TABLE 6: Cost of the Industrial Decentralization Programme, 1986/7

	Trade and Industry	R'000	Estimated % Attributable to Decentralization Programme	R'000
	TRADE AND INDUSTRY			
18-9	Decentralization of Industries	521 397	100	521 397
	CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING			
4-1	Industrial Area Developmental and Control	47 311	50	23 655
4-1	Supporting and Associated Service	19 592	10	1 959
4-7	Physical Planning	2 581	20	516
4-7	Regional Development Coordination	338	50	169
4-15	Financial Assistance to Local Authorities (Loans)	44 437	15	6 666
4-15	Control and Establishment of Industries	92	80	74
4-15	Industrial Area Development	2 262	80	R 1 810
	FOREIGN AFFAIRS			
5-1	Foreign Aid and Development Cooperation	1011 337	20	202 267
5-9	Incentive Scheme for Industries	36 000	50	18 000
				R776 513

TABLE 7: Costs to SADCC[7] Countries of Destabilization 1980-1985

	(US Dollars – Millions)
Direct War Damage	1 610
Extra Defence Expenditure	3 060
Higher Transport and Energy Costs	970
Lost Exports and Tourism	230
Smuggling	190
Refugees	660
Reduced Production	800
Lost Economic Growth	2 000
Boycotts and Embargoes	260
Trading Arrangements	340
TOTAL	$10 120 m.

Source: Memorandum from SADCC to OAU, Addis Ababa, July 1985.

1 The nine Southern African Development Coordinating Countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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by David Welsh

THE O'BRIEN AFFAIR

(A speech to the Cape Town Press Club)

A cynical colleague of mine remarked in the Senate last year that university disputes generate so much heat because the issues are so trivial. That is no doubt true of many of our disputes, but it is not true of the Conor Cruise O'Brien issue. This has rocked U.C.T. to its foundations; and its reverberations will be felt for a long time yet. It may also have implications for the kind of universities and the kind of society that post-apartheid South Africa will have.

It is not my intention to say much about the findings of the du Plessis Commission Report : which I believe to have been a forensic fiasco. Nor will I say anything about the way in which the University Council has handled the release of the Report: which I believe to have been crass.

Far more important is the future, and how, if at all, U.C.T. and other South African universities can prevent this kind

of episode. Universities are fragile institutions, ultimately held together by a web of mutually respected rights and obligations. In important respects universities are inescapably dependent on the communities they serve and the state from which they derive some 80% of their revenue : yet if they are to function as proper universities they must maintain a considerable degree of independence from both of these constraining forces – this is what is properly understood by university autonomy, a concept that is distinct from academic freedom.

Autonomous or not, universities are incapable of standing aloof from the political currents that course through society. Universities in divided societies will almost inevitably find themselves drawn into the vortex of conflict, usually with serious dangers for their integrity and their capacity to function efficiently. In these circumstances the university is not just the barometer of political tension : given the propensity of students to radicalism (whether of the left or right), the campus of the multi-racial university may be a prism through which the conflicts of the wider society are even magnified.

U.C.T. finds itself now in such a vortex of conflict : it has committed itself to non-racial goals which it seeks honestly to implement : in 1986 16,5% of our student body was black; in 1987 over 40% of our applications for admission were from blacks; by 2000 it is highly likely that blacks will constitute at least 30% of the student body, assuming only a 1% p.a. increase.

Even now the size of the black student population at U.C.,T. has reached 'critical mass', that is to say the point at which their numbers give them significant clout on the campus. This is not to imply that U.C.T.'s black students are politically or ideologically homogenous; nor does it suggest that the 200 – odd who were involved in the O'Brien affair were only blacks.

For many black students, the struggle to attain U.C.T.'s entrance requirements has been an arduous one, given the appalling inequalities that are inherent in our divided educational system. There are problems of under-preparedness, of financial hardship, and of accommodation. To concentrate on one's academic studies if one comes from a township that is a violent place in constant turmoil is well-nigh impossible. And if you are a black student at U.C.T. you are quite likely to run the risk of being taunted for attending a privileged, elitist, white-controlled institution.

