RHODES UNIVERSITY DURING THE SEGREGATION
AND APARTHEID ERAS, 1933 TO 1990.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

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ABSTRACT

In 2004 Rhodes University celebrated its centenary. At a Critical Tradition Colloquium opportunity was given to explore the university’s past. In particular, its liberal image was questioned and its role during apartheid brought under scrutiny. This thesis investigates the questions raised at the Colloquium. It aims to cover the whole apartheid era in one coherent narrative by addressing the history of Rhodes during that era and how it handled issues of race and politics. It begins in 1933, when the first black student applied to Rhodes, and ends in 1990, when apartheid was drawing to a close.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam – To the Greater Glory of God

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<td>CP</td>
<td>Conservative Party</td>
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<td>Natal</td>
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<td>NP</td>
<td>National Party</td>
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<td>PAC</td>
<td>Pan African Congress</td>
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<td>Progressive Federal Party</td>
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<td>RAU</td>
<td>Rand Afrikaans University</td>
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<td>UCT</td>
<td>University of Cape Town</td>
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<td>UP</td>
<td>United Party</td>
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<td>UPE</td>
<td>University of Port Elizabeth</td>
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<td>Wits</td>
<td>University of the Witwatersrand</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Over the years the liberal image of Rhodes University has been called into question, and its role during the apartheid era brought under scrutiny. In August 2004, as part of the centenary celebrations of Rhodes University, a Critical Tradition Colloquium was held at which Rhodes alumni, past and present staff and students, sought to hear alternative voices in a discussion about the university’s past, present and future. Reflection on the past often focused on the struggle of those at Rhodes who had opposed apartheid, and lauded those who had taken a stand against it.

A special edition of the *African Sociological Review* published some of the papers presented at the colloquium. In the introductory article guest editors Fred Hendricks and Peter Vale\(^1\) state that “one of the untold stories of South Africa’s dark past [is] the role of its universities” and that “Grahamstown and Rhodes University are central to the unfolding understanding of the linkages between universities and apartheid.”\(^2\) Most of the subsequent articles go on to highlight and consider instances in the history of Rhodes where such links occurred. However, while very resourceful, and though bound together as a journal, they fail to cover the whole apartheid era in one coherent narrative. This thesis aims to do that.

It is from this colloquium, and this questioning of the role that Rhodes, as a university, played during apartheid, that this thesis arose. It seeks to address the history of Rhodes University in the apartheid era. However, as the origins of apartheid can be traced back to the practices of segregation in the decades prior to 1948, when the National Party came to power, so too with Rhodes. This has necessitated this thesis beginning in 1933, when Rhodes received its first application from a black student, and ending in 1990, when the apartheid era was drawing to a close.

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\(^1\) Both were members of staff at Rhodes during the 1980s. Today Hendricks is Dean of Humanities and Vale is Head and Professor of Political Science.

The role of the university during apartheid, and in particular Rhodes, deserves some consideration.

Firstly, what has been written about Rhodes prior to the colloquium is inadequate in addressing this need. In his acknowledgements for *Rhodes University 1904-1970: A Chronicle* (1970), RF Currey states that “this book makes no claim to be ‘History’…[to] call it simply ‘a chronicle’ would seem more fitting – and may prove safer.” Currey recognised that he was no historian and had no desire to claim to have done a better job than a trained historian from the university’s own department of history. Instead his book is a retelling of the minutes of the Rhodes Senate, with anecdotal commentary and limited insight offered. The key episodes and issues are glanced over. It is by no means critical or analytical, as expected of a history, but it does not claim to be one. In 2004 *A Story of Rhodes: Rhodes University 1904-2004* by Richard Buckland and Thelma Neville, both former public relations officers of the university, was released to commemorate Rhodes’ centenary. While updated, it is, like Currey’s book, not a history and is of a celebratory nature with its glossy pages, colour photos and simple text. There exists a need then for a critical academic history of Rhodes. While this thesis does not attempt to fulfil a need of that magnitude, it hopes to bring that need closer to reality.

Secondly, the questions about the role of Rhodes during apartheid need to be clarified. It is necessary to investigate the epithets attributed to Rhodes – such as ‘a colonial institution’, ‘a segregationist institution’, ‘an apartheid institution’, ‘an ivory tower’, ‘a racist institution’, ‘a liberal university’ and so on – to ascertain why and what they are based on. This includes looking at the relationship between Rhodes and successive apartheid governments, what Rhodes’ attitude was towards activists, and what its ‘official’ stance towards apartheid was, if any. One of the ways to do this is to analyse how key episodes and critical issues were dealt with in the history of Rhodes and by

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whom. This process forms part of this thesis. Here it is necessary to define what is meant by the term ‘Rhodes’. While generally by ‘Rhodes’ is meant the university as a corporate body, often in this thesis reference to ‘Rhodes’ will infer reference to the university administration, in the sense that it would have been the ‘official’ voice. However, every care will be taken to avoid any ambiguity by stating quite clearly what constituency is being referred to when referring to Rhodes University.

Thirdly, questioning the role of any university in any context brings into the process questions about the university itself, such as what the purpose of a university is and if a university can be neutral, which further encompasses questions about academic freedom and university autonomy. A university’s function is two-fold: to find out things about the world, that is, to research, and to pass on knowledge, that is, to teach. It is generally understood that the purpose of a university is to find, or serve, the truth; although this has been contested by the neo-liberal view that a university is a training ground for future professionals. For a student’s or academic’s research to be authentic he or she needs the freedom to enquire and investigate as many options as possible without any hindrances so as to find the truth or come as close to it as possible. This is known as academic freedom, a fundamental right which (free) universities around the world claim. Dlamini defines academic freedom as when an individual academic can hold whatever views, orthodox or not, without censure or penalty, allowing for critical enquiry. This is, however, an extreme definition, as academic freedom is not license to hold any view. Often coupled with academic freedom is university autonomy, which is the university’s right to govern itself as an institution without external interference. How far a university is legitimately autonomous is debateable as many are public-funded institutions, such as those in South Africa, which rely on a substantial state subsidy. This financial reliance on the state can, and during apartheid did, undermine the universities’ claim to autonomy. However, while a university is meant to be free from any state influence, it may use its autonomy to choose to follow state policy even if to the detriment of academic freedom, as was seen in

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6 For instance, an academic that taught notions of scientific racism or that the world is flat, would not be tolerated today.
7 Ibid., p. iii.
South Africa when Afrikaans-medium universities stifled debate considered by the government to be inappropriate, and chose not to admit black students.

Martin Hall shows that there are two interpretations of academic freedom circulating today. The first is the ‘classic’, shaped by former UCT vice-chancellor TB Davie in the 1950s, which views academic freedom as the human right to freedom of speech in institutional form. Here academic freedom and university autonomy are interdependent. The ‘contextual’ interpretation takes into account the effect on academic freedom when political conditions necessitate a change in the nature of the state and university. Here the automatic relationship between academic freedom and university autonomy is not immediately apparent. This interpretation is found in the work of Andre du Toit who argues that academic freedom as a concept does not have a definite meaning and that we should be wary when we come across it. While we often look at the threats to academic freedom we would do well to probe academic freedom itself to reveal any “underlying assumptions, associated political agendas and possible ideological functions” that may be behind its use.

In the rhetoric of the ‘open’ universities in the period leading up to the Extension of University Education Act in 1959 and after, the classic version of academic freedom was prevalent. However, a contextual reading of the situation, in hindsight, reveals that the critical issue was not always external – the state – but sometimes internal – the practice of the university community itself based on a plausibly faulty understanding of academic freedom. For instance Rhodes repeated the arguments defending academic freedom that Wits and UCT were advocating against the state’s attack on its university autonomy, but had in fact admitted only a handful of black students in comparison to Wits’ and UCT’s hundreds. Here a contextual reading is vital in recognising the difference in Rhodes’ understanding of academic freedom, based on its practice of a restrictive admissions policy, as opposed to the more ‘open’ understanding practised at UCT and Wits.

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9 Ibid., p. 9.
10 Ibid., p. 10. Quoting Du Toit.
Academic freedom could not have existed at Rhodes as the university was not free of unfair discrimination, and was defending its university autonomy to maintain the status quo. Academic freedom cannot flourish when other human freedoms are being transgressed.

In 1957 the Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand published a booklet, *The Open Universities in South Africa*, declaring their unambiguous opposition to the government’s extension of apartheid to the universities, and drawing upon the classic version of academic freedom.\(^\text{11}\) Seventeen years later UCT and Wits released a follow-up booklet entitled *The Open Universities in South Africa and Academic Freedom*. One of the identified reasons for this was that the universities’ views of academic freedom had undergone change since 1957. Said the authors of the 1974 booklet,

> It is appropriate, however, to remark generally that academic freedom, like other ‘great, abiding truths’, is only ‘abiding’ in so far as each generation reinterprets and makes that truth its own. The concept of academic freedom is, like all concepts, subject to some reassessment in the light of changing needs and changing social circumstances, though the core of belief remains unchanged.\(^\text{12}\)

In the 1957 booklet, the notion of academic freedom centred on the four indispensable freedoms of a university – namely, the right of the institution “to determine for itself on academic grounds who may teach, what may be taught, how it shall be taught, and who may be admitted to study”. This drew on TB Davie’s classic definition.\(^\text{13}\) However, in the 1974 booklet it is recognised that “academic freedom in its broadest sense includes university autonomy, but the two terms are not necessarily synonymous.”\(^\text{14}\) The authors go on to explain that university autonomy relates to the freedom of the corporate body in society, while academic freedom concerns itself with both university autonomy and the freedom of the academic in teaching, learning and research. The fact that a university, though autonomous, may be in breach of academic freedom by itself enforcing

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\(^{11}\) The Academic Freedom Committees of UCT and Wits, *The Open Universities in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1957).


\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 1.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 2.
restrictions on free enquiry and free expression within the university, shows that university autonomy and academic freedom can be differentiated. The authors conclude that “academic freedom, like freedom itself, defies absolute definition”, and thus precede the contextual version of academic freedom as elucidated by Du Toit. The fixation of the ‘open’ universities with academic freedom during apartheid has led to its conceptual development, assisted by the universities’ (usually) annual academic freedom lectures and academic freedom committees.

To be politically neutral is an ideal that many universities desire. However, Dlamini contends that it is sometimes misinterpreted as a reality or description that can actually exist. This cannot be so. Any move on the part of a university to be neutral is a political move in itself. Therein lies the paradox. Vice-chancellor of Rhodes, James Hyslop (1963-1975) espoused the notion of an apolitical university, and yet was confronted with political issues, both internal and external, at every turn. The very action of trying to create a politically neutral university resulted in the repression of students and staff who were considered activists by the administration because of their political views or actions. The best way to have created university neutrality would have been to allow the exact opposite: the free expression of all points of view, and not to have assumed an institutional stand. Should a university take a stand on a political or social controversy, it will impede its commitment to free and critical enquiry, because university neutrality makes possible both academic freedom and university autonomy. A university can, in a sense, be neutral if its individual members are allowed to freely express their personal commitments. Otherwise neutrality relates to the university as a corporate body, and this institutional neutrality presupposes the political opinion of its members. Adopting a neutral position in fact exposes the university to political attack, because it is inherently a political position.

15 Ibid., p. 2.
17 Ibid., p. 8.
18 Ibid., p. 10.
The problem with university neutrality is how it is used. Moulder states that during apartheid the English-medium universities were criticised from the right for protesting against the state’s contraventions of their university autonomy; but they were also criticised from the liberal left for not protesting against the many other state contraventions of human freedoms. The universities would argue that, in the case of the former, they had a right to protest the attack on their institutional freedom but, in the case of the latter, they were not obliged to protest the attack on society’s freedoms, invoking a claim to political neutrality. The argument for the latter case is flawed because a university is not separate from the society in which it is located and cannot be free when that society is not free. Refraining from using its power to act was political acquiescence disguised as political neutrality, which Simon terms “covert neutrality”. However, if a university can only be neutral *ceteris paribus* when a university is being too political or not political enough becomes indistinct. Searle offers an argument for a politically neutral university. He argues that

the traditional theory of neutrality is not that the university avoids having any social consequences but that it is open to expression of all points of view and it does not take institutional stands on controversial social and political questions, except in so far as its educational mission requires it to do so…Of course, the university has effects on controversial social and political questions, but its institutional intent is education not politics.

However, Moulder views this argument as unhelpful in understanding university neutrality because “what is at stake is not merely the institutional intent behind university education [but] particularly in a society which is as unequal as ours, are the unintentional consequences of university education”, which is that “our universities buttress the status quo”, that is, maintain white supremacy and aggravate rather than heal the inequalities of

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21 Moulder, ‘University Neutrality’, p. 248. The term is used by Moulder. It translates: other things being equal.
This view is supported by Budlender who notes that the councils of ‘white’ universities were “dominated by representatives of big business and the professions” and that it was “clear that our universities continue to serve a particular political elite, symbolised by the people who are charged with running the university”, the structure of which was not politically neutral. He also sees Montefiore’s conclusion on neutrality as applicable to the South African situation in the 1970s:

I should be inclined…to say that when the very structures of society are called into question, the range of the political increases, maybe alarmingly, and the space for political neutrality shrinks until there may be hardly any left. When such points are reached, those who would want to be liberal may have to abandon all present pretence of political neutrality in order the more clear-sightedly to formulate and to work for a programme for the achievement of a society in which the possibility of such neutrality may in the end be restored.

This explains how the actions of the ‘open’ universities in publicly protesting the government’s infringement of human rights would be condoned even though they appear to be political, because trying to exercise neutrality would have been futile in the context of the situation. The authors of The Open Universities state:

The open universities are not ‘political’, as is sometimes alleged. Indeed, taking a political stance and being committed to an ideology would violate the very nature of a university. Nevertheless, they have felt compelled to comment upon certain aspects of the society of which they form a part. They do so in the belief that universities can fulfil their proper function only in a society which respects academic freedom together with other civil liberties. Academic freedom is so woven into the fabric of human freedom that it is jeopardised by infringements of human freedom.

While a university can be neutral in some circumstances, it is in its own interest to abandon that neutrality when human freedoms are being violated in its society, because

26 The Academic Freedom Committees of UCT and Wits, The Open Universities of South Africa and Academic Freedom, p. 46.
its own academic freedom will ultimately be violated. A university cannot afford to become an ivory tower solely concerned with the pursuit of knowledge as it has a responsibility to the society that it is a part of. A university is a powerful institution that has the means to change society, but refraining from doing so when justice is being denied beyond its own walls and calling it university neutrality, is in fact acquiescence.

To provide context and a basis for comparison for this thesis on Rhodes, the histories of other historically white, English-medium universities were consulted. In the past two to three decades historical writing about South Africa’s universities has been in decline. However, two significant models for this thesis have been Howard Phillips’ history of the University of Cape Town (UCT)  and Bruce Murray’s two histories of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). These are critical, academic histories that seek to analyse the role each university played in society, more than just recounting the mundane of how each university began and grew, what was built, and how it was administered. With EH Brookes’ history of the University of Natal, they form the core of academic histories of historically white English-medium universities in South Africa other than Rhodes.

Phillips’ history of UCT is aimed at a non-specialist audience and avoids being "scholarly but dull [and includes] some anecdotal matter". It was commissioned to commemorate the 75th anniversary of UCT, and covers the university's history from 1918 to 1948, a period not explored by previous authors. Phillips does not neglect the life of students at UCT and dedicates a chapter to “UCT and the Wider Community”. He pays close attention to the university during World War Two and the subsequent small rise in the number of black students – especially the exaggerated reaction to it. His review of the thirty-year period shows the significant changes UCT underwent, especially its failure to establish an identity based on a “broad South Africanism”, which was meant to unite its

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28 Murray, B.K., *Wits: The Early Years* (Johannesburg, 1982) and *Wits: The ‘Open’ Years* (Johannesburg, 1997).
31 For previous histories of UCT, and its forerunner the South African College, see works by Ritchie and Walker.
English- and Afrikaans-speaking students. Phillips’ history of UCT stops in 1948, at the birth of apartheid, but provides a sound analysis of UCT during the inter-war years and immediately after, although he is not as critical of UCT’s so-called ‘open’ admission policy as Murray is.

Murray’s first history of Wits covers the years 1896 to 1939. He looks at the origins and development of Wits; he examines its foundations of liberal thought and criticism, its role in the development of the professions, and the relevance of its research to society; and he analyses its admission of black students, and the relationship between English- and Afrikaans-speaking whites within the institution. Murray also includes a chapter that focuses on “Questions of Discrimination” in which he questions the liberal image of Wits. He reveals, in particular detail, that Wits did not always follow an ‘open’ policy of admission as its forceful reaction to the government’s policy of university apartheid in the 1950s might have implied. Murray’s analysis of Wits and UCT’s admission practices before World War Two shows that both universities practised academic segregation. Only in the mid-1930s did Wits and UCT begin to move towards a more ‘open’ policy in admitting black students, and then only in very limited numbers.

Murray’s second volume picks up where his first left off and reaches 1959, when the Extension of University Education Act was passed. It covers a period of robust political and student activity. He examines the emergence of Wits as an ‘open’ university, the extent to which it became ‘open’, and its effort to remain ‘open’ after the National Party came to power in 1948. Murray stresses that while Wits’ declared policy was one of ‘academic non-segregation and social segregation’, it came at a price. He examines the complications of being an ‘open’ and ‘liberal’ university in a segregated society, and follows the evolution of the politics of university apartheid, its threats to Wits and Wits’ responses to it. In examining student politics Murray finds that the left and liberals habitually wrestled for control, and that divergences existed between the student leaders

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32 For previous publications on Wits, and its forerunner the South African School of Mines, see Rosenthal, Glyn Thomas and MacCrone.
33 Murray, Wits: The Early Years, pp. xi-xiii.
34 Murray, Wits: The ‘Open’ Years, pp. xi-xiii.
and university administration in their response to the challenges of government policy. This undermines the image of a united ‘open’ and ‘liberal’ university fighting against apartheid in the 1950s. Murray also pays close attention to the iconic academic freedom protests of 1957 and 1959, and how they played out. In summary, Murray’s histories of Wits illustrate how a major ‘liberal’ institution operated during the segregation and apartheid eras.

Brookes’ history of the University of Natal goes up to 1965, and while not blessed with decades of reflection, does cover similar ground. Natal’s history is particularly interesting because the university readily admitted black students but practised academic segregation. While a single institution, it ran two campuses in Durban – Howard College for white students, and a campus for black students near the city centre – in addition to the Pietermaritzburg campus for white students, so avoiding the ‘problem’ of mixing the races. Brookes explores how this came about. He notes that in resisting the state’s plans for legislated academic segregation in the late 1950s, Natal’s position was ambiguous in comparison to that of UCT and Wits because it practised academic segregation. A highlight of Natal’s history is its medical school for black students, the only one of its kind. When it became clear that the 1959 legislation would transfer the medical school to UNISA, Natal fought the state and succeeded in retaining the school, although it lost its other black students. The extreme measure to which the staff at the medical school went – they all threatened to resign – provides a comparison to the reactions of the other historically white English-medium universities in protesting university apartheid. For instance, the 1959 legislation also transferred Fort Hare from Rhodes to UNISA, but Rhodes’ protests were not as vociferous as Natal’s. The retention of Natal’s medical school may have been an apartheid anomaly but it was a sign that resistance to the state’s entrenchment of apartheid could be effective.

No further histories of these universities have been written. UCT lacks an updated history since 1948, Wits since 1959, and Natal since 1965. This does not mean, however, that nothing else has been written about these universities since then. Published memoirs of

35 Brookes, Natal, p. 46.
leading personalities at these universities have been able to provide first-hand accounts of more recent times. Stuart Saunders was a student at UCT in the 1940s and 1950s, a member of staff in the Faculty of Medicine from the 1960s – of which he became head in the 1970s, and vice-chancellor from 1981 to 1996.36 As a student, Saunders recalls the discriminatory treatment that black students received by some blatantly racist lecturers; and as a professor of medicine he recounts the frustrating difficulties working at Groote Schuur hospital, where UCT’s principles of academic freedom often came into conflict with the state’s apartheid laws. As vice-chancellor, Saunders remembers the intense 1980s when he often had to literally come between the police and his students.

GR Bozzoli, vice-chancellor of Wits between 1969 and 1977, reflects on his time at the institution.37 While a lecturer in electrical engineering, Bozzoli recollects how loopholes had to be found to admit black students into his faculty. As vice-chancellor he reflects on the difficulties Prime Minister Vorster’s government gave him, especially the state’s increased repression of liberal student organisations. On at least two occasions Bozzoli was forced to act to avoid government intervention at Wits. These were the ‘swimming pool incident’, when Bozzoli submitted to white public opinion and prohibited black students from using the pool; and the ‘cartoon incident’, where Bozzoli had to reprimand the editor of the Wits student newspaper for publishing a cartoon that insulted the Prime Minister.

Mervyn Shear draws on Murray’s histories of Wits and briefly brings up to date the university’s history since 1959 before recounting his time as deputy vice-chancellor for student affairs there between 1983 and 1990.38 Because of his portfolio, Shear found himself in the middle of student political activity:

I saw masked students run across the campus with ANC and Communist Party flags, attended the funeral of a black apartheid victim, witnessed real resistance by students to establishment discipline and quickly learned that the University must

36 Stuart Saunders, *Vice-Chancellor on a Tightrope: A Personal Account of Climactic Years in South Africa* (Cape Town, 2000).
be very wary about introducing rules that would be impossible to enforce; that consultation and democratic-decision making on various issues were essential if they were to enjoy student acceptance [and] I also had to learn how to deal with the police, particularly the riot squad and the security police.39

However, Shear’s book is more than just a memoir and does offer some critical analysis. He asks whether Wits did too little or too much to promote racial justice, and if it colluded with the powers that be to establish apartheid on campus. He attempts to assess Wits’ “position on racial discrimination, its opposition to infringements of fundamental human rights in South Africa and its contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle and to the promotion and maintenance of academic freedom.”40

In his memoir, EG Malherbe, a widely published scholar on education in South Africa, offers random reminiscences of his years as vice-chancellor of Natal from 1945 to 1965. When Natal’s medical school for black students was threatened by the 1959 legislation, Malherbe went head to head with the government, inviting the acting Minister of Education, BJ Vorster, to visit the school. When Vorster reiterated the government’s plans for the ethnic universities, Malherbe lost his patience and remarked: “You want to go and build a university for these Blacks in Zululand and spend millions on doing so. The Blacks will think you are foistering [sic] something inferior on to them and I won’t be surprised if they burn the bloody place down” – this, as Malherbe says, proved prophetic.41 In his history of the University of Natal, Brookes acknowledges Malherbe as “a consistent opponent of university apartheid [and] every form of interference with university autonomy”, but criticises him for not going further and applying integration more fully.42 Yet Brookes suggests that Malherbe maintained academic segregation not for ideological reasons, but for sound pedagogical ones, and recalls that because of Malherbe’s cautionary stance, the medical school was saved.

Memoirs such as those of Saunders, Bozzoli and Malherbe act as valuable primary sources that offer personal insights into situations, albeit subject to the shortcomings of

39 Ibid., p. xviii.
40 Ibid., p. xxvii.
42 Brookes, Natal, p. 61.
memory. Shear’s book appears to be both a memoir and a critical history, but is based on his participation in the period he covers. By placing these memoirs together with the works of Phillips, Murray and Brookes, a considerable amount of information is provided for this thesis for context and comparison. It is regrettable, though, that no memoir exists of a leading personality from Rhodes. One last source is a collection of memoirs to commemorate UCT’s 150th anniversary. In it a chapter by David Welsh, “The values of the English-medium universities”, maps out the so-called liberal tradition of UCT, Wits, Natal and Rhodes. Welsh notes that it was the goal of these universities to attain “cosmopolitanism”, but that circumstances in South Africa prevented this. He criticises the admissions policies of the universities prior to World War Two, which were generally closed, and the practice of social segregation on the campuses once more black students were admitted. He identifies Fort Hare as an “escape-hatch” as the universities would decline the applications of black students if the same course was offered at Fort Hare. Welsh also recognises the paradox in university neutrality and the price to be paid for it.

This thesis is not a full history of Rhodes. It aims to follow the mould of Phillips’ and Murray’s works in being critical and analytical, and includes references to personal histories akin to those in a memoir. The questions it seeks to answer are similar to those of Shear’s about Wits, but cover substantially more than just one decade.

