

P R E S I D E N T I A L

..... J H S B T L A \ C .
REPORT OF THE TRANSVAAL TOUR

My tour of the centres and interest groups in the Transvaal followed right on the heels of a very successful weekend of consultations with ASSECA and IDAMASA. There was also joint Executive meeting with NUSAS at Witwatersrand University on Sunday, 7th March. Reports on all these consultations will be handled separately.

The main purpose of the tour was to fall into whatever Fresher Reception programme was set out in a particular centre, to acquaint myself with the conditions in the black universities and colleges, to introduce myself and also to identify the people I'm supposed to work with. While on this tour I examined possibilities of new growth points and addressing some interest groups. In all these objects the tour was a rousing success.

UNIVERSITY OF THE NORTH: - 9th March, 1971.

1. Meeting the SRC: The President assured SASO of the continuing support from the University of the North. SASO was the black students' own trade union and syndicate. He and his SRC were rather unhappy about a controversial letter from the President of SASO addressed to the SRC citing some rumours which were said to emanate from the SRC and about alleged 'happenings' on the Turfloop campus. All knowledge of these was denied. Concern was also expressed about the fact that Turfloop was not informed in time about the present policy decisions. It was felt that SASO should not concentrate on individuals but should address herself constantly to the mass of the students.

The President of SASO expressed his gratitude at the open and frank submissions of the SRC and noted the fact that he was impelled by a deep concern for the welfare and progress of SASO. He went on to assure the SRC that the tone of his letter was that of merely seeking information on specific issues and viewed the SRC as the only authoritative body that could give the official viewpoint. The good intentions of SASO were accepted although it was said that the letter was liable to unfortunate interpretations.

The meeting went on to discuss plans for the year and examined SASO's call for a renewed involvement of the black students in practical community projects which is an attempt at concretising our self-reliance approach and also to involve the students with intellectually and emotionally in the sufferings of their people so that they may be one with them in their search for the collective improvement of their living conditions. Active support for these 'reality' programmes was indicated.

The President then analysed the new policy decisions on NUSAS, IDAMASA and ASSECA as reflected by the meetings of the previous weekend. Support for the independence stand particularly regarding multi-racial organisations was expressed. The move towards closer association with the other black organisations was also urged.

The decision of the SRC to appoint its Vice-President as Chairman of the SASO Local Committee was expressed. There was no objection to this as far as SASO was concerned particularly because in a centre which has overwhelmingly expressed support for SASO it was expected that SRC members would be ardent supporters of SASO. This gives the SRC a say in the running of the SASO Local Committee and the Vice-President would liaise with the SRC.

The SRC expressed regret that I would not be able to address the student body firstly because no arrangements could be made because notice of my visit was received very late and secondly because the SRC was already fully occupied with a very important meeting. The President of SASO was then invited to visit Turfloop on SASO DAY on 10th May.

SASO Local Committee:

This meeting was merely intended as a 'pip-talk' gathering where the Local Committee was let in on the policies and significance of SASO.

After a detailed examination of SASO, the President went on to discuss present plans and present policies. Discussion centred around local organisation and contact with the Head Office and the Executive. Local initiative was desired with regard to the field work schemes.

Present policies towards other organisations was discussed. This refers to Standing Committee decisions on NUSAS and UCM, and ASSECA and IDAMASA.

The value of Formation School and Conference was emphasised. It was important if the build-up of leadership in SASO and at SRC level had to be kept constant.

I found the members of this Committee very eager to learn and they were very keen on SASO and assured us of the support of the students.

ST. PETER'S SEMINARY, HAMMANSKRAAL - 10th March, 1971.

This College is at the moment involved in its internal problems with particular regard to the circumstances surrounding the "retirement" of the previous Rector. They are still studying the situation under the new Rector. He has already ruled that meetings of organisations which the Seminary is not affiliated to will not be allowed on the campus and their representatives will not be allowed to address the students. Unfortunately the Rector was away when I visited and I was not able to say whether he supported (sympathised) SASO or whether he would allow his students to affiliate.

