

JD/PS

November 17, 1966

The Secretary,
Improper Interference Commission,
Private Bag 82,
PRETORIA

Dear Sir,

Enclosed you will find 12 copies of a memorandum containing our evidence for the Improper Interference Commission.

Yours faithfully,

John Daniel
Vice-President

DRAFT REPORT FOR THE COMMISSION ON THE IMPROPER INTERFERENCE BILL

INTRODUCTION

The National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) was founded at an inaugural conference held in Bloemfontein in 1924. The centres which met and affiliated to the new organisation were the University of Cape Town, The University of the Witwatersrand, Natal University College, Rhodes University College, Stellenbosch University, Pretoria University, Grey University College and the Potchefstroom University College.

The concept upon which NUSAS was based was the same as that of most national unions of students all over the world. This was that students have certain common interests as students and that a body should exist for advancing those common interests.

Other bodies existed for advancing group interests, for example the Students Christian Association and the Students Jewish Association.

The function of NUSAS was of a different order. It aimed to bring together all these different groups, to provide them with a forum at which benefit might be derived from the exchange of opinions. This idea has, of course, long been associated with the University spirit and on this basis, NUSAS still claims to be a National Union of Students.

In 1933, the Grey University College, Pretoria University and the Potchefstroom University College disaffiliated from NUSAS and in 1936, Stellenbosch University followed suit. They held a concept of a racially, culturally and linguistically exclusive organisation, and came together to form the Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond (ANSB). After the formation of the ANSB, NUSAS made frequent attempts to establish a dialogue with them but failed, especially since, during the war years, they came out in open support of Nazism.

The first non-White centre to affiliate to NUSAS was the Fort Hare University College, in 1945. In the same year, Hewat Training College, for "coloured" students, became a member of NUSAS and in the following year, the University of Natal (non-European section) was also admitted.

During recent years, branches of NUSAS have been formed at both Pretoria and Stellenbosch Universities with the result that today NUSAS consists of 21 affiliated centres.

Objects of NUSAS

The objects of NUSAS as laid down in its constitution are:

- 1 To represent the students of South Africa nationally and internationally, and to establish and/or maintain their co-operation with the students of other countries.
- 2 To promote and defend democracy in student affairs, in the Universities and in South Africa.
- 3 To maintain and further genuine co-operation in a spirit of tolerance, good will and mutual respect, among all students.
- 4 To uphold the right of all students to meet, assemble and study together on a basis of full equality, and to promote the ideals of academic freedom.
- 5 To promote the educational and general interests of students, and to guard their rights as students and citizens
- 6 To encourage the interest and/or participation of students in welfare and/or educational community projects.
- 7 To perform all such other acts as may be necessary to further the above objects.

NUSAS IS NOT, AS IS COMMONLY THOUGHT, AN ORGANISATION OF AUTOMATICALLY ENROLLED MEMBERS.

It is, as stated in Clause 4 (a) (i) of its constitution "a Union of students governed as a federation of Constituent Centres and having group or individual membership.

The structure is threefold, being a federation of:

- a) Students' Representative Councils
- b) Local Branch Committees
- c) Individual members

a) Students' Representative Council

The SRC is the body elected by the students on a campus to exercise on their behalf certain powers as laid down by their University Councils, and to represent them in all matters relating to their interests. The SRCs are, in terms of their constitutions empowered to enter into contracts with other organisations and as such can take the decision to affiliate to NUSAS. By so doing they represent their student bodies in the organisation but through this act individual members of the student body do not become members of NUSAS. The fact that the student body elects the SRC entitles them to all the facilities offered by NUSAS.

b) Local Branch Committees

Where there is either no SRC or the SRC does not wish to affiliate to NUSAS, as at Stellenbosch University, but there are individuals who wish to participate in NUSAS activities then at least 10 individuals may come together to form a local branch of NUSAS and affiliate to the organisation. They do not, however, represent the entire student body in NUSAS, but only the members of their branch.

c) Individual members

Where there is either no SRC or the SRC does not wish to affiliate to NUSAS, and there are individuals who wish to participate in its activities but insufficient to form a local branch i.e. less than 10, these individuals may join the organisation in their personal capacities.