It is necessary to define the terms ‘open’, ‘liberal’ and ‘radical’ and to situate them within the South African context. ‘Open’ generally means that something is available to all and not closed off to any persons in particular. For instance, the Open University in the United Kingdom specialises in distance learning, in particular to allow disabled people to study for a degree whereas they might not be as well supported at a standard, residential

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43 A Lennox-Short and D Welsh (eds.), UCT at 150: Reflections (Cape Town, 1979). UCT dates its founding back to the establishment of the South African College, which it grew out of, even though it only attained university status in 1918.
44 D Welsh, “The values of the English-medium universities”, in A Lennox-Short and D Welsh (eds.), UCT at 150: Reflections, p. 22.
46 These come from oral interviews and personally written articles about certain individuals’ times at Rhodes during apartheid either as a student or member of staff or both.
university. In South Africa, before legislation in 1959 prohibited historically white universities from admitting black students, UCT and Wits chose to admit students of all races. In the preface to *The Open Universities of South Africa* the vice-chancellors of UCT and Wits state that they “are called the ‘Open Universities’ because they admit non-white students [sic] as well as white students and aim, in all academic matters, at treating non-white students on a footing of equality with white students, and without segregation”.47 If an ‘open’ university in South Africa is an historically white university that admitted black as well as white students before the 1959 legislation, then this would also include Rhodes and Natal. However this definition is problematic because Rhodes only admitted a small number of black students in comparison to the hundreds at UCT and Wits; and Natal, while admitting a large number, segregated its black students from its white students. In his memoir, Shear groups Rhodes and Natal with UCT and Wits, stating that their “doors were, at least in theory, open to all who were academically qualified for admission.”48 However, prior to 1959, even the doors of the Afrikaans-medium universities were, at least in theory, open to the admission of black students, and they were certainly not ‘open’ universities. Shear identifies Rhodes, Natal, UCT and Wits as “the English-language so-called ‘open universities’”; and so the connection is also the common medium of instruction.49 But this would then also include the University of Fort Hare, an English-medium institution and at one time affiliated to Rhodes. However, it is clear that an ‘open’ university would have to be an historically white university that admitted black as well as white students. Yet the disparity in the way in which Rhodes and Natal admitted black students as compared to UCT and Wits deserves distinction. While social segregation was practised at UCT and Wits, even though academic segregation was not, Natal practised both; and Rhodes’ five postgraduate black students, hardly feature. Wits and UCT were far more ‘open’ than Natal and Rhodes. For the purpose of this thesis ‘open universities’ will refer only to UCT and Wits, but ‘historically white English-medium universities’ to Rhodes, Natal, UCT and Wits. When

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48 Shear, *Wits*, p. xi.
necessary it will be indicated if Fort Hare is included, especially during the years 1951-1959, when it was affiliated to Rhodes.

The terms ‘liberal’ and ‘liberalism’ are complicated ones and need to be delicately treated as they carry different meanings and connotations. In American politics today a liberal is seen as the opposite of a conservative; and in Europe as the opposite of a socialist. This is, to say the least, confusing, which is why political philosophy holds that liberalism is so broad that it almost has no meaning.\footnote{Unknown, “Liberalism defined: The perils of complacency”, in L Husemeyer (ed.), \textit{Watchdogs or Hypocrites? The amazing debate on South African liberals and liberalism} (Johannesburg, 1997), p. 261.} For this thesis the definitions provided by Butler, Elphick and Welsh have been adopted as they pertain to South Africa. They state:

To be ‘liberal’ in South Africa is to demand limitations on the power of government, holding it to strict adherence to the rule of law and demanding protection of minorities, individuals, and non-governmental entities like the press.\footnote{J Butler, R Elphick and D Welsh (eds.), \textit{Democratic Liberalism in South Africa: Its History and Prospect} (Cape Town, 1987), p. 3.}

They continue:

‘liberalism’ affirms the rights of individuals, of minorities, and of institutions against the power of the state; it asserts freedom of speech and assembly; and above all, it affirms the rule of law, the insistence that no government official is above the law, which is ultimately created and sustained by the people’s will.\footnote{Ibid., p. 8.}

Therefore the historically white English-medium universities could be labelled ‘liberal’ because they filled the criteria of these definitions. However, during apartheid many white liberals in South Africa shied away from supporting a democracy based on a universal franchise, and came to occupy the middle ground between the political right and left.\footnote{Ibid., p. 7.} Liberal thought and activity in South Africa have been less about the freedom of the individual and more about recreating shattered communities and defending previously discriminated groups.\footnote{Ibid., p. 4.} For instance, a ‘liberal’ university would defend its
autonomy and students from state attack or discrimination, but would not preach a full democracy based on majority rule. ‘Liberal’ students would gladly go out and assist an informal settlement, but would not think of the inhabitants there as their equals. ‘Liberal’ has become a tainted word in post-apartheid South Africa because it is associated with cosmetic actions by individuals who performed them more out of self-fulfilment than out of sincerity. True liberalism, in the sense of believing in and supporting a democracy based on equally free individuals, generally did not exist among whites during apartheid. Hence the epithet ‘so-called liberal’ is used, as in ‘so-called liberal universities’, when the nature of their liberalism is in doubt.

If a ‘liberal’ would favour moderate political and social reform, then a ‘radical’ would favour extreme, even revolutionary, reforms. However, from a conservative point of view even something liberal can appear to be radical. The term ‘radical’ is often misused because its meaning is elusive. A radical has in the past been equated with a socialist or communist, especially during the apartheid era. In this thesis a ‘radical’ will be understood to mean someone who will use extreme measures more readily than a reformist. However, it must be noted that the measure “is extreme not in…its violence or illegality, but [the] extent [to which] it violates a given society’s canons of good taste.”

This thesis seeks to continue what was started at the Critical Tradition Colloquium – questioning the ‘liberal’ image of Rhodes and its role during apartheid – and thus builds on what was presented there and published in the *African Sociological Review*. Most of the contributors did not utilise the restricted records of the university. None of them had the time to spend on these records that I was afforded. The minutes of Senate and Council formed the starting point of my research as they provide a focal point for the university’s activities, covering the meetings of faculties, selection committees, and various other committees. Other records were consulted to corroborate Senate and Council minutes. The student newspaper, *Rhodeo*, offered alternative views and

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56 PR Maylam had access to and made use of Senate minutes for his paper “Rhodes University: Colonialism, Segregation and Apartheid, 1904-1970.”
elucidated events and issues Senate and Council often glanced over or even omitted. Persons either involved in particular events or who have a special knowledge of the university’s history were interviewed to corroborate the documentary evidence as well as provide a human element to the account.

The format of the thesis is chronological. Chapter Two concerns itself with Rhodes before apartheid not only to provide background to the establishment of the university but also to highlight how Rhodes dealt with the first applications from black students, initially closing its doors, but after World War Two reviewing its policy to admit only postgraduate black students. The chapter is divided into two parts covering Rhodes before and after the war. The next three chapters are each dedicated to the term of successive vice-chancellors. Chapter Three looks at Rhodes when Dr Thomas Alty was master and then vice-chancellor (1948-1963). The chapter investigates how Rhodes attained its university status and how it grappled with academic non-segregation. It explores the circumstances surrounding the awarding of honorary doctorates to Minister of Education, JH Viljoen, and later, State President, CR Swart. It examines the university’s participation in the protest against university apartheid and describes the affiliation of Fort Hare, and the creation and loss of the Port Elizabeth branch. Chapter Four covers the vice-chancellorship of Dr James Hyslop (1963-1975). It considers Hyslop’s aim to make Rhodes an apolitical university, the accusations that Rhodes was subversive and leftist, the banning of members of staff, and the repression and protest of academics and students. There is coverage of the 1967 NUSAS Congress at Rhodes, which Steve Biko walked out of, the 1968 student protests, the 1969 Basil Moore Affair, and the 1971 Disobedience Campaign, when students en masse deliberately broke residence rules they considered archaic and oppressive. Chapter Five covers most of the period when Dr Derek Henderson was vice-chancellor (1975-1996), but it stops in 1990 when the scope of this thesis ends as apartheid was drawing to a close. Here the main themes are the integration of black students at the university, student activism, especially during the State of Emergency of 1985-1986, the activities of the Black Student Movement on campus, and the subsidy crisis and coming demise of apartheid in 1990.
Rhodes University College (RUC) was founded in Grahamstown in 1904. In the aftermath of the Boer defeat in the South African War (1899-1902), the British High Commissioner, Lord Alfred Milner, pursued a policy of Anglicisation. One of his aims was to advance British-style education. The establishment of a college of higher education in the eastern Cape corresponded with this and would strengthen the British imperial connection.\(^1\) Thus the College was founded as a colonial institution. This was further reflected in the naming of the College after the foremost imperialist of the time, Cecil John Rhodes, recently deceased, even though he had had hardly any association with the eastern Cape during his lifetime. The decision to name the College after him was a lever to obtain funding from the Rhodes Trust to establish the College.\(^2\) Thus, the College took both the imperialist’s name and money; money largely derived from profits at the Kimberley diamond mines. From its very beginning, Rhodes University was linked in name to colonialism and segregation.

In 1933 the College first considered the possibility of acquiring independent status as a university.\(^3\) It was then a constituent college of the University of South Africa (UNISA), which had begun operation as an examining body in 1918. Also in 1918, the Universities of Cape Town (UCT) and Stellenbosch had been inaugurated, and together with the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), established in 1922, and the University of Pretoria, established in 1930, were the only independent residential universities in South Africa by 1933.\(^4\) The recent creation of the University of Pretoria as a second Afrikaans-medium university to match the two English-medium ones may have led RUC to aim to become the next English-medium university in the country. However, after careful

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\(^2\) Ibid., p. 15.
\(^3\) RUC-C, Cory Library, Council VII, MS 17 244/1, p. 196, 18 August 1933, min. 4(a).
\(^4\) Phillips, *UCT: The Formative Years*, p. 4; and Murray, *Wits: The Early Years*, pp. xi and 324 (dates are the year in which the university was officially inaugurated and not when legislation was passed).
deliberation the RUC Council resolved not to pursue the matter,\(^5\) in view of the effects of the economic depression which had resulted in a 23% reduction in the government subsidy.\(^6\) The College was also too small to manage itself as a university, with an enrolment of less than 500 students. To break away from UNISA and become an independent university the College would require a solid financial foundation. The issue of independent university status would only resurface a few years after the Second World War, by which time the financial difficulties experienced by the College due to the depression, the war itself and the lengthy and expensive Field case,\(^7\) would be resolved, leaving the College financially injured but not without the time to reconsider independence.

Also in 1933, but unconnected to the proposal to become an independent university, the first black student applied for admission to Rhodes.\(^5\) George Singh, an Indian graduate of Fort Hare, applied to be accepted for an MA in English.\(^9\) His application was brought to Senate by Professor Dingemans, one of the four founding professors of the College. Dingemans led the Senate discussion on Singh’s application and on the admission policy of the College.\(^10\) A number of resolutions with amendments were proposed but when the Master of the College, Professor Bowles, pressed Senate to make a final decision, it was resolved 8 votes to 4, that “The Senate of Rhodes University regrets that it is not yet in a position to agree to the admission, as resident or non-resident students, non-Europeans as it feels the time is not yet ripe for such a change in the policy of the College”.\(^11\) Singh’s

\(^5\) RUC-C, Cory Library, Council VII, MS 17 244/1, p. 249, 18 May 1934, min. 4.
\(^7\) The HOD of the Department of Music had been reprimanded by Council for students’ poor performance in music examinations. The HOD in turn accused one of the Department’s lecturers, Field, of suspicious conduct and incompetence, and he was duly dismissed from the College. Field turned to the courts to seek redress for what was in hindsight an unfair dismissal based on the HOD’s suspicions and hearsay. This was in 1942. It was not until 1947 that the Eastern District Court found in favour of Field. Rhodes appealed to the Supreme Court but lost, and had to bear all the costs, some 12 500 pounds, which was a heavy blow on the College finances. Currey, *Rhodes: A Chronicle*, pp. 97-99.
\(^8\) The terms “white”, “Coloured”, “Indian” and “African” are unavoidably used in this thesis because they were the population categories utilised by apartheid law. The term “black” has been used to describe the last three groups. Other terms, such as “Bantu”, “non-European” and “Chinese”, have also been used as they come from the literature of the time. However, the use of these terms does not imply acceptance of ‘racial’ grouping or labelling.
\(^9\) RUC-S, Cory Library, Senate IV, MS 17 504/4, p. 303, 10 April 1933, min. 6.
\(^10\) Ibid.
\(^11\) Ibid.
application was rejected, and at the next meeting of Council a resolution was passed, with no votes against, endorsing Senate’s final resolution, and effectively barring the admission of any black student to Rhodes. By making this decision Rhodes was willingly entrenching itself as a segregated university and without any political pressure.

While Hertzog’s 1924 Pact Government, dominated by the National Party, aimed to promote and strengthen racial segregation, universities were saved from the imposition of segregation and left to decide on their own admission policies. Rhodes failed to take advantage of this freedom, preferring to adopt its own segregationist policy in line with the white supremacist thinking of the time. The early 1930s saw Hertzog’s National Party and Smuts’s South African Party draw closer together on the ‘native question’ and eventually merge to form the United Party in 1934. This new Fusion Government consolidated segregationism and finally allowed Hertzog to pass his segregationist ‘Native Bills’ in 1936. Before Fusion the two parties had had differences over segregation, yet both had an “unashamed paternalism and commitment to the maintenance of white supremacy”. By the 1930s segregation had become a “consensus ideology” within white society, and in the years 1930-1935 extra-parliamentary resistance to segregation had waned because of a lack of cohesion among opposition groups.

The action of the Rhodes Senate and Council in refusing admission to a black student in 1933 suggests conformity with the hegemonic ideology of segregation in white South Africa. Yet the decision that Senate had made was not unanimous. Four members had voted against the resolution and six members, a third of the total, had abstained from voting. The eight members that had voted for the resolution constituted less than half of Senate. In contrast, the whole of Council had voted for the resolution. Dingemans was unfortunately unable to attend the Council meeting to state his views but it was decided

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12 RUC-C, Cory Library, Council VII, MS 17 244/1, p. 165, 21 April 1933, min. 8(f).
13 Murray, Wits: The Early Years, p. 299.
15 Ibid., pp. 148, 160.
16 Senate consisted of 18 members, all present at the meeting.
This suggests a disparity between the two bodies in their approach to the admission of black students to the College. Whereas Senate had vigorously discussed the issue at length before being compelled to vote, the result of which shows a divided membership, Council treated the issue as just another item on the agenda and rubber-stamped Senate’s decision without comment.

Rhodes was not alone in being influenced by segregationist ideology as is shown in the actions of the other English-medium universities in the country. While both UCT and Wits had statutes that provided for ‘open’ admission, they did not necessarily practise it. Both institutions reflected the prejudices of white society at the time. The Senate and Council of Wits had even considered adopting a “restrictive admissions policy” in the 1920s and early 1930s when black students began to apply, going so far as to encourage the government to assist in excluding black students from ‘white’ universities. In 1923 the Council of UCT conceded that it would prefer not to admit “native or coloured students in any numbers, if at all”. The difficulty for UCT and Wits lay in their having the only medical schools in the country, which caused complications when the practical training of students clashed with segregation laws. Wits did admit one Coloured student in 1926 to study medicine and in 1934 the Council decided in principle to admit black applicants. By 1929 UCT had had five Coloured graduates in arts and education, and by 1937 had 40 Coloured and Indian students, ten of which were in medicine. In admitting this number UCT was ahead of other English-medium universities and beginning to dissent from segregationism. However, it was only with the advent of World War Two that black students (including Africans) began to be admitted to UCT and Wits on a substantial scale, mainly because they could no longer continue their professional studies abroad. Wits only had four black students in 1939, but this number had grown to 87 in 1945. Similarly, by 1945 UCT had 76 Coloureds, 26 Indians and five Africans in

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17 RUC-C, Cory Library, Council VII, MS 17 244/1, p. 165, 21 April 1933, min. 8(f). Council consisted of 25 members of which 20 were present. The Master, Prof. Bowles, was also absent.
18 Murray, Wits: The Early Years, p. 298.
20 Murray, Wits: The Early Years, p. 299.
22 Ibid., p. 192.
23 Murray, Wits: The Early Years, p. 298.
attendance, which was double the number of black students at the start of the war. At Natal, though, a completely different path was followed. Indian applicants were refused admission in 1921 and 1926. Later it was decided to run separate classes for black students. These began in 1936, giving rise to a dual university that admitted students but segregated them. In 1945 there were 181 black students at Natal. In 1947 Natal proposed to open a medical school for black students but support from the Smuts government was lacking. The following year, with a new government under Malan, support for the medical school emerged. In 1951 the Natal Medical School opened its doors with an enrolment of 35 black students.

What was the position of black students in the overwhelmingly white universities? Phillips shows that at UCT between 1918 and 1948 black students purposely isolated themselves in an effort to avoid awkward moments in which they might be patronised by their fellow white students. The black students were “grudgingly tolerated” by the university administration; and the predominantly white student body, in a 1937 poll, showed strong opposition to black students being included in social activities. Some white parents refused to send their children to UCT because there were black students there; and the United Party even asked UCT not to advertise the fact that the black students attended the same classes as white students. The Vice-Chancellor of UCT, J.C. Beattie, commented in a letter to a friend in 1937 that “There is a strong colour prejudice in South Africa and we have to give attention to that.” These were the inter-war years during which Social Darwinism and hostility to miscegenation were still widespread and even some prestigious American universities freely practised racial discrimination.

26 Ibid., p. 74.
27 Ibid., pp. 79, 83-84.
29 Ibid., p. 193.
30 Ibid., p. 193.
31 Ibid., p. 193.
The Rhodes Senate and Council followed these trends when adopting a segregationist admission policy. They probably did not want to deal with the problematic social issues faced by Wits and UCT in admitting black students; and the idea of separate classes did not even occur to them because the South African Native College (SANC) was not so far away at Fort Hare, where black students were being catered for. 33 Rhodes did not offer medicine or engineering and thus did not have to admit black students as UCT and Wits did. Black students could study for arts, education, science and theology degrees at Fort Hare or through UNISA, and thus did not have to attend Rhodes. It could have been argued that black students were admitted to Wits and UCT for these same courses because Fort Hare was some distance away from large city centres. But Fort Hare’s proximity to Grahamstown must have played a part in Rhodes deciding not to admit black students to those courses even when Wits and UCT were doing so. 34 This is clearly shown in rejecting Singh’s application for a Master’s in English, which he could have done at Fort Hare or UNISA. By not admitting its first black applicant Rhodes was mirroring Wits, UCT and Natal, all of which had initially turned down their first black applicants. Yet by 1933 UCT already had a handful of Coloured students, Wits had admitted at least one Coloured student and Natal was on its way to starting separate classes for black students. Thus prior to World War Two, Rhodes was behind the other English-medium universities, having no black students and a clear policy restricting their admission. As with the desire to become an independent university, Rhodes’ admission policy would resurface after the War, when the two matters would be clearly linked.

Rhodes University (College) after World War Two

As an institution founded on British Imperial values, Rhodes supported the cause of the War. While the specifics of the War’s direct effects on Rhodes are not within the scope of this thesis, the indirect effects of the War would shape some social change at the College.

33 The literature on the SANC freely refers to it as Fort Hare, thus no distinction is made and both “SANC” and “Fort Hare” are used in this thesis to refer to the same institution.
34 David Welsh argues that a mitigating factor might have been because Rhodes did not want to draw students away from Fort Hare. Welsh, D., “Some Political and Social Determinants of the Academic Environment”, in Hendrik W. van der Merwe and David Welsh (eds.), Student Perspectives on South Africa (Cape Town, 1972), p. 22.
At Rhodes a fair number of staff had taken leave to participate in the War and some 160 students had interrupted their courses to volunteer.\textsuperscript{35} A large number of ex-servicemen returned once hostilities had ceased. At Rhodes, Senate established an Ex-Servicemen’s Committee in 1945 to serve their interests. The College was under government pressure (both South African and Rhodesian) to admit ex-servicemen.\textsuperscript{36} Enrolment at Rhodes rose from 784 in 1945 to 1189 in 1946, of whom 464 were ex-servicemen.\textsuperscript{37}

There was a general fear in political and educational circles of what the returning servicemen would bring back with them because of what they had been exposed to in the war.\textsuperscript{38} They had accumulated knowledge and ideas of social justice, having fought against Fascism and Nazism. Colin Eglin writes, “I returned from the war with a deep revulsion for Nazism and fascism, and with a realisation that systems based on racial discrimination and exclusion were no longer acceptable”.\textsuperscript{39} During the war white South African servicemen had formed the Springbok Legion, a trade union-like organisation to protect and serve their interests, especially once the war was over. Their idea of social justice involved transmitting into civilian life the “unity and co-operation among races which was achieved on the battlefield”, to oppose moves to undermine the “principle or practice of democracy”, and to support a society working for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.\textsuperscript{40} The Legion also called on the Smuts government to take “drastic steps to curb the seditious activities of all Nationalist organisations”.\textsuperscript{41} This was most probably a reference to Afrikaner Nationalist organisations in the country, such as the Ossewa Brandwag. The Legion was calling for a just, non-racial and anti-fascist society.\textsuperscript{42} The normal practices of segregation and prejudice had been postponed to accommodate the

\textsuperscript{35} A special dispensation was resolved by Senate to be favourable to returning staff members after their service was completed, hence a fairly significant number must have taken leave: RUC-S, Cory Library, Senate V, MS 17 504, p. 161, 6 November 1939, min. 17(b); and Currey, \textit{Rhodes: A Chronicle}, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{36} RUC-S, Cory Library, Senate VI, MS 17 504, p. 138, 25 October 1945, min. 5(b); and Currey, \textit{Rhodes: A Chronicle}, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 27.
urgent needs created by the war, such as the admission of black students to practical medical training at UCT and Wits on the government’s orders,⁴³ and women fulfilling traditionally male roles in society while the men were away. The war had thus interrupted the prevailing gender and racial ideologies and there was an opportunity to create a new society as advocated by the Legion. The Minister of Education, JH Hofmeyr, who had been the first Vice-Chancellor of Wits, announced in Parliament in 1945 that universities could not legally refuse admission to any student based on colour or race. He did, however, insist that universities still maintain an internal policy of racial separation as much as possible.⁴⁴

In August 1946 Professor Hobart Houghton proposed two motions in Senate. The first was that the College remove the rule restricting the admission of black students and the second that the College reconsider its admission policy for black students. The first motion passed with 20 votes for and none against and the second motion passed with 21 votes for and none against.⁴⁵ A third motion was added (it is not recorded who proposed it) to the effect that while the admission of black students to Rhodes be reconsidered, Rhodes should generally not accept African and Coloured students for courses offered at Fort Hare. The motion passed with 15 votes for and one against.⁴⁶ Senate’s action demonstrated a move away from self-imposed academic segregation but with the condition that the College should not draw students away from Fort Hare. This condition fitted in with the accepted norm that black students attend Fort Hare, which was originally set up to cater for ‘native’ students.⁴⁷ Rhodes was simply following the practice of the other white universities. Courses on offer at Rhodes and Fort Hare were very similar. Consequently Rhodes would not find itself admitting black students as UCT and Wits had because they offered medicine, law and engineering.⁴⁸ UCT and Wits had,

⁴³ Murray, Wits: The Early Years, p. 298.
⁴⁵ Senate consisted of 26 members, all present at the meeting.
⁴⁶ RUC-S, Cory Library, Senate VI, MS 17 504, p. 213, 6 August 1946, min. 7.
⁴⁸ This allowed Nelson R Mandela to register for an LLB at Wits in the 1940s. As Rhodes was still a university college its degrees were still conferred by the University of South Africa.
however, admitted black students for courses in arts and education, which were offered at Fort Hare, but these black students were in the main Coloured or Indian, and not African.

Council, however, gave an equivocal response, requiring of Senate an investigation into the arguments for and against the admission of black students. In December Senate provided Council with a report. Arguments for the admission of black students were that having a colour bar was “the negation of the true University” and was especially undesirable in a South African university where the future (white) leaders of the country should have the opportunity to interact with leading members of black communities; that a less restrictive policy would improve the standing of Rhodes in relation to the other English-medium universities which were admitting black students; that the present prohibition of black students made it difficult for Rhodes to accept foreign students from Greece, Turkey, Egypt and the Middle East, and when exchanging students with American universities; and that Rhodes’ claim for a medical school would be reinforced if it was willing to train black students as well as white students.49

These arguments seem to have been a mix of honourable sentiments and practical concerns. They were all, however, in the College’s self-interest as the arguments treat the issue as a means to an end that would bring the College up to speed with the practices of UCT, Wits and Natal. The first argument makes it seem as if Rhodes was assuming the moral high ground by removing the colour bar, but its removal was seen not in the interests of the black students who would be admitted, but in the interests of the white students who would have an excellent opportunity to interact with the black students because as the future leaders of the country the white students would one day have to govern them. The argument using the admission of black students as a lever to establish a medical school illustrates how far Rhodes was willing to go to liken itself to UCT and Wits, which already had medical schools, and Natal, which was on its way to opening one for black students. The arguments for the admission of black students arose out of self-interest, not out of altruism.

49 RUC-S, Cory Library, Senate VI, MS 17 504, pp. 312-313, 7 and 9 December 1946, Annexure F.
The arguments against the admission of black students included the possible estrangement of support from the College, such as individuals and organisations that contributed financially to the College that may abhor the idea; the likely opposition of present students; and the lowering of academic standards.\textsuperscript{50} Senate had consulted the students at a meeting at which they had voted in favour of admitting black students by a large majority. In a secret ballot that followed, this decision was overturned, but Senate was still of the opinion that there would be very little student opposition if only a limited number of black students were admitted and if they did not live in residence. The ‘fear’ that academic standards would drop with the admission of large numbers of black students, “whose educational and cultural background is lower than that of [the] present students”, compelled Senate to review its recommendations to Council on its decision to admit black students.\textsuperscript{51} To avoid this ‘danger’ Senate expressed the opinion that only black graduates be admitted to the College, and in limited numbers.

