



Rumours of Spying

The Rhodes NUSAS SRC feels it necessary to respond to allegations about two members of the Rhodes community contained in an article in a February 17 edition of *The Star* newspaper. Despite the fact that these allegations have not yet reached the attention of the general public or Rhodes students, their seriousness demands a response.

According to the article, headlined **ANC denounces Forsyth as a flop - gives reasons**, the African National Congress released its own dossier on South African "superspy" Olivia Forsyth to support claims that she was a *"transparent and bungling agent whose attempts to infiltrate the organisation ended in a pathetic flop"*. The ANC said, according to the article, that *"Lieutenant Forsyth has betrayed many close colleagues in the South African security forces, once her cover had been blown in Harare in February 1986"*. The *Star* article proceeds to name 11 of them, including the current Rhodes SRC vice-president, Louise Vincent, and the SRC Permanent Secretary, Janet Knight.

The NUSAS SRC has addressed these allegations in a serious and, we believe, responsible manner. It must be stated at the outset that despite the seriousness of these allegations for both the NUSAS SRC and for the individuals concerned, we are not prepared to engage in witch-hunts, nor in the face of public pressure to make rash and hasty responses to the issue. Our public response has therefore taken time because the democratic processes of the

NUSAS SRC have been thorough and vigorous, and we are hence able to state our position with confidence.

The naming of these people as informers arose from Lt. Olivia Forsyth's confession to the ANC. While we are aware that the list contains names of people who were definitely spies - for example - Joy Harnden, it would not be surprising if the *"confession"* also contained disinformation.

Both Louise Vincent and Janet Knight were approached to work for the Security Police. Lt. Forsyth would have been aware of these approaches and as such her information had some basis. We need to point out that our response to the allegations about these two individuals cannot be identical for reasons which we will explain.

The Nusas SRC has decided it would be inappropriate and incorrect to respond definitively to the allegation about Janet Knight as we do not have sufficient information to make an informed response. We are at the same time not prepared to act on this allegation until we can embark upon a thorough process of investigation. Janet Knight is an employee of Rhodes University and has not been subject to the security processes of Nusas. A rash response by the SRC would be an injustice to students and to Janet Knight.

The position of Louise Vincent is however different. Nusas' active anti-apartheid stand has meant that we have had to

develop processes for dealing with security issues such as informers. We are confident that these processes are adequate. The fact that Louise Vincent had been approached by Security Police meant that our investigation around Louise was particularly thorough.

Shortly before she came to Rhodes in 1985, she was approached to work for the Security Police. The method of recruitment was devious - she was lead to believe that she would be doing "investigative reporting" on student activities while at Rhodes. The two men who visited her at her parents home had prior knowledge that she was registered for a Journalism degree. At no time did these men reveal their true identity. She was given a number to phone in Grahamstown in connection with the "job". Shortly after her arrival at Rhodes in 1985 she met with one of the men who had approached her.

It did not take her long to realize the true nature of her "work" and her "employees" and she cut all links with them. That same year Louise Vincent told members of the NUSAS Local Committee of these events.

Steps were taken by Nusas to verify this story and an investigation was begun. This process, which was completed in 1987, was both thorough and intensive and enabled NUSAS to clear Louise Vincent of all suspicion.

It is significant that Lt. Forsyth could not have known about this process as she had already left Rhodes and was at that time in ANC custody.

We remain confident in the process of investigation which cleared Louise Vincent of suspicion. The current allegations in no way detract from or alter our confidence in her. Through additional investigations brought about by the allegation, we found no further information which would contradict our earlier findings. Louise Vincent has signed a complete affidavit detailing her experiences.

While we are confident that our processes dealing with security issues and informers are adequate, we are not naive to the presence of spies in Nusas. Our anti-apartheid stand and our commitment to building non-racialism and democracy is a threat to the government. It is not unexpected in this context that the Security Police see it as important to send spies into our organisation to sow division, spread misinformation and to gather information on the legitimate activities of a student organisation. We also know that many students are approached to work for the security forces before they even come to university, and while some do so knowingly, others succumb out of naivety or fear. NUSAS has therefore had to develop processes to deal with these underhand attempts to undermine the legitimate activities of our organisation.

The processes relating to security are ongoing and are constantly updated and subject to re-evaluation. Any new information is given thorough consideration.

