from liberal groups such as the Womens Movement for Peace was established to organise and co-ordinate relief work. This group headed by two bishops, was able to mobilise the largely white liberal community to supply food, clothing, fire wood, blankets and shelter.

A second broad support committee was established on the initiative of the United Women's Organisation. This group had the potential to give some sort of lead in the crisis, but it was unable to do so. Firstly, it failed to receive the support of a community which was already actively involved in the Wilson Rowntree and Leyland strikes. And secondly, it was not recognised by the Bush Committee, which, however undemocratic, was the only channel for relief.

It was in this situation of extreme confusion that progressive students responded. Clearly the demand was for supplies, yet the only channel for the provision of these was the liberal-dominated emergency committee and the Bush Committee, which was allegedly selling off supplies and distributing them unequitably.

All this raises once again the limitations of relief or charity work. The Emergency Committee argued consistently that their involvement was solely moral and humanitarian, and not political. This, I would argue, is the wrong basis from which to participate in relief work, for it fails to take account of the nature of South African society. By regarding the issue as a-political, the emergency committee ignored the fact that the Nyanga Bush situation was not an individual isolated problem. It was directly related to the inadequate provision of housing in the Western Cape, and to the migrant labour system with its influx control, pass laws and "independent homelands"; in short to the whole economic and political fabric of our society. The struggle then, to remain in the Western Cape needed to be seen as a possible short-term victory in the context of other long-term demands.

All this is not to argue against relief work. Clothes, food, money etc. are often needed by the victims of state repression. And seen as a means, charity can perhaps provide people with the necessities needed to continue to wage a struggle. But if seen as an end in itself, charity will in the long run only serve to create relations of dependency between the donor and the recipient, and will fail entirely to provide permanent or comprehensive solutions.

But what does all this mean for the student movement? It is very probable that situations like Nyanga will occur and re-occur, where there is a lack of leadership from the community, and intervention dominated by liberals. Indeed, the recent Kliptown evictions in the Transvaal were characterised by similar problems. Here I can only provide a few words of warning.

UCT delegates in action.

Firstly, we should not rush in unthinkingly. At the early stages of the Nyanga Bush crisis the call came for whites to rush down and take the names of those threatened with eviction. Few stopped to query where the call had come from, why names were being taken, and what problems would result from the huge language barriers. Over-hasty action can destroy popular initiative.

We should try to ensure that the provision of supplies is organised and co-ordinated in the best manner possible. Individual, disperate actions can more easily be crushed or intercepted by the state. For example, a lot of the firewood collected and taken individually to the Nyanga Bush camp was collected and burnt by BAAB officials. Furthermore, without co-ordination, food can easily be wasted and clothing and other supplies inequitably distributed.

We should guard against adventurism. Individual interventionist action often does little more than re-inforce relations of dependency.

Finally, and most important, we should ensure that issues like Nyanga Bush and Kliptown are taken up as political issues on campus. We should ensure that as broad a group as possible is drawn in on discussions. We should examine in depth (as students at UCT did) the issues themselves, the context in which they occur and related questions of political strategy. And as I've said already, we should use the issue itself, rather than our skills and resources, as the basis for our support. In this way even if the battle against demolition is lost, long-term gains can still have been made.

3. Organised Community Struggles

So far we've examined various types of student involvement in and with the community. We've looked at relief work and its limitations, at issue-orientated and solidarity work such as boycotts, and we've mentioned briefly direct organisational involvement. We've also mentioned different roles of students — a material role through the provision of skills and resources, and an ideological role, through attempts to politicise and create awareness.

But there are 2 further areas of student involvement on which I want to focus. The first is our relation to organised, local community struggles. What is our role in community struggles around rents, township amenities or the due date of electricity? I would argue that in these cases our role is an extremely limited one. It would be arrogant and opportunistic for any white to believe that he or she could play any direct role in a local struggle of an oppressed community unless directly requested to do so by the community involved.

One occasion when campus support was called on by the community was in the recent rent and rate struggles in Durban. At the request of the Durban Housing Action Committee (DHAC), white students were able to play a supportative role by helping with the printing and laying out of pamphlets, making statements at mass meetings in an attempt to influence the Durban City Council, by petitioning the white electorate for support, and by organising surveys in white areas so as to document the racist practices of the City Council. It is important to emphasise that this involvement was based on the solid channels of communication between the community organisation and individuals on Durban campus.

4. Research and Publications

This Durban example relates to the final type of involvement I want to mention, namely research and publications.

These areas of involvement have historically been dominated by white democrats, largely because we've had the time and the educational and research skills necessary. Very recently, though, community groups have come to emphasise that if the mental

manual divide is to be broken down, black progressives must play this role too. As such, I would argue that the research role for white progressives is a diminishing one, as community groups are slowly establishing their own research units, resource centres and printing presses. Nevertheless, I believe that there is still a very definite role for the committed white intellectual who is prepared to conduct research in response to the needs of the community. At the same time a socialist attitude to research is important, whereby the findings and the research skills are passed on.

There is also still a very definite role for interventionist journalism, where white students comment critically on the issues of the day. But again, there are definite guidelines which, I believe, need to be adhered to. Especially when dealing with sensitive community and labour issues the journalistic research needs to be rigorous, accessible and well-informed. Criticism should be conveyed in a style which is neither arrogant nor dogmatic, and unnecessary labels should be avoided. One such label is the term "progressive". There is, for example, a tendency in some student circles, to label SAAWU as a "progressive trade union", but not FOSATU. This sort of labelling, besides being insensitive and of no theoretical or practical value, also ignores very definite contradictions within a grouping like FOSATU.

D CONCLUSION: RE-EMPHASING THE LIMITATIONS

In the final section of my talk, I want to draw together and re-emphasise some of the limitations of student involvement in the broader community, to which I have already referred or alluded.

One limitation relates to the very real racial differences which characterise our society. I alluded to this when I referred to the suspicion with which some community people viewed the involvement of whites on the Wilson Rowntrees Support Committee. What is important is for us as white students and white democrats to understand our structural position in society -- socially, politically, economically, culturally, educationally, etc.