In these circumstances concern with questions like academic freedom must seem overwhelmingly like a liberal self-indulgence which is remote from the cauldron of the township, a luxury that is irrelevant to the life - and - death issues of the struggle.

It is in this context that sharply differing conceptions of the university's basic value system and its goals arise. An institution like U.C.T. is rooted firmly in essentially Western conceptions of academic freedom, university autonomy and university neutrality.

This cluster of values makes it impossible to condone the forcible disruption of lectures - **lehrfreiheit** and **lernfreiheit** are crucial parts of the classical idea of academic freedom, which, let it be noted, is concerned also with the rights of students to hear a teacher whose course they have chosen to attend.

(Here I may remark that the 100 students in Dr O'Brien's class are forgotten people : that **their** academic freedom was violated does not even rate a mention by the du Plessis Commission).

If one believes in university autonomy then one must reject the call for 'community control' of the university; but this does not mean that all communities served by the university should not be represented in its governing council, or that the university should not strive broadly to reflect in its staff and student body the population profile. I accept both of these goals unreservedly.

If one accepts the idea of university neutrality then one must reject the call for the university 'to align itself with the democratic forces in the liberation struggle'.

Each component of this complex is highly debatable : university neutrality, for example, is a much-battered notion breached in all kinds of direct and indirect ways, not least by being an elemental link in a chain of privilege and power. Yet, if you reject neutrality you, by definition, must espouse some or other form of partisanship or political/religious orthodoxy. The philosophical difficulties and the practical consequences of this alternative position make, in comparison, the problems of university neutrality pale into insignificance.

It is not clear from the Commission's report whether they believe that the O'Brien episode was a violation of academic freedom. Partly their confusion stems from their prior confusion of academic freedom with university autonomy; and partly because they are in some doubt as to whether O'Brien is properly classified as a scholar, a journalist or a political activist – eventually they settle for all three, but only after straining at the leash to try and demonstrate that his 'political activism' predominated.

The 'potted' biography of O'Brien offered by the Commission, incredibly enough, makes no mention of the fact that he was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana from 1963-5, that he is the author of several books of scholarly distinction, or that he is presently Pro-chancellor of Trinity College, Dublin. Instead, we get a history of only his political and quasi-political roles.

He was invited in his scholarly capacity. The students in his class in my department, those I referred to as the 'forgotten hundred', said in a memorandum of apology to him : 'We all found the course smooth, interesting, informative and enjoyable'. This memorandum was available to the Commission but was not referred to in the Report. Perhaps it would have complicated the profile of O'Brien they were anxious to portray.

To my way of thinking academic freedom is a particular subset of wider human freedoms: If you like, it is civil liberty in the academic context. As such it most certainly embraces freedom of speech, subject, of course, to the rules of scholarly debate and the general criteria of academic civility. Dr O'Brien was prevented from speaking in his scholarly capacity – and his class testify to his ability in this respect – so there should be no room for equivocation : **his** academic freedom **was** violated, and so was that of his class.

I do not share the view of the Senate and Council that 'academic freedom does not exist at the University of Cape Town or at any other South African University', a resolution that was adopted in July, 1986. Of course, it is grievously restricted and, of course, at least one campus has been subjected to virtual occupation by the Security forces. It

remains true, however, that at least some scholars in some institutions can, and do, write and say things that are critical of the status quo. I do not want to be misunderstood : I am not minimising the severity of the restrictions, which have in them a truly totalitarian potential. Academic freedom is always a matter of degree, and not an all-or-nothing matter. By claiming that it does not exist, or by saying, as the Commission does, that 'freedom of speech does not exist on the campus' one is engaging in a kind of hyperbole that might have the dangerous effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Freedoms are not enlarged by bewailing their absence, but only by fighting grimly to build upon what few remain.