NUSAS Policy

The basic policy of NUSAS as taken from its Correlated Resolutions is as follows:

- 1 NUSAS shall aim to encourage the promotion of equality of educational and economic opportunity for all in South Africa to ensure that university education is not the privilege of a class.
- 2 NUSAS shall aim to ensure that the knowledge and culture of the universities and colleges are used in the interests of the people as a whole.
- 3 NUSAS shall aim to further student rights and student independence by maintaining in every possible way, and extending, the rights of freedom of speech, press and organisation of all students.
- 4 NUSAS (a) believes in a democratic system of education and holds that such a system can only prevail in a society based on the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
(b) realises that education cannot be separated from the society in which it takes place, and that apartheid in education is an integral part of, and stands or falls with, the total policy of apartheid
(c) consequently declares its opposition to the policy of apartheid, which deprives South Africans of freedom of movement, association, expression, study and worship, and impedes the full development of a democratic educational system in S. A.
(d) nonetheless, NUSAS, both from its nature as a student organisation and from the realisation that its effectiveness in carrying out its policy is greatly enhanced by its non-party-political character, reaffirms that it will not affiliate to or identify itself with, any political party,
(e) declares that it will play its role in the total life of the community by defending and seeking to implement its policy.

- 5 NUSAS believes university autonomy to be the independence of universities from State or other external control, which autonomy, it believes will allow universities to promote academic freedom by reserving for themselves the right to determine, according to academic criteria, who shall teach, what shall be taught, who shall be admitted to university and how the teaching is to be carried out.

NUSAS believes that the use of university autonomy by a university to deny the right of entry to certain students, on grounds other than academic merit, is an abuse of university autonomy and that, at the same time, any attempt by a government to infringe university autonomy in order to implement an ideology, is an abuse of university autonomy as well as an abuse of academic freedom.

NUSAS believes that academic freedom, which implies the admission of students on the basis of academic merit only, is a fundamental part of democracy as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and that any truly democratic government must uphold academic freedom at all costs, even if necessary at the cost of interfering with the university autonomy of universities.

NUSAS believes further that academic freedom cannot be said truly to exist until the time when accessibility to education generally, and higher education in particular, is made available to and accessible to all members of a particular nation, and that it is the responsibility of the Government to work for conditions in society which will realise this belief.

- 8 NUSAS (a) while not subscribing to the aim of any particular political party or organisation, and noting that it does not invite official observers from political parties to its annual Congress,
(b) nevertheless believes that the Executive should represent the National Union's policies at any forum, whether party political speakers or speakers from political organisations be present or not,
(c) recommends that the President, Vice-President, Vice-President for International Relations and Deputy Vice-President of NUSAS in particular, as well as the rest of the Executive, should not hold any office in any political party.
- 9 NUSAS believes that social segregation is incompatible with academic and human freedom, that freedom of association is one of the fundamental freedoms of the life of a community, and that social practice should be left to the discretion and conscience of individuals rather than be determined by authority.
- 10 NUSAS opposes racial discrimination in the professions, particularly in the legal, medical and teaching professions, and declares that there should be free access by all qualified people to them regardless of race, that salaries should be paid on the basis of ability and qualifications, and that facilities in law courts, hospitals and schools should be freely open to all who are entitled to use them.

How NUSAS is governed

NUSAS is democratically governed. Its policy and programme is determined, not by a few individuals, but by the elected representatives of the students meeting together once a year. This meeting is known as the Student Assembly of NUSAS and meets each July.

The Student Assembly is made up of delegates chosen by the affiliated SRCs and Local Branches. This is the governing body of NUSAS. It determines NUSAS's policy for the coming year and elects a 20-man Executive to implement its decisions. This Executive must report back to the Student Assembly every year. Two members of the Executive, the President and Vice-President hold office in a full-time capacity and are stationed at the Union's Head Office in Cape Town. These two full-time officials do not attend lectures but may only hold office for up to two years after completion of their degree courses.

The activities of NUSAS

In terms of NUSAS's policy and its objects, its activities may be classified into three main categories.

