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EMW/RT

28th December, 1956.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Since I wrote to you on 29th October, there has been a great deal of activity in the academic freedom campaign. I am sure that you would appreciate a summary of what has happened over the past few weeks.

Probably the most important event over the past few weeks has been a statement from the Councils of the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand, reaffirming their belief in their present policies of non-segregation. In a statement the Council of the University of Cape Town made four points: (1) The University is opposed in principle to academic segregation on racial grounds, (2) It believes that separate academic facilities for Europeans and Non-Europeans could not be equal to those provided in an open University, (3) The University is convinced that the policy of academic non-segregation, which as far as possible the University of Cape Town has always followed, accords with the highest University ideals and has contributed to inter-racial understanding and harmony in South Africa, (4) It desires that the University be permitted and enabled to carry on its functions under the same conditions as hitherto and that nothing be done to change or impede the University's policy of academic non-segregation.

Following the meetings of the Council, it was decided to hold a joint conference on "The Value of the Open University in South Africa". The conference will be held early in January in Cape Town and will be attended by senior members of the academic staff of the two Universities.

This conference should be most significant because it will undoubtedly produce an academic statement of why the University opposes apartheid at the open Universities. It is understood that the findings of this conference of the open Universities will be published.

The statement of the UCT Council was in similar terms to a resolution adopted a short while previously by the Senate.

On 7th December a special meeting of the University of Cape Town Convocation was held. This was the first time that Convocation had ever met. 613 graduates attended the meeting. The following resolution, proposed by Mr Gerald Gordon QC and seconded by Adv. Martin Theron, was adopted:

"That Convocation of the University of Cape Town, being convinced that the true function of a University is to seek fearlessly for the truth, and that this function can only be fulfilled if the University is free to decide whom to teach, how to teach, what to teach and who shall teach, views with grave alarm any threat of interference with University autonomy and academic freedom. It expresses its strongest disapproval of the Government's proposal to enforce academic segregation at the University of Cape Town as it is opposed in principle to academic segregation on racial grounds and believes in the right of the University to accept students on

a basis of merit alone, without regard to race, colour or creed. It is convinced that the policy of academic non-segregation which the University of Cape Town has always followed accords with the highest ideals of a University."

This resolution was adopted by 612 to 1.

Convocation appointed a committee to represent the views of Convocation to the authorities and to the public.

More than 800 graduates of Wits voted unanimously at a Wits Convocation meeting in the Great Hall against enforced University apartheid. Professor MacCrone said at this meeting: "The two open Universities resent being politically butchered to make a Roman holiday for racial ideologists."

A meeting of staff members of the University of Cape Town decided "to note with concern the declared intention of the Government to impose academic segregation on racial grounds."

The meeting reaffirmed its support for the system of non-segregation at the University of Cape Town and elected a committee to act in accordance with the spirit of its resolution.

Meanwhile, the Council of the University of Natal announced that there would be no apartheid at future graduation ceremonies at the University. Formerly graduands had sat in racial blocs, but from now on they will sit alphabetically.

At Natal University an "Open University Committee" was formed in November with representatives of the Pietermaritzburg Students' Representative Council, the SRC of the Non-European Section, staff and Convocation. The Durban SRC has reported the matter back to its student body for decision. The Committee resolved to "stand for the principle of academic non-segregation and to oppose all legislation which directly or indirectly attacks that principle." The Committee will endeavour to work for the abandonment of the system of internal segregation at the University of Natal, and will co-operate with the open Universities in opposition to University apartheid. The Committee is not an official body but represents a strong body of opinion of professors, lecturers and students past and present.

Any illusions that the Government are not intending introducing apartheid legislation in 1957 have now been dispelled. The political correspondent of "Dagbreek en Sondagnus" said (18.11.56) the Cabinet were preparing legislation for tribal colleges. It was widely reported in the press that Mr Viljoen, Minister of Education, had told a reporter that University apartheid would be introduced. Apparently the tribal colleges for Africans would be controlled by Dr Verwoerd. This was also reported in "Die Burger" of 30.11.56.

Professor James, Acting Principal of UCT, stated in reply that "separate Universities are wrong in principle." Mr N. Rubin, President of the UCT SRC, also opposed the Government's University apartheid move. A statement issued by the President of NUSAS was given wide press coverage in the "Cape Argus", "Cape Times", "Natal Mercury", "Natal Witness", "Natal Daily News", "E.P. Herald" and the "Rand Daily Mail." The statement claimed that University apartheid might well be a forerunner of indoctrinated teaching. Prof. J.S. Marais, Chairman of the Open Universities Liaison Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand strongly opposed the establishment of tribal colleges.

It is believed that the plan for apartheid will be announced

in the Speech from the Throne on January 18th. In a meeting at Uitenhage on 31st November, Dr T.E. Donges claimed that if the United Party were returned to power, they would abolish apartheid at Universities.

The Government-supporting press have given great publicity to University apartheid. Dr P.G.J. Koornhof in "Bantu", an informal publication of the Department of Native Affairs, claimed that "at mixed Universities the Bantu comes into contact in intimate manner with Leftist Europeans who promote the crooked development of the Non-European to the detriment of all."

The Government press have attacked the open Universities in two ways: (1) by claiming that the opposition at the open Universities is not really representative of University opinion. "The Transvaler" (12.12.56) attempted to discredit the "its Convocation meeting by referring to Mr R. Feetham as "the Chancellor, an ex-Unionist of Milner repute", and asking whether the Universities themselves are opposing the Government or "only certain (mainly Jewish) elements on the staff and among the students", (2) By alledging that because there is a measure of social separation at the open Universities, the Non-Europeans are "bywongers" and would be better off in their own Universities.

Prof. J.S. Marais replied, in a letter to "Die Burger", claiming that the Non-European student should be permitted a choice of University - the fact is that Non-Europeans would prefer to go to an open University even if there is social separation. Prof. Marais pointed out that "Die Burger" would have been the first to protest if the open Universities had adopted its call to be consistent and had mixed residences and sport. It is interesting to note that the original Government attack on the Universities 8 years ago claimed that apartheid was necessary because of undesirable social mixing (daurnekaarboerdery), whereas the fact that there is no social mixing is now a major argument against the open Universities.

A gratifying growth of public support for the open Universities was in evidence. In his Charge on 14.10.56, the Bishop of Johannesburg, Rt Rev. Ambrose Reeves, strongly supported open Universities. In "Good Hope" (January 1956) the Archbishop of Cape Town also opposed University apartheid. In introducing a motion at the Durban Parliamentary Debating Society, the Rev. Stanley Sudbury of the Methodist Church advocated academic non-segregation. The Cape Peninsula Church Council adopted a strong resolution in favour of academic non-segregation and addressed it to Mr Viljoen.

The Teachers' League of S.A., the Natal Congress of the Liberal Party, the Cape Town Branch of the S.A. Association of University Women and the Institute of Race Relations all issued statements in favour of the open University system in the period under review.

Press coverage was exceptionally good in this period. The November issue of "Forum" carried articles by Bishop Reeves, Dr Brookes, Julius Lewin, F.S. McNeill and B. Pogrund, while in December articles by the NUSAS President and Mr H. Eigalis, a former NUSAS Executive member, were published. The "Cape Times" carried several editorials in favour of academic non-segregation, as did the "Natal Mercury", "Natal Daily News", "Golden City Post", the "Cape Argus", the "Star", "The Sun" (Sydney, Australia) and "The Press" (Christchurch, New Zealand).

For further information, contact the NUSAS Office.

Yours faithfully,

E.M. WENTZEL

President.

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