

National union of south african students
nasionale unie van suid-afrikaanse studente

NUSAS

PHONE 2-7831 TELEPHONE
TELEGRAMS NATUSAS CABLES

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ST. GEORGESSTRAAT 148 ST. GEORGE'S STREET
KAAPSTAD CAPE TOWN

HO/KT

17th August, 1964.

To: SRC Presidents,
for Information, Local Committee
Chairmen

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Dear Sir/Madam, Detention of President of NUSAS

Although you have no doubt read the newspapers fully on the recent detention of Jonty Driver, President of NUSAS, I would like to give you the full picture as it is at the moment. I would point out that this circular is being written before the planned student protests at various centres have taken place, and also that Jonty's detention may be changed at any time.

At about 10.45 pm on Thursday, 13th August, while Jonty was packing in preparation to depart on the following day by mail ship to take up the offer of a teaching post in England, 5 members of the Security Police came to the front and back doors of the flat. In the flat were Kenny Parker, Jonty and myself. The Security Police searched the flat diligently for about 1½ hours and then took Jonty away, saying that he would be held under Clause 17 of the General Law Amendment Act. They also took with them a file though I am not aware of its contents. After he had been taken away, we received several telephone calls which made it clear that anonymous persons were well aware of his arrest.

On Saturday 8th August an Executive meeting, which some SRC Presidents attended and at which not all the Executive were present, was held in Cape Town. This meeting coincided with the attendance of delegates from NUSAS centres at the first convention of Conservative Students in SA. A report on this convention will be sent to SRCs. At the Executive meeting, one of the items for discussion was the news that Jonty had been offered an extremely good teaching post at the Seven Oaks public school in the UK. He would take up the post in September. The Executive was unanimous in its decision that Jonty should accept this post, and that he would tender his resignation on the day of departure, 14th August. It was decided that I would take over as President on receipt of the resignation on Friday. In view of the events of Thursday night, the position is that Jonty is still President until such time as he is released and departs to take up the post, or until his term of office expires.

The Executive issued a number of statements on the arrest, which you have seen in the newspapers. We also cabled COSEC requesting them to inform all National Unions of Students. Further to this, we have made all possible arrangements for his maximum personal comfort and have informed his family.

We have received a message from the immediate past President of the Oxford Union Society, who was in Cape Town at the time of the arrest. It was also reported in the press that a cable from NUS of England, Wales and N. Ireland had been sent to the Minister of Justice.

As far as action at centres goes, I have the following to report, based mostly on press statements. At UCT, a petition was organised on Friday which, within a few hours, collected some 1000 names, calling for a mass meeting on the question of the arrest of Jonty Driver and a lecturer Dr M. Katzon. The next day, the Principal of the Univ. of Cape Town, Dr Duminy, the Acting Chairman of the Univ. Council and President of Convocation, Mr C. Corder, and the President of the UCT SRC, issued a statement expressing concern at the recent arrests and requesting that these persons be either charged immediately or released. Plans have been adopted for a mass meeting of students later this week.

At Wits the SRC issued a statement and is organising a meeting to be held on 18th. A poster demonstration by some 40 students against Clause 17 was organised by the NUSAS Local Committee on Friday afternoon.

At the Natal centres, meetings will be held at Howard College and Pietermaritzburg today, and a telegram has been sent by the UN.D SRC to the Minister of Justice.

In the E. Cape, the Rhodes SRC has organised a meeting and a protest march which will be held within the next few days. The St Paul's Branch of NUSAS also issued a statement condemning the detention and backing up the action intended by Rhodes students.

The Stellenbosch Branch also issued a statement deploring the arrest.

All centres will be kept informed of the position of Jonty as soon as it is possible to find out anything new. We assume that you in return will keep us fully informed on the meetings and demonstrations which are held.

It is not clear why Jonty has been detained but certainly it was not for any justifiable reason and I think we should take the strongest exception to the detention of the President of our Union. We have written to the Minister of Justice about the action of his department in this connection.

Yours sincerely,

MAEDER OSLER

Acting President