I am not arguing that we must involve ourselves in any situation from a position of extreme guilt, but I am saying that we must recognise, in all sensitivity, our own particular base. We, as whites, have not been subject to the same laws as blacks. Nor have we been educated under the same system, and we have lived in very different areas. If we understand this, then we can also understand why it is so easy for us to dominate and engage in manipulative politics.

And following from this, I want to quote from an article in the recent issue of WIP:

> "Whilst it would be narrow to argue that one must be poor or black to understand the social dynamics of poverty and oppression we must acknowledge that the white democrat (usually an intellectual) whose life-style and daily experience is remote from that of the oppressed, will have difficulty in formulating policies of struggle for the oppressed. Despite recent statements and actions by some individuals . . . we cannot say that black consciousness is simply false consciousness. It is not! It emerges from real conditions of racial oppression, which we ignore at our peril."

Secondly, we need to be aware of the danger of "playing at black politics", to put it crudely. Coming from outside into a situation of which we are not organically part, can create problems. It would be very easy for us to - unawares - aid one faction or alliance in the community against another. We thus need to be as aware as possible of community activity. In this regard, a thorough reading of publications like WIP, Social Review, SASPU National, the Labour Bulletin and local newspapers like Grassroots, The Eye and Ukusa can help increase this awareness.

Thirdly, let me re-emphasise the need for us as white democrats (or, in fact, for all intellectuals) to attempt consciously to break down mental/manual divisions by passing on skills and guarding against domination. Our skills, resources and our education should not be used as bases for bargaining. They do give us relevance, but they also give us the potential to control.

Finally, I want to return to my first point, namely that without a strong organisational base on campus, without structures and channels which allow for the greatest internal democracy possible, our off-campus involvment loses much of its potential. With solid campus organisation and with real faith in our base, off-campus involvement can take on its full meaning.

Warning on need for discussion

Staff Reporter

STUDENTS need to build strong democratic organizations on their own campus before they become involved in off-campus community issues, the Nusas congress was told this week.

Speaking on "Students and the broader community", a City labour researcher, Mr Michael Evans, said it was important that in-depth discussion took place between students and labour and community leaders.

This would increase the understanding students need of community issues and at the same time inform labour and community leaders about the limitations placed on students.

Citing the boycott of Wilson-Rowntree products started by the South African Allied Workers' Union, he said that if a second union initiated a separate boycott of a different product, the practicality of it being taken up by students would have to be carefully examined.

If students decided this would be "unstrategic" in view of their limitations, they might "simply have passed a motion expressing solidarity without committing themselves to active involvement".

Similarly, the issue of squatter removals at "Nyanga Bush" earlier this year had posed problems for the student movement. The mere provision of relief in the form of blankets, clothing and food was charity, and treated the issue on moral, not political grounds.

"Nyanga Bush" was in fact a problem related to the "whole economic and political fabric of our society", including the pass laws, migrant labour and the inadequate provision of housing.

He said he was not arguing against relief work or charity as these were often needed by the victims of state repression.

"But if seen as an end in itself, charity will in the long run only serve to create relations of dependence between the donor and the recipient and will fail entirely to provide permanent or comprehensive solutions," he said.

Cape Times 3/12/81

SA Youth Foundation invitation refused

Education Reporter

HACKLES rose at the Nusas congress last night as students debated a motion on an invitation from the South African Youth Foundation to attend a leadership seminar.

The foundation is a project of Inkatha Youth and the University of Stellenbosch.

Two of its four trustees, Mr Frans Roelofse and Mr Nic Koornhof, were members of the Stellenbosch SRC which reported issues of Wits Student and Varsity to the Publications Control Board.

The Wits issue was banned, as were all future editions of Varsity shortly afterwards.

Inkatha 'impis', it is claimed, assaulted pupils during the school boycotts and also UCT students on campus during protests against the university's 150-year anniversary celebrations.

The forewords to the seminar programme were written by Dr Piet Koornhof, Minister of Co-operation and Development, and Chief Gatsha Buthelezi.

Wits delegate Mr Jeremy Clark said Dr Koornhof represented the Cabinet responsible for detaining and banning student leaders, including Sammy Adelman and Andrew Boraine, as well as causing untold misery through its exploitative labour policy.

A delegate asked: 'How can we go to a leadership conference without our democratically elected leaders?'

Regarding Chief Buthelezi, students felt they could not align themselves with 'those who align themselves with Pretoria.'

A student said: 'Chief Buthelezi is not just a puppet of Pretoria but a political opportunist.

'This seminar is an attempt to co-opt progressive people into their system and make the seminar appear representative of all campuses.'

Both Dr Koornhof and Chief Buthelezi had attacked 'progressive' students publicly, the student said.

There was some support for sending a Nusas observer to make contact with the conservative groups and 'find out what's going on.'

However, by far the majority felt that attendance would undermine the recognition Nusas had gained in the broad struggle for democracy and that contact for its own sake was worthless.

Congress resolved that no university affiliated to Nusas should send delegates to the seminar, and that it would encourage other universities to follow suit.

It would also inform the foundation of the reason for the refusal.

The motion was passed by four votes with five abstentions.

● The invitations were not sent to campus SRCs but to university administrations.

Nusas attacks education inquiry

Education Reporter

THE congress of the National Union of South African Students (Nusas) has condemned the De Lange committee of inquiry into education as a body set up 'to investigate ways of improving the situation in South Africa in the State's interest.'

In a motion passed unanimously yesterday, Nusas noted the State's increased interest in English-speaking and black universities as a result of student action and its resolve to meet the skilled labour shortage by improving tertiary education for blacks.

Parliament had passed the Vista University Act, which made provision for a technical form of tertiary education for blacks.

CONDITIONS

The State had set up the De Lange committee and threatened to retard the growth of universities to put pressure on university administrations to control 'progressive' academics.

Students believed that 'education needs to take account of the material conditions in South Africa and must contribute to the realisation of an equal and democratic society.'

The congress decided 'to expose and act against attempts by the State to increase their control over the university.'

Education Reporter

THE greatest hindrances to democracy in South Africa are the white products of an authoritarian society who are indivi- alised, thrust into decision-making and forced to compete by the system in which they live.

Suggestions on how to 'unlearn' this socialisation formed part of an address by Avril Joffe, talking on Exploring Democratic Organisation at the National Union of Students annual congress last night.