Accordingly, Senate recommended that Council accept its new policy on the admission of black students, but that it be amended to read that Rhodes would consider only the applications of black graduates, judged by Senate on their merits, for courses not offered at Fort Hare. Senate also unanimously resolved to accept a limited number of black graduates.\textsuperscript{52} It added that “Senate is opposed to any drastic or sudden change of policy, and is of the opinion that the admission of non-Europeans be a gradual and natural development.” Furthermore, any black graduates accepted to the College would have to find their own lodgings as they would not be allowed to live in residence.\textsuperscript{53} Here lay the foundations of social segregation at Rhodes. Finally, in 1947, Council rescinded its 1933 resolution restricting the admission of black students by a 14 to 4 vote, stating that it would consider applications from black graduates on the recommendation of Senate if they met all the conditions.\textsuperscript{54} The change in policy was minimal. The heavy conditions placed on the admission of black students were highly restrictive. The door was still effectively closed.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[50] Ibid.
\item[51] Ibid.
\item[52] Ibid.
\item[53] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Hobart-Houghton’s motions, and the support they received, are best explained by the effect of World War Two on South African society. The war and the genocide that went with it discredited racism in many parts of the western world. White segregationists in South Africa had to pay some heed to this trend, even though white supremacy remained unquestioned in the minds of most white South Africans. For instance, in 1940 Rhodes had decided not to allow black UNISA students to graduate at the Rhodes graduation ceremony. Yet six years later black graduates were being given the opportunity, however slight, to apply to Rhodes. Rhodes does not deserve credit for its decision to remove the rule prohibiting the admission of black students because it was not done with honourable intentions, but for the College’s self-interests. By the end of the process Hobart Houghton’s original motions had been considerably diluted.

Meanwhile Rhodes was beginning to agitate for independence again. In 1947 the government appointed a commission under Dr Edgar Brookes (from Natal) to review the future of UNISA and its constituent colleges. It sent out lengthy questionnaires to each of the colleges and Rhodes responded by showing a desire to leave UNISA and to take up the proposal to administer Fort Hare. Rhodes was not the only college seeking independence. Natal University College, the University College of the Orange Free State and Potchefstroom University College were following suit. It seemed that UNISA would come to lose all its constituent colleges and become solely a distance-teaching and examining body for external students. In the questionnaire Rhodes had “no objections on racial grounds” to Fort Hare being recognised as a constituent college, and was prepared to take over temporary responsibility of Fort Hare “upon terms…mutually agreed upon”. Up till then Fort Hare had not been a constituent college of UNISA, even though it had written UNISA examinations and received its degrees. Under the Commission’s proposal Rhodes would monitor the standards of teaching, examination

55 RUC-S, Cory Library, Senate V, MS 17 504, p. 214, 9 September 1940, min. 5(b).
56 Ibid., p. 338, 10 March 1947, Annexure B.
57 Brookes, A History of the University of Natal, p. 67.
58 RUC-S, Cory Library, Senate VI, MS 17 504, p. 339, 10 March 1947, Annexure B.
and research at Fort Hare, but generally allow it to run its own internal affairs. Fort Hare would become affiliated to Rhodes and be included in the Rhodes University (Private) Bill. If passed by Parliament, it would give Rhodes its independence and effect the affiliation of Fort Hare.

At the end of 1947 the Rhodes Senate considered the application of Martin Kaunda, a graduate student from Fort Hare who wished to be accepted for BA Honours in Geography, which was not offered at Fort Hare. Kaunda seemed to fit the conditions for the admission of black graduate students and he had a sound record. His application was approved by Council, but it appears that he did not take up the offer as there is no further record of him. At the beginning of 1948 Senate looked at three applications from black students. The first, HD Mlonyeni, also a graduate of Fort Hare, wished to do an MA, and Senate recommended him for admission. However, Council felt it necessary to ask Fort Hare for a report on Mlonyeni before admitting him. On receiving a reply from the Principal of Fort Hare, Council turned down his application and further insisted on always obtaining a written report from the previous institution attended by black student applicants. The second, C Naidoo, applied for BSc Honours in Chemistry but was turned down due to lack of available space in the chemistry laboratories.

The third was ROA Mncadi, who had been accepted by the recently retired Master, Professor Bowles, for BSc Honours in Physics. Senate had confirmed the Master’s decision, as did Council. It is evident that Mncadi was Rhodes’ first black student and the only one in 1948. In the same year Senate began an informal discussion about how the black graduates admitted to the College would fit in. Essentially it was a discussion about the social segregation of white and black students on campus. The irony is that

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60 RUC-S, Cory Library, Senate VI, MS 17 504, p. 476, 10 November 1947, min. (i).
61 RUC-C, Cory Library, Council X, MS 17 244/4, p. 477, 21 November 1947, min. (g).
63 RUC-C, Cory Library, Council XI, MS 17 498 v.1, p. 19, 12 March 1948, min. 9.
64 Ibid., p. 40, 25 March 1948, min. 2; the report is not recorded in the minutes or attached.
65 The name is also spelt Mncode and Mncade in the minutes.
66 RUC-S, Cory Library, Senate VI, MS 17 504, p. 510, 24 February 1948, min. 58 and p. 522, 8 March 1948, min. (ii).
67 Ibid., p. 541, 6 April 1948, min. 9(a).
68 Ibid., p. 506, 24 February 1948, min. 10 and p. 519, 8 March 1948, min. (i).
Rhodes only had one black student. Yet the discussion became serious enough to warrant the need for a report. The report concluded that as there was only one black student at Rhodes, no definite policy was needed for the role of black students in the life of the College; interim arrangements were decided upon and Mncadi was advised not to participate in the non-academic life of the College. The Senate’s need to enforce strict social segregation when it had only just begun to admit black students, albeit only one, is indicative of Rhodes submitting to the hegemonic segregationism of the time. UCT and Wits were also under a lot of pressure to appease the Minister of Education, JH Hofmeyr, in ensuring social segregation on their campuses. Senate’s directive must have worked because little else is known about Mncadi during his one year at Rhodes. One can only speculate how daunting it must have been to be the only black student on a campus of over a thousand white students.

At the same time students were embroiled in their own debate over academic segregation. In 1948 the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) voted to accept a motion as proposed by Wits that “academic non-segregation” be included in NUSAS’ aims. This caused much consternation among some university SRCs, with Rhodes and UCT voting to withdraw from NUSAS, and the Durban campus of the University of Natal also showing some indignation. This indicates how extremely conservative the student leadership was at these so-called liberal and ‘open’ universities. NUSAS suddenly found itself severely divided and was thus unable to mount any significant response to the National Party when it came to power that same year. In 1950 an inter-SRC conference was held in Durban to try and resolve the issue of academic segregation, but no black SRCs were invited to attend. For this reason Wits boycotted the conference. Natal’s Durban campus proposed a motion that whites should represent all-white universities, blacks represent all-black universities, and whites represent the two ‘open’ universities at

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69 Ibid., p. 528, 25 March 1948, min. 18.
70 Murray, Wits: The ‘Open’ Years, p. 49.
71 Mncadi failed his BSc Hons Physics exam and was not readmitted. RUC-C, Cory Library, Council XI, MS 17 498 v.1, p. 296, 10 March 1949, min. 3(b).
72 NUSAS was by this time predominantly white, English-speaking students, the Afrikaans universities having severed ties in 1933 and 1936 to form the Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentbond (ANSB), which became the ASB in 1948.
73 Murray, Wits: The ‘Open’ Years, p. 108.
conferences. However, Rhodes and UCT were not happy with it and rejected the motion. The UCT SRC did not approve this because as an ‘open’ university it would not be allowed to send black students to conferences. Likewise Fort Hare was on the verge of becoming affiliated to Rhodes and the motion would have restricted Rhodes from sending black students too. Their unwillingness to accept the Durban motion indicates UCT’s and Rhodes’ student leadership had become less conservative since the NUSAS congress in 1948.

Wits, in comparison, came out as the main defender of academic non-segregation. This is because Johannesburg’s established upper middle class, who would by nature have been conservative, generally did not send their privileged offspring to Wits, but to UCT and Rhodes. This may explain the more liberal nature of Wits, with more middle to lower class students, than the conservatively minded student bodies of UCT and Rhodes. The late 1940s also encompassed attempts at reconciliation between the Afrikaanse Studentbond (ASB) and NUSAS to such a point that the NUSAS leadership even considered not making Fort Hare a full member to encourage the Afrikaans-medium universities to rejoin. This was an attempt to appease at the cost of principle.

The administrative structure of universities in South Africa

Before the issues of the next chapter are addressed, it would be beneficial to recount the way in which higher education was set up in South Africa in the twentieth century. This is to demonstrate the way in which the administrative structure of a university affected how it was run. This thesis attempts to capture the official voice of Rhodes in its dealings with the Nationalist government and its responses to apartheid. This has required a close reading of the minutes of Council, the highest decision-making body of the university. It is essential to first understand the powers of government over universities.

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74 Ibid., p. 121.
75 Ibid., p. 168.
76 Beale, “Apartheid and University Education”, p. 46.
With the creation of the Union in 1910, higher education came under the supervision of the central government.\textsuperscript{77} The first universities to be established were UCT and Stellenbosch in 1918, together with UNISA, which acted as a federal university with a number of constituent colleges. With the inauguration of Wits in 1922, Parliament passed the Higher Education Act in 1923 to streamline the management of universities by creating councils to act as the boundary between the universities and the government. In this way university councils became the “legal body corporate” of the universities.\textsuperscript{78} The Act granted university councils the power to determine the composition of university senates, which in turn had their own duties, primarily concerned with academic matters.

While councils could appoint and dismiss professors and lecturers, although this was generally a matter of rubber-stamping the decisions of their senates, they could not establish new degrees, diplomas or faculties without the approval of the Minister, who also had the power to open and close institutions of higher education. When Hofmeyr notified the universities in 1945 that they could not legally refuse admission to students because of their race or colour, the universities had to obey. Wits and UCT had been ordered by the government to increase their intake of black medical students during the war.

Universities were public institutions that relied on the government for a significant proportion of their funding. In 1946 the government grant at Rhodes was as much as 60% of the institution’s total gross income, with each student receiving a government subsidy of 85 pounds, the highest in the country. While the grants made to UCT and Wits were by far larger, they amounted to 42% and 35% respectively, with student subsidies of 49 and 51 pounds respectively.\textsuperscript{79} The high grant and student subsidy at Rhodes were not in any way related to government favouritism, as the Huguenot College, an Afrikaans-medium institution, received a grant of 67%. The serious financial difficulties that Rhodes experienced in the late 1940s caused it to rely very heavily on government funding. This unhealthy financial reliance on the government would have harmed the College’s

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p. 22.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., pp. 24-25.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 28.
autonomy because decision-making would have been skewed to ensure continued government support. It seems likely that Rhodes became even more reliant on the government subsidy in the following years, which would have placed it in a hazardous position when attempting to question the new apartheid government on its policy or actions.

Historically, Rhodes was predisposed to “English liberal conservatism”. Its location in the heart of the eastern Cape bred parochialism. It admitted a significant number of students brought up on local farms, as well as students from Rhodesia who generally had no concern for South African issues. These factors helped create an attitude of political apathy and social conformism.\textsuperscript{80} The acceptance of the colour bar at Rhodes was influenced by the student political culture, which was one of acquiescence. In turn, the political conservatism of the students was complemented by the conservative College administration and domineering individuals among the staff. Rhodes was residential in character and dominated the small town it was located in. “Racial feeling is quite unknown and the College is representative of the best educated opinion in South Africa”, stated the College Calendar up till 1950, although this referred to the race relations between English- and Afrikaans-speaking whites.\textsuperscript{81} The SRC found that “the whole white-black issue was almost hypothetical”, illustrating the “general mood of conservative disinterest” that permeated the College.\textsuperscript{82} It was in this environment that Dr Thomas Alty became Master of the College.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p. 51.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., pp. 52-53.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., p. 53.
Acquiescence at Rhodes manifested itself in many different ways, but mainly in two broad categories. The first was acquiescence to government policy by the administration, and the second was acquiescence to white supremacism among the students and staff. Most whites in South Africa were indifferent to the effects of apartheid on the black majority and happy with the status quo. ‘White’ institutions were obliged to obey the government, which developed and maintained means to ensure a strict hold on them. These were the government’s harsh treatment of opposition, and the reliance of many ‘white’ institutions, especially universities, on the government for financial support. The Nationalist government’s aim was to maintain white supremacy and it was not going to allow institutions dependent on its financial support to hinder this.

At Rhodes a climate of acquiescence to government policy had long set in. Once the NP came to power in 1948, the university generally became more acquiescent, fearing the government’s reaction to anything the university may do to upset it. This acquiescence did not, however, take on easily and promptly. Under the leadership of Dr Thomas Alty, Rhodes walked a zigzag path, showing both acquiescence and defiance towards the government, revealing an ambiguity in the university’s actions. As the influence of the Nationalist government increasingly shaped the running of the university, there was still present a counter voice to offer some challenge to this acquiescent stance, but not loud enough to change it.

Thomas Alty and the road to independence

By the end of 1948 Rhodes University College was fully engaged in trying to attain university status. It also had a new Master of the College. Dr Thomas Alty had been

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1 Thomas Alty, “Graduation Address”, 11 April 1964, Cory Library, RU Graduation Addresses, Box 1 v.2, p. 4.
Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Glasgow and arrived at Rhodes in October to take up his position. He assumed leadership of an institution desperate for autonomy but without the financial clout to back up its application. The College was in huge debt.\(^2\) Initially Alty was not made aware of this dire situation and was given the power to promote the College’s Private Bill in Parliament, not knowing that this was inextricably linked to the financial situation.\(^3\) While the College was sourcing funds from various bodies and gaining widespread support for autonomy, the Minister of Education, AJ Stals, had made it clear that he would only consider university autonomy for the College on receipt of a report on the College’s financial position.\(^4\) By December Alty had caught on and expressed his unhappiness in Council, upset that he had not been properly informed of the College’s financial situation. He offered his resignation. Council quickly granted Alty extreme powers to deal with the financial situation as he saw fit.\(^5\) While this gave Alty enormous executive authority, it also passed the burden onto him. Thanks to some gracious donations and support, the College was able to pull through.

At Alty’s very first Council meeting in October 1948 the Rhodes University (Private) Bill was being debated for the last time before it could be finalised and brought before parliament. The bill differed from other university bills on the clause for the affiliation of Fort Hare. Some members of Council were worried that the clause might not be acceptable to the new NP government. It was likely it would not approve of a black college joining a white university. Subsequently, an amendment that the affiliation would be dependent “upon such terms and conditions as agreed by the two institutions and approved by the Minister” was added.\(^6\) Council needed to pre-empt the government’s reaction because the smooth passing of the bill was necessary for Rhodes to gain university autonomy. Yet Council also recognised that the affiliation clause would draw attention because of the inherent difficulties it would pose for the government’s plan to

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\(^3\) RUC-C, Cory Library, Council XI, MS 17 498 v.1, p. 242, 29 Oct 1948, min. 5.  
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 263, 19 Nov 1948, min. 13 and 17.  
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 267, 2 Dec 1948, min. 5.  
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 236, 22 October 1948, min. 4 and p. 242, 29 October 1948, min. 4.
entrench racial segregation. Alty was asked to prepare a memorandum to present to a parliamentary committee set up to consider the bill.\(^7\)

The select committee first interviewed the Vice-Chancellor of UNISA, Dr AJR van Rhyn. As expected, the issue of segregation came up. Van Rhyn was of the opinion that Rhodes was not in favour of any “unhealthy mixing [of the races]” but noted that as soon as Rhodes became independent it would formulate its own policy regarding this.\(^8\) During Alty’s interview the Chairman of the Committee, Strauss, stated that the bill did “create a suspicion that no adequate provision is made…for the segregation of Europeans and non-Europeans”, and that there was nothing which “satisfactorily gives the assurance that there will be no mixed classes”.\(^9\) Alty replied that there were not any special provisions for segregation because the affiliation of Fort Hare was meant to be temporary until such time it became independent. Rhodes would only be certifying the standards at Fort Hare, with “no question of any mixing”.\(^10\) Alty went on to say that while Rhodes did accept graduates from Fort Hare for courses not offered there, thus far there had been only one student and currently there were none. It was expected that as Fort Hare grew and developed there would be no need for its students to come to Rhodes. Consequently there was “no prospect of the sort of mixing” the Committee had in mind.\(^11\) But Strauss did not relent and stated that “as it stands [the bill] would allow such practices [of mixing]”, and that it would be advisable to make a definite provision that there would be no mixing whatsoever in classes, examinations and graduations, so as to assist the bill’s progress through parliament. Alty, hoping to appease Strauss, replied that it was not in the interests of Rhodes to have such a provision in the bill, but that it may be included in the university statutes.\(^12\) Strauss insisted that it should be made clear that the statutes would provide for no mixing of the races.\(^13\)

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 276, 31 December 1948, min. 3.
\(^8\) SC 4-1949, Cory Library, Report of the Select Committee on the Rhodes University (Private) Bill, February 1949, p. 6, nos. 25 and 26. The Committee consisted of Messrs Strauss (Chair), Van Coller and Brink, Dr Hertzog and Dr Steyn.
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 30, nos. 62 and 65.
\(^10\) Ibid., pp. 30 and 31, nos. 67 and 68.
\(^11\) Ibid., p. 31, no. 69.
\(^12\) Ibid., pp. 31-32, no. 70.
\(^13\) Ibid., p. 32, no. 71.
This exchange shows why Senate and Council were anxious over the affiliation clause. While Fort Hare and Rhodes were some sixty miles apart, thereby rendering unlikely any chance of mixed classes, the government still worried that mixing might take place. However, Strauss’s insistence that the Rhodes bill contain a provision on segregation is without foundation because no other university bill had such a clause. The University of Natal (Private) Bill, passed in the previous year, did not have a segregation clause.\textsuperscript{14} Natal did, however, have a definite policy of racial separation.\textsuperscript{15} Natal’s bill was passed when the United Party was still in power.\textsuperscript{16} Another university bill, that of the University College of the Orange Free State, which was going through parliament concurrently with the Rhodes bill, also did not contain any provision enforcing segregation. As this institution was more Afrikaner Nationalist in nature, it was likely that there would be no possibility of integration, and the issue was not raised in its parliamentary committee.\textsuperscript{17} It appears to have been taken for granted that the University of the Orange Free State would continue its practice of not permitting the admission of black students. Similarly, in 1950 the Potchefstroom University bill would not carry any provision about segregation.\textsuperscript{18} Rhodes seems to have been particularly targeted by the Nationalist government, most likely because it was English-medium, supposedly liberal, and a hub of NUSAS and UP support (Rhodes was in the Albany district, whose MP was a member of the UP\textsuperscript{19}). The new government may have been trying to avoid the kind of development that had occurred at the University of Natal.

Before returning to Cape Town for the second reading of the bill, Alty, aware by now that the government may insist on a segregation clause, raised the matter in Council. A

\textsuperscript{15} SC 3-1948, Cory Library, Report of the Select Committee on the University of Natal (Private) Bill, February 1948, pp. 6-10, 17.
\textsuperscript{16} The Select Committee for the Natal Bill consisted of Messrs Trollip (Chair) and Conradie, Dr Osborn, Dr Eksteen and Mr Robertson. \textit{Ibid.}, p. iii.
\textsuperscript{17} SC 5-1949, Cory Library, Report of the Select Committee on the University of the Orange Free State (Private) Bill, February 1949.
memorandum was written, outlining Council’s policy on the matter. It stated that Rhodes wished “to ensure that any degrees awarded at Fort Hare shall be of real value” comparable to the degrees of other institutions, and that while Rhodes would “control the syllabuses, courses of study and examinations” of Fort Hare, the latter would “remain as a quite separate entity” running its own internal affairs with its own staff. It added that this would be a “temporary measure…until such time as the Native College can be established as a completely independent institution for non-Europeans”. The memorandum pointed out that “in none of the [other university] Acts…is there one reference to the exclusion of non-Europeans from the University” and added that “it is not the policy” of either Rhodes or Fort Hare authorities to alter the current practice that black students attend Fort Hare and white students attend Rhodes.

Council, wary of government displeasure, then considered the possibility of adding a clause to the bill prohibiting the admission of black students. It was proposed by one Council member that Alty be empowered to insert this clause if necessary. Considering that only in the previous year the 1933 resolution prohibiting the admission of black students had been rescinded, to reinstate it so soon would have been a timid climb-down. The proposal was defeated by a large majority, even though some concern was expressed that the government might not accept the bill unless there was a segregation clause. The College needed its bill to be passed to become an independent university. Unable to decide on the matter Council agreed to grant Alty the power to use his discretion should the matter arise in parliament. Alty also asked for the opinion of Senate. After much discussion, Senate resolved, by twenty votes to four, that it was “not prepared to accept a University Act which contains a clause excluding non-European students”. Senate was less anxious about the government’s reaction, highlighting the gap between the two university bodies.

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20 RUC-S, Cory Library, Council XI, MS 17 498 v.1, p. 287, 18 February 1949, Appendix A.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., p. 287, 18 February 1949, min. 4.
On 25 February 1949 the bill was presented to parliament for its second reading by TB Bowker, MP for Albany. Rhodes was described as a “European university”, and the affiliation clause was highlighted as the only one which differentiated the bill from the other university acts. Bowker added that the “Bill does not remove the university from government control or government liability”, and that “our universities must remain dependent on the government for assistance and guidance”. Bowker was stating the reality that the newly independent university would still have to rely on the government for financial assistance. Rhodes was receiving a government grant that was at least 60% of its gross income, with each student being subsidised to the amount of 85 pounds, the highest level of subsidy in the country.

Brink, who had sat on the parliamentary committee, stated in the debate that “where these universities are established they should acknowledge the principle of apartheid”. He was particularly upset that the University of Natal was only doing this to a degree. “I am very glad to know that apartheid will be enforced in the Free State and also at Rhodes University”, Brink continued, hoping that the difficulties arising from Rhodes’ connection with Fort Hare would be dealt with. Brink further expressed delight that Fort Hare’s affiliation to Rhodes would only be temporary, until such time it could become an independent institution for black students in line with the government’s future plans for ‘ethnic’ universities. The fact that the idea for ‘ethnic’ universities was being raised in parliament in 1949 shows how far back the plans for the 1959 Extension of University Education Act go. In wrapping up the reading in parliament, the Minister of Education, AJ Stals, added his support for Rhodes becoming independent. However, he stated that while “universities are jealous of their independence”, they must accept that they no longer get only one-third of their income from the state (they get more), and that Rhodes’ date of independence would depend on its financial health. The message was clear: Rhodes University may be independent and free to manage its own affairs, but the
government still had a hold over it because of its significant financial support. The bill was finally adopted.\textsuperscript{31}

By drawing on the tradition that university acts did not contain segregation clauses, Rhodes was saved from having to insert one. The possibility of one day allowing mixed classes was still open. However, the lack of any official segregation clause did not prevent Rhodes from practising segregation. The Rhodes administration itself did not desire the Fort Hare affiliation to result in racial mixing. Council added to the rule on admission that “Non-Europeans are not ordinarily admitted to courses in Grahamstown if such courses are available at the SANC”, on the recommendation of Senate in 1950.\textsuperscript{32} The government’s stance on the matter was forceful because it wanted to ensure the future segregation of universities. But the government did ultimately back down and allow Rhodes to formulate its own policy, as had been done at Natal; and subsequent university acts for the University of the Orange Free State and for Potchefstroom University did not contain a clause on segregation.\textsuperscript{33} However, if plans for ‘ethnic’ universities were already in the pipeline, government may have decided to let these acts go without too much of a fight.

In March 1949 the University of Natal was inaugurated. Rhodes’ financial situation meant its independent university status would be delayed until March 1951, some two years after the passing of its bill. The University of the Orange Free State, whose act was passed a month after that of Rhodes, was inaugurated before Rhodes, in 1950. To assist Rhodes out of its financial predicament the Grahamstown municipality and the government together took supportive steps and secured a large loan. This was followed by a very successful appeal to the public for funds. The loan and appeal brought in some 350 000 pounds.\textsuperscript{34} This was, however, a lengthy process and was not helped by the

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., pp. 1798-1799.
\textsuperscript{32} RUC-C, Cory Library, Council XI, MS 17 498 v.1, p. 480, 21 September 1950, min. 2.C.(ii).
\textsuperscript{34} Rhodes University Calendar, p. 14. Once adopted by the House of Assembly the bill still had to pass through the Senate before being assented to by the Governor-General. The Act was published in the Government Gazette Extraordinary on 8 April 1949 as Act 15 of 1949.
destruction of the Great Hall by fire towards the end of 1949. In February 1950, Alty approached the Minister of Education, CR Swart, to request a specific date for the inauguration of the new university. The delay in the Minister’s reply seemed to indicate that university status would only come in 1951. The Minister’s reply arrived in August, fixing 10 March 1951 as the appointed day, but also including a condition that Rhodes procure a sum of 100 000 pounds by the end of 1950 for leverage. By now Rhodes could manage this and the way was finally clear for attaining independence.