Speaking to the SRC I noted a deep desire to get much more involved in student affairs on a wider basis. There is a feeling that students at St Peter's are very isolated and very little room for interaction with other students and other non-theological disciplines is encouraged. If anything else SASO will afford them contact with all black students and keep them in contact with current moods and thinking on the black campuses. The community projects SASO is envisaging this year will give them a further chance to serve their people and thus carrying out their Christian conviction of mission to the world. These are the opportunities that black students cannot afford to let slip.

The motion of centre affiliation to SASO was not taken last year (it was in fact withdrawn) after threats by other organisations that they will demand the same method of affiliation. There was a feeling that such a small community could not effectively get involved in the many tasks that all the organisations operating would desire.

/I learn

I learn that there has been considerable pressure on the SRC to call a meeting which would review last year's decision because SASO is seen as the organisation true to the aspirations of black students. It is an organisation that can umbrella at local level the multifarious activities of ineffective and limping committees and that a new involvement was required if Seminary students were hoping to be of any consequence to the suffering millions they hope to minister to and on whose leadership they are looking forward to, when they have qualified.

AFRICAN STUDENTS' MOVEMENT - SOWETO:

I was invited by the Executive of the ASM to plan with them their programme for the year and generally give advice or organisational problems and priorities for black students at school level.

ASM is a comparatively young group formed by young school children who became concerned about the gap between high school and university in our educational system. They also noted that the bulk of black students left school in matric and some even earlier. They realise that this drop-out rate has to be curbed. This can be done by instilling the proper motivation for educational attainments, encouraging the leadership potential in black students. They hope to organise debates, public speaking, lectures and seminars on black universities, how they are constituted, how they function, student administration and their role in the black community. They have eyes on unity in the school ranks, competitive spirit in sport and classroom, cultural and social events and generally aiding students with their problems.

This is indeed a huge task which these budding leaders have set upon themselves. They need our whole support and encouragement in their small beginnings. They have expressed a keen interest in SASO and its programmes and would like to be contacted about planned community development schemes and would be pleased to be involved in such ventures. They shall be asking us to help them realise their objects. They hope to organise holiday schools on subjects particularly on the subjects which give students difficulty and specialist students will be asked to provide tuition.

All this is a very encouraging event and calls for our support. What more do we want!

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I was greeted with the news that the Director of Indian Education had refused permission for TCE to affiliate to SASO. This meant that, according to the Rector, I could not speak to the student body but could have discussions with the SRC. It also meant that TCE would not be able to take part in any SASO project.

However in a meeting with the Rector and the Liaison Staff Member and representatives of the SRC I was called upon to analyse SASO, its history, policies and significance. Thereafter in a question-and-answer session, the Rector and his Liaison officer expressed their personal keenness in the organisation and accepted its good intentions as I analysed them. They regretted that TCE would be unable to join and suggested that SASO should apply to the Director of Indian Education to whom all Indian Training colleges were responsible, for those colleges which wish to affiliate to be allowed to do so. I undertook to arrange a meeting between representatives of the Executive and the Director of Indian Education.

UNISA- JOHANNESBURG:

At a subsequent meeting with some UNISA students I understood that a SASO branch would be formed. A lot of interest has already been indicated. A meeting of all UNISA students will be called on the 28th March to form a branch and elect a committee. We are looking forward to hearing about the latest developments. Johannesburg UNISA has given the lead for all UNISA people particularly in the metropolis.

Provision is made in Section 3 of the SASO Constitution that: "(iii) individuals affiliate directly through the Executive. 10 or more individuals in a non-affiliated centre may constitute a branch."

This makes it possible for those who are studying through UNISA to apply for individual membership and if there are more than 10 of them in a locality, they can then constitute themselves into a SASO Branch.

I believe that its very important for UNISA students to make use of this provision. I believe that the individuality and isolation of UNISA students is not conducive to broadening one's outlook and cultivating the leadership potential. Among other things a UNISA branch would be an effective agent for unity and solidarity and development of a collective outlook to the

problems of correspondence students. A branch can organise discussion groups on the syllabus, inter-disciplinary or faculty seminars, representing those students and their problems to the university and generally looking after the welfare of students e.g. group tickets and concessions to vacation school and building up a local library and arranging for study rooms for all the students.