Miss Joffe is a junior lecturer in the UCT sociology department.

COMMITMENT

Democracy means breaking down this socialisation. It requires disciplined and energetic commitment to working together for a democratic future,' she said.

The breaking down process could take place in the home, learning how to run the family without relying on roles. The principles of democracy could apply in schools and should be practised in groups such as student, youth and women's organisations.

White democrats had a triple alienation when fighting for a more equitable society.

'We are not working class. We are unable to make sense of white politics in parliamentary form and as intellectuals we are alienated.'

REALITY

While whites should recognise that they were working in a fundamentally different society from blacks, they should bear in mind that democracy as the alternative to the apartheid state must arise from the people.

Unity came from common activity and involvement and the struggle towards democracy had to be achieved through democracy.

Another aspect in exploring democracy was that it should be taken beyond legal and political rights.

'The factory worker and the manager may have an equal vote but they do not have equal power. Formal democracy must be given content and reality so that people have control over their day to day lives.'

For all the problems facing students, Miss Joffe observed that 'men and women make history in circumstances that are given, not chosen.'

'The fact that Nusas is at one of the strongest points in its 57-year history in spite of bannings, detentions and harassment illustrates that democracy is already under way.'

'Democracy begins in the home'

Students condemn education controls

Staff Reporter

NUSAS yesterday condemned State attempts to increase control over English and black universities and committed itself to work for an education which will contribute to a democratic society free from exploitation.

The resolution noted the State's increased interest in English-speaking and black universities during 1980 and 1981 as a result of mass action by students in the form of boycotts, mass meetings and other action.

It also noted that the State and industry had responded to the shortage of skilled labour by deciding to increase the number of blacks receiving tertiary education. This response took three main forms:

● The passing of the Vista University Act which provides for technical education at tertiary level in a separate university reserved for blacks only.

● The setting up of bodies to investigate ways of improving the present situation "in their own interest". These bodies included the Human Sciences Research Council and the De Lange Committee.

● Pressurising university administrations by threatening to sever funds as a way of "increasing control over progressive academics and students".

The resolution expressed the belief that universities had a vital function and should not be subject to State control that education needed to take account of practical conditions in South Africa and must contribute to the realization of an equal and democratic society and that universities were important bases for organization of the student and academic communities.

Nusas committed itself to working against State interference. It would expose and act against attempts by the State to increase their control over the universities.

Avril Joffe

Avril became a junior lecturer in the UCT Sociology Department at the beginning of 1981 after completing an honours degree in Industrial Sociology at Wits. She was actively involved in the student movement there and became chairperson of the Economic Research Commission in 1979. Avril has also worked on the LRC and as a labour reporter for 'Afrika'.

Democracy at work

The issue of democratic organisation is quite clearly on the agenda both within the broad progressive movement as a whole and in NUSAS as a member of that movement in particular. The concept of democracy and the question of democratic organisation has indeed permeated its way through all struggles throughout our history.

The debate has reached different stages in different areas but I want to take NUSAS as my starting point whose theme for 1981 as we all know has been "Students for a Democratic Future". However since NUSAS' theme is directly related to the struggle for democracy in the progressive trade union movement, the communities etc. the issues I hope to raise are not only specific to NUSAS but also pertinent to the movement as a whole.

At this point I would like to emphasise that I will avoid using specific examples and I hope that delegates to NUSAS Congress will illustrate some of the points I raise with their own concrete experiences.

My paper will be divided into four broad areas beginning with a brief introduction of the origins of the NUSAS theme and stemming from that the reasons for this paper. I will then go on to discuss why democracy is on the agenda, to ask why is it a struggle for democracy and to argue that not only is it a struggle for democracy as a principle, as a goal, but that democracy is also a method or tool of organising people in the struggle.

This will form the third part of my paper which will lead on to a discussion of the constraints that operate on us in a repressive society, in a fundamentally undemocratic society like ours.

The fourth part of my paper will end off outlining tensions that exist in beginning to organise democratically and hopefully this is the area that will enable delegates to discuss the issues that pertain to them on their respective campuses.

(1) ORIGINS OF THE NUSAS THEME

The theme for NUSAS in 1980 was "Exposing Total Strategy" which initially was approached from the side of the State's political programme and it became generally clear as the year moved on with the schools boycott, the Free Mandela Campaign, the meat boycott etc. that Total Strategy had to be looked at in terms of resistance and uprisings of the mass of people of S.A. who were directly affected by this Total Strategy espoused so clearly by Gen. Magnus Malan and P.W. Botha.

With the upsurge of resistance in the 1980's the debates about organisation, means and ends in the schools boycott, organisational programmes, strategy and tactics and grassroots mobilisation became widely articulated, discussed, written and presented in documents and memoranda. Some of these issues are clearly spelt out in for example, a letter to Social Review 10 Sept 1980 which details the questions affecting the Committee of 81 during the schools boycott in the Western Cape.

It was this emphasis on the problems of organisation that led to the initial debates around democracy and democratic organisation. Accordingly, NUSAS adopted as its theme for 1981 "Students for a Democratic Future". It was initially conceived as a focus on students, their education and how democracy is related to their particular situation.
While not wanting to present things in a mechanistic fashion, once again the broader democratic movement helped NUSAS define and explore the issues before it. The attention of the campuses moved away from education and students as such to that of the "democratic future" with the focus becoming one of democracy as a principle, and as a goal.

To illustrate what seems to have happened it is useful to liken the process of history to a movie, a film in which with the raging debate on democracy has actually stopped in the middle. The frame on democracy in the movie (to continue the metaphor) has been removed, enlarged and perhaps over-exposed. Now it is quite an obvious yet important point that you cannot understand the whole movie if you stop the frame in mid-stream. Rather you will have a distorted and incomplete perception of the movie.

The essential point I wish to make is that democracy is a process. In order not to abuse the concept or to give it an existence in some magical realm of its own, this point must be kept in mind. Democratic organisation must be placed in context. As Joe Pahla explained on Sunday night that students must begin from the context in which they find themselves, and not abstract themselves from that ongoing process of struggle.