**Feeling the pinch of apartheid: “Academic Non-segregation for Rhodes?”**

Between 10 and 12 March 1951 Rhodes University celebrated its inauguration. Alty was installed as Rhodes’ first Vice-Chancellor and Principal, and the first honorary degrees were conferred. One of the honorary graduates was Professor (later Sir) Basil Schonland. A graduate of Rhodes and Cambridge, he was currently the Director of the Atomic Energy Research Commission in the UK, and was also the son of Selmar Schonland, who had played an important role in the founding of Rhodes and had been the fifth professor to join the staff in 1905. Later in the year Basil Schonland was unanimously elected by Council to be Rhodes’ first Chancellor. With the attainment of independence, Fort Hare officially became affiliated to Rhodes. While mixed classes were avoided, the new and closer unity between the two institutions led to some social interaction, such as when Fort Hare students visited Grahamstown to participate in a debating competition with Rhodes students.

In 1951 political interest among the student body at Rhodes was mediocre at best but experienced bouts of activity, such as in August. At the first general meeting students

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35 RUC-C, Cory Library, Council XI, MS 17 498 v.1, p. 391, 17 November 1949, min. 4. (c). (6).
36 Ibid., p. 411, 16 February’ 1950, min. 6.
37 Ibid., p. 462, 11 August 1950, min. 5.
38 The term “academic non-segregation” was used at the time.
40 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XII, MS 17 498 v.2, p. 37, 29 June 1951, min. 9, and p. 24, 27 July 1951, min. 6.B(2). The SRC asked Alty if the Fort Hare students would be allowed to eat in the dining halls. The matter was referred to Council, who asked Alty to use his discretion. There is no record of his decision but is probable that they were allowed to as no law prohibited inter-racial dining at the time.
debated the possibility of academic non-segregation at Rhodes, concluding that it was an “ideal worth fighting for”, but also stressing that it was academic equality and not social equality that they were supporting.\textsuperscript{41} The editor of *Rhodeo* argued that the current strict rules of admission at Rhodes for black students amounted to a colour bar and that this was a “tacit acceptance of the principle of academic apartheid”.\textsuperscript{42} At the second general meeting the SRC presented a motion calling for academic non-segregation. This was passed by the student body by an overwhelming majority, 408 to 92. This seems to indicate a large amount of support. However, the students were only calling for “academic non-segregation”. This is not the same as academic integration, which implies a sense of mixing. The white students at Rhodes were viewing themselves as separate from the black students, to whom they were willing to give academic equality but not social equality.

The student body waited to see how the university authorities would react.\textsuperscript{43} A letter from the SRC was sent to the Senate. It asked that the university authorities give its views on academic non-segregation, on the withholding of passports from South African students, and on the right of universities to control their own affairs. Senate was affronted at being sent a direction communication of such a nature from the students but nonetheless decided to reply. In its response Senate pointed to the present rules regarding the admission of black students and its undertaking not to modify them. But it agreed with the SRC’s view that universities should enjoy autonomy. As the withholding of passports did not affect Rhodes, Senate was not prepared to express any opinion on the matter.\textsuperscript{44} Senate’s silence on the passports issue suggests acquiescence. Although the matter must have been discussed, there is no record of such discussion. Senate’s reply comes across as paternalistic, as it was informing the SRC what it already knew and refusing to engage with the points that were raised.

\textsuperscript{41} “Academic Non-segregation for Rhodes?”, *Rhodeo*, 4 August 1951, p.1.
\textsuperscript{43} “Students Favour Non-Segregation”, *Rhodeo*, 18 August 1951, p.1.
\textsuperscript{44} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XII, MS 17 498 v.2, p. 39, 5 September 1951, min. II.6, and p. 48, 14 September 1951, min. 3.B(2)(b).
Although an independent university, Rhodes still acted with caution, afraid to alienate the government. The tercentennial anniversary of the landing of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape was to be celebrated in 1952, and all the universities had been invited to take part in the festivities. This would be a hugely symbolic event, and failure to participate would be noted by the government. The Rhodes Council wished to first ascertain which other universities would also be participating to make sure it would not be the odd one out. UCT and Stellenbosch, being situated close to the heart of the festival in Cape Town, were keen to participate. When it turned out that other inland universities such as Natal, Potchefstroom and the Orange Free State would also be taking part, Council agreed to enter Rhodes into the festival with a float that displayed the work of Cecil John Rhodes. There had been an initial reluctance among the student body to attend the festival because of its racial bias against the participation of black students. This affected Rhodes in as much as Fort Hare was affiliated to it. The festival organisers had insisted that black students could only take part in the “native education” float within the “tribal village” enclosure and not in the various university floats. After some consideration the student body decided to support the festival in principle on the basis that representation at it would show the real diversity of the country and how the “races” should “speak and act in a spirit of widely embracing unity”. By “races” the students meant English and Afrikaner. As late as 1952 they still saw Anglo-Afrikaner relations as “racial”. Unlike UCT and Wits, Rhodes did not have enough black students to redefine the notion of race from English and Afrikaner to white and black. In fact, Rhodes had only had one black student. In comparison, the Wits SRC agreed to participate in the festival “subject to their having full right to send a delegation representative of the University”, which effectively meant Wits did not participate because the festival organisers did not allow the delegation to include black students. At UCT the student voices supporting a boycott of the festival were in the minority and the SRC’s motion to participate could not be defeated even after a mass meeting was held. Alternative ways were proposed to represent “Non-

45 The festival is covered in depth in L Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival: contesting South Africa’s national pasts* (Bloomington, 2003).
48 “Rhodes to go to Festival”, *Rhdeo* Supplement, 18 August 1951.
49 Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival*, p. 275 n33.
Europeans” in South Africa’s past in other floats, but UCT’s various floats excluded black students.\(^{50}\) The Rhodes SRC hoped, rather naively, that students from Fort Hare would be invited to join as a separate institution. A proposal at a student meeting to boycott the festival if Fort Hare was not allowed to attend was dismissed, and subsequently Rhodes did attend on its own.\(^{51}\) Rhodes students had failed to go out on a limb, as Wits had, and confirmed that they did not acknowledge black students as their contemporaries. Their treatment of Fort Hare was both patronising and paternalistic, and ultimately they snubbed their affiliated college.

During the 1950s, while the ‘open’ universities of UCT and Wits admitted growing numbers of black students, and while Natal’s classes for black students also grew, Rhodes lagged far behind. Of the applications from black students between 1947, when the Council decided to admit graduate black students, and 1959, when the Extension of University Education Bill was passed, Rhodes accepted only five.\(^{52}\) Rhodes could hardly be described as an ‘open’ university during this time, even though it was (and still is) often lumped together with the other English-medium universities and described as ‘open’.\(^{53}\) While in theory Rhodes was open to qualified black students, the practice of admission was severely restrictive. The first student accepted was M Kaunda, but he did not take up the offer of a place. The second to be accepted, but first to attend, was ROA Mncadi, but he did not graduate. The third was NOH Setidisho, who was recommended by Senate for admission to Mathematics Honours in 1952, a course which was not available at Fort Hare, where he had graduated. His application was considered by Council and approved 8 votes to 1.\(^{54}\) There is no record of him having graduated, so his attendance is doubtful.\(^{55}\) The fourth was HS Govinden, also a graduate of Fort Hare, who applied for Honours in Chemistry for 1953. He too was accepted by Senate and Council.

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\(^{50}\) Ibid., pp. 158-161. UCT’s Speech Training and Drama Department presented the floats “Darkest Africa” and “Africa Awakes”, which patronisingly emphasised how European civilisation had ‘saved’ Africa.

\(^{51}\) “Rhodes to go to Festival”, Rhodeo Supplement, 18 August 1951.

\(^{52}\) Welsh, “Some Political and Social Determinants”, p. 22. Welsh posits that three were accepted but a review of the records indicates five. However, acceptance did not mean the student took up the offer and attended.

\(^{53}\) As explained in Chapter 1.

\(^{54}\) RU-C, Cory Library, Council XII, MS 17 498 v.2, p. 70, 14 December 1951, min. 10.

\(^{55}\) RU Graduation Ceremony Programme, 27 March 1953, Cory Library, Box 1, 1940-1980, Protected Periodicals.
based on his good academic record.\textsuperscript{56} He was the first black student to graduate at Rhodes. On Senate’s recommendation he was allowed to attend the 1954 graduation ceremony without special arrangements having to be made for him.\textsuperscript{57} Senate’s need to discuss and decide on the matter illustrates that academic non-segregation was not accepted as policy by the university administration. If it was there would have been no need to discuss the possibility of special arrangements for Govinden to graduate. There is no record of the details of Senate’s discussion or what the special arrangements would have been, but at a Senate Advisory Committee meeting it was decided by four votes to one that Govinden could graduate at the regular ceremony.\textsuperscript{58} The fifth and last black student to be accepted during this time was XF Carelse, a graduate of Fort Hare, for Honours in Physics in 1954.\textsuperscript{59} Having set a precedent the year before, Senate did not fret over special graduation arrangements for Carelse, and he graduated in 1955 at the regular ceremony.\textsuperscript{60} The stringent process that the applications of black students had to undertake explains why so few black students were accepted at Rhodes. Behind the process was the university administration’s cautious approach to academic non-segregation. The admission policy at UCT and Wits was much more open, and black students’ applications did not have to meet as many rigorous conditions as they did at Rhodes.\textsuperscript{61} UCT and Wits, being in city centres, had a more cosmopolitan outlook, whereas Rhodes, located in what had been a colonial frontier zone, viewed things far more conservatively. This may explain the very low number of applications from black students. As black students could attend Wits, UCT or Natal for undergraduate as well as postgraduate study, there was little reason for them to apply to Rhodes for postgraduate study. Fort Hare graduates may have preferred to go to the more obviously ‘open’ universities. A number of black

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XII, MS 17 498 v.2, p. 136, 3 September 1952, min. II.13.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 341, 24 March 1954, min. II.11, and RU Graduation Ceremony Programme, 2 April 1954, Cory Library, Box 1, 1940-1980, Protected Periodicals.
\item \textsuperscript{58} RU-S, Cory Library, Senate IX, MS 17 504, v.9, p. 379, 9 March 1954, min. 10.
\item \textsuperscript{59} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XII, MS 17 498 v.2, p. 321, 10 February 1954, min. 5(1).
\item \textsuperscript{60} RU Graduation Ceremony Programme, 1 April 1955, Cory Library, Box 1, 1940-1980, Protected Periodicals.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Although at Wits Dentistry did not admit black students and Medicine limited their numbers. Shear, \textit{Wits}, pp. 3-5.
\end{itemize}}
students at UCT and Wits studied for professional degrees not offered at Rhodes, such as medicine and engineering. Moreover, many black students studied by correspondence through UNISA. By only accepting applications from black graduates, primarily from Fort Hare, for courses not offered at Fort Hare, Rhodes was automatically restricting those who could apply. It then subjected these applicants to an extremely rigorous assessment. The chances of a black student gaining entry into Rhodes during the 1950s were slim. Yet the policy and process were never revised. Rhodes did not want as many black students as there were at UCT and Wits, and considered Fort Hare, now affiliated, as its version of Natal’s practice of segregation within a single institution. In 1955, both Senate and Council turned down a request from the Congregational Union of South Africa for ‘Coloured’ theology students to be trained at Rhodes. The conditions at Fort Hare were not to their satisfaction, but because the facilities for training in theology were available at Fort Hare, Senate and Council saw no reason to admit these ‘Coloured’ students. Rhodes was not alone in this type of segregationist behaviour, as all the ‘open’ universities were forced into practising segregation as the pressure from the Nationalist government grew. Wits and UCT struggled to practise academic non-segregation while maintaining some form of social segregation. In the early 1950s the Wits Council was bothered by the increase of black students in medicine and sought to impose a quota on their admission. Dentistry did not even admit black students as its dean felt it was “not in the interest of either the white or the non-European members of the community”. The position of the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Humphrey Raikes, was that “any demonstration against the operation of the duly established laws of the country [was] wrong”. He clarified this, stating that “demonstration in University blazers and in close association

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63 Shear, *Wits*, p. 5.
64 Ibid., p. 6.
with non-Europeans [made] things worse”, bringing discredit to the University.  

Supposedly an ‘open’ university, Wits’ response after the NP came into power was to avoid government intervention by limiting the admission of black students and ensuring strict social segregation on campus. Wits’ policy was “essentially one of appeasement”.  

The Wits student leadership was politically more progressive and had difficulty in working with a conservative Council. In May 1952 the SRC declared that it would not recognise any student club or society that discriminated on the grounds of race, colour or creed. Its president argued that it was impossible for Wits to pretend to be politically neutral because of the character of South African society. He added that a true university would take a stand against a government that advanced a policy of apartheid education and infringed fundamental freedoms, and that Wits was thus failing to protect its independence and was guilty of ceding to government pressure.  

In 1954 the Wits Council granted the Vice-Chancellor the power to veto all SRC decisions, and imposed a new constitution on the SRC. When this action failed to make a difference, Council dissolved the SRC so as to pacify the government, which had been putting more and more pressure on Wits. In stark contrast, a motion in the Wits Senate to reject academic non-segregation was defeated by a clear majority. An alternative motion was passed to reaffirm Wits’ policy of not “discriminating in academic matters on racial grounds”.  

Earlier in the year a special meeting of Convocation had voted overwhelmingly to oppose university apartheid legislation. A questionnaire sent out to all its members was returned with an 80% approval of its decision. However, non-segregation only applied to academic matters, and social segregation remained the norm at Wits until the late 1970s. Raikes’ official policy was “academic non-segregation, coupled with social segregation”. The ambiguous, even hypocritical, stance taken by Rhodes was also visible at other English-medium universities.

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65 Ibid., pp. 11-12.  
66 Ibid., p. 12, quoting Murray  
68 Ibid., p. 15.  
69 Ibid., p. 6.  
70 Murray, Wits: The ‘Open’ Years, p. 296.  
71 Shear, Wits, p. 11.
JH Viljoen’s honorary degree

Between 1951 and 1963, Rhodes University conferred honorary degrees on a variety of people, the choice of whom says much about the ethos of the institution. In 1951 Sir Basil Schonland was awarded an honorary LLD. A graduate of Rhodes, he had made his name unravelling the mysteries of lightning and researching radar, had been scientific advisor to Field Marshal Montgomery in World War Two, and had set up the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in South Africa at the request of Jan Smuts. Shortly afterwards he accepted the position of Chancellor of Rhodes.72 Another recipient in 1951 was HJ van Eck, a founder of Eskom and chairman of the Industrial Development Corporation, which had done much for the industrialisation of the country after the Second World War.73 In 1953 Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, the financial successor to CJ Rhodes as chairman of De Beers, and founder of Anglo American, received an honorary LLD.74 Joining him was Hugh Le May, who had made a substantial donation to the University to set up the prestigious Hugh Le May Fellowship.75 However, from 1954, the year Rhodes celebrated its 50th anniversary, the awarding of honorary degrees began to be surrounded with ambiguity.

At the 50th anniversary celebrations on 24 September 1954, a special graduation was held to award an honorary LLD to Professor Arthur Stanley Kidd, the only surviving founder of Rhodes; to Percival Gane, who had made significant contributions to the legal profession in South Africa; and to JH Viljoen, the Minister of Education. Why Rhodes decided to award an honorary degree to a government minister, especially as he had in the previous year during a debate in parliament revealed himself to be an advocate of university apartheid, requires examination.76 By conferring on Viljoen an honorary degree Rhodes was displaying its acquiescence to apartheid. The award created barely a

72 A comprehensive biography of Basil Schonland is covered in B Austin, Schonland: Scientist and Soldier (London, 2001).
ripple at the university. The administration was silent. The students were apathetic.\textsuperscript{77} Perhaps it was deemed tolerable to honour the Minister of Education at the 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the University. Viljoen was not just receiving an honorary degree; he was also to lay the foundation stone of the new Great Hall.\textsuperscript{78} The event was broadcast on the SABC.\textsuperscript{79} The Great Hall at Rhodes University today still bears the stone with Viljoen’s name. Rhodes did not invite its last surviving founder to lay the foundation stone, which would have been more symbolic. It is also odd that Rhodes, with its British imperial heritage, chose an Afrikaner. It was a move to appease the government and it confirmed Rhodes as an institution that was entirely comfortable with apartheid.

In April of the same year Rhodes awarded DDT Jabavu an honorary PhD at its graduation ceremony at Fort Hare.\textsuperscript{80} Jabavu, born and raised in the eastern Cape, had been educated in the UK, was Fort Hare’s first black professor, and had become an esteemed educator and author.\textsuperscript{81} Fort Hare graduation ceremonies were under the auspices of Rhodes, thus nominations for honorary graduands had to go through Rhodes’ Honorary Degrees Committee. Fort Hare, as a University College, was not yet empowered to award its own honorary degrees. The story behind Jabavu’s nomination gives insight into the thinking of Rhodes University at the time, especially considering that the Defiance Campaign was underway in 1952. Alexander Kerr, Principal of Fort Hare, had first nominated Jabavu in August 1952 for an honorary PhD. However, Rhodes politely declined, explaining “that having regard to the present state of the county politically it would not be wise to proceed with such a nomination at the present moment”.\textsuperscript{82} Kerr replied that Jabavu was aloof from the Defiance Campaign, and to his knowledge had not made any statement of support, which would have been “out of line with [Jabavu’s] known usual moderation”. He added that it would have “been highly expedient politically at this present moment” for Rhodes to have conferred “a mark of

\textsuperscript{78} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XII, MS 17 498 v.2, p. 365, 3 June 1954, min. 3.
\textsuperscript{79} Rhodes University 1904-1954 Brochure, Cory Library, PR 7907.
\textsuperscript{81} Joyce, \textit{Dictionary of SA Biography}, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{82} Higgs, \textit{The Ghost}, p. 153.
distinction…upon a recognised Bantu leader”, signalling Rhodes’ approval of Jabavu’s brand of liberal-conservative politics.\(^{83}\) Rhodes’ immediate history of acquiescing to the government meant that it would choose not to confer an honorary degree on a leading black figure. Only when the Defiance Campaign had ended did Rhodes approve Jabavu’s nomination. By recognising Jabavu at the Fort Hare ceremony and not at a Rhodes University ceremony, Rhodes was adhering to the practice of segregation. Presumably he would not have been awarded the honorary doctorate had the ceremony been in Grahamstown.

**University Apartheid: Rhodes’ reaction to the 1957 Bills and 1959 Acts**

In September 1954 the Holloway Commission submitted its report on its investigation into the possibility of establishing separate universities for ‘non-Europeans’.\(^{84}\) The report did not favour either the creation of separate universities for blacks, or separate facilities within the ‘open’ universities for black students, as both would be financially unfeasible. The Commission’s main aim had been to consider the practical and financial implications. Although appointed by the government, the Commission acted independently. Its report was rejected outright by the NP.\(^{85}\) In 1955 Viljoen formed an internal committee to pursue plans for university apartheid. Early in 1957 it reported that it would cost three million pounds over ten years to establish five institutions, three for the major ‘Bantu’ groups and one for Indians and one for ‘Coloureds’. The Separate University Education Bill, introduced to parliament by Viljoen in March 1957, would grant to the Minister of Native Affairs the power to found and manage university colleges for the ‘Bantu’, and for the Minister of Education to do similarly for Indians and ‘Coloureds’. Control of Fort Hare and the Natal Medical School for blacks would also be transferred to the government. UNISA would be the examining body of these new separate colleges, and only with ministerial permission could a black student be admitted.

\(^{83}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{84}\) The members were JE Holloway, RW Wilcocks and EG Malherbe, the Vice-Chancellor of Natal. JE Holloway, “Report of the Commission of Enquiry on Separate Training Facilities for Non-Europeans at Universities 1953-1954”, Cory Library, p. 2. Rhodes was not approached to contribute evidence, but Fort Hare was.

to the ‘white’ universities. Staff at these new separate colleges would in effect be civil servants under the ultimate control of the relevant minister. These university colleges would be government institutions, with none of the usual rights afforded to universities.86

The bill was rejected at its first reading, but was brought back later with some amendments.87 Viljoen argued for the bill, accusing the ‘open’ universities of being hotbeds of black unrest and confrontation. He claimed that the bill would save the ‘open’ universities from ‘swamping’ themselves with black students and that separate universities would allow the black people to learn and develop in their own way. Viljoen was arguing for the preservation of white supremacy, the advancement of segregation, the acknowledgement of racial difference, and for ideological control over the educated black person. The bill was momentarily postponed because of the upcoming 1958 election, while a Commission of Inquiry (replacing the usual parliamentary committee) investigated the administrative practicalities of the bill.88 By this stage the government had already begun work on two new ‘Bantu’ colleges, the University College of the North and the University College of Zululand, indicating their confidence that the bill would pass.89 In August 1958 it was reintroduced to parliament as the Extension of University Education Bill, by MDC de Wet Nel, the new Minister of Education, who had also headed the Commission of Inquiry.90 The bill had been heavily influenced by the Minister of Native Affairs, HF Verwoerd. By the time the bill was passed in June 1959, he had become Prime Minister, and had replaced de Wet Nel with JJ Serfontein. The bill had sailed through its final stages. A separate University College of Fort Hare Transfer Bill was also passed to transfer control of Fort Hare from Rhodes to the newly formed Department of Bantu Education, under which all ‘Bantu’ colleges would fall.91

Only in February 1957 did the NP government’s plans for university apartheid, which included removing Fort Hare’s affiliation with Rhodes, come to Senate and Council’s

86 Ibid., pp. 291-292.
87 The transferral of Fort Hare and the Natal Medical School would require their own bills.
88 Murray, Wits: The ‘Open’ Years, p. 292.
90 Viljoen had passed away towards the end of 1957.
91 Murray, Wits: The ‘Open’ Years, p. 293.
attention.92 Yet as early as March 1956 Rhodes reported NUSAS’s proposed campaign against the government legislation and the Rhodes SRC’s resolution to join in the protest.93 This suggests that the university administration had been seriously out of touch with student politics, or had ignored the issue until 1957, when it affected Rhodes more directly than before. Nonetheless, the student body did nothing further as they were not concerned with legislation that initially looked like it would affect only Wits and UCT. In response to the proposed legislation, Senate drafted a letter that was approved by Council and sent to the Minister of Education. In it Rhodes stated its objections to the proposed changes to its private act and the plan to disaffiliate Fort Hare. It expressed “surprise and distress” at not having been consulted, protesting “strongly against this interference in the conduct of an autonomous University”. Rhodes could not “in conscience acquiesce” to the removal of nearly one-third of its students, nor “support a proposal” for the repeal of the affiliation clause. Rhodes was being put “in a position of great difficulty” in fulfilling its commitment to Fort Hare but also having to co-operate with the Department of Education.94 However, the letter omitted to state any opposition in principle to academic segregation. Whereas at UCT and Wits a major objection was to the government’s imposition of university apartheid, Rhodes’ objection centred more on the government’s meddling with the Rhodes University (Private) Act without even consulting Rhodes, thus infringing on Rhodes’ autonomy. Because Rhodes had admitted a miniscule number of black students and had none in 1957, it was not as concerned about the imposition of university segregation, which it was in essence already practising. If it had not been for the issue of Fort Hare’s affiliation one wonders if Rhodes would have made any protest at all. Its late reaction to the bill is a sign of this.

In October 1957 Senate and Council submitted its evidence to the Parliamentary Commission on the Separate University Education Bill. In a memorandum they highlighted the bill’s violation of university freedom, and pointed out that while the bill’s principle was to limit the admission of black students, in practice it would prohibit their

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92 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIII, MS 17 498 v.3, p. 94, 22 February 1957, min. 7 and Annexure B(1).
94 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIII, MS 17 498 v.3, p. 98, 23 February 1957, Annexure B (2). The reply to this letter by the Secretary of Education is not included in Council minutes, but it is noted on 5 April 1957, p. 105, min. 4.
admission entirely. It also argued that the education at the proposed ‘tribal’ colleges would not be worthy of university standards and that the powers granted to the relevant minister were extreme.95

For most of the following year Senate and Council were silent on the issue. At an Inter-University Conference of Convocation held at Wits in February 1958, representatives were present from Wits, UCT, Natal and Fort Hare, but not from Rhodes.96 This absence suggests a lack of interest and support from the Rhodes Convocation (which was represented on Council by Justice JD Cloete, a conservative member of the UP). Rhodes’ silence may be explained by internal crises such as the chronic shortage of student accommodation on campus, and Senate’s investigation into Rhodeo for ignoring censorship rules, for which it was banned for half a year.97 The death of the Prime Minister, JG Strijdom, in September 1958, afforded a suspension of lectures for staff and students to attend a memorial service. Rhodes viewed itself as a public institution that needed to acknowledge the death of the state’s leading public figure, instead of asserting its autonomy as an academic institution. At the same time Council approved Senate’s protest against the omitting of the Conscience Clause in the establishment of the new ‘tribal’ university colleges and forwarded it to the minister.98 The Conscience Clause, extant in the private acts of the ‘white’ universities, protected staff and students from being prejudiced against because of their beliefs and opinions. The omission of this clause in the acts of the ‘tribal’ colleges denied academic freedom and undermined the status of the colleges as institutions of higher learning. At the very same meeting of Council when the late prime minister was honoured, a protest to the same government was approved. On the one hand Rhodes was a public institution that at times needed to bow to the state’s will on public matters, such as to mourn the death of the prime minister. On the other hand Rhodes was an autonomous university that had the right to protest the government’s omission of the conscience clause in the ‘tribal’ colleges.