The black students of Johannesburg have realised the disadvantages of studying in isolation and have set about improving their situation.

NATAL:

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL: BLACK SECTION :

Support for SASO on this campus is building-up. There are fears for a growing tide of indifference and apathy on the part of the majority of students.

However, the Fresher Reception meeting where I shared the platform with Mr Neville Curtis of NUSAS, was well-attended and there was considerable interest in the policies of the organisations as enunciated by their respective Presidents. It became very obvious that the black students in this centre had made up their minds about the direction which they must take. They detected so much that was irreconcilable between the policies of the two organisations. Despite the honest expressions of the NUSAS President that the two organisations were not mutually exclusive, they saw no effective role for black students in multi-racial organisations.

Their intentions were to be crystallised in a subsequent student body meeting where the SRC was simply instructed to disaffiliate itself from the National Union. This was the last straw in the "uneasy peace" between this sole black affiliate of NUSAS and the National Union. The motion was passed unanimously.

Note that SASO had resolved at a Standing Committee meeting that it will express no opinion or in anyway instruct centres affiliated to both organisations.

The meeting with the UNB-SRC was cancelled because the President of SASO did not turn-up. This was due to some misunderstanding about time and place of the meeting.

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UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND:

In a meeting with the SRC I analysed our programme for the year and called for active support for the community projects in particular. It was felt that SASO should start putting into practice its policies. Support was expressed for the organisation on the campus and the SRC itself pledged its wholehearted support.

Concern was expressed here too about the apparent lack of interest by students. It was felt that SASO should step up its projects so that students should start doing something meaningful.

Restiveness was reported on the campus about the number of students who have not been readmitted among whom are SRC members and in particular a recent suspension of the member of the SRC for entering the kitchen where he had gone to make representations about the dissatisfaction of students. Apparently attempts to take the issue with the Rector have been unsuccessful. Also, a student has been arrested for damaging university property by percing open the plastic mugs used in the dinning hall. His case is pending.

At a subsequent meeting which was attended by a large percentage of the students, SASO was received with enthusiastic interest. The responses were terrific and the perceptive nature of the questions gave hope of reawakening. On the whole SASO was very well received here.

Steps are underway for the formation of a SASO Local Comm. which will carry-out SASO policies and projects and generally keep in close liaison with the Executive. This will be a sub-committee of the SRC and a member of the SRC will be designated Chairman. This is an encouraging thought and will be to the general good of the students.

THE LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE -- MAPHUMULO:

It had been reported that SASO is losing ground here while last year the SRC was unanimously in favour of SASO this year's SRC is very sharply divided on the issue and generally sceptical. Some students are even worried about the direction of black consciousness and whether it is acceptable to their churches and hence might jeopardise their standing with the church. There is some decision also about the "black theology" orientation which SASO was adopting.

In a student body meeting I enunciated the SASO viewpoint on all these issues and it is hoped that this

served to clear the students' thinking on the policies and aims of SASO.

Meantime the Governing Council of the College will meet soon to discuss the question. It is rumoured that the Council is particularly worried about inviting Special Branch activity on the campus which we strain their relations with the government. There is also a feeling in the Governing Council and Faculty Board that support for an exclusivist organisation on the basis of colour is a tacit denial of the message of Christ of the all humanity and equality of people. Any policy which against this message should not be supported by the Church because it will be giving-in to the apartheid policies and dogmas of racial separation of the Nationalist Government. We can only hope that the Christian Church will be more perceptive on this issue and realise that there is a definite place for black consciousness in the church which is a genuine attempt at realising in depth and in practice the meaning of Christ's Word.

Some students who have declared themselves in favour of SASO are in the process of forming a Branch.

No visits were made to the Indian Colleges pending a meeting with the Director of Indian Education on Friday 26th March. This is very important because then students can take part in SASO knowing what the official policy is and acceptance by the college authorities will be easier to come or new means of affiliation will be considered in the light of government policy.