

REPORT OF NUSED CONGRESS, JULY 1971

Like the other affiliates, NUSED was spent the past year concerned as much with establishing campuses as with working out its project work as such. This congress has thus been an important one in gathering the threads on which our one year old organisation was founded and producing a clearer and stronger line of policy and projects for the coming year.

The congress concerned itself in particular with projects for 1971-72 which included planned activities in a public awareness campaign on the problems of the pass laws and pass courts in this country and an attempt to further extend NUSED's contacts with the Afrikaans campuses in order to carry out its responsibilities as a South African student organisation more fully.

The executive posts of Directors of 4 major areas of student concern, Research, Education Reform, Residence Reform and scholarships were confirmed and these portfolios are to be carried on in the coming year. NUSED hopes particularly to increase activities in Educational reforms, and the presence and assistance of Mr Colin Soskolne from the Human Sciences Research Council helped to show congress the future possibilities of student role in this area, and it was strongly urged that centres do involve themselves in this type of constructive activity. Residence reform is obviously a burning question at South African universities today, as one can gather both from the second term residential upheavals and disobedience campaign at Rhodes, and the major reforms at the other universities. This area of student interest was considered it was believed that activity of this kind on campuses can only be to the improvement of the position of the average residential students at the universities of South Africa.

Regarding medical scholarships, the Congress decided to expand the availability of these funds to campuses not affiliated to NUSED, and also to expand them in terms of reference to include both pharmacists and dentists. In keeping with this, and acting on the example of Wits, the Congress also proposed a mass fund raising campaign to be aimed at those qualified already and practising in each of the 3 professions aided by the scholarships. As an area of society badly needing assistance, it is felt that this expansion of the scholarship fund can only be of great benefit to the country.

Finally the delegates discussed a South Africa - United States of America student exchange plan proposed by L Tighe of UN (Pietermaritzburg). It was agreed that the matter would be investigated and that NUSED would offer its support and assistance to this independent scheme, and would encourage students to involve themselves in the scheme.

An important policy decision was taken in the decision of the congress to avoid all segregated forms of fundraising in the name of NUSED. This was considered necessary both as a practical matter and as a matter involving an extremely important principle. Since the essence of this organisation is its multi-racial composition, to undertake fundraising projects which would not be open to all members of the organisation would be both a paradoxical and unacceptable position on grounds of principle, it was believed that the organisation could, in a motion such as this commit itself strongly to the cause of a future and freer society in South Africa by putting into practice as fully as possible what it attempted to preach. With the support of local branches and students it is hoped that integrated fundraising efforts will proceed as successfully as did efforts prior to the actual formality of this motion.

Clearly, the ethos of the organisation is one quite distinct from other student organisations. Through its projects it seeks to avoid being a mere student trade union for benefits, and attempts to supplement an active social conscience, as in matters such as Pass Courts and medical scholarships. This organisation represents possibly one of the ideal associations in which student members can work for both their own improvement in the universities, through residence and education reform, and for the correction of some of the many wrongs in our society itself. A considerable amount has been achieved locally in the past year, and the congress looks forward to an even more successful year for NUSED with students from different centres co-ordinating their previously divided efforts to remove or improve some of the major shortcomings of our universities and society today.