95 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIII, MS 17 498 v.3, p. 151, 16 October 1957, Annexure A.
96 D Williams, A History of the University College of Fort Hare – the 1950s: the waiting years (New York, 2001), p. 417.
At the end of 1958 Council again received a communication from the government regarding the Fort Hare Transfer Bill, a whole year after the first communication. Again Alty responded that Rhodes had objections to the bill. Council’s otherwise silent reaction to the proceedings in parliament is revealing. While UCT and Wits were holding general meetings, protest marches and university assemblies accompanied by rousing speeches in defiance of the government’s plans, the Rhodes Council was offering nothing more than mild dissent. This laissez-faire attitude of the Rhodes Council grew into defeatism in 1959. When a Chinese Assumption Sister applied to be a student in 1960, it was recommended that her application be approved and she be admitted “provided legislation is not enacted before 1960 debarring the University from doing so”. When another Chinese student applied later in the year the same response was given, by which time the bills had been passed (June 1959) and would be law from 1960. Council was clearly subscribing to a ‘hands down’ attitude and allowing the government to do what it wanted without a fight. This defeatist attitude contrasted with the vigour of the student body (described below) in protesting the legislation. The fact that Council was acting as if the legislation had already been passed, and still went ahead with the protest march in April 1959, at which the Chairman was one of the leading dignitaries, confirms its ambivalent nature because it illustrates its acquiescence to the government’s plan, while still asserting the university’s right to protest that same plan.

Senate’s discussion of the logistics of conducting Fort Hare examinations after disaffiliation had also begun before the bills were passed. Once the bills were passed Rhodes quickly initiated the process of amending its private act to take into account the changes made by the new legislation. In December 1959 Council officially rescinded its resolution regarding the admission of black students, a resolution which had been made redundant by the passing of the bills. The two Chinese students were advised to

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99 Ibid., p. 272, 5 December 1958, min. 10.
101 Ibid., p. 320, 18 June 1959, min. 7.
102 Ibid., p. 321, 18 June 1959, min. 13.
103 Ibid., p. 356, 30 October 1959, min. 7.
obtain ministerial permission to attend Rhodes now that the law had changed.  

While NUSAS’ academic freedom campaign had started in 1956, Rhodes students only actively joined it in 1957 when it became clear that the proposed legislation would affect Rhodes too. The NUSAS campaign had centred on the principles of university autonomy and academic integration. NUSAS had welcomed the report of the Holloway Commission, rejecting university apartheid. In March 1957, at an SRC General Meeting, Rhodes students decided to engage in forceful, intensive protest and invite the Senate and staff to participate. An action committee was formed to organise the protest, and political interest gradually grew among the student body. An incident that provoked politically active students was the confession of an anonymous Rhodes student in September 1957 of spying for the police Special Branch. The encouragement of the students to partake in the protest against the government was particularly strong. An article in the August 1958 Rhodeo speaks of how Rhodes could not isolate itself from the issues at stake and that it had to stand by UCT and Wits. The bills were nearing finalisation and it was essential that student protest be heard. However, only a few students had bothered to attend the 1958 NUSAS Congress which had been hosted by Rhodes. This illustrates that the politically active students at Rhodes were in the minority and struggling to gain the support of the general student body. One issue that did create interest was parliament’s consideration of dropping the minimum age for voting to eighteen years, which would give thousands of white students the franchise.

In September over 500 students attended a meeting called by the SRC to support a motion against the government’s planned disaffiliation of Fort Hare and its assault on the

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105 Ibid., p. 388, 3 December 1959, min. 12.
107 “NUSAS Notes”, Rhodeo, 26 March 1955, p. 3.
109 “Liberalism at Rhodes” and “Political Thinking at Rhodes”, Rhodeo, 13 November 1957, p. 2.
112 “Rhodes and NUSAS”, Rhodeo, 29 August 1958, p. 3.
113 “University Students and the Vote”, Rhodeo, 29 August 1958, p. 4.
independence of universities. However, the student body was not united. A motion condemning the government’s actions “as a violation against the rights of man” and stating that “total integration offered the only solution” was rejected by a substantial majority.\textsuperscript{114} The editor of the \textit{Rhodeo}, reflecting on the meeting, pointed out that the motion’s rejection demonstrated that the Rhodes student body was not as liberal as it liked to depict itself. He argued that the liberal-speak of the students was “insincere drivel”.\textsuperscript{115} When called to act, the so-called liberal students failed to speak with one voice. By rejecting the motion the students showed that they were happy with university segregation and did not care for the disaffiliation of Fort Hare.

In April 1959 Rhodes University held a march to protest the Extension of University Education Bill. \textit{Rhodeo} announced that it would be the “University’s strongest demonstration of solidarity and opposition expressed in a dignified” manner to maintain academic freedom.\textsuperscript{116} What is clear is that it was to be a protest against the state’s assault on university autonomy. In a letter to \textit{Rhodeo}, a student, Hugh Lewin, wrote that the “issue at hand is not one of integration or apartheid, but a breach in University autonomy”, and that “approval of integration is not necessarily implied by protesting the Bill”.\textsuperscript{117} Given that Lewin would later serve a jail term for his activism in the 1960s, it is clear that by focusing on university autonomy Rhodes would be united in its protest and that the contentious issue of integration would have to be sacrificed for the cause. The university autonomy issue provided a nice smoke screen for Rhodes to hide behind, especially considering that it was in all respects already practising academic segregation.

The protest march was a first for Rhodes. Over one thousand people participated. Students and staff were led by the Chairman of Council, the Chairman of Convocation, the Vice-Chancellor, and the Principal of Fort Hare. Even representatives from the local schools joined in the protest, such as the Headmaster of St Andrew’s College. Not known for histrionics or demonstrations, Alty must have felt strongly that wrong was being done

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\item \textsuperscript{114} “University Autonomy Defended”, \textit{Rhodeo}, 19 September 1958, p.1.
\item \textsuperscript{115} B Murray, “Liberalism at Rhodes”, \textit{Rhodeo}, 19 September 1958, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{116} “Rhodes Opposes University Apartheid Bills”, \textit{Rhodeo Crisis Edition}, 3 April 1959, p.1.
\item \textsuperscript{117} H Lewin, “Autonomy – Not Politics”, \textit{Rhodeo Crisis Edition}, 3 April 1959, p. 2.
\end{itemize}
to lead the solemn protest.\textsuperscript{118} His address focused on the autonomous rights of a university.\textsuperscript{119} Alty did, however, admit that “In our own university we have, for our own reasons, admitted relatively few non-Europeans” and that there “has been no suggestion that the University [Rhodes] has in any respect failed in its duty to the College [Fort Hare]…The two institutions are 60 miles apart so that even the demands of apartheid would seem to be satisfied.”\textsuperscript{120} Alty did not capitalise upon the influence he held as the Chairman of the Association of Universities of the British Commonwealth and as Chairman of the Committee of Principals of South African Universities. Following the protest march members of the staff were invited to sign a statement of objection to the bills. This appears to have been signed by the vast majority.\textsuperscript{121}

The protest march occurred on the same weekend as graduation, at which Rhodes awarded an honorary LLD to John Edward Holloway, who had headed the Commission on Separate Education Facilities for Non-Europeans that had rejected university apartheid. However, since the Commission of 1953-4, Holloway had done a \textit{volte face} and was now showing favour towards university apartheid. The \textit{Sunday Times} attacked Rhodes for this, quoting a recent article by Holloway which clearly showed his turnabout, and admonished the ‘open’ universities to be more careful when choosing candidates for honorary degrees.\textsuperscript{122} Rhodes’ honouring of Holloway backfired and embarrassed the university. Holloway would become one of apartheid’s most loyal proponents, even publishing a book defending it,\textsuperscript{123} and Rhodes had made a serious contradiction honouring him at the very same time it was protesting university apartheid.

Following the protest march the student body was embroiled in SRC politics over whether or not to support co-operation between NUSAS and the ASB. In the previous year this had been discussed at the conference of each body and the Rhodes SRC had organised its own intervarsity SRC conference with the SRCs of Stellenbosch and the

\textsuperscript{118} Justice JD Cloete, “A tribute to Dr Thomas Alty”, 27 May 1982, Cory Library, MS 18 031.
\textsuperscript{119} “Protest March”, \textit{Rhdeo}, 24 April 1959, p.1.
\textsuperscript{120} Address by T. Alty, “University Autonomy” Brochure, 4 April 1959, Cory Library, PR 7897.
\textsuperscript{121} Statement of Objection to Bills, Cory Library, PR 7897.
\textsuperscript{122} “Rhodes Attacked”, \textit{Rhdeo}, 30 May 1959, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{123} JE Holloway, \textit{Apartheid – A Challenge} (Johannesburg, 1964).
Orange Free State. However, the political climate and the ASB’s support for the government placed Rhodes in an ambivalent position. In May 1959 the outgoing Interim SRC Chairman, Rudolf Gruber, proposed a motion at a student meeting to hold another intervarsity SRC conference, but that this should be a full conference attended by the SRCs of the English- and Afrikaans-medium universities. However, the students objected to the motion because the opinions of the Afrikaner universities clearly clashed with those of the English universities and the conference would be a waste of time. At an emergency SRC meeting nine members, including Gruber, resigned, calling themselves ‘moderates’ and stating that an ‘extremist’ element had taken over the student body. A few of the ‘moderates’ were re-elected to the SRC in a by-election, and in a general meeting attended by over 600 students a motion to hold an entirely new SRC election was defeated by 215 to 213 votes. The student body was sharply divided. The speculative plans for further co-operation between the Afrikaner and English universities and their SRCs were now dashed.

While Rhodes held no further protest marches, Wits and UCT held impressive ones on the third reading of the bill in parliament in May 1959. Wits went so far as to create a huge banner declaring its principles. It was draped over the façade of its main building. The recently formed Academic Freedom Committee at Rhodes did send parliament a letter of protest signed by 94 staff members, and the SRC President attended a conference in Cape Town. A delegation from this conference, representing eight universities and over 15 000 students, was turned away by the Minister of Education’s secretary who notified them that it was not the minister’s policy to meet with students. *Rhdeo* urged Rhodes students to follow the examples of UCT and Wits and declare their principles, but this was not taken up. Internal issues at Rhodes, such as the SRC resignations, were taking priority, and the protest issue had been relegated to the fourth page of *Rhdeo*, with the SRC conflict on the front page. With the students engaged in examinations and the winter vacation around the corner, protest was put on hold. Rhodes did, however,

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make its record attendance at the NUSAS Congress held at Wits, with 35 student delegates present. The bills were passed in June and as much as the ‘open’ universities had protested, the government had simply ignored them.

The actions of Rhodes were weak and tardy compared to those of the other English-medium universities. Wits and UCT were afforded the advantage of location, both being in large city centres, with UCT on parliament’s doorstep. Because of this and the so-called tradition of academic non-segregation that the two institutions upheld as ‘open’ universities, the two worked closely together in opposing the bill. In January 1957 UCT and Wits held a joint conference and published its proceedings in *The Open Universities in South Africa*. The essays in the book avoided criticising apartheid generally, but instead focused on the government’s “unwarranted interference with university autonomy and academic freedom”. In this way the opposition to the government did not exclude the Afrikaans-medium, closed universities, emphasising that each university should have the right to be open as much as to be closed. Thus, as Bruce Murray contends, it allowed Rhodes to carry out an ardent campaign in support of its right to decide for itself not to admit blacks.

The emphasis on university autonomy was for pragmatic purposes, but was also in a sense appeasement. Wits was not without its own internal squabbling during this time, however. The SRC may have united with the Council and Senate to defend university autonomy, but it also sought to rally political opposition to the apartheid system and to challenge racial discrimination at Wits as practised in its quota system for medicine, non-admission to dentistry, and social segregation on campus. Council declined to alter its policy on social segregation or to change the rules of admission to medicine and dentistry. As the bill was read in parliament for a second time, UCT students held a

128 “Apathy Again Revealed”, *Rhodeo*, 26 August 1959, p. 3.
130 Ibid., p. 307.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid., p. 308.
133 Ibid., pp. 312 and 314.
vigil outside parliament for three days, and Wits held its first ever General Assembly of the University to reaffirm its principles, together with a large banner strung across the façade of its Central Block declaring its belief in university autonomy and academic freedom. Ultimately, as Murray maintains, the ‘official’ stance of the ‘open’ universities did not amount to humanitarian values. Instead, by focussing on university interests, the universities had been brought together to dissent.\textsuperscript{134}

Murray does argue, however, that the protests of the ‘open’ universities were more than just symbolic. While they were incapable of changing the government’s legislation on their own, the protests emanating from these universities since 1948 had achieved a decade of reprieve, allowing hundreds of black students to attend and graduate. Murray notes that the protests and campaigns ensured that principles crucial to the university were defended and not simply allowed to go without a fight.\textsuperscript{135} Rhodes did not take as principled a stand as Wits and UCT had done. The voices of dissent were present, but not as consolidated and as strong as at Wits and UCT. Whereas internal politics at Wits and UCT revolved around protesting government legislation, at Rhodes the SRC politicking deflected attention from the greater issue at hand. The position of ‘moderate’ students accorded with that the administration was taking. Rhodes tried to tread a middle path during this period when the opportunity was available to prove itself a genuinely ‘open’ and liberal university. However, the ‘open’ English-medium universities “marched into battle with chinks in their moral armour” and this “laid them open to accusations of insincerity”.\textsuperscript{136} In Rhodes’ case this is true because it could not profess to be a liberal university when it failed to make a united stand against the government for university apartheid, but instead hid behind the convenient smokescreen of university autonomy because it was already practising segregation.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p. 320.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., pp. 290-291.
\textsuperscript{136} Williams, A History of the UCFH, p. 328.
The University College of Fort Hare

Following the passing of the Fort Hare Transfer Bill, Fort Hare’s affiliation with Rhodes University came to an abrupt end. The long-established relationship between Rhodes and Fort Hare was effectively severed when the new law downgraded Fort Hare to the level of one of the newly created government-controlled ‘Bantu’ colleges. The 489 students at Fort Hare were from 1960 under the watchful eye of the Minister of Bantu Education. The Fort Hare hostels, which had since 1916 been run independently by the three patron church groups, the Presbyterians, Methodists and Anglicans, were also taken over by the government (which was an infringement of church rights). The staff at Fort Hare became civil servants and subject to the whim of the minister, who soon dismissed the Principal, Professor Burrows, and eight other staff members. In reaction to this a number of other staff members resigned in protest.\(^{137}\) Some of these former Fort Hare members of staff found employment at Rhodes, such as Terence Beard in the Philosophy Department, and Professor Burrows as the Director of the Institute of Social and Economic Research.\(^{138}\)

Before Fort Hare became affiliated to Rhodes it had written UNISA examinations and received its degrees but was not one of its constituent colleges. This odd arrangement was to avoid black members of the Fort Hare staff being entitled to sit on the UNISA Senate. Instead, UNISA was represented on the Fort Hare Council by two representatives from Rhodes, one of whom was usually the Master. This arrangement was fully endorsed by the Fort Hare Principal, Dr Alexander Kerr, and by the Brookes Commission.\(^{139}\) When Fort Hare became affiliated to Rhodes, Dr Kerr sat on the Rhodes Council to represent Fort Hare. Correspondingly, Alty sat on Fort Hare’s Council as the representative of first UNISA and then Rhodes.\(^{140}\) Fort Hare’s right to manage its internal affairs was endorsed in the Rhodes University (Private) Act of 1949.

During the early 1950s Fort Hare students became more cynical about the supposed liberalism of the white students. The Fort Hare SRC had not been invited, for instance, to

\(^{139}\) Beale, “Apartheid and University Education”, p. 23.
\(^{140}\) Alty later became Chairman of the Fort Hare Council.
the Durban Inter-SRC Conference in 1950. This cynicism would culminate in the breakaway of black students from NUSAS to form SASO in 1969 and the founding of the Black Consciousness Movement. In 1952 Fort Hare seceded from NUSAS as a result of unsuccessfully trying to persuade the body to become politically involved in defending the rights of black people. It had come up against strong opposition on the basis that NUSAS was not a political organisation. It did, however, rejoin a few years later. By 1954 Fort Hare students had become greatly disillusioned with Rhodes students. Contact between the two SRCs was infrequent. When Fort Hare students visited Rhodes to partake in a debating competition, they were told to bring their own food because they would not be allowed into the kaif (cafeteria). Following this episode the Fort Hare SRC severed all relations with Rhodes. By 1956, though, the two SRCs came together again to oppose the government over its proposed university apartheid legislation.

Although the Principal of Fort Hare took part in the Rhodes protest march in Grahamstown in April 1959, Fort Hare did hold its own local protests. In May 1957 students and staff marched through Alice. Another protest march was held in March 1959. After the bills were passed a delegation comprising the Principal of UNISA, Professor S Pauw, and the new, government-appointed Principal and Registrar of Fort Hare, Dr JJ Ross and Mr HJ du Preez respectively, arrived in October 1959 to organise the affairs of transferring Fort Hare from Rhodes back to UNISA. The students demonstrated so fiercely the Fort Hare staff struggled to control them. Students at Fort Hare were highly politicised, having borne the brunt of racial segregation and apartheid. They also tended to be older than their white counterparts, and were taught by black as well as white staff.

In 1958 the Fort Hare Council sent a memorandum to the government expressing its opposition to the bills and arguing that by becoming a state-controlled ‘Bantu’ college it would be taking a step backwards from the advances it had made in the forty years of its

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144 Beale, “Apartheid and University Education”, p. 54.
existence. In March 1959 Alty, as Chairman of the Council, sent a petition to parliament, but permission for it to be heard was denied. A parliamentary committee was formed to hear evidence for the University College of Fort Hare Transfer Bill. This sat in April and May 1959, and presented its report to parliament in early June. When evidence was heard, a large part of the time was taken up in pedantic interviews with the Under-Secretary of Bantu Education, Dr PAW Cook, who was the government’s representative on the Fort Hare Council, followed by the former Principal, Dr Kerr, and the current Principal, Professor Burrows. Four other members of the Fort Hare staff were interviewed, including Professor ZK Matthews, as were representatives of each of the three church groups that ran the hostels. While the bill would affect Rhodes, no one from the university was invited to submit evidence, although Alty’s petition against the bill was tabled as he was Chairman of the Fort Hare Council, as were the appeals of each of the three church groups.

After the passing of the legislation Rhodes resolved to continue examining and granting degrees to Fort Hare students already enrolled in degree programmes as external students until the current first years of 1959 completed their degrees. In October 1959 Fort Hare held its last assembly as a University College affiliated to Rhodes in the form of a ‘Final Ceremony’. From 1960 it would fall under the Department of Bantu Education. A joint procession of the Rhodes and Fort Hare Senates, staff and students took place in Alice, followed by addresses from various figures including Alty, Kerr, Burrows and Matthews, and the Fort Hare SRC President. Burrows expressed his appreciation for Rhodes’ “untiring and loyal help given to the beleaguered Fort Hare”.

147 SC 15-1959, Cory Library, Report of the Select Committee on the UCFH Transfer Bill, June 1959. Composed of Mr Fouche (Chair), Messrs Mostert, Nel, Rust, Butcher and Moore, Mrs Ballinger, and Drs Steyn, de Wet, Muller and Steytler. Butcher, Ballinger and Moore, and sometimes Steytler, would collectively always object to the clauses of the bill when they came to a vote in the Committee. Unfortunately their vote was always in the minority.
149 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIII, MS 17 498 v.3, p. 320, 18 June 1959, min. 7.
150 UCFH Final Ceremony of 1959, 28 October 1959, Pamphlet Box 70, Cory Library.
The next four Fort Hare graduation ceremonies remained under the auspices of Rhodes and were hosted in its Great Hall, separate from its own graduations.152 While the Fort Hare graduations on the Rhodes campus were only for black Fort Hare students, the audience was not segregated.153 At the April 1960 ceremony Burrows, ZK Matthews and Kerr were meant to receive honorary degrees, but this was postponed “owing to special circumstances”, that is, the State of Emergency imposed after the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March which prevented Matthews from attending because he had been arrested.154 Rhodeo had a number of articles on the massacre censored by Senate because of the State of Emergency regulations.155 Public meetings and marches were banned. However, T Dunbar Moodie recalls that “Rhodes students marched in protest carrying placards from the Drostdy Arch to the Cathedral, two at a time. More we thought would have constituted a march and marches were banned. As it was, there was a good chance we would be arrested for ‘loitering’, so we walked pretty briskly.”156 The country was gripped in fear as the government clamped down on black resistance, arresting thousands, while parliament passed the Unlawful Organisations Act, banning the ANC and PAC. Matthews was detained for 135 days.157 The honorary doctorates were conferred at the Fort Hare graduation ceremony in 1961.158 Rhodes conferral of honorary degrees on Kerr and Matthews suggests a symbolic display of opposition to the disaffiliation of Fort Hare. Kerr had been Vice-Chairman of the Fort Hare Council before it was purged and replaced by a completely new Council. Matthews resigned in protest over the legislation and lost his pension.159

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152 This was because Rhodes continued to examine the Fort Hare first year students of 1959 until they completed their 3- or 4-year degrees. Students from 1960 fell under UNISA until Fort Hare gained ‘autonomy’ in 1970.
153 “Fort Hare Graduation at Rhodes”, Rhodeo, 30 April 1960, p. 5.
155 Rhodeo, 1 April 1960.
158 Only to Kerr and Matthews, as Burrows had passed away in October 1960. Williams, A History of the UCFH, p. 574, and “End of Rhodes/Fort Hare Partnership”, Rhodeo, 27 May 1961, p. 3. The Rhodeo incorrectly calls the 1961 ceremony the last Fort Hare graduation at Rhodes.
159 Williams, A History of the UCFH, p. 534.
At the last Rhodes University graduation for Fort Hare students in 1962, HS Govinden, Rhodes’ first black graduate, received his PhD in Chemistry. Govinden had attended Rhodes in 1953 and was awarded his BSc Honours at the Rhodes graduation ceremony in 1954 with no special arrangements being made. As a graduate of Rhodes he should have attended the Rhodes ceremony in 1962. His attendance at the Fort Hare ceremony instead is indicative of the university’s compliance with segregationism. While there was no rule preventing Govinden from attending the Rhodes ceremony, it was convenient for the organisers to place him in the Fort Hare ceremony with the other black students. The absence of any consideration of the matter in Senate or Council illustrates that it was done straightforwardly.

The creation of the Republic and CR Swart’s honorary degree

In December 1959 Alty addressed Council at length on the state of the university, in particular on the effects of the new legislation. The university was financially stable, it was full to capacity, and a programme of expansion had begun. There was an opportunity to establish a branch in Port Elizabeth, the idea of which had first been aired in 1957 in a letter from the city’s mayor. Rhodes took this invitation seriously as a branch in Port Elizabeth would allow for the development of engineering and medicine. In 1959 Rhodes was letting Fort Hare go and redirecting its energies towards a branch in Port Elizabeth. The Rhodes University (Private) Act was amended in 1960 to permit the university to extend to the city. The Port Elizabeth Division of Rhodes University was officially opened in 1961.