If one accepts my argument that academic freedom is a particular form of general human freedom then the view that it is irrelevant to the people in the townships has to be modified. I would hope that the struggle against apartheid is also a struggle for rights; and I would also want to argue that one of the critical failures of black education has been its authoritarianism, which includes violations of academic freedom.

I have little faith in the respect for general rights of those who denigrate subsidiary rights like academic freedom. I have even less respect for the weird argument that the university should abridge its own internal freedom because freedom outside is so grossly curtailed. This involves a logic that is beyond my comprehension. The defence and enhancement of freedom within one's own bailiwick is surely a vital part of the process of enlarging freedom in the wider society.

Contrary to the Commission, I believe that one dimension of the university **is** a Hyde Park Corner writ large, in which freedom of speech is the basic institutional value and to which controversial, provocative, volatile speakers, and even Irish political activists are welcome. People more prudent than myself will undoubtedly reject this approach as utopian, and urge the case for controls 'in the circumstances which presently exist in South Africa', to quote the Commission's words. I would mildly want to point out that this is a pale reflection of the argument invoked by the South African government to justify everything from censorship to the state of emergency. I will accept the criticism of being utopian, but I would insist that every measure of control, every time it is applied, represents the derogation of an ideal to which every decent university should aspire. If the University has to apply controls, it should do so in the full knowledge that this is an acquiesence in the face of forces which it is impotent to control. These, no less than government invasions of university autonomy, should be recorded on plaques in the vestibule of the library.

You will have gathered from what I have said today and previously that I have little respect for the Du Plessis Commission Report. Indeed I have dealt with only a few of the objectionable features in its findings.

It went a long way towards legitimating the kind of happenings that we do not wish to see repeated. The pity is that its ill-considered findings may vitiate and taint its recommendations, many of which should be accepted by all who have the good of U.C.T. at heart. I agree tha tthere must be reconciliation, and I agree that the inculcation of a university ethic in our students is vitally necessary.

In all of this I hope you will have empathy with our Vice-Chancellor, who occupies one of the most difficult posts in the land. He is the target of brickbats thrown simultaneously from all directions. His is the invidious situation of Voltaire, who lamented to a friend in 1733 "If I displease those madmen, the Jansenists, I'll have on my side those buggers the reverend fathers."

If he takes strong-arm action against students this will almost certainly provoke ferocious counter-action, which may in turn cause the police to some on to the campus to restore academic freedom with their customary delicate touch. If he takes no action he cedes in effect a veto power to a radical minority, which in turn would almost certainly cause the government to intervene - you can imagine some elephantine Bill 'To restore and protect freedom of speech on certain university campuses ..."

In short, we are in a no-win situation. I would have liked to conclude by offering some attempt at a solution to the problem, but no workable one comes to mind, at least as a short-term prospect. In my own evidence to the Commission I recommend that each and every registering student be apprised of strict university rules that would make it a serious offence to disrupt lectures or meetings. No one should be left in any doubt about the dire consequences of such actions. The rules must be clear, with the penalties apparent.
I am advocating firm action; and I am assuming, of course, due process of law within the university's disciplinary machinery.

A very rough analogy may be found in the steps taken by the University years ago to eliminate the barbaric practice of initiation. All the major constituencies in the university agreed that it had to go, and tough rules were promulgated and widely publicised. No student could have the excuse of ignorance of the law. The strategy succeeded.

It is a far cry from initiation to the politically-charged issue that vexes us now. But the strategy must be the same. Indeed, consultation among the University's constituencies, including student associations, and perhaps even consultations with a number of outside community organisations could be construed as part of the process of inculcating a university eithic.

I have said some harsh things in this speech; but I make no apology. I do, however, want to emphasise that it is crucial for U.C.T. to try to create some consensus on these issues – and it cannot be a consensus that rests upon a covert form of censorship.

Our students should recognise that a university which cannot sustain even the circumscribed area of freedom of speech that South Africans are permitted is an even more impoverished university than it need be.□