I say this because it is important to understand that democracy cannot be defined in abstraction; it can only be understood as people struggle for certain demands in a given situation. To ask for the meaning of democracy is of limited value — to understand it we need to examine it unfolding in a particular situation. Of course, for South Africans this is best done by examining the unfolding popular democratic struggle in S.A.

We must avoid slogan-mongering about democracy in vague and abstract terms, we must rather discuss democratic values and organisation as they are interpreted and realized in the lives of people living under the present South African system.

These discussions and debates on the student movement must always be informed by an analytic understanding of the society in which we live, and by theoretical debates around issues like democracy. These must be concretized both in the experience of the student movement and in their working relationships in the off-campus arenas.

In the experiences of students trying to organise themselves democratically, to work democratically and build towards a democratic future many lessons have been learned. Not only about the possibilities of democracy, but also of the limitations and constraints under which we operate. Every organisation must continually review their activities and be self-critical so as to advance.

(2) WHY IS IT THEN A STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY?

It is a struggle for democracy because it is a struggle to extend the scope of people's rights of participation in bodies democratically elected by them. Because formal democratic institutions in a society like ours do not in themselves guarantee substantial freedom and real control, the struggle also encompasses attempts to establish and maintain the social conditions under which such freedom and control can be realised.

The struggle for democracy thus extends far beyond the narrow sphere of political and legal rights and implies the organisation of the people as a political force. Only with the support of this broad-based organised mass of people can the struggle for democracy be effectively pursued.

From what I have said, we can see that the struggle for democracy goes beyond the formalistic notion of democracy of rights to vote for a national assembly, the right to freedom of speech, movement, belief etc.. Part of the struggle however, in South Africa is very definitely a struggle to win these formal rights — in South Africa the demand for universal suffrage is a part of the struggle for democracy. Part of progressive struggle and organisation involves giving content and a greater reality to these rights and freedoms. It involves expanding, broadening and deepening ideas about participation and democracy through struggle.

Why do we say this? Democracy as a formal set of rights appearing in the political sphere separately and independently from the workplace and the communities is highly misleading. There is no equality of power in our society. The owner of the factory and the assembly line worker are not equal even if they both have the vote. This is because formal democracy serves to hide or mask class rule, domination and subordination. It poses and presents people as equal and as legal subjects. But, as I said, representative democracy is not something to be dismissed as irrelevant, it must be combined with the demand for some form of democratic control by the people over the day-to-day aspects of their lives. The struggle for democracy at the same time involves a need to break with the conditions dictated by the rulers of this country — for example there is a need to break the divisions between economic and political struggles; in fact with all the distinctions imposed on us by our society which are made to divide and fragment us. So the task of the democratic movements is to broaden and deepen the concepts and practise of both politics and democracy. Not limiting the concept of democracy to the level of politics but rather expanding it, to include all areas in the everyday lives of the people. The need, for example, to carry the struggles from the work place into the communities has been strongly emphasised by the progressive trade union movement in the last few years.

So quite clearly a future society must embrace more than formal political democracy — it requires a redistribution of the wealth of the land to the people as a whole in a situation in which the people shall govern.

(3) DEMOCRACY AS A TOOL, AS A METHOD OF ORGANISING

Earlier it was stated that democracy is a process. It is a continuous process which does not come to fruition in one day. It is not an immediately realisable goal. It is a struggle for constitutional, legal and political demands. It is a struggle FOR democracy. BUT democracy is also an organisational tool of that struggle; in fact it is the organisational form that the struggle takes, the means as well whereby that struggle is waged.

The democratic alternative to the present apartheid state must materialise and arise concretely from the

people. This means winning areas of freedom and bases of democratic struggle. Since unity is expressed, manifested, consolidated and developed in common activity, collective decisions, participation and struggle, it is also a struggle won through democracy. In each area of struggle we must operate as democratically as possible in trade unions, communities, the home, the university. The degree to which this is possible in any given situation depends on the context, the battles to be won, and those that have been won etc.

Democracy quite simply then is an organisational practice through which participation and decision-making is encouraged, leadership is developed and the broadest level of the organisation in question, is educated.

There must at the same time be some separation between the process and the goal. If we don't acknowledge this, we fall into the anarchist trap I will refer to this later. There are limits on what is immediately possible. This is not to say that every step, every act must not, like a compass, point in the direction of the guiding principles of democracy, and that there is a need for the day-to-day struggle to embody or be informed by the democratic goal. In other words, this is not saying that democracy must not be taken seriously. It must be taken seriously, and must be treated as a real objective.

The problem arises however that the relationship between means and ends is not a true identity. Because, if it were, then either the means of the struggle for democracy are already available and so therefore is the end, in which case there is no democratic process since democracy is instantaneously realisable and realised. Or on the other hand democracy is not instantaneously realisable and the end therefore does not exist.

The problem to be acknowledged here is that in a fundamentally undemocratic society like ours, real or true democracy in organisation is dependent very definitely upon the particular exigencies under which that organisation operates, whether it be a student organisation, a trade union, a community organisation, a boycott support committee, an anti-republic day committee etc. Suffice it to say, men and women make history, but in circumstances that are given, and not chosen.

This leads to the fourth part of the paper, that of the limitations and constraints under which we are forced to work in a repressive society.

(4) THE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS AND CONSTRAINTS OF OUR REPRESSIVE SOCIETY

Numerous constraints exert pressure on groupings and organisations involved in the struggle for democracy. The most severe and hideous repression which is available to the State is constantly unleashed against the people, taking the form of widespread practises of torture, of right-wing fascist movements, the activities of the National Intelligence Service and the security police, harassment, detentions, bannings and so on. While this does not mean we must hide behind the security legislation it also means that this legislation cannot be denied. While saying this, it is necessary to repeat a point made earlier. We must break with those constraints forced upon us to divide and fragment us -- the divisions imposed in the workplace, between the workplace and the community, between men and women, between black and white - while nevertheless recognising these constraints and contradictions and manipulating them to achieve what objectives we set for ourselves.

For example, although our struggle is a non-racial one, at times, to be effective it might be better to operate in one's own racially defined area of struggle, but nevertheless, with an overall commitment to non-racialism with in the broad democratic movement. An obvious example that springs to mind is, as Joe Phahla said, the student movement which has defined the universities as sites of struggle. Another example which is pertinent to our student movement is the triple alienation which we suffer as white democrats. Firstly, we are not part of the working class. Secondly we are often unable to make sense of white politics

in its parliamentary form, in other words we are alienated from our own constituency. And thirdly, as intellectuals and potential experts and professionals we are also alienated.