As the creation of the Republic drew nearer, Rhodes was not alien to the white patriotic fervour surrounding it. In 1960 Council comprised mostly English-speakers who were right-wing supporters of the UP. The only certain supporters of the NP were three of the

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160 Rhodes University Graduation Ceremony, 14 April 1962, Cory Library, Box 1.
161 A mitigating factor may have been that Rhodes was awaiting a final overseas examiner’s recommendation to award Govinden his PhD, which could have caused him to miss the Rhodes ceremony and instead attend the Fort Hare one a week later by which time the recommendation had arrived. RU-Board of Faculty of Science, Cory Library, Senate XIV, MS 17 504, v.14, p. 275, 6 April 1962, min. 10.
163 Ibid., p. 356, 30 October 1959, min 7.
government-appointed members, namely JCK Erasmus, FD Conradie and Dr JP Hartman. Conradie, a member of the provincial council, was also a member of the Afrikaner Broederbond. 164 Members of Senate were likely to also be supporters of the UP. One who was certainly a supporter of the NP was JJ ‘Koos’ Gerber, known to be a member of the Broederbond, who in 1960 was offered a second Professorship of Education at Rhodes when all other departments only had one professor. 165 According to Terence Beard, a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the time, Gerber “wielded quite a lot of power”. 166 At the referendum held on 5 October 1960 to gauge public opinion on Verwoerd’s plan to for a republic, the district of Albany, in which Rhodes lay, voted 8184 to 2448 against it. 167 This was likely to have been the opinion of the majority of the Rhodes staff and students too. Rhodes was founded as a British-style institution of higher learning and liked to fashion itself on the Cambridge and Oxford models. Many of its academic staff were British or had completed their postgraduate degrees at British universities. As with previous Masters of Rhodes, Alty was British. Rhodes would no doubt have treasured the remaining imperial link to Britain symbolised in the Governor-General and membership to the Commonwealth. Moreover, the creation of a republic and withdrawal from the Commonwealth would isolate South Africa and this would not bode well for Rhodes, which relied on its contact with Commonwealth universities, from which it attracted staff. Despite this Senate and Council barely discussed the issue. This suggests their acquiescence to the will of the government. The result of the referendum was close: 52.3% voted for republic and 47.7% against. 168

In the weeks leading up to the proclamation of the Republic on 31 May 1961, Fort Hare students participated in stay-away demonstrations to protest that black people had been denied any say in the matter even though they made up the majority of the population. The state reacted by closing Fort Hare. The Rhodes SRC, chaired by Ian Macdonald, called a general meeting at which the students decided to protest the state’s action by

165 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIII, MS 17 498 v.3, p. 437, 1 July 1960, min. 5(1). Gerber was also appointed by the government to the Fort Hare Council which he later became Chairman of.
166 Interview with Terence Beard, 30 October 2006.
168 Ibid., p. 387.
picketing in Grahamstown and boycotting lectures for two days. The boycott was well supported.\(^{169}\) Two days later five members of the SRC were called in for questioning by the police on the basis that their general meeting had been illegal due to a prohibition of public meetings at the time. The meeting had in fact received the permission of the local magistrate and the students were subsequently not charged.\(^{170}\) The police’s questioning of the students was nothing more than an act of intimidation. Neither the boycott nor the questioning of the SRC was mentioned in Senate, which suggests it wished to distance itself from the action of the students. Rhodes did not hold a ceremony to welcome the creation of the Republic but did not want to appear to be protesting it either. On the day of the proclamation about 400 students gathered with the SRC and some members of staff, such as James Moulder, Terence Beard and DCS ‘Daantjie’ Oosthuizen, in the General Lecture Theatre not to protest against the Republic, but to call “for a radically new approach to the present South African situation…based on the ideals and principles of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights”\(^{171}\). It was emphasised that the meeting was not one of defiance but of self-dedication to overcoming the prejudices of society. This seems a noble act but casts doubt on the purpose of gathering on the day of the Republic in the first place. The students’ solidarity of support against the closure of Fort Hare was their closest action to protesting against the Republic.

The 1962 NUSAS Congress was to be hosted by Rhodes. Senate and Council agreed to the SRC’s request to accommodate all the delegates, black and white, in the university’s residences, on the proviso that it was legally possible to do so. In this regard they forwarded their decision to the Eastern Cape Committee of the Group Areas Board to ask for their advice.\(^{172}\) This shows that the university authorities were acting with extreme caution lest their decision not conform to apartheid law. In the past this had not been a problem, but now there was increased government pressure on universities to maintain segregation. When Council received the response that Rhodes could not legally accommodate the black delegates, it decided to “break with precedent” and refused the

\(^{169}\) “Rhodes Students Boycott Lectures”, Grocott’s Mail, 5 June 1961, p. 3.
\(^{171}\) “A Rhodes Dedication Meeting”, Grocott’s Mail, 1 June 1961, p. 3.
\(^{172}\) RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 76, 8 December 1961, min. 8.
SRC’s request. The SRC asked Council to reconsider its decision and letters were received from the Wits SRC and Rhodes Lecturers Association asking the same, but black delegates at the 1962 NUSAS Congress at Rhodes had to find their own accommodation off campus.

In 1962, both the Rhodes Senate and Council, the latter unanimously, approved the conferring of an honorary LLD on State President CR Swart, who would be visiting Grahamstown to lay the foundation stone of the 1820 Settlers Memorial in September. The response to this was mixed but strong. Fort Hare alumni wrote a letter to the Rhodes Council stating their objection to the honorary degree for Swart. This was noted by Council but not replied to. Rhodes alumni took no similar action. *Rhodeo* drew attention to the casual, indifferent student reaction to the matter. It admitted that for Rhodes it was a “wise tactical move” to honour Swart, in particular because English-medium universities were currently being attacked by the Afrikaans press. By conferring an honorary doctorate on Swart it would show that Rhodes was not “so British and un-South African that young people from nationalist homes cannot feel at home there”. A Port Elizabeth Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Oosterlig*, had published an article attacking Rhodes for allegedly making Afrikaner students feel unwelcome. The decision to confer on Swart an honorary degree may have been a tactical move on Rhodes’ part, but there was opposition from some members of the staff who boycotted the graduation ceremony for Swart, arguing that his “political record is so much at variance with the principles of academic freedom and human dignity” that they cannot support it. The staff boycott was deplored by Council which directed the Registrar to send each member of staff who had participated in the boycott a copy of the Council’s statement. Prior to this Senate had also passed a resolution by 28 votes to 6 deploring the action by staff members.

173 Ibid., p. 95, 23 February 1962, min 6.
174 Ibid., p. 103, 30 March 1962, min. 11 and p. 117, 18 May 1962, min. 9.
175 Ibid., p. 95, 23 February 1962, min. 7.
176 Ibid., p. 117, 18 May 1962, min. 10.
177 “Honorary Degree for Swart”, *Rhodeo*, 13 April 1962, p. 3.
179 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 153, 7 September 1962, min. 11.
180 RU-S, Cory Library, Senate XIV, MS 17 504 v.14, p. 356, 28 August 1962, min. 15.
A more significant consequence of Swart’s honorary degree was the resignation of the Chancellor, Sir Basil Schonland. Schonland notified Council of his resignation in June 1962, giving the reason that he was moving permanently to England. 181 *Rhodeo* stated that his resignation was due to his heavy commitments in England and his inability to travel to South Africa so freely. 182 However, the real reason behind Schonland’s resignation was his dismay at the awarding of an honorary degree to Swart, who as Minister of Justice and later Deputy Prime Minister had seen through the enactment of apartheid’s foundation laws. In his biography of Basil Schonland, Brian Austin highlights the reaction surrounding the issue. 183 A staff petition asking the Council to overturn its decision was rejected and all those who had signed it were reprimanded by the Council, especially Terence Beard, who had initiated it. Only 26 academics signed the petition, and only one member of the Senate. Beard was at the time substituting in Senate for Professor DCS ‘Daantjie’ Oosthuizen, the head of philosophy, who was on leave. Beard recalls how he was “attacked from all sides” in Senate because of his actions and received no support whatsoever from any of the other members. He did manage to get Professor Jakes Ewer, head of zoology, to sign the petition, although Ewer did so reluctantly. 184 When Schonland had heard of the Council’s decision to honour Swart, he expressed his dismay to Alty, wondering how Rhodes could even think of honouring someone who had “so blatantly defaced all that a university held dear”. 185 Alty replied that Council had seen fit to recognise the new office of State President, and not its incumbent. The reply did not satisfy Schonland who immediately tended his resignation, but without making public his reasons. It is evident that Alty did not disclose them. The real reasons for Schonland’s resignation have only come to light in recent years, thanks to Austin’s biographical work. 186

The actual graduation ceremony was an unashamed celebration on the part of the larger Rhodes community. *Rhodeo* reported that Swart was greeted by a “full and enthusiastic

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181 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 128, 22 June 1962, min. 6.
183 Austin, *Schonland*, pp. 574-575.
184 Interview with Terence Beard, 30 October 2006.
185 Austin, *Schonland*, p. 575.
186 *Ibid*. Austin had interviewed Terence Beard and Ann Oosthuizen, Schonland’s daughter, to reveal this information.
Great Hall”, and that on receiving his honorary doctorate he was met with “prolonged applause of two minutes”.187 In introducing Swart, Professor Chapman, the University Orator, reminded the congregation that as Minister of Education, Swart had given the “green light” for Rhodes to become an independent university.188 Chapman’s words were not entirely accurate. Swart, as Minister of Education, had actually delayed Rhodes’ attainment of independent status. However, instead of providing a biography of Swart, Chapman focused on embellishing what the primarily ceremonial office of State President entailed, as if evading addressing Swart directly.189 Chapman concludes his oration: “The University, through its competent authorities, the Council and the Senate, wishing to mark the occasion of the visit of the first State President in the most signal manner in its power, decided to invite him to accept the highest honour which is in its gift.”190 Whether or not Rhodes invited Swart to be honoured because he was visiting Grahamstown is inconsequential. By recognising the office of the State President in such a public way, Rhodes was acquiescing in the creation of the Republic. Rhodes was also endorsing, or turning a blind eye, to Swart and his actions when he was Minister of Justice. Rhodes did, however, learn a lesson from this episode. No further heads of state were awarded honorary degrees.191 And when the premier of Rhodesia, Ian Smith, was nominated for one in the 1970s, Council was reminded of the Swart controversy and decided against honouring Smith.192

The Port Elizabeth Division

In 1962 Rhodes found itself subjected to the scrutiny of the government again. Having established a branch in Port Elizabeth, which was growing modestly, a certain section of the Port Elizabeth community showed resistance to the existence of an English-medium

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188 *Ibid*.
189 HJ Chapman, Oration for State President CR Swart, Cory Library, MS 16 531.
190 *Ibid*, My emphasis.
191 The argument that Swart received his honorary degree based on his office as State President is false because honorary degrees are given to persons and not the offices they hold.
192 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXII, MS 17 846 v.6, p. 363, 21 June 1979, min. 79.41.5. Ian Smith was a graduate of Rhodes and had been SRC President in 1946. Today the Rhodes University calendar still refers to CR Swart as the State President in its list of Honorary Graduates whereas many more dignitaries since have their titles omitted.
University in the city. In the past few decades the emigration of Afrikaners from the Karoo to cities, as a result of post-war industrialisation, had created a substantial Afrikaner community in Port Elizabeth. But the attacks on Rhodes, as voiced in Die Oosterlig, were Nationalist propaganda. They caused some anxiety at Rhodes, but a statement by Jan de Klerk, Minister of Education, made in June 1962, alleviated Rhodes’ fears. He said that he would not grant permission for the establishment of any further universities in the country as he believed there were more than enough to suit the needs of ‘whites’.193

However, this reprieve was short-lived. The Mayor of Port Elizabeth, Monty van der Vyver, stated in September that De Klerk supported the idea of an independent University of Port Elizabeth. This was received with shock at Rhodes. In a letter to the Minister, a joint committee of Senate and Council highlighted that only two years previously Parliament had amended the Rhodes University (Private) Act to allow Rhodes to expand into Port Elizabeth. Furthermore, Rhodes had wanted to institute engineering and medicine there, but had been refused permission by the minister. Yet Van der Vyver proposed that an independent University of Port Elizabeth should include engineering and medicine, and the minister had agreed to this.194 Rhodes, while trying to work with the Port Elizabeth Municipality to create a successful campus in the city, was being frustrated by the government’s restrictions on its development. It appeared as if the minister was practising double standards by turning down Rhodes’ requests but supporting Van der Vyver’s. Rhodes had been struggling for decades to receive governmental authorisation for engineering, medicine and agriculture. The initial shock turned into disbelief: “It would seem to be scarcely conceivable that the proposal by the Mayor should receive official approval,” said the joint committee. “We cannot believe that all this effort of past years…could be so ignored.” Finally, the minister was beseeched to be aware of the “grave damage” such an action would have on Rhodes.195

193 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 131, 22 June 1962, min. 11.
194 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 165, 28 September 1962, min. 3 and Attachment. This was the Finance and General Purposes Committee on which sat representatives of Council and Senate including the Chairman of Council and Vice-Chancellor.
195 Ibid.
At Council’s request Alty urgently met with the minister in October and reported to Council that the minister had indeed changed his position since June.\textsuperscript{196} Council recognised that it might be able to save the Port Elizabeth Division by resolving to offer courses there in both English and Afrikaans.\textsuperscript{197} The concern to accommodate Afrikaans speakers at Rhodes prompted \textit{Rhodeo} to begin publishing an article or two in Afrikaans in every edition.\textsuperscript{198} Now that a few years had passed since the 1959 acts, which had caused the severing of ties between the Afrikaans and English campuses as well as between the ASB and NUSAS, the Rhodes SRC was again at the forefront of talks between the Afrikaans and English universities, holding meetings with its Stellenbosch and Potchefstroom counterparts. The Stellenbosch SRC was even invited to participate in the meetings between SRC members from Rhodes Grahamstown and the Rhodes Port Elizabeth Division regarding the uncertain future of the Division.\textsuperscript{199} While still part of NUSAS, the Rhodes SRC often pursued its own agenda. However, Rhodes’ plans to cater for Afrikaans-speaking students came too late.

In February 1963 the government approved Van der Vyver’s application. The R200 000 promised to Rhodes by the Port Elizabeth municipality was to be transferred to the new independent university, as would the property occupied by the Rhodes Division in Bird Street and the property that was due to be offered to Rhodes for further expansion (Driftsands).\textsuperscript{200} The eighteen lecturer at the Port Elizabeth Division condemned the actions of the Mayor and the failure of the Municipality to honour its commitments. Alty voiced Rhodes’ intention to remain in Port Elizabeth, because it had been invited there by the community, and would only leave if rejected by it. This was clear defiance of the government. However, Alty soon received a letter from the minister that he wished “to make it quite clear that your University will not be allowed to continue its academic activities at Port Elizabeth.”\textsuperscript{201} The Port Elizabeth community did, however, stay true to Rhodes. In the white municipal election Mayor Van der Vyver and four other municipal

\textsuperscript{196} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 177, 19 October 1962, min. 24.
\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 285, 13 September 1963, min. 4(5).
\textsuperscript{200} Currey, \textit{Rhodes: A Chronicle}, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{201} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 151.
councillors that had supported the independent dual-medium university lost their seats.\textsuperscript{202} Unfortunately this was too late, as the process of establishing the university in Port Elizabeth was now in the government’s hands and not the municipality’s. The paradox that the elected municipality of Port Elizabeth, led by Van der Vyver, had not been representative of the feelings of its electorate, can be explained by the strong influence of the Afrikaner Broederbond. Van der Vyver had not acted solely on his initiative, nor had Minister De Klerk changed his mind without some coercion. Larger forces had been at play in the removal of Rhodes from Port Elizabeth. The new university would essentially be controlled by the Broederbond - its first rector was Professor EJ Marais, a senior member - and biased towards teaching in Afrikaans.\textsuperscript{203}

Although the commitment to Rhodes was honoured by the newly elected Port Elizabeth council, which paid the remainder of the promised R200 000 to Rhodes, despite the minister’s orders, Rhodes had to ultimately admit defeat. On 4 October 1963, draft legislation for the University of Port Elizabeth was published. On the same day, the Rhodes Council, on receiving a report from the new Vice-Chancellor, Dr James Hyslop, who had met with the minister, decided to completely withdraw from Port Elizabeth, finishing classes by the end of the following year.\textsuperscript{204} As Currey states, “It was a dignified acceptance of a position imposed by an authority which had the power to enforce its will.”\textsuperscript{205} The very first act passed by parliament in 1964 established the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE), which officially opened in January 1965.

The end of the Alty era

At the same meeting that the Chancellor’s resignation was announced in June 1962, Alty notified Council of his intention to retire at the end of March 1963.\textsuperscript{206} Initially earmarked to become Rhodes’ next Chancellor after his retirement, Alty preferred to return to the

\textsuperscript{202} Ibid., p. 152.
\textsuperscript{203} Wilkins and Strydom, \emph{The Super-Afrikaners}, pp. 265-266, 422-423. Wits suffered a similar fate when the Rand Afrikaans University was established on its doorstep to counter its English-speaking influence in 1975.
\textsuperscript{204} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 302, 4 October 1963, min. 6.
\textsuperscript{205} Currey, \emph{Rhodes: A Chronicle}, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{206} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 128, 22 June 1962, min. 5.
United Kingdom, where his services were being sought in higher education. Alty served at the head of Rhodes during one of its most difficult periods and his solid leadership managed to pull the university through. The successive losses of Fort Hare and the Port Elizabeth branch were blows, as well as government pressure on universities. At the end of his tenure Alty was criticised by a National Party MP, who incidentally also sat on the Rhodes Council, for leading a group of leftists at the university. This is highly unlikely as Alty was hardly a leading oppositional figure. “If anything…Alty was a diehard Conservative”, a characterisation which a number of Alty’s close colleagues fully agreed with. Following the Sharpeville Massacre, Alty had told Gillian Jewell, a lecturer in French and political activist, that: “I don’t mind my lecturers having political principles, as long as they don’t act on them.” In his 1962 graduation address he stated

We must be satisfied that what we teach is the exact truth as we know it; that in all research, personal wishes and prejudices are suppressed and that only what appears to our objective judgement to be true is retained…It is equally the duty of the University to do this work in a completely objective manner, to ensure that what is being imparted is knowledge and not indoctrination. For this reason it is obviously impossible for a university, as an institution, to have any party political affiliations.

At Alty’s final graduation ceremony as Vice-Chancellor in 1963, the Honourable Justice Oliver Schreiner and Dr EG Malherbe were awarded honorary doctorates. This contrasted sharply to Swart’s honorary doctorate only the year before. Schreiner, a judge of the Appeals Court, was the only judge to have voted against the validity of the 1955 Senate Act. For this he was passed over for Chief Justice. Dr Malherbe, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Natal since 1945, had defied the government by ensuring that Natal kept its medical school for black students. Alty returned in 1964 to receive an honorary doctorate, together with two other previous heads of Rhodes, Cullen Bowles and John Smeath Thomas. As it was Rhodes’ sixtieth year, a number of dignitaries were

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208 Interview with Hugh Lewin, November 2006.
209 Cloete, “A tribute to Dr Thomas Alty”.
211 Malherbe, *Never A Dull Moment*, p. 312. The medical school’s staff had threatened to resign.
recognised with honorary degrees, including Margaret Ballinger, who had served as a representative of Africans in parliament from 1947 to 1960, and was a leader of the Liberal Party, established in 1953;\(^\text{212}\) as well as Tom Bowker, the United Party MP for Albany, who had spearheaded Rhodes’ Private Bill.

On the eve of Alty’s departure Terence Beard, Senior Lecturer in Politics, and Dr CF Goodfellow, Lecturer in History, were both detained by the police in Umtata for a week in March 1963. The two had travelled to the Transkei to obtain affidavits from people involved in recent unrest. They were accused of interfering with police business and held in custody.\(^\text{213}\) While this news was reported in the student press, it was not mentioned at Council level. This was the first time academic staff members from Rhodes were detained. It seems Beard and Goodfellow did not receive any support or intervention on their behalf from the university as they had gone into the Transkei of their own accord and not as employees of Rhodes. This would not be the first time Beard would be detained, and detentions of staff would become more frequent as the decade progressed. At an Academic Freedom talk held in May, a disappointing 150 students attended, and the speaker, Dr Currey, had had short notice to prepare a proper talk. Among the staff who attended, Professor JVL Rennie, the Acting Vice-Chancellor, was present. However, before the talk began, Rennie felt it necessary to notify the gathering that he was there not in his official capacity, and that the views expressed at the meeting were not necessarily those of the university authorities.\(^\text{214}\) By its very nature a talk or meeting on Academic Freedom would be political and Rennie was protecting himself and the university from any anti-government sentiments that were likely to be heard at such a meeting by dissociating them from the institution. He was attempting to separate the political from the academic. If the university authorities were so concerned about dissociating themselves from such politically-sensitive events, then they should not have allowed them. Instead they ‘window-dressed’ by allowing them to be held, but insisted they were not the official views of the university. This only added to the ambivalence surrounding what the university’s official view was.

\(^{214}\) “Academic Freedom: Dr Currey talks at RU Meeting”, *Rhodeo*, 23 May 1963, p.3.
Soon after Alty left Grahamstown at the end of March 1963, Mr Justice Johannes Dante Cloete was elected Chairman of Council, on which he had sat for a number of years as a representative of Convocation.215 Nearly twenty years later Cloete read a eulogy to Alty at a memorial service in which he stated, “It is no exaggeration to say that but for his leadership, courage and drive in probably the most critical time of its history the fate of Rhodes may well have been disastrously different. May Rhodes University never forget him for that.”216 In August, Dr James Hyslop, a mathematician by training, also from Scotland but with extensive experience in higher education both at Wits and in Kenya, arrived to take up his post as Rhodes’ second Vice-Chancellor. Together with Cloete, Hyslop would manage Rhodes with an iron fist. In September, Dr PJ du Toit was elected Rhodes’ new Chancellor. Du Toit was a Doctor of Veterinary Science and nationally respected among his profession. His election was a tactical move by Rhodes to garner state support to teach veterinary science, which the government had refused time and again.217

215 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 262, 5 July 1963, min. 3.
216 Cloete, “A tribute to Dr Thomas Alty”.
217 Ibid., p. 284, 13 September 1963, mins. 3 and 4, and p. 304, 4 October 1963, min. 9.
CHAPTER FOUR
AN APOLITICAL UNIVERSITY?
THE HYSLOP ERA, 1963-1975

These were the years during which Rhodes was led by Dr James Hyslop as Vice-Chancellor. HF Verwoerd was Prime Minister and clearly steering the country away from the rest of the world. The ANC and PAC had been banned and forced underground. Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the black resistance had been sentenced to prison. The iron hand of the government was extremely difficult to challenge, backed by a strong economy and equally strong Nationalist rhetoric. The United Party was the official opposition, but did little to oppose the Nationalist government. The lone liberal voice in parliament from 1961 to 1974 was that of the Progressive Party’s Helen Suzman. Grahamstown lay in the Albany constituency, which was a United Party stronghold. The English-speaking population in ‘settler country’ was generally conservative in outlook, not warming to the NP government, but strongly white supremacist. Notwithstanding this, there were supporters of both the Liberal and Progressive Parties in Grahamstown, in particular among the more liberal-minded Rhodes staff. But their numbers were not sufficient enough to impact on the vote. This was typically the situation throughout the country. Whites who opposed apartheid were simply outnumbered and overwhelmed by the system.

Rhodes’ compliant stance towards the government involved a breakdown in the collegiality and camaraderie usually associated with staff and students at a university. As a university Rhodes reflected broader white society. It had its own authoritarian administration and leadership in the form of the Council and Vice-Chancellor. Division between staff and students was based on their support for or opposition to the government and apartheid; the opponents were in the minority. This led to heavy-handed reactions to individuals or groups that questioned or challenged the administration or the government. Generally, the university administration colluded with the government, and in particular the Special Branch, to quell any divergences from the status quo. This authoritarian environment, both at Rhodes and throughout the country, was sustained by harsh
repression. The Rhodes administration kept in mind its treatment by the government with regard to Fort Hare and its Port Elizabeth Division. When Verwoerd took over leadership of the government in 1958, he brought with him the influence of the Afrikaner Broederbond, which had forced Rhodes out of Port Elizabeth.

As Vice-Chancellor, Hyslop espoused the notion that a university was a place of scholarship and learning and should have nothing to do with politics. Hyslop liked to make the point that

> Universities have often been criticised for adopting a neutral attitude when confronted by controversial social and political problems….The university, as an institution corporate in character, having within its community varying viewpoints on the issues of the day, is not in a position to act as a kind of conscience of society. It should remain aloof from transient public controversies, except insofar as to uphold the right of honest comment, honest argument and the liberty of the individual to speak freely.¹

This ‘ivory tower’ image of the university would have negative implications for the academic freedom of the staff and students of the university. The Chairman of Council, Mr Justice Dante Cloete, a bloedsap member of the UP, held a similar notion.² He and Hyslop became close associates in the management of the university.

**Government pressure on Rhodes**

In October 1963 the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs and of Health, Dr Albert Hertzog, made a speech openly attacking the English-medium universities.³ Hertzog accused the “Universities of the Witwatersrand, Cape Town, Rhodes and Natal” of having engaged “on a grand scale” in the destruction of the “backbone and pride” of the youth and “stripping them of their self-respect”. He labelled the teaching staff at these universities “liberalists and half-communists who on every possible occasion [try] to impress on young people that they [are] no better than the primitive black man.” Hertzog also noted

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² Interview with Terence Beard, 11 December 2006.
³ RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 306, 25 October 1963, min. 6(12) and Annexure.
that a number of people currently in custody over sabotage and subversion came from these universities.

