

STATEMENT FOR A MEETING TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY 3 MAY 1983 AT 17H15

WE HAVE CHOSEN TO MEET HERE TODAY IN SOLEMN CONCLAVE BECAUSE AN EDUCATION BILL IS BEING DEBATED IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. WE DO SO IN CONCERT WITH OUR FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES AT THE UNIVERSITIES OF CAPE TOWN, NATAL AND THE WITWATERSRAND.

FOR NIGH ON A QUARTER CENTURY THE RIGHT TO SELECT OUR STUDENT BODY, ON CRITERIA WHICH WE ESTABLISH, HAS BEEN DENIED US. VIRTUALLY NO STUDENT IN THIS GATHERING, THEREFORE, CAN RECALL A TIME WHEN IT WAS OTHERWISE. SOME OF THE MORE SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE CAN DIMLY RECALL THE EARLIER AND NORMALLY ACCEPTED DISPENSATION. SOME OF US CAN EVEN RECALL TEACHING IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, AND INDEED MARCHING IN SOLEMN ACADEMIC PROCESSION TO RECORD OUR OUTRAGE AT THEIR ABROGATION.

THIS OUTRAGE HAS NEVER BEEN STILLED. IN THE MORE RECENT PAST THERE HAVE BEEN SOME GROUNDS FOR HOPE THAT OUR LONG VIGIL MIGHT BEAR FRUIT. THE DE LANGE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED THE RESTORATION OF AUTONOMY OF ENROLLMENT CRITERIA. THE COMMITTEE OF UNIVERSITY PRINCIPALS ACCEPTED THIS STANCE. EXPECTATIONS RAN HIGH.

NOW, IN PLACE OF HIGH EXPECTATIONS, WE HAVE THIS BILL. IN THE WORDS OF THE GREAT ROMAN POET HORACE

"PARTURIENT MONTES, NASCETUR RIDICULUS MUS"

("MOUNTAINS WILL BE IN LABOUR, THE BIRTH WILL BE A SINGLE LAUGHABLE LITTLE MOUSE")

DE LANGE ROARED, THE BILL SQUEAKS.

WHAT DOES THE BILL OFFER US? IT OFFERS US A QUOTA. NAY, IT IS MORE HYDRA-HEADED THAN THAT, IT OFFERS US THE PROSPECT OF A WHOLE PLATOON OF QUOTAS: QUOTAS FOR EACH RACE GROUP, QUOTAS FOR EACH STUDY DIRECTION. MULTIPLY THEM TOGETHER, AND YOU COULD HAVE AS MANY AS FORTY OR FIFTY QUOTAS, ENOUGH TO PAPER A GOOD-SIZED WALL WITH. THE POSSIBILITIES ARE MIND-BOGGLING: WHAT WILL BE THE "COLOURED" QUOTA FOR CLASSICS, THE INDIAN QUOTA FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES, OR THE XHOSA QUOTA FOR SOTHO III? WE SHALL NEED AS MANY STATISTICIANS AS THERE ARE QUOTAS.

REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA TAKES GREAT STRIDES FORWARD, ON THE PLANE OF RHETORIC. "GIVE US SIX MONTHS". "THE ALTERNATIVE IS TOO GHASTLY TO CONTEMPLATE". "ADAPT OR DIE". ON THE GROUND THE RHETORIC IS TRANSMOGRIFIED INTO AN ACHING, TIMID LITTLE SHUFFLE, AS IF WE WERE ALL CHINESE WOMEN OF OLD WITH BOUND FEET.

WE PROTEST. OF COURSE WE PROTEST. WE HAVE PROTESTED, AND WE SHALL CONTINUE TO PROTEST. BUT LET US NOT VIEW THIS GATHERING AS PRIMARILY ONE OF PROTEST. LET US CONSIDER IT RATHER AS A RENEWAL OF DEDICATION: WE SHALL NOT REST, INDEED WE CANNOT REST, UNTIL ONCE AGAIN WE ARE MASTERS IN OUR OWN HOUSE, AT LIBERTY TO ADMIT OR NOT TO ADMIT, THOSE WHOM WE CHOSE.

LET THIS BE OUR MESSAGE TO THE WORLD.

D S HENDERSON
RHODES UNIVERSITY

3 MAY 1983