

PAPER ON SASO(CONFIDENTIAL FOR DISTRIBUTION TO MEMBERS OF NATIONAL COUNCIL ONLY)LAST MEETING:

The question of the relationship between NUSAS and SASO was not successfully resolved at the last National Council Meeting and must be resolved at this one.

As I understood, the two points of view which were put at the last meeting were these:

First, that we should make no effort to approach any black campuses in any way at all unless first requested to do so by these campuses, and should then only seek to assist or co-operate where asked to do so and not attempt to involve these campuses in NUSAS - in the belief that any such involvement conflicts with SASO.

Second, that we should make every effort to approach black campuses and involve them in the affairs of NUSAS, while offering any assistance or co-operation of which we are able - even where this might involve difference with SASO.

The supposition underlying the first point of view I saw as these:

- 1) That SASO is best able to act for/represent/assist black students in all respects.
- 2) That NUSAS is unable to do so, in any respect and in fact hinders SASO by trying to do so.
- 3) That there is no role for black students in NUSAS.
- 4) That the only role for NUSAS is in white society.
- 5) That the role of NUSAS must be determined entirely in terms of SASO's priorities, actions and role.

The supposition underlying the second point of view as I saw them were:

- 1) That NUSAS is obliged to maintain contact and co-operation with all groups of students.
- 2) That such contact and co-operation is valuable both to NUSAS and other parties.
- 3) That there is a role in NUSAS for black students.
- 4) That there is a role for NUSAS in black society.
- 5) That NUSAS must determine its own priorities and reconcile these with those of SASO where possible.

The particular point at issue was whether NUSAS should initiate an approach to Ngoye or other black centres where regular contact with NUSAS is not maintained or where SASO is or is not represented.

NUSAS/SASO relations to date:

At the meeting held in Johannesburg, SASO stated that they wished for no co-operation between the two organisations other than 'exchange of notes' on research or other matters; and no co-operation but no maligning in respect of relations overseas. On the question of black SRC participation in mixed/white dominated meetings SASO has since issued a call for the boycott of the USCO meeting convened by Wits. There appears to be some difference between SASO and the views of one or two of these SRC's. The SRC at UNB gave notice of disaffiliation from NUSAS in April - this comes into effect in September.

I have received reports of SASO attacks on NUSAS from overseas - In Jan/Feb. And have asked for clarification but received no reply. SASO declined to send a speaker to National Seminar.

Prior to the events NUSAS declined to recognise SASO at Congress in 1969, though did not refuse to do so. SASO recognised the need for a National Union. In 1970 SASO amended this constitution to effectively withdraw recognition from NUSAS and at NUSAS Congress, SASO was recognised as a body 'well able' to represent black students. SASO observers attended the '70 Congress but NUSAS has received no invitations to SASO events.

During NUSAS reassessment, SASO prepared a critique of NUSAS most of which points were accepted in reassessment. Since December 1969 all NUSAS seminars and Congresses have been fully and completely integrated (unlike the past 66-69).

Both NUSAS, SASO and ASB delegates attended the Abe Bailey Workshop in January 1971 at Cape Town.

Future Relations:

I make a number of suppositions:

- 1) That there is a definite role for NUSAS to play in the student and national scene - both white and black.
- 2) That there is a definite role for SASO to play in the student and national scene - both black and white.
- 3) That if change is to occur in South Africa absolute conflict must be avoided - though confrontation is inevitable and will hasten change.
- 4) That if change is to occur there must be some degree of interaction between the various groups and forces involved.

There are simplistic statements - but to examine the matter in question without first examining them is to be assured of reaching only disagreement.

With respect to NUSAS and SASO specifically I suppose that:

- 1) There is no inevitable conflict between the ideals, the goal and role of NUSAS and SASO - though one can easily occur or be promoted.
- 2) That there are roles in change in South Africa for both NUSAS and SASO - and that each can be more effective where there is explicit or implicit co-operation.
- 3) That there will always be friction of one sort or another on an organizational or role level.
- 4) That it should be the intention of NUSAS to minimise this friction where it hinders effective change.
- 5) That the question of the relationship between the two organisations cannot be resolved by only one formula.
- 6) That the relationship between the two organisations, and between white and black students is not the ultimate priority - that nor are either SASO or NUSAS themselves - but that effective change is the ultimate priority.

I therefore see it as important:

- a) That contact at least on a leadership level is maintained between the two organizations, - and that differences be resolved wherever possible on this level.
- b) That it is necessary and desirable that there be interaction between white and black students - if not necessarily between NUSAS and SASO.
- c) That it is necessary that NUSAS accept separation as a modus operandi where politic - and only where politic - but that NUSAS remain committed in reality to the achievement of principle.

This means:

- 1) That NUSAS must be prepared to initiate contact with any campus or group or any student at any time.

- 2) That NUSAS must be prepared to assist any campus or group or any student at any time - on request.
- 3) That NUSAS must be prepared to co-operate with any campus or group or any student when both parties plan and organise such co-operation equally and together.
- 4) That any student or campus or group must be free - and must be encouraged - to participate in decision-making processes within NUSAS.

If SASO decides to agree or disagree with these statements then it must decide for itself what its course of action is to be.

Individual students must decide what their course will be.

NUSAS must decide for itself what its courses must be. While each must recognise the point of the others - as it applies - it must know fulfil and assert its own point.

As far as I am concerned NUSAS must be a non-racial organisation - and must adhere to its principle in real terms. Not to do so is to fail itself, and while it must recognise the role of SASO - facilitate it wherever possible - it must also be free to criticise and disagree with it in words and in actions - where it feels such disagreement facilitates change or combats racialism.

NUSAS must place its own organizational priorities beneath those of its commitment to change - as is circumspect with survival and effectiveness - as must SASO.

Beyond this I must agree that there are limitations to the role of NUSAS on black campuses - that SASO is better able to play this role in many - most but not all circumstances or for all black students. While I cannot concede that there is no role or that what role there is, is counter productive - I must stress that if there is to be a role it must be a committed, genuine and intelligent one - and here every campus in NUSAS - and everyone of us is to be brutally criticised:

The Regional directors for their almost total failure to expand activity in their regions; their administrative failures;

The SRC Presidents for their almost total endorsement of the de facto whites only situation on their campuses; their failure to really involve themselves in black/white interaction.

The affiliate organisation Chairmen for allowing their organisations to slide towards bourgeois as opposed to real concerns.

And myself and Paul for not making it our absolute priority to ensure that these things have not happened.

It is in these terms when you can comprehend the scale of your own failure - that you can realise that, even consider dragging your views to black campuses is impertinence - but it is in these terms that I believe it is important that you do so. If the terms are unacceptable - if we cannot realise them then we must stay away from SASO and black campuses - we can only do harm.