The Rhodes Council took offence at this statement, as did the other universities that were attacked, and asked Hyslop to compose a response to be sent directly to the Prime Minister. In it Hyslop noted that the university was “disturbed by this false, defamatory and unjustified attack…by a Minister of the State”. In essence Hyslop was asking for the Prime Minister’s assurance that the government did not support Hertzog’s allegations and his attempt to discredit the university. His letter was referred to the Minister of Education, Jan de Klerk, who asked Hertzog for his comments. Hertzog’s reply, which had been written as a response to a letter of protest from UCT, was duplicated and sent to Hyslop. In it Hertzog mentioned the names of former students that had recently been involved in sabotage and subversion, and the universities they came from. These were Ben Turok, Festenstein and Goldberg from UCT; Strachan from Natal; and Kantor, Goldreich, Wolpe, Slovo and Hepple from Wits. In particular he noted that UCT was the most guilty for fomenting this type of behaviour.

No students were mentioned from Rhodes because none were involved in such activities at the time. One ex-student, Hugh Lewin, had been incarcerated for sabotage activities and would spend seven years in prison. When asked about subversive activities among Rhodes students during his time there (1958-1960) Lewin replied

“Subversion” amongst the students? Strictly speaking, there was none during these years, not in the sense of illegal, clandestine activities covered later by the “Sabotage” and “Terrorism” acts. Yet there was at Rhodes during this time, as at other English-speaking universities, a small and often very active dissenting group voicing opposition to the establishment, often to the point of opstokery – subversion, but only of a sort.

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., p. 323, 13 December 1963, min. 6(11) and Annexures.
6 Interview with Hugh Lewin, November 2006.
This type of student behaviour, as Lewin describes it, continued into the 1960s, and although Lewin was a product of Rhodes, his ‘subversive’ behaviour after university was not adopted by other alumni.

Hyslop did not, however, get an assurance that the government did not support Hertzog’s allegations. Council sought no further response on the issue, but authorised Hyslop to discuss with UCT, Wits and Natal the possibility of issuing a general statement defending the traditions of the English-medium universities and their current policies. Council was again handing over responsibility for contentious issues to the Vice-Chancellor, as it had done with Alty. If Council had genuinely been offended by Hertzog’s allegations it would have sent a letter of protest itself. But Council shied away from making a public statement to defend Rhodes, even though Hertzog had made a public speech attacking it. Council was reluctant to censure a cabinet minister but at the same time did not seek further recourse even when its protest was ignored by the government.

Early in 1964 Dr AP Jonker, an NP Member of Parliament, took the liberty of making derogatory remarks about Rhodes University and its former Vice-Chancellor, Alty, in a House of Assembly debate. Jonker accused Alty of having led a “leftist group” at Rhodes and that, when Rhodes had wished to expand to Port Elizabeth, it was “to liberalise that city”. Jonker had been speaking in parliament when the University of Port Elizabeth bill had been under discussion. The Chairman of Council, Cloete, reacted by releasing a press statement refuting Jonker’s allegations and assuring all that Rhodes’ expansion into Port Elizabeth had been for educational purposes, with a view to the potential development of engineering and medicine, and reminded all that the Port Elizabeth City Council had invited Rhodes into the city.

Jonker was one of the government-appointed members of the Rhodes University Council. This made the situation all the more awkward as Council, at its next meeting, deliberated

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7 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 323, 13 December 1963, min. 6(11).
8 Ibid., p. 349, 28 February 1964, min. 7.
on how to respond to these allegations, with Jonker present. Senate had passed a
resolution repudiating Jonker’s allegations as having no foundation and urged Council to
take necessary action.\footnote{Ibid.} Council initially considered a similar resolution with the intention of bringing the matter to the attention of the Minister of Education. However, Jonker
made an apology at the meeting, and Council proceeded to modify its resolution
accepting Jonker’s assurance that his speech in parliament had not meant to imply that
Alty had been the leader of a leftist group at Rhodes or that a leftist group at Rhodes had
had anything to do with the expansion into Port Elizabeth. This was carried by thirteen
votes with three abstentions. Jonker wished to record that Council’s interpretation of his
remarks in his speech were not in accordance with his own interpretation. Furthermore,
he moved that the resolution just passed not be made public. This was agreed and Senate
was to be duly informed.

The reality was that Rhodes could not actually chastise Jonker for his actions because he
was an untouchable government official. Even if the minister had been informed of
Council’s resolution, Jonker would probably have been exonerated. This incident
highlights the irony in Hyslop’s apolitical stance. The Council, as the most senior
decision-making body of the university, was not apolitical. The four government-
appointed members were not politically neutral. Similarly, the Chairman and a few others
on Council were civil servants in their capacity as judges, mayors or municipal officials.
These tended to have political affiliations and loyalties that influenced the running of the
university, generally in a conservative direction.

Hyslop saw fit not to annoy the government in any way so as to protect university
autonomy. This involved acquiescing to the government. This is illustrated by the
Council’s tribute to Verwoerd after his assassination in 1966.\footnote{RU-C, Cory Library, Council XV, MS 17 498 v.5, p. 193, 9 September 1966, min. 3.} The Chairman directed
that as the Council of a university it was proper to pay tribute to the late Prime Minister
and that the university felt a “deep sense of abhorrence and shock as a result of
[Verwoerd’s] tragic passing”, adding that he was “a great leader of his people”. The
The banning order placed on Terence Beard, a senior lecturer in political theory in the department of Philosophy, came to the attention of Council in October 1963. The Staff Association reported that it had passed a resolution protesting “the inroads upon academic freedom entailed by the banning of Mr TVR Beard” and requested the Council to protest publicly. Council did not take kindly to this request and preferred to distance itself from the matter by handing it over to the Vice-Chancellor. Hyslop had to ascertain from the Minister of Justice the exact nature of the restrictions imposed on Beard and whether they interfered with Beard carrying out his academic duties. The minister replied that Beard had to approach him as well as the magistrate of Grahamstown for details of his banning orders. Council took this to mean that it was Beard’s affair and had nothing to do with them. They refused to take a stand on the matter. Hyslop only went so far as to inquire about the effect of the banning order and not why Beard had been banned. As a member of the Rhodes staff Beard received very little support from the administration. Senate would, however, later take up Beard’s cause.

Beard was often labelled a communist by other Rhodes academics because of his liberal leanings. He was also branded an atheist and this treatment contradicted the conscience clause in the Rhodes University Private Act that protected an academic from prejudice.

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12 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 317, 18 October 1963, min. 36.
based on his or her own beliefs. The Dean of Students, Professor Hugh Chapman, had been instructed to keep an eye on Beard and report his activities to the Vice-Chancellor.14 Beard had been dismissed from Fort Hare for “undermining apartheid” in 1959 and at Rhodes had led the staff opposition to the awarding of an honorary degree to Swart in 1962. Beard was persona non grata among the conservative-minded staff and a thorn in the side of senior management. His banning order had been the result of his earlier detention in Umtata, when he had been arrested early in 1963 for collecting information on police brutality and the rigging of elections in the Transkei along with three other members of the Liberal Party, including Dr Clem Goodfellow, a Rhodes history lecturer. Beard was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act even though he was a liberal, not a communist. The particulars of his banning order included not being with more than one person at a time except for academic reasons. While he could attend faculty meetings, lecture and tutor, he was not allowed to enter the senior common room. In 1965 his banning order was expanded to include social events such as a cricket match or cinema performance.15

Beard, as the most vocal member of the Rhodes community in challenging the university’s acquiescent stance, mostly bore the brunt. He kept the liberal flag flying at Rhodes. In 1964 Beard and three other Rhodes academics, namely Peter Rodda, Harry Cohen16 and Norman Bromberger, were detained and flown to Cape Town for interrogation.17 They were released a few weeks later with no charges, but on returning to Rhodes found that the administration had altogether ignored their predicament. In the same year, Bromberger, from the department of economics, was banned. Eric Harber, from English, followed in 1965. Yet the administration continued to do nothing to support those being banned.18 However, Senate did pass a resolution in October 1964,

14 Terence Beard, “Rhodes Past and Present: A Critical and Personal Assessment”, African Sociological Review, 9, 1, 2005, p. 74; and interview with Terence Beard, 30 October 2006. In his paper Beard names Vice-Principal Rob Antonissen as his informant but in his interview stresses Antonissen as a friend and the Dean of Students, HJ Chapman, as the informant. This was more likely as Antonissen was also Dean of Arts and a more sympathetic character.
15 Interview with Terence Beard, 30 October 2006.
16 Ian Macdonald asserts that Cohen was ‘subversive’, known as ‘Black’ Harry, and had even tried to recruit him. Interview with Ian Macdonald, 6 December 2006.
17 “SRC Protests 90-day arrests”, Rhodeo, 6 August 1964, p. 3.
18 Beard, “Rhodes Past and Present”, p. 76.
requesting that the Minister of Justice either bring these banned members of staff to court or lift the banning orders as it was creating uncertainty and suspicion on campus and harming the reputation of the university. Council delayed acting on Senate’s resolution, deferring the matter for some time. When communication finally reached Council from the minister, it did not amount to anything new. The onus was once again placed on the banned members of staff to write directly to the minister for an explanation of their banning orders, and only on receipt of this information would Council do anything further. As it was common practice for the minister not to disclose the reasons for banning orders, this was a way of evading responsibility for the matter. The Grahamstown representative on Council, AW Poole, proposed in February 1965 that Council not associate itself with Senate’s resolution, but withdrew his proposal in the absence of support. In the end, Hyslop’s efforts did succeed in having the banning orders lifted before their five year expiry. Beard and Bromberger were un-banned in 1966. Harber, however, had already gone into exile in the United Kingdom.

Beard, though, would still suffer prejudicial treatment from the university administration, especially from Council. On more than one occasion Senate approved and recommended that Beard be promoted to professor and head of Political Studies, but was overruled by Council. Beard believes that this was because Council was dominated by the government-appointed members who interfered with academic matters and reversed decisions of Senate. Of the four English-medium universities, Rhodes was the only one where Council undermined the authority of Senate by not honouring its decisions. In 1966 Council did, though, approve Beard’s appointment as acting head of the new Department of Political Studies, which had broken away from Philosophy. The following year, the recommendation of a joint committee to select Beard as Professor of Political Studies was adopted by Senate without discussion; but Council, by majority vote, rejected it. The Chair of Political Studies remained vacant while Beard continued as

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19 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIV, MS 17 498 v.4, p. 463, 17 November 1964, min. 3.
20 Ibid., p. 483, 26 February 1965, min. 6.
22 Interview with Terence Beard, 30 October 2006.
acting head of the department for a long time. Senate would not accept anyone other than Beard as professor, and thus the post was not advertised further. In 1973 Senate recommended that Beard formally be made head of the department and that he become an associate professor – a new position that had been created in the restructuring of academic rank. Council accepted this. However, this was only an adjustment in status and not in salary. Beard was denied the same salary that other heads of department were receiving, simply because he was not a professor. Only in 1977, under a new Chairman and with a new Vice-Chancellor at Rhodes’ helm, did Council finally uphold Senate’s recommendation that Beard be appointed as Professor of Political Studies, which he had in all but name been for ten years.

Repression and protest

The freedom of academics was often restricted under various apartheid laws. The most prominent were the Suppression of Communism Act, Criminal Law Amendment Act and Suppression of Terrorism Act. While these laws did not directly limit an academic’s freedom to teach and research, they did hold consequences for those who were deemed to be inciting radical political action. Academics had to be careful of what they were teaching and publishing. This seriously stifled free debate. Both academics and students feared informants reporting them to the security police. Liberalism was conflated with communism. This is why liberal universities were labelled, by Nationalists and right-wingers, as ‘hotbeds’ of communism. The Defence Act of 1960 gave the Minister of Justice the power to ban and harass outspoken critics of the government. In 1962 the power of the police to control and interrogate suspects was increased, being able to detain them without charge for twelve days. This was extended to 90 days in 1963, 180 days in 1965, and by 1976 had become unlimited. The Suppression of Communism Act and the Publications and Entertainments Act empowered the government to practise censorship.

24 Ibid., p. 378, 27 October 1967, min. 10.
26 Interview with Terence Beard, 30 October 2006.
and many literary works were banned and their possession prohibited. Furthermore, any banned scholar could not be cited for teaching or research purposes. The Minister of Justice could also limit the teaching and research of certain academics, forcing those who did not voluntarily avoid sensitive areas to look into an acceptable area. This severely undermined the core role of a university to be able to engage in free debate.²⁹

In 1965 the government introduced legislation that would protect any academic or student who advocated or practised racial segregation from being discriminated against by the university or another academic or student.³⁰ At UCT, the government intervened in 1968 to stop the appointment of Archie Mafeje as a Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology. While there was no law that restricted who could teach at universities, the government saw fit to force the UCT Council to rescind its appointment of a black academic by threatening legislation that would have placed a colour bar on teaching staff at ‘white’ universities.³¹ At Rhodes, SM Burns-Ncamashe became a temporary Junior Lecturer in Bantu Languages in the Department of African Studies from 1963, but this did not warrant the government’s attention as his position was never made permanent.³² Black academics would only be permanently employed at Rhodes nearly two decades later.

In 1963 Professor Jakes Ewer of Zoology, the only member of Senate to sign the petition against awarding Swart an honorary degree, had chosen to leave South Africa on the grounds that politics was interfering in scientific matters.³³ Not all academics were in a position to leave the country, such as Terence Beard, although many did. Goodfellow, after his brush with the Security Police, left South Africa in 1964. He relocated to the University of Basutoland (Lesotho) which he called “the only free university south of the Limpopo”.³⁴ With the advent of the 90-day detention ruling, academics and students throughout the country were being arrested. At Rhodes this included Beard, Rodda, Cohen and Bromberger. But students were affected too. In 1964 four Rhodes students,

³⁰ Ibid., p. 197.
³¹ Ibid., p. 198.
³² RU-S, Cory Library, Senate XIV, MS 17 504 v.14, p. 477, Annexure E3.
³³ “Varsities are party tools”, Rhodeo, 29 August 1963, p. 1.
namely Anthony Carter, G Trevelyan, Gillian Gane and M Sobey, members of the Liberal Party, were initially thought to have gone missing but were found to have driven to Swaziland for fear of being arrested.\(^{35}\) When Gane returned from Swaziland in 1966 she was promptly arrested and banned.\(^{36}\)

In reaction to the 90-day law, the SRC asked for a permit to hold a protest in town. This was initially denied by the City Council. When permission was eventually received the students were no longer motivated enough to participate.\(^{37}\) At UCT and Wits large protests were held against the 1965 bannings of Professor Jack Simons at UCT and Professor Eddie Roux at Wits. In 1967 Dr Raymond Hoffenberg of the UCT medical school was banned and Rhodes staff and students joined other white English-medium universities in protesting. Some 55 members of staff at Rhodes signed a petition against Hoffenberg’s banning.\(^{38}\) But the official position of Rhodes on the banning, as with its own banned staff, was silence. Neither Council nor the Vice-Chancellor made any comment on the recent spate of bannings of academics.

In 1963 NUSAS had been subjected to heavy government attack, spearheaded by the then Minister of Justice, BJ Vorster, who described NUSAS as “a cancer in the life of South Africa that must be cut out” and attempted to link NUSAS with Communism and subversion.\(^{39}\) During the next year the existence of NUSAS and the automatic membership of students began to be questioned at the English-medium universities. At Rhodes there was a move among the students “to reform NUSAS and to make it less political and more concerned with students’ interests”, and a fair number of students were elected on to the SRC on an anti-NUSAS stance.\(^{40}\) Conservative student bodies were formed at other campuses and at Rhodes the Association of Conservative Students (ACS)


\(^{37}\) “90-day protest now to be ditched”, *Rhodeo*, 3 September 1964, p. 1.


\(^{39}\) Kline, “The National Union”, p. 142.

\(^{40}\) “Reform NUSAS move by two”, *Rhodeo*, 5 March 1964, p. 1.
was established. At the South African Conservative Students Association conference in Cape Town in 1964, the largest delegation was not from the Afrikaans universities, but from Rhodes, although its membership at Rhodes was small.

The ACS and its counterparts did not attract much support generally, which suggested that students who did not support NUSAS were not necessarily conservative, but rather apolitical or disinterested. This was in reality the majority of students, known as the ‘silent majority’. In response the NUSAS executive decided to moderate its more radical positions and pacify some of its critics by refocusing the organisation on student interests and softening its political stance. Black students who supported NUSAS viewed this action as traitorous and denounced it “as the result of a liberal training which causes [white students] to shiver in their boots when attacked by members of their own class". To this end the Natal black medical school temporarily disaffiliated in 1965. In response, the new NUSAS president, Ian Robertson, adopted a moderate direction for NUSAS, trying to appease both the left and the moderate factions of the organisation. This middle-of-the-road approach is exactly what brought on the indignation of the black supporters. When the previous president, Jonty Driver, had attempted to steer the organisation into a more radical position in 1964 he received very little support and the SRC of the white students of Natal had threatened disaffiliation.

In reflecting on his student years at Rhodes between 1961 and 1965, Edward Webster recalls a student meeting in the Great Hall following Jonty Driver’s proposal to turn NUSAS into the student wing of the liberation movement:

As you can imagine this confirmed the worst fears of students at Rhodes who were still smarting under an earlier attempt by a liberal-dominated SRC under the leadership of Basil Moore to pass a resolution condemning colonialism. This led

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41 “SACSA is banned at Rhodes – Bands”, Rhodeo, 26 March 1964, p. 1.
43 Kline, “The National Union”, p. 142.
44 Ibid., p. 143, quoting Legassick.
45 “Non-Whites Decide to Leave NUSAS”, Rhodeo, 9 September 1965, p. 5.
46 Kline, “The National Union”, p. 143.
to a conservative backlash and the mobilisation of the silent majority who flooded the Great Hall in large numbers to defend their heritage.47

The majority of students at Rhodes clearly held conservative views and were very much slaves to the fabricated heroic memory of colonialism. Webster adds that he became president of the SRC in 1964 as a moderate candidate. But when involved with the May 1965 sit-in against the banning of black supporters at Rhodes rugby matches,48 at which over a hundred students sat on the library steps and sang “We Shall Overcome”, he was accused of being a communist.49 Webster also reflects on the narrow vision of liberal protest:

Yes we had become rebels, but we were rebels with a cause of our own. We were protesting on behalf of black supporters to watch our rugby not for non-racial rugby teams or the right of all players to participate in the same league. In fact, it never occurred to us to consult with our black supporters or to form any sort of alliance with them. Yes we were rebels – but it was our cause, not theirs.50

The government assault on NUSAS continued in May 1966 when its president, Ian Robertson, was banned and given a one-way exit permit to Britain. Robertson had invited American Senator Robert Kennedy to South Africa as a guest of NUSAS, and the government had disapproved. The day after his banning about 3000 students from Wits marched through Johannesburg in response.51 Students at Rhodes reacted to Robertson’s banning by holding a thousand-strong protest meeting, followed by a candle-lit vigil. This was followed by a protest march. This was the largest protest by Rhodes students since the creation of the Republic in 1961, and elicited strong support from some staff.

47 Edward Webster, “Rebels with a cause of their own: a personal reflection on my student years at Rhodes University, 1961-1965”, Transformation, 59, 2005, p. 102. This sit-in protest took place in May 1965 and included the likes of Johann Maree, Jacklyn Cock, Roger Omond, Charles van Onselen, Tim Couzens, and John Sprack. Webster’s article also appears in the African Sociological Review, 9, 1, 2005.
48 Proclamation R26 of 1965, as amended by Proclamation R228 in 1973, extended the Group Areas Act to include “any person present in or upon any land or premises…for a substantial period of time or for the purpose of attending any place of public entertainment…as if his presence constituted occupation of such land or premises.” M. Horrell, Laws Affecting Race Relations in South Africa (Johannesburg, 1978), pp. 124-125, 378.
49 Webster, “Rebels with a cause”, p. 103; and “Rhodes Students Deplore Ban on Spectators”, Rhodeo, 6 May 1965, p.1, and “Public Interest Aroused by Protest”, 27 May 1965, p.1.
50 Webster, “Revels with a cause”, p. 104.
members. In October 1967 John Sprack, who had been president of the SRC at Rhodes the year before, and was president-elect of NUSAS, had his South African citizenship removed and was deported. Sprack had just completed a tour of campuses across the country and had visited Rhodes the day before receiving his deportation orders. A meeting of the student body voted overwhelmingly in favour of petitioning the Minister of the Interior to hear Sprack’s appeal. About 600 students signed the petition. The involvement of Rhodes student leaders in NUSAS assisted in rousing political protest among students, by calling them to identify with their counterparts at other English-medium universities, which were receiving the same repressive treatment from the government. Similarly new, younger staff at Rhodes tended to be less conservative than their seniors and sympathised with the students, especially those who had recently studied at Rhodes.

The 1967 NUSAS Congress

In July 1967 the Rhodes SRC hosted the 43rd NUSAS Congress. In preparation for the Congress the SRC approached the university administration for permission to accommodate all NUSAS delegates on campus. This was not just a formality. When Rhodes had hosted the Congress in 1962 Senate and Council had broken with precedent and declined the request to allow black delegates to be accommodated on campus. This had not been the case in 1958 when black delegates had freely been accommodated. Clearly the implementation of the 1959 Act had changed administrative policy. Yet a few weeks prior to the 1967 Congress, the university administration had consented to the SRC’s request and approved the accommodation of all the delegates, black and white. However, some segregation would be enforced as black delegates would be housed in separate residences to those of the white delegates. Preparations for the Congress

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53 NUSAS circular, 9 October 1967, Cory Library, MS 18 156/11.
54 Peter Harris, Report of Rhodes University SRC to 44th Annual Congress of NUSAS, June 1968, Cory Library, MS 18 157/3.
continued without having to arrange special off-campus accommodation for black
delegates as had been necessary in 1962.

However, Senate and Council had not been entirely sure of their decision. Council in
particular sought advice regarding the legal position of blacks on campus. At short notice,
Council informed the SRC that special arrangements would have to be made after all.
The SRC was unable to organise, at such short notice, off-campus accommodation for the
black delegates, who were forced to find lodging in the township, or in the case of Indian
and coloured delegates, in their designated areas of town. Council did give permission for
the black delegates to eat their meals on campus, but in a separate dining hall to that of
the white delegates, who ate in the Kaif. This was unacceptable to NUSAS, and the
Rhodes SRC made special arrangements for all delegates to eat off campus. On the first
day of the Congress the delegates, black and white, passed a motion by Wits SRC
president Robin Margo condemning Council’s decision and initiating a 24-hour hunger
strike, which forced the dining halls and Kaif to dispose of the food they had prepared.56
All delegates were allowed to attend conference venues on campus, but not the social
functions, which were racially segregated.

A group of black delegates from Natal’s medical school, led by Steve Biko, were angered
by these events. This group was dissatisfied with white liberal students who appeared to
advocate non-racialism but failed to practise it honestly. Biko and his fellow delegates
were affronted to find that the white delegates had yielded to the segregationist measures
that the Rhodes administration had imposed on the Congress. Following Robin Margo’s
motion, Biko proposed an amendment accusing NUSAS of having known in advance that
black students would not be accommodated and that as such the Congress should be
suspended so as to find a more suitable venue. This was rejected, causing Biko and his
followers to walk out the Congress. Aubrey Mokoape, a friend of Biko’s, recalled that

56 Xolela Mangcu, “The Quest for an African Identity: 37 Years On”, unpublished, Centenary Lecture,
Rhodes University, 2 June 2004. Copy of text to be deposited in Cory Library.
“What had happened there hurt him deeply. He saw this blatant hypocrisy he had been told about unfolding in front of his eyes.”

Biko walked out of NUSAS and into the University Christian Movement (UCM), which had been established that year and was also meeting in Grahamstown. Led by radical figures such as Basil Moore and Colin Collins, the UCM understood that whites could not lead an essentially black liberation struggle, and by 1970 the organisation had its first black president, Justice Moloto. Biko utilised the UCM as a mouthpiece for his idea of an all-black student organisation. This led to the establishment of the South African Students’ Organisation in 1969. This was one of many organisations formed as part of the Black Consciousness Movement from the late 1960s up until they were all banned in 1977. In a letter to SRC presidents in February 1970, Steve Biko, as president of SASO, writes

In the NUSAS Conference of 1967 the blacks were made to stay at a church building somewhere in the Grahamstown location, each day being brought to conference site by cars etc. On the other hand their white ‘brothers’ were staying in residence around the conference site. This is perhaps the turning point in the history of black support for NUSAS. So appalling were the conditions that it showed the blacks just how valued they were in the organisation.

At the time of the incident the president of NUSAS, Margaret Marshall, queried the university administration on changing its decision. The answer given to her was that Rhodes had received a ruling from the government. But when Marshall obtained her own legal advice that the government could not legally restrict a university from accommodating who it wished, the Rhodes administration would hear none of it. The black delegates were not students of Rhodes and had thus not broken any laws. Their stay at Rhodes would have only been temporary, albeit segregated. At a Senate/Student Liaison Committee meeting held after the Congress, the Vice-Principal, Professor JVL Rennie, explained that the Congress had coincided with other inter-university activities.

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57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
and had created a situation that forced the administration to make decisions ad hoc.\textsuperscript{60} This confirms that the university administration had of its own accord decided to enforce segregationist measures, and when denounced by NUSAS for its decision, hid behind a dubious claim of complying with the law.