The task therefore, that confronts democrats working for a future fundamentally different society to the repressive one in which we work, is to develope appropriate forms of organisation given all the specifics of that situation.

It involves a clear understanding of the limits and possibilities of democratic organisation in each given situation and of how each organisation fits in and forms working relationships with other similar organisations in the progressive movement in South Africa.

(5) TENSIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS

The final section of this paper involves outlining three areas in which tensions and contradictions can emerge and have emerged in the activities of the past year both on campus and in organisations outside of it. I call them tensions and contradictions because they are not resolved in abstract, and appear and reappear in organisational practice and can only be worked through democratically in each given situation with people in the organisation concerned, not necessarily through formal structures but in the process of activity and struggle.

The first tension is that between democracy and efficiency which I might hasten to add are not polar opposites, but part and parcel of the same process. Ultra democrats are those people who regard democracy as the overriding principle, often hamstringing the organisation.

The workings out of problems in a given organisation must be appropriate to the decision that needs to be made, the speed with which it needs to be made and the constraints on the organisation itself. This is not to deny a need to be as democratic as possible in coming to that decision. Indeed, democracy is at times a very laborious process and at times quite painful, but it is also the most effective way of :
(a) sharing workloads
(b) enabling people to develop a sense of loyalty and commitment to the group.
(c) transferring skills to newer people
(d) avoiding self-engrandisement and elitism
(e) avoiding intimidation and alienation,
and most importantly, involving members in collective decision making, constructive debate, discussion and criticism.

The second tension relates to the question of accountability and the participation by all the members. The question is not between the supposedly conflicting views of those who define democracy as accountable elites, and those who define it in terms of participation, as the recent editorial of the SALB emphasises. (SALB 7. 3 (1981))

Rather, I would argue it is about how members in a particular organisation must be involved in the democratic running of that organisation and how, when they represent that organisation, they are accountable back to its members as a whole.

While this debate is specific to the trade union movement and not entirely applicable in all its ramifications to the student movement it raises interesting questions of leadership. To quote from a recent WIP editorial: "What is the relationship between participation, representation, and leadership?"
How does an organisation prevent representation and leadership from blocking participation?
Isn't one of the functions of leadership to encourage participation by others? (WIP 17, 1981) But if this is so, what is it that makes a leader democratic?

While I don't in any way profess to have answers to these questions, there are certain points I would like to make. Leadership can arise, for example, because people have information available to them or have numerous wonderfully creative ideas. Making this information accessible, motivating new ideas and allowing and indeed encouraging initiatives to emerge is a task of that leader. This is not to say that leadership must not be sensitive and hold back at times to allow initiatives to emerge, but on the other hand taking responsibility and delegating areas of activity is not necessarily being undemocratic.

The art of democratic leadership consists in enabling the organisation to be as effective as possible, of setting a pace which accords with the objective conditions and the real possibilities at hand and most importantly, the question is surely one of whether, in a given context and concrete situation, the course or policy advocated will aid or impede the prospects of winning democratic demands.

The third and final tension is one which has been a recurring theme throughout this talk; that is, that democracy is not the organisation and it cannot be substituted for the organisation. It is not a fait d'accompli. This view leads to anarchy. Democracy is not an anarchic process, it must be bound down to an organisational process in concrete form.

It has become fashionable when disagreeing with

someone, or some group, not to argue against their particular position or point of view, but to label them as "undemocratic".
In other words, calling someone or some group undemocratic is like shouting obscenities at them. Democracy, as Eddie Webster said in his talk to Nusas Congress last year, has become a word that few political protagonists are prepared to concede to their rivals for their exclusive property. The problem is not this though, but that it can thus be used to mask true crucial principles and questions of tactics and strategy. So my warning is simply this — don't use it as a tool to undermine decisions with which you don't agree.

To continue with the same argument: democracy is a principle. It is not the organisation. But it is a mode of organising, a tool, a method.

Democracy involves a set of practices which are used to a greater or lesser extent. And finally, this democratic set of practices needs to be learnt. We are all products of an authoritarian society. We have been socialised into particular roles. We have had decisions thrust upon us and we have been forced to compete and become individualised.

Working democratically involves breaking down this experience. There are numerous ways in which people can be educated in democratic practices. Each arena must be the site of this learning — the family, the school, student organisations, youth groups, womens' organisations. Being democratic implies being disciplined, being committed to working together and committed to being effective in the struggle for a democratic future.

In conclusion democratic organisation in South Africa is that organisation which allows the mass of people to participate in the process of developing democratic demands. Democracy is not only bound up with the organisation of the people. It is the very movement of the people.

