

MO/RT

17th August, 1964.

To: Executive.
For information SAC Presidents

SJ

Dear Executive,

This circular is a follow-up on the discussion which we held at the recent Exec. meeting in Cape Town. You will recall that we discussed at some length the disturbing nature of recent events in the country and the reported involvement of students. We noted that there have been no fewer than 35 lecturers, students and ex-students involved in the recent raids and detentions. These included 7 lecturers and 4 ex-students. Several students have fled the country and so far only 2 of the lecturers have been released. We noted that this was against the background of increasing tension and unrest in the country, and we decided that a statement should be issued which made clear our attitude to the present situation.

The draft statement drawn up by Jonty and myself, and due for release on Wed. 26th, reads:

"The national Executive of NUS/S, most of the members of which were in Cape Town over the weekend of 7th and 8th August at the time of the Conservative Students' convention, has recently spent much time considering the serious situation which exists in SA at present, and as a result, has resolved, on behalf of NUS/S, to call urgently on those in authority to convene a series of meetings or consultations between themselves and the leaders of all sections of the community, in an attempt to resolve the present crisis.

"In particular, the Executive noted with alarm the growing incidence of violence, and especially the frequent allegations of police brutality, the incidents of sabotage and of terrorism (such as the bomb explosion on the Johannesburg station) and of politically-motivated vandalism.

"The Executive reaffirmed the belief of NUS/S in the Rule of Law, and stated that NUS/S could not and would not condone extra-legal activity of this kind. It called on the members of NUS/S, and South Africans generally, to observe the Rule of Law.

"The Executive noted, however, that certain people, including, as has been alleged by the Minister of Justice in a statement made at Pretoria University on 8th August, students and lecturers are supposed to have been involved in sabotage. The Executive recognised that many people in this country have been driven to desperation by the continued failure of peaceful or democratic means of bringing about change in this country. The Executive recognised that the policy of the government, in refusing to allow their opponents the rights which would enable them to bring about change peacefully and democratically, was the cause of this desperation. It was in terms of this recognition that the Executive called for a series of meetings or consultations between the leaders of all sections of the community in an attempt to resolve the present crisis.

"The Executive further reaffirmed the abhorrence which NUSiS feels towards Clause 17 of the General Law Amendment Act, which allows for the indefinite detention of suspects in solitary confinement for purposes of interrogation, with no right to trial or to legal advice. The Executive therefore resolved to call on the Prime Minister and the Department of Justice to ensure that those being detained should either be charged or brought to trial, or should be immediately released. The Executive further resolved to call on the Minister of Justice to fulfil immediately his promise to repeal Clause 17 of the General Law Amendment Act."

Bearing in mind the fact that the Nat. Party will be holding provincial meetings throughout the country in the near future, and that many of the resolutions tabled already deal specifically with students and univs., it is most important that we anticipate the campaign which will almost certainly be launched against NUSiS. I would point out that one of the resolutions tabled for the congress of the Tvl. Nat. Party in Springs is reported as asking for the prohibition on communists, liberals and non-whites from being employed as professors or lecturers at "white" universities (Sunday Times 16.8.64). It will be important for us to start on an increasing campaign putting pressure on the govt. and organisations, calling for legitimate and recognised consultations with all sections of the community. You may recall that NUSiS has done so on a few occasions in the past, but I think that at this time, we could be particularly effective.

If you have any comments to make on the draft statement, please let me know immediately. Let me know also what steps you intend taking in the build-up of a gradual but effective campaign against detention and unrest in our society which has been caused primarily by the govt's policies.

Yours sincerely,

MAEDER OSLER

Acting President