The Rhodes administration had sought updated legal advice, which drew their attention to amendments to the Group Areas Act, and concluded “that it would probably not be legal for the University to house non-White delegates in a University Residence”.\textsuperscript{61} However, Council also sought advice from the government Departments of Planning, Bantu Affairs and Community Development, such that “every care [was] being taken to ensure that Rhodes [did] not transgress the law in any particular”.\textsuperscript{62} The Department of Community Development confirmed that it would be wrong to accommodate black delegates in Rhodes residences except under permit. When Rhodes requested such a permit the government refused and added that no mixed social events were to be allowed. The Bantu Commissioner in King William’s Town had informed the Registrar that African delegates would not be permitted to even attend the Congress. However, this prohibition was subsequently found to be groundless.\textsuperscript{63}

While a government ruling may have forced Rhodes’ hand, the university administration had gone to excessive lengths to obtain legal clarity. It is hard to believe that the university would have suffered consequences if it had quietly allowed the original arrangements to stand. At the 1968 Congress at Wits all delegates were accommodated on campus but split on racial lines because the Departments of Bantu Administration and Community Development had not granted permits. Biko was again in attendance and proposed a resolution that, as the English-medium campuses were not able to guarantee full equality to the congress delegates, future congresses should be held at venues where

\textsuperscript{60} Senate/Student Liaison Committee, SRC Minutes, Cory Library, 18 August 1967, p.1, P. Haxton, MS 14 476.
\textsuperscript{61} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XV, MS 17 498 v.5, p.327, 23 June 1967, min. 9.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
everything could be conducted on a completely non-racial basis. This was passed fifty votes to ten.\textsuperscript{64}

The Rhodes administration was simply too afraid to contravene any law lest the government react unfavourably. The administration was also worried about conservative white opinion. Rhodes had recently been receiving unfavourable press attention due to the actions of its more militant students.\textsuperscript{65} The decision to prohibit all black delegates from staying on campus was to curb further bad press. Rhodes had, after all, not accommodated black delegates in 1962. Yet it had allowed mixed dining then. As Mike Williams, External Vice-President of the SRC, stated after the 1967 Congress in an article in \textit{Rhodeo}: “I wonder whether these councils are bending under pressure or whether they have thrust aside their desire to preserve academic freedom and their respect for the dignity of all students.”\textsuperscript{66} Williams was referring not only to the incident at Rhodes but also to the actions of other university councils, notably UCT’s, in succumbing to pressure and pleasing the government at the expense of student rights. At UCT, the SRC’s refusal to recognise a conservative students’ society that actively practised racial segregation, forced the Council to impose a new constitution on the SRC in the face of government-threatened legislation.

At a general student meeting at Rhodes in August, a motion was carried noting that the discrimination against students at the NUSAS Congress was “deeply regretted” and that such discriminatory behaviour was believed to be alien to universities.\textsuperscript{67} The students’ motion was rather mild and timidly evaded the severity of what had occurred. In his report, the outgoing SRC president, Peter Haxton, noted that the incident had been discussed at length with the administration and that he had been assured that in future the Kaif would be open to all guests of the university, regardless of race. He did not, though, make mention of the accommodation issue. All the SRC resolutions deploping the

\textsuperscript{64} NUSAS, 44\textsuperscript{th} Annual Student Assembly Minutes, Wits, Johannesburg, 30 June to 9 July 1968, Cory Library, MS 18 157/1, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{65} The SRC was concerned with Senate and Council’s choice of honorary degree candidates for 1967, some of whom were seen as dubious. This led to student protest and wide press coverage.


\textsuperscript{67} Meeting of Student Body, SRC Minutes, Cory Library, 8 August 1967, p.3, Motion 92/67, P. Haxton, MS 14 476.
incident ultimately did not make a difference. Those Rhodes students who supported liberal movements such as NUSAS generally promoted liberal ideals but simultaneously sought to maintain their white privileges.

By the time of the 1967 NUSAS Congress black students were disenchanted with the idealistic white students. After the formation of SASO in 1969, NUSAS was forced to review itself as an organisation and to this end began to become more involved in liberation issues. In 1971 it formed the Wages Commission to investigate what black workers were earning. In 1974 it faced a setback when the government cut off its international funding and it was forced to decentralise. Rhodes was one of the campuses that decided to discontinue its central affiliation to NUSAS. In the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto uprising NUSAS embarked upon a project of re-identification as white Africans, in an attempt to shake off their European roots. From 1977 this policy of ‘Africanisation’ was reaffirmed. 68

The University Christian Movement and campus unrest

In 1968 the SRC submitted an unprecedented number of requests to Senate demanding student representation on Senate and Council, as well as statutory recognition of the SRC as a constituent body of the university. 69 These demands, mostly arising out of student demonstrations and sit-ins in the quadrangle outside the Council Chamber, were regarded by Council as “local manifestations of the current world-wide ‘Student Power’ movement”, which they believed was inspiring NUSAS. Council was particularly disturbed by the participation of members of staff in the activities of the UCM, founded the year before. The UCM was seen as a threat as it took an anti-establishment stance. 70

The Rhodes Council was facing a challenge it had never faced before. It did not know how to react, except through conventional means. The most common line was to divert blame for the events on campus to outside bodies. Council reckoned that “the influence

69 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVI, MS 17 498 v.6, p. 227, 13 June 1969, min. 27.
70 Ibid., p. 23, 30 August 1968, min. 5.
of NUSAS on the SRC, and that of foreign movements on the UCM” were proof of outside agitation.\(^71\) News of anti-establishment student protests at campuses in America, France, Germany and Italy struck fear into Council. However, these were in fact isolated events in localised settings that had been going on since 1964.\(^72\) But because they appeared to correlate in 1968, it created the illusion that a ‘student power’ movement was sweeping the world. Council’s decision to blame “foreign movements” illustrates that it, like many other university administrations, fell fancy to this misapprehension. This became worse so when protesting students began to identify themselves under the ‘student power’ banner.

In September 1968 the SRC organised a motorcade of students to drive to Alice. This was to protest police intervention at Fort Hare as a result of students boycotting the installation of the new rector, Professor GN de Wet.\(^73\) This would be followed by a protest march in Grahamstown, for which the municipality had granted permission. Council condemned the SRC’s actions arguing that it was “obviously interference of the most blatant kind in the affairs of another University” and that it could lead to dangerous incidents.\(^74\) Council issued a notice that it considered “any demonstration or action which constitutes interference in the internal affairs of another university institution to be a negation of the concept of university autonomy, indefensible and inimical to good relations between university institutions.”\(^75\)

As in 1959, Council did not want to offend the government, and Fort Hare was essentially a government institution. Furthermore, as some staff members had associated themselves with the students’ demonstration, Council expressed “its stern disapproval of such conduct, which amount[ed] to improper interference in the affairs of the student body”.\(^76\) Council was coming to view such staff members in a serious light. Convention at Rhodes held that staff and students were distinct constituencies of the university, but in

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\(^71\) Ibid., p. 23, 30 August 1968, mins. 3 and 4.
\(^72\) Searle, *The Campus War*, p. 11.
\(^74\) RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVI, MS 17 498 v.6, p. 50, 11 September 1968, mins. 3, 4 and 5.
\(^75\) Ibid., p. 50, 11 September 1968, min. 5.
\(^76\) Ibid., p. 50, 11 September 1968, min. 6.
recent years the line between staff and student had become fuzzy due to some members of staff also being students registered for higher degrees. Rhodes was coming to rely on its graduates to stay on as teaching staff due to the shortage of English-speaking academics in the country. This opened the way for young men and women, who as students had been active in student politics, to carry on their activism as staff members. Two prime examples were Basil Moore in Theology and James Moulder in Philosophy.

Council’s castigation of staff who partook in student demonstrations alarmed the Staff Association who, through Senate, asked Council to rescind its notice. Council refused to do this but released another notice clarifying that its castigation only applied to the Fort Hare protest and not to protest in general. In a reply to Senate, Council stated that the conduct of certain members of staff had been improper because they had encouraged students to participate in the Fort Hare protest, and this may have created the false impression that the university supported it.77

The Vice-Chancellor had been absent during the Fort Hare protest while attending a conference in Australia. He was nevertheless asked by Council on his return to carry out a complete investigation. Only in February 1969 did Hyslop report to Council, in the form of a short, two-page memorandum based on his impressions of what had occurred. Hyslop attributed responsibility for the unrest to a few individuals and outside movements. He stressed the responsibility of dominant personalities on the SRC, such as Peter Harris and Peter Kirby, and concluded “that the SRC did in fact urge the students to take part in the demonstration, and was actively engaged in its organisation”.78 Hyslop also put blame on several members of staff, not mentioned by name, who “have exercised an undue amount of influence on student thinking”. He claimed that the unrest stemmed from a conference held at Wits in July 1968 on “The Role of the Student in the Modern University”, at which Harris and Kirby made vociferous contributions. A month before the unrest there had been a UCM conference in Stutterheim that had promoted the idea of ‘student power’. He doubted that the UCM was only engaged in religious renewal and

77 Ibid., p. 55, 25 October 1968, mins. 10 and 11.
78 Ibid., p. 137, 28 February 1969, min. 8(b), attached report.
was convinced that the ‘student power’ movement had spilled over from America, and was connected to the ‘Black Power’ movement.

Hyslop’s report was welcomed by Council. His conclusions about the SRC seem odd to the modern reader, but in the late 1960s the SRC was demanding representation on Senate and Council for the first time. This was something new and the administration viewed it as insolence. The administration resorted to its traditional methods of dealing with the students that they regarded as misbehaving. These included punishments such as rustication and exclusion. The administration failed to grasp that all the students wanted was to be heard. It appears that the administration had never before dealt with students who had asked questions the way they were asking questions now. Students up till then had been generally subservient or apathetic, with the odd few making a noise now and then. But now a larger number of students were not only making a noise, but questioning their own university. The Rhodes administration reacted to such students almost in disbelief, suggesting that they had been malignly influenced by outside movements or certain members of staff. Hyslop concluded his report by noting that some of the student activists had left Rhodes and that with a more moderate SRC in office, it seemed doubtful that there would be any resurgence in 1969 of student demonstrations aimed at the university. Hyslop could not have been more wrong. Council’s very refusal to appoint Basil Moore at the end of 1968 became the controversy necessary to spark off more intense student action in 1969.

The 1969 Basil Moore affair

Basil Moore was a BSc and BD graduate from Rhodes and had been president of the SRC in 1962. He had also been elected president of NUSAS but as a minister of the Methodist Church had been advised by the Church not to assume office. From 1965 to 1968 he was

79 Both Senate and Council were at this time composed largely of ageing and conservative-minded men. There were thirty-five professors on Senate, only one of whom was a woman. Of these only eleven had been appointed in the last three years. Some had been appointed as far back as the 1930s. Council, greatly influenced by the four government-appointed members, was not softened in any way by the four Senate-elected members. These Senate representatives were usually themselves conservative and out of touch with students. Rhodes University Calendar (Grahamstown, 1970).
80 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVI, MS 17 498 v.6, p. 137, 28 February 1969, min. 8(b), attached report.
a part-time lecturer in Theology at Rhodes. Moore had a reputation for being liberal-minded and had been the first national chairman of the University Christian Movement (UCM) when it was founded in 1967, with it headquarters at Rhodes. In December 1968 the Rhodes Senate accepted a selection committee’s recommendation to offer the position of temporary lecturer in Systematic Theology to Moore from 1969. As an influential leader of the UCM, Moore was seen by some in the administration as a risky choice. He had appeared in court earlier in the year, along with three other Rhodes staff, for publicly protesting the Prohibition of Improper Interference Bill.81 However, Council did not approve of his appointment, even though he was the most qualified candidate, and overturned Senate’s decision. Professor WD Maxwell, the Dean of Divinity, played a key role. He sat on both Senate and Council and wielded an enormous amount of influence at Rhodes. A conservative figure, he did not like Moore.82 While he had approved of Moore’s appointment on the selection committee and in Senate, he changed his vote in Council.83 He did this even at cost to the Faculty of Divinity, which was experiencing serious staffing troubles.84

At a meeting in March 1969, Senate passed a resolution that reaffirmed its recommendation, by 30 votes to 2, that Moore be appointed to the position of temporary lecturer. Maxwell had also retired at the end of 1968, increasing the staff shortage in Divinity. However, Council doubted “the desirability, apart from [Moore’s] academic qualifications and teaching experience, of appointing [him] to the staff, on account of his activities in the UCM and its connection with the ‘Student Power’ movement”, and to this end sought to have a special Council committee interview him “to estimate his attitude and behaviour in non-academic matters”.85 Council was wary of figures such as

81 “Four appear in court today”, Rhodeo, 30 May 1968, p. 1. The other three were David Novitz and James Moulder from Philosophy, and Lawson Lobb from Statistics, all graduates of Rhodes. The bill prohibited: political parties from being multi-racial, persons of one race group from assisting in the political activities of another, and persons receiving foreign aid for political parties. When passed, the Liberal Party decided to disband, and the Progressive Party reluctantly confined its membership to whites. Horrell, Laws Affecting Race Relations, p. 27.
82 Interview with Terence Beard, 30 December 2006.
83 Interviews with Terence Beard, 30 December 2006, and Ian Macdonald, 6 December 2006.
84 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVI, MS 17 498 v.6, p. 123, 22 November 1968; and p. 85, 13 December 1968, min. 8(3).
85 Ibid., p. 161, 18 April 1969, min. 10.
Moore. There were a few staff members at Rhodes who joined with students in demonstrations, to the annoyance of Council. In the previous year Rhodes had been subjected to unfavourable press publicity for the student unrest on campus as a result of the UCM’s actions, in which Moore had played a key role. For Council, this hostile and damaging exposure was unwelcome, and the unrest on campus was seen in the context of overseas events connected to ‘Student Power’.

In March 1969 the students learnt of Council’s rejection of Moore’s application and that he would no longer be a member of staff at Rhodes. In May *Rhodeo* published an article setting down the rumours about Moore’s non-appointment. This perturbed Council, as the matter had meant to be confidential, but it decided not to take any action. Council also wanted to placate Senate. Senate had, by 20 votes to 2, passed a resolution noting that it had almost unanimously approved Moore’s appointment, and that it deeply regretted “the procedure by which a decision was reached about an alternative appointment”, and requested “that every endeavour be made in future to take Senate fully into the confidence of Council in matters of this nature”. As a means of solving the staffing problems in Divinity, Council had appointed an *ad hoc* committee. This had come up with a temporary solution, but Senate was concerned that it had been completely excluded from this process. Senate’s second resolution, passed without objection, requested Council “to appoint a Joint Committee of Senate and Council to examine the present procedures for appointment of staff, in order to avoid the repetition of the recent difference between the two bodies over a staff appointment”. The Acting Principal, Professor JVL Rennie, reported to Council that Senate, in passing these resolutions, was not making a further plea for Moore’s appointment. Cloete, Chairman of Council, proposed that the second resolution be accepted and that the Joint Committee appointed

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88 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVI, MS 17 498 v.6, p. 184, 16 May 1969, min. 4.
90 The four Senate members on Council did sit on this committee, but in their capacity as members of Council. Two government-appointed members of Council also sat on this committee. No member of staff from Divinity was invited to sit on this committee.
91 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVI, MS 17 498 v.6, p. 186, 16 May 1969, min. 7.
also consider the last sentence of the first resolution. After much discussion this was agreed to.

Council appears to have pacified Senate for the meantime as the issue fell to the wayside, but there was rising student agitation over Moore’s non-appointment. In June, Council received a letter from the SRC reporting the decisions taken at a meeting of the student body. The students had noted that Council had twice overruled Senate’s approval of Moore’s appointment because of his association with the UCM and were disappointed with Council for not honouring the decisions of Senate, the body best equipped to oversee academic staff appointments. The students called on Council to clarify the rumours by sending representatives to a student body meeting. Council replied that it was responsible for all staff appointments and that this was not the business of students. When Council dined in the Drostdy Dining Hall after their meeting on 20 June, a dozen or so students protested outside with placards, and about fifty students left the dining hall when the members of Council arrived. Exams and the winter vacation did nothing to quell the rising resentment, and protest gained momentum after the winter break. At the end of July *Rhodeo* released a special edition focusing on the Moore Affair, equating it with the Mafeje case at UCT the year before. Council was to meet on Friday 1 August and a sit-in in the quadrangle outside the Council Chamber was to be held as a protest. At a meeting on 28 July the SRC could not agree on whether to support the sit-in, but was aware that a group of students was planning to act regardless of SRC support. In the end the SRC opted to send a petition to Council requesting that the SRC executive be permitted to address Council. This proposal was not fully supported as it was seen as an attempt to use the traditional channels of communication which Council had effectively closed by its persistent silence on Moore’s non-appointment. As the editor of *Rhodeo* concluded in his special edition editorial,

The time has arrived for long overdue student action to convince Council that we are determined to be heard…. And due to the SRC’s vacillation, the time has

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come for individual students to grasp the initiative and ensure that justice is done at Rhodes University.  

At its meeting on 1 August, Council considered the letter from the SRC with its attached petition, signed by some 434 students, and debated whether or not to allow the SRC executive to address them. The SRC was concerned that there had been prejudice against Moore because of his involvement with the UCM, and that government pressure not to appoint Moore was a violation of university autonomy. Professor Chapman, the Dean of Students, informed Council that at a meeting of about 250 students the night before, the students had rejected the SRC petition and called for a sit-in. This sit-in was currently in progress in the quadrangle. Council decided that three of its members would meet with the president and two vice-presidents of the SRC and reiterate to them that Council was responsible for staff appointments, which were not the concern of the students; that Council was not willing to discuss any information about Moore; and that Council was unhappy with the recent behaviour of students, but “as an act of grace”, would meet with the SRC president and vice-presidents. This was passed eight votes to five.

Council’s stance and rhetoric angered many students. The SRC had asked permission to address Council about an issue that was bothering students. The SRC was not demanding anything of Council. Yet Council saw fit merely to reiterate what it had already stated, and to maintain silence on the issue. The students were aware that Senate was being overridden by Council. It is no wonder then that a group of students had already given up on trying to communicate with Council and were holding the sit-in. Instead of engaging with the students, Council opted to remain aloof.

The students participating in the sit-in in the quadrangle outside the Council Chamber were awaiting Council to address them. They had been addressed by some members of

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95 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVI, MS 18 498 v.6, p. 249, 1 August 1969, min. 10 and letter from SRC, 28 July 1969 with petition.
96 *Rhodeo*, 14 August 1969, p.1, cartoon shows a dishevelled, beaten-up academic with a broken arm leaving the Council Chamber stating to some students in a sit-in outside “And we of the Senate have been persuaded by council that…”
staff, including Afrikaans lecturer, Andre Brink, and temporary Politics lecturer, David Tucker. At the Council meeting, the participation of staff members in student demonstrations was criticised. Legal advisers had informed Council that staff who participated in any action undermining the authority of Council as the governing body of the university were violating their contracts. Council noted that Dave Tucker had been addressing the students at the sit-in. Such was the students’ impatience with Council that they burnt an effigy of it at the sit-in. When Council concluded its meeting and departed the Chamber just after 5pm without giving the students any reply, some 35 students marched into the building and occupied the Chamber. They were accompanied by Dave Tucker. In the meantime Rennie had notified the SRC of the meeting with members of the Council to be held the next morning at 9am. The SRC president, KW ‘Bill’ Meaker, announced this to the students gathered in the Chamber but a motion of no confidence in the Council was proposed and passed. The students felt that the integrity of the university was at stake. The occupation of the Chamber was planned to last until the SRC met with the members of Council the next morning. However, at around 8pm Rennie, accompanied by two security officers, entered the Chamber and ordered the students out. He gave them five minutes to leave or they would be rusticated for eight weeks. Attempts by the students and members of the SRC to negotiate with Rennie were refused and some students left. When the five minutes were up thirteen students and Dave Tucker remained. Rennie declared the students rusticated and arranged to meet with Tucker the next morning to reprimand him. However, they did not leave the Chamber and Rennie organised an interdict from the local magistrate’s court ordering them to leave. At 11pm a court official arrived with the interdict and ordered the occupants out of the Chamber. They complied and joined the students outside who had been continuing the sit-in and continued it into the morning. Rennie met with Tucker and suspended him subject to a disciplinary hearing. The SRC President and Vice-Presidents had their meeting with three members of Council, who informed them that Council would not make public the reasons for not appointing Moore as this would create a precedent.

97 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVI, MS 18 498 v.6, p. 250, 1 August 1969, min. 11.
98 “Panic Reaction Against Sit-In”, Rhodeo, 7 August 1969, p. 1.
At a special meeting of Senate the following week, Rennie’s report of the events of 1 August was heard, but debate ensued on the students’ sentence of suspension of eight weeks, and the students’ letters to Senate were read. Some members of Senate, sympathetic to the students’ pleas, proposed that their sentences be reduced. This was strongly objected to by members who saw any remission as a sign of weakness. The debate concluded when a motion approving of Rennie’s actions was overwhelmingly carried without objection; and each of the student’s sentences was confirmed by majority vote, although not without objection. Senate did not concern itself with Rennie’s suspension of Tucker, which was left to Council. When Council met, Rennie repeated his report that he had made to Senate. The three members of Council who had met with the SRC reported that it had been difficult to convince the SRC that it was “morally wrong” for Council to publish the reasons for not appointing a candidate and that the SRC “were seeking ‘confrontation’”. The last important issue was a report from the Staff Disciplinary Committee regarding the actions of Dave Tucker. The Committee had considered two letters from the SRC and a petition from 62 Politics students supporting Tucker. In his defence Tucker stated that he had addressed the sit-in crowd at the invitation of the SRC. He stated that he had been appointed spokesperson of the students occupying the Chamber but the Acting Principal had not given him a chance to mediate. Although he had disregarded Rennie’s ultimatum, Tucker had left the Chamber before the court order arrived at 11pm and stated that he had urged the remaining students to leave before legal eviction was necessary. The Committee found Tucker guilty of deliberately defying, in the presence of students, the Acting Principal’s order and that this was contrary to his contract, and recommended to Council that he be dismissed. Council unanimously decided to dismiss Tucker from his post. It was noted that Tucker

99 RU-S, Cory Library, Senate XIX, MS 17 504 v.19, p. 407, 6 August 1969, mins. 5, 6 and 7.
100 Sympathisers included Profs. Hammond-Tooke, Hewson, Antonissen, Glasser and Branford, Dr Davenport, Mr Justice Addleson, and Mrs Charton. Objectors included Profs. Gerber, Chapman, Morton, Gledhill, Nunn and Hobart Houghton, Dr Smuts, Miss Richardson, and Rennie as Acting Principal.
101 RU-S, Cory Library, Senate XIX, MS 17 504 v.19, p. 407, 6 August 1969, mins. 10 and 13. Votes against each of the thirteen student’s sentences ranged from two to six.
102 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVI, MS 17 498 v.6, p. 268, 14 August 1969, min. 5 and attached report.
103 Ibid., p. 268, 14 August 1969, min. 7.
104 Ibid., p. 271, 9 August 1969, mins. 3, 6, 9 and 10.
had already tendered his resignation before the recent events, effective 31 August, as he was taking up a scholarship to study further overseas.\footnote{Ibid., p. 269, 14 August 1969, min. 8. This was a scholarship awarded by Rhodes, which Tucker retained.}

Tucker’s case gave rise to further student discontent. Tucker stated in Rhodeo that he was surprised that Senate had upheld Rennie’s rustication of the thirteen students. Rennie’s actions had been impromptu and the students should have faced a fair disciplinary hearing before being rusticated. Tucker felt that Senate could still have upheld Rennie’s authority without having to resort to extreme action.\footnote{“Dave Tucker is sacked”, Rhodeo, 21 August 1969, p.1.} The student demonstration had not been against Council.\footnote{“Tucker Presents His Defence”, Rhodeo, 21 August 1969, p. 4.} The students only wanted to gain the assurance of Council that the conscience clause had been respected in the non-appointment of Moore. Council should, at the very least, have given some sort of answer to the sit-in outside instead of completely ignoring it. Council had not taken the students seriously, thus the students had not taken Council seriously. They pitched camp in the Chamber and elected a dog as Council Chairman.

Rennie concluded his report:

\begin{quote}
In order to impress you with the dangers potentially inherent in the situation that I had to face on Friday, I would most earnestly ask you to consider what the consequence would have been for the future, if the sit-in had succeeded, even for one night: the next occasion, shall we say, the occupation of the Vice-Chancellor’s and Registrar’s Offices for a longer period, against the background of irresolution and appeasement that less determined and decisive action would have meant.\footnote{RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVI, MS 17 498 v.6, p. 268, 14 August 1969, attached report by Acting Principal, p. 9.}
\end{quote}

Rennie went on to state that subsequent investigation had revealed that one of the thirteen students rusticated had planned a take-over of the whole Administration Block with detailed precision. It is clear that Rennie was connecting the episode at Rhodes to events overseas that had ended in violence and disarray on campuses. Student power was still
fresh in the administration’s mind from the campus