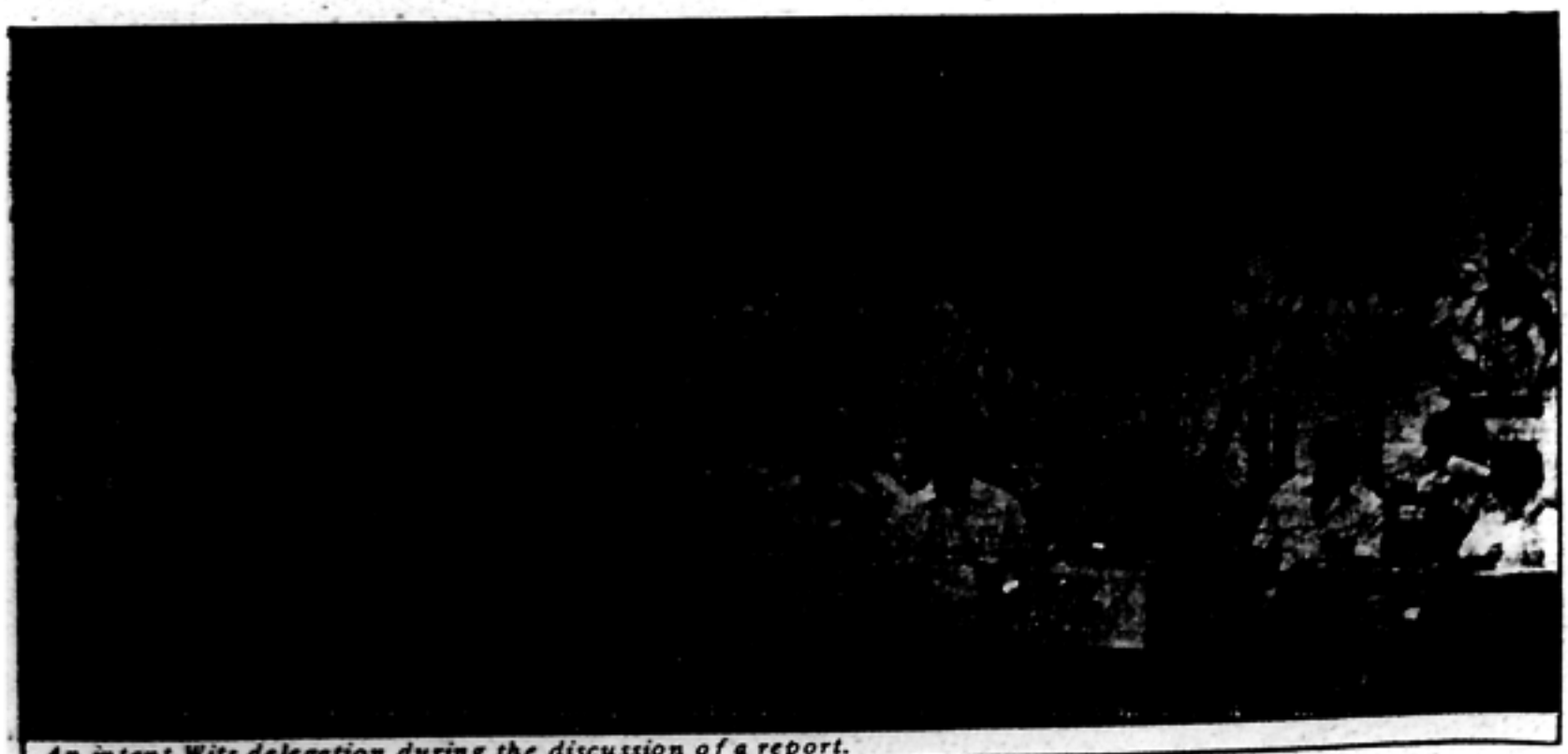
Democratic organisation requires the energetic participation of the people. A just and democratic society

Laurie Nathan participates in discussion.

can only be won through a prodigous effort of struggle, through victories and defeats, through errors and misjudgments, and cannot be achieved through an unconscious or automatic development — behind our backs, as it were.

There are some signposts but no ready formula to achieve a better society and no easy solutions to the thousands of concrete, practical decisions that confront us day by day.
Only experience, and learning the lessons of this experience, is capable of correcting and opening up new paths.

The fact that NUSAS is at one of its strongest points in its 57 year history, despite detentions, harassment, intimidation and bannings of student leaders illustrates to us that the process of democracy is already underway. They can ban the movie or confiscate it for a couple of days but there are 25 million people to ensure that it never stops running.



An intent Wits delegation during the discussion of a report.

Call for change in rape laws

Staff Reporter

NUSAS yesterday called for extensive changes in the handling of rape cases by the South African courts, police and medical profession.

Motivating the motion, a delegate from Durban, Mr Andrew Sampson, said "rape is the only crime for which society inevitably blames the victim, and the victim, a product of the same society, also blames herself."

Ms Fiona Dove, also of Durban, referred to internal examinations of victims as "the second rape". A rape-victim could only procure an abortion if it was proved in court that she was raped, she added.

Referring to court treatment of rape victims, Nusas noted that because the accused is regarded as innocent until proved guilty, the defence consists of transferring the guilt to the rape victim who is herself "put on trial".

The students demanded that the law be amended and that police and doctors refer all rape cases to aid centres like Rape Crisis.

They noted "The inadequacy of the definition of rape in present South African Criminal Law, the inconsistent use of the element of consent and the three-phased victimization of the complainant".

This three-phased victimization was the trauma of being raped itself, the medical and legal procedure victims go through and the subsequent victimization of the raped person through societal rejection.

Rape clinics

They urged the police and the judiciary to liaise with Rape Crisis so they could gain a better appreciation of "the social and psychological traumas of the assault" and recommended that hospitals set up specialized rape clinics.

Nusas expressed the belief that rape and legal procedure were a product of the present structure of society and therefore legal reform should be demanded without accepting it as a final goal.

To illustrate the way in which rape victims were cross-examined by the courts, the students reconstructed a court case in which a man who had been mugged was subjected to the same type of questioning.

The fact that he did not struggle with the armed robber for fear of his life was construed as his making a "conscious decision to comply with the demands of the robber (rapist) rather than to resist the assault".

'Philanthropy'

The fact that he had given money away in the past — was not a virgin — was counted against him as he had "achieved quite a reputation for philanthropy".

The defence attorney asks him: "How can we be sure that you were not contriving to have your money taken away by force?" (The victim was asking to be raped through the implication of "loose morals".)

Finally, the fact that the man was wearing an expensive suit was seen as an invitation to be robbed, parralelling the implication that "provocative" clothing invites rape.

Call for creches on university campuses

Staff Reporter

AT YESTERDAY'S session of the Nusas congress at the University of Cape Town, delegates called on university administrations to "acknowledge their responsibility to provide creches for their staff and students".

The administrations should provide "realistic" budgets to Student Representative Councils and provide facilities for the establishment of creches on all the campuses.

It was noted that UCT was the only campus with a creche, run by the Women's Movement with funds from the SRC. Other creches should be run along the same lines — non-sexist, non-racial and non-competetive.

The congress resolved to "take on the task of exploring alternative means of child-rearing appropriate to a democratic society".

A delegate from UCT said it was vital that these means be explored, as "alternative methods of child-rearing are at the heart of restructuring a democratic society".

Children were taught undemocratic methods of living through the hierarchical, authoritarian nature of the nuclear family and were brought up to believe the two sexes had vastly different roles to play in society, he said.