- a) A students' trade union which aims to further the interest of its students
- b) A forum providing a means of contact between all sections of the South African student population on a basis of equality.
- c) An organisation which strives to serve the interests of the community as a whole.

a) Students' Trade Union

The main functions in this category are:

- i) Students Loan Fund - In 1949, NUSAS initiated a scheme to provide the students at its affiliated centres only with loans to cover the cost of their fees, accommodation, books, clothing etc while they are studying. These loans are repayable over a period of 10 years.

Each month during the academic year, i.e. March to November, NUSAS pays out a total of R340. to various students.

From 1949 to November 1, 1966, the department has paid out the sum of R55396.15 to a total of 767 students.

This money is entirely raised by students themselves at the affiliated centres through various fund-raising schemes.

The criteria considered in the award of these loans are financial need and studenthood.

- ii) Scholarships - The Scholarships department was established in July 1962. The department works in two ways, it acts as an agent for the award of scholarships to overseas universities and awards its own internal scholarships in South Africa.

Internally, the department has awarded 7 medical scholarships since the beginning of 1965 and plans to award at least a further 3 in 1967.

Since July 1962, the department has awarded 51 scholarships to overseas universities and is at present negotiating the award of three more overseas scholarships. Of those, 90% have gone to universities in the United Kingdom, and the others to universities in Holland and Canada.

The total value of the scholarships awarded by the Department is in the region of R50,000 to R60,000.

NUSAS does not select the overseas scholarship winners. It merely advertises the availability of the scholarship, receives the application forms and forwards them to the particular university offering the scholarship. The university itself makes the choice of the scholarship winner. Obviously the funds for these scholarships are provided by the universities themselves.

In the case of the medical scholarships, the funds are raised by NUSAS through fund-raising drives at its affiliated centres. The selection of the winners is made by the NUSAS President, and a board of trustees consisting of lecturers from the medical faculties of the University of Cape Town, the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Natal.

- iii) Travel - NUSAS has, since 1926, organised 40 successive holiday tours to Europe. Attendance on these tours ranges from 80 to 120.

- iv) Discounts:- NUSAS has organised a nation-wide discount scheme whereby students can, on production of a NUSAS Identity Card, obtain from 10 to 25% discount on a wide range of goods.

- v) Vacation employment - NUSAS operates an extensive Vacation Employment scheme in order to provide students with a means of supplementing their incomes during the Christmas and July vacations. In the 1965 Christmas vacation NUSAS managed to obtain employment in Johannesburg and Cape Town for over 600 students.
- vi) Coaching - NUSAS has organised at its various centres, a scheme whereby students give extra coaching to school children who require assistance in various subjects and to students at their universities who require help. Students are charged a fixed fee. In this way the students who undertake to give coaching can earn extra pocket money.
- vii) General - NUSAS organises regular lectures at its various centres on a wide variety of topics, designed to stimulate intellectual thought and activity. It has from time to time organised road safety schemes with the co-operation of local road safety organisations, baby sitting schemes, whereby students can earn extra pocket money during the academic terms.

Conclusion

We would submit that the activities described above have been to the advantage not only of successive generations of students but of the country as a whole. The loan scheme has enabled hundreds of students to obtain an education which they might not otherwise have been able to afford, and we would contend that this is to the advantage of South Africa itself.

The Medical Scholarship scheme is making a small, though vitally important contribution to overcoming the desparate shortage of doctors in this country, while by enabling students to further their studies overseas, we are enabling them to develop their academic potentialities to the full and, on their return to South Africa, these people can make a valuable contribution to the society.

We would further submit that the other schemes such as the discount and vacation employment schemes are of great importance to individual students, particularly those with limited financial resources.

We would contend that should the Improper Interference Bill eliminate non-racial organisations ~~such as~~ NUSAS, the country would be the poorer through the enforced elimination of these activities.

b) A forum for student contact

- i) Seminars - Regular seminars of from 2 to 4 days duration are held where students, both English and Afrikaans, white and non-White meet to discuss academic matters of common interest and to hear lectures on a given topic.

ii) Conferences

The Student Assembly of NUSAS - This is the largest of the conferences held during the year. This conference is held at a different university centre each year, and attendance ranges from 200 to 250 students. In addition to discussion of NUSAS policies and activities, the conference discusses problems relating to the school and university educational systems, ~~questions~~ relating to the concepts of Academic and Human Freedom and university autonomy and NUSAS's relations with other national and international student bodies. The programme also includes a series of lectures on varying topics, cultural programmes such as musical and poetry evenings, a debating contest between the various universities, films and tours to places of historical interest in the area.