Nusas vow to eradicate sexism

Staff Reporter

STUDENTS attending the annual Nusas Congress at UCT yesterday reaffirmed their commitment to eradicate sexism and called on university Rag organizations to do away with sexist practices and explore alternative methods of fund-raising.

In a statement on sexism, the students said "the oppression of women is intrinsic to an undemocratic society and any group working towards a democratic future must have as one of its fundamental aims the liberation of women".

"Women are oppressed at many levels — but one which is most obviously prevalent on our campuses is the treatment of women as sex objects."

The most obvious examples of this were the institutions of drum majorettes and beauty queens and although there had been "progressive tendencies" in Rag, their committees should take more active steps towards the abolition of all sexist practices.

Nusas plan to give more help

STUDENT accommodation — especially for blacks — was seen as one of the most pressing problems in all university centres, the Nusas congress heard yesterday.

And where accommodation was available exorbitant rentals and the Group Areas Act complicated the establishment of integrated student communities.

This was stated at the [illegible] of 20 Nusas congress with committee reports to be tabled signalling the start of the final formulation of Nusas policy for 1982.

Yesterday's report by the Student Services Committee looked at problems facing SRCs regarding the provision of student facilities and services.

The committee examined the provision of non-racist and non-sexist creches with UCT being the only campus having a creche run along these lines.

The UCT creche was established by the Women's Movement at UCT and is financed by the SRC. It was decided that more pressure should be put on university administrations to provide venues and funding for creches on all affiliated campuses.

The Nusas head office was mandated to investigate the coordination of a scheme advertising vacation jobs on a national level.

Services

Other student services already in existence which will be expanded by Nusas in 1982 included:

- A "digs" exchange scheme to help students on holiday find cheap accommodation when visiting the different centres.
- The "swift lift" scheme providing students with information about lifts and safer transport for students [illegible] during [illegible] travel.
- More intensive advertising of the South African Students' Travel Service, an agency that works for Nusas.
- The expansion of the Nusas national discount scheme which provides students with cheaper rates and discount prices throughout the country.
- Issuing an updated version of the Nusas Student Handbook — a guide for students' benefits in South Africa.

[illegible]

David Webster

David is a lecturer in the Department of Social Anthropology at Wits University. He is a founder member of the Conference of Academics for a Democratic Society (CADS), established at Wits after the 'Koornhof incident'. During this time he was instrumental in organising academics at Wits to oppose possible disciplinary action against Adelman, the Wits SRC President. David is also an Honorary Vice-President of NUSAS.

Closing address

Friends,

It is a very great privilege for me to be able to address your annual congress. I would like to thank the Nusas Executive for their invitation to me, and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them and the UCT delegation for their hard work that has made this Congress such a success.

The outgoing executive has performed a magnificent task over the last year, in the most difficult circumstances — notably the banning of Andrew, but also, in a year when the Government has shown its most brutal and repressive teeth, with the banning of Sammy Adelman, Firoz and Azher Cachalia, and the detention of many of our friends and colleagues. To those banned and detained, we say: we salute you; you are the beacons that light our way in the struggle. Your goals are our goals, your dreams are our dreams, and we see it as our duty to avenge the treatment to which you are subjected. We will fight on for a free and democratic South Africa, and the ideals in which you believe; and we know we will win.

South Africa is in a state of Civil War. When the security police can swoop on a young Afrikaaner mother of a six year old child, whose father is a professor of medicine at Witwatersrand University, and whose uncle is a Cabinet minister, then families are turned against families, democrats against Nationalists, and the fabric of our society threatens be torn asunder. When the Ciskei gains its sham pendence", against the wishes of the mass of eople, and when it has to ban, detain and repress democratic forces among its people, then calami- cannot be far away. And, finally, when our com- unities, factories and especially universities are as olarised as they are, then all the state and police repression in the world will not contain the militant resistance of the mass of South African peoples.

Historical Background

It is against this background that the present congress is taking place. It would be useful, I think, to look further back into the history of struggle in South Africa, and to chart some of Nusas' paths within it.

Nusas, being a students' organisation, has always had the element of youth on its side. Youth has a great advantage of possessing energy and enthusiasm, often pushing forward where older, more cautious people hold back. There have been victories and defeats in the history of Nusas, just as there have been in the broader struggle for democracy in South Africa; many of these have been mentioned by speakers at this congress.

But I think it is an ideal that we should look to, when we study the lessons of our predecessors. One such, which Joe Pahla drew our attention to, is the Youth League of the African National Congress. Here, in the 1940's, a young group of people, disaffected by the rather staid politics of the leaders of their organisations, began to criticise and move the organisation in a more militant direction. Of course, they made mistakes, but they eventually transformed the organisation into a potent political force, and in the process of democratic struggle, they thrust forward such great leaders as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Thambo.

Nusas is, of course, a very different organisation from the one I am alluding to, operating in very different conditions and a different moment in time. It has, however, proved to be a significant training ground for young South Africans; the detention of Auret van Heerden and Fink Haysom, and the banning of Andrew Boraine, the three past presidents of Nusas, stands as a silent monument to the Student Union's part in the struggle.

The year that we move into, 1982, is notable for the anniversary of three important landmarks:

1. the formation of the Congress of Democrats (an organisation of Whites dedicated to non-racialism and the struggle, in alliance with like-minded organisations, for a just and truly democratic South Africa). Also the launching of the Coloured Peoples' Organisation, which shared the same ideals.

2. the lauching of the Defiance Campaign in 1952 — a disobedience campaign aimed at six "unjust laws". During the period of the campaign, 8,000 people received short prison sentences, in an attempt to overload prisons.

3. 1982 will also be the 25th anniversary of the Alexandra Bus Boycotts, where the residents of Alexandra Township boycotted the Putco Bus Company over a fare increase. The boycott lasted 3 months and spread to other areas. Putco were eventually forced to capitulate. (Still Johannesburg bylaw on lifts.)

These anniversaries should stand as exemplary lessons to us — they should be examined for their successes and failures, and, although we live in very different times, the experiences of those times should be absorbed.

1. The Defiance Campaign was notable for the fact that it was a non-racial campaign, it was nationwide, was mass-based, and was even quite strongly represented in small rural areas. The campaign was initially very successful but faded when the ANC failed to turn the mass euphoria of joint protest and action into concrete organisation.

2. The COD had no mass base and no institutional protection, and were thus easily picked off by the Governement.

3. The bus boycotts foreshadowed a trend which is re-emerging: that working class struggles can and must be fought whereever the working class finds itself: whether it be in the work place (where Trade Unions are the most appropriate form of organisation). and in the townships or even homelands, where community organisation is the most appropriate.

Nusas has its parallels to these anniversaries and trends. When I was a student and member of Nusas, in the late '60s, protest politics was the dominant form of activity. It was an exhilarating period, but no long term gains were achieved, and a small leadership held power and knowledge, and grassroots support withered as soon as the particular issue disappeared. There was no consolidation. The protest politics then was geared to education and politics, and not to the broader struggles of the working class, and certainly not to community development.

The high point of protest poltics for Nusas was in 1959, with the closing of universities to Blacks. The massive campaigns by students were extremely valuable, and stimulated many overseas organisations to take up the struggle against apartheid. This struggle, to re-open our places of learning was worthwhile then; it's still worth fighting for now.

The decade of the seventies was significant for defeats and advances. The Schlebush Commission and the Nusas trial temporarily set back the student movement, and the SASO breakaway and emergence of black consciousness posed a real threat to the organisation.

Nusas' responses in recent times has been to consolidate. Since the dark years of 1976 came a restructuring and the Students' Union has emerged as a determined, flexible and organisationally sound body. Your commitment to the realisation that South Africa is a third world country, and that students must build a future in it, has been a major turning point, and has given you both the theoretical foundation and the organisational issues, on which to build experience.

The University as a site of Struggle

I have attended many of your committees, your talks and reports, and have been deeply impressed by the seriousness of the debates and the breadth of issues that have been raised.

One theme that appears to have emerged with some force is that of the university as a site of struggle. It's gratifying to see that while there is a perception of the need for consolidation and introspection, there is nevertheless the commitment to keep up the involvement in wider issues — to support trade union and community struggles.

I'd like to address the issue of the university and its internal dynamics. And first, I want to examine the myth of the liberal university.

There are many well-meaning people who argue that the university should be a tranquil island in the troubled sea that is our country. That the university should distance itself from the morass of politics. They appeal for the university to be left alone, in the pursuit of knowledge and truth; in short, they not only believe the university is an ivory tower, they actually uphold the concept as an ideal. They also mistakenly believe that the university is a bastion of liberalism. It is not.

A recent study of the history of my own university — Wits — shows that the institution has always reflected directly the main contradictions of South African society.

Our "liberal" university, believed by some to be in the forefront of the fight against racism, sexism and elitism, has, over time, dragged its feet on exactly these issues. It transpires that our university actually asked the Minister of Education of the Union of South Africa (in the '30s) to pass legislation forbidding Blacks to enter "white" universities; the Minister replied that they had to accept Blacks. Early employment policy systematically opposed the appointment or promotion of women staff (some may say that little has changed) especially under Hofmeyr. And records show that the university was constantly seen as being an institution for the education of the sons and daughters of the rich.

Norman Manoim responds to a suggestion for the theme.

Much of the university funding came from mining finance and capital; most of the early courses were explicitly to provide skilled manpower for the mines. Indeed, Wits grew out of the Transvaal School of Mines. The state too, wanted its pound of flesh, and courses in the arts were often launched with the justification that they could service some government department. My own department, Social Anthropology, was launched in 1923, offering courses to district commissioners and other administration officials, to teach them how best to understand, and control, the Black population.

So let us be under no illusions about the autonomy of our 'liberal' universities, nor let us delude curselves with the holy grail of 'academic freedom'.

Dr Koornhof came to make an election speech on our campus this year and found himself, for one of the few times in his life, confronted by the people whose lives his department controls, but who never elected him. They, and the white students who stood by them in their struggle, deprived Koornhof of one hour of his political freedom. (The howls of outrage, and the trial by television and media that our students were subjected to, created a climate in which the state could later detain, then ban, three of our students. Then, the cries for democracy, the right to be heard, and freedom, were nowhere to be heard.)

On our campus, the Chairman of Council and the Vice-Chancellor issued statements condemning student behaviour as unscholarly, unmannerly, and an "infringment of academic freedom". This, for a political speech! But the Chairman of Council revealed what lay behind his anguish — that donors from private industry would stop donating funds to the campus.

The lessons of the Wits campus activities are significant: they are that the students were in the vanguard, constantly challenging the university staff, academics and administration, to examine their consciences, and to take a stand on issues of deep moral principle. The academics were jolted into the recognition of the necessity for involvement; that major struggles over the nature of the university and its place in society had to be fought, at both ideological and practical levels. Some of these issues are beginning to be faced, and we see, on the Wits campus at least, the emergence of CADS — the Conference of Academics for a Democratic Society, which attempts to examine and act on some of the issues constantly being thrown up by a university and society in crisis.

This illustration shows us two important things: not only were our universities at the beck and call of the state and capital; they still are.

It is therefore imperative that you, the progressive students, examine the internal dynamics of your universities.

White students, as Avril Joffe pointed out in her speech, suffer a double alienation: (1) your beliefs and practices distance you from the majority of South African whites and (2) as Joe Pahla pointed out, you are intellectuals, not workers. Since you are not members of the working class, one must recognise that the major struggles for democracy in South Africa are going to be fought and won by others (whose cause one may nevertheless espouse).

Trapped in this double alienation, it is essential to foster unity among progressives and democrats. But to do so, one must be sure of one's own organisational base. Only when one has a sound foundation can one offer help to others from a position of strength. It is a question of discipline and responsibility. There are limitations to student power, and it is essential that one does not lose one's base.

One possibility for assisting students to form that firm base on campus, is to seek out allies who share your ideals.

There are, for instance, sympathetic lecturers who like you, believe in the democratic struggle and are working towards it. On the Wits campus, over 150 academics rallied behind the SRC and BSS, when it seemed probable that they would be victimised by the university after the Koornhof incident.

Also at Wits, a new organisation, the Conference of Academics for a Democratic Society has been launched, which aims to link progressive academics, senior students and university workers. Their stated aims:

* to examine and debate the role of open universities, particularly their relation to the state, business interests and the wider community;