In addition, NUSAS sponsors various conferences which run concurrently with the Student Assembly in July and where students meet to discuss matters of common interest in specialised fields:

These are; a) Freshers reception chairmen conferences. At the beginning of each academic year, the various universities organise a programme designed to integrate fully, the new student into all aspects of university life. In July of each year, the chairmen or representatives of each of these reception committees meet to pool their ideas.

- b) Rag Chairmen's conference. As is well known, each university organises an annual charity rag. Again in July of each year, NUSAS sponsors a conference where representatives of each of the Rag committees meet to exchange their ideas on new methods of fund raising.
- c) Student Editors conference - similarly, in July of each year, NUSAS sponsors a meeting of the student editors of the student newspapers.

Conclusion

NUSAS would contend that whether one believes in a policy of segregating the races or integrating the races, one must accept that this country is peopled by different races and that it is of vital importance to the peaceful development of the nation, that the different groups should develop an understanding of and respect for the others. NUSAS believes that this can only be done by affording the groups an opportunity of meeting on a common platform. NUSAS believes that the barriers that exist between the different language groups and race groups in this country is to the detriment of the country and that by providing a meeting ground where these groups and races can gather to discuss common problems it is making a positive contribution to the development of the country.

- c) Community and welfare schemes
 - 1) Blood weeks: With the co-operation of the Association of Medical Students of South Africa and the various blood transfusion depots in the country, NUSAS organises an annual drive on the campuses to persuade students to make regular blood donations. The scheme has been particularly successful in recent years. Several thousand pints of blood have been donated and a few hundred new donors have been recruited.
 - ii) Work camps - NUSAS co-operates with other groups in the organisation of regular work camps. Groups of students volunteer to undertake such activities as building or rebuilding schools, churches, bridges, laying sports fields, etc.
 - iii) Freedom from hunger campaign - NUSAS undertakes a regular campaign in an attempt to collect food which it passes on to various schools, churches and other organisations. The campaign usually operates in this manner: A university residence agrees to give up one meal per week or per month and this meal is given over to the above-mentioned groups. It also assists the Kupugani organisation with its agricultural project, the objects of which are to develop farms as self-maintaining entities and to waken the people of various areas to the immense possibilities of scientific farming. It also attempts to raise money to provide farmers with seed, cattle, fertiliser, fodder, etc.
 - iv) Night schools - NUSAS attempts to give assistance to the various night schools in the different centres. These night schools give guidance to those people who cannot afford a regular education by giving them coaching in subjects with a view to the completion of courses ranging from the lower primary school standards to matric.

Conclusion

NUSAS would contend that it cannot be disputed that the above is of tremendous value to the community as a whole and that by so doing students are fulfilling their obligation as students and as privileged members of the community.

NUSAS's attitude to political questions

NUSAS is not a party political body. As such it is in no position to comment on the question of parliamentary representation for the Indian and Coloured population groups which is an aspect with which this Commission is concerning itself. NUSAS has no party political programme or policy.

However, as students, and as an important group in the society as a whole, and as a group which will, in future years, provide the community with its leadership, it believes that it has a right to concern itself with and comment upon all aspects of the South African society including political questions.

It is for this reason that it concerns itself with legislation relating to the universities, as well as other matters affecting the lives of all members of the community. It believes that it has not only a right, but a duty to discuss, for example, the provisions of the Bantu education act which is a political doctrine affecting education in this country, or violations of academic freedom with such acts as the Extension of University Education Act.

We believe that it is valuable to hear the viewpoints on such matters of all groups, English and Afrikaans, White and non-White. We believe that this is a means of creating an understanding of the issues which will face students in future years and of developing understanding of the 'other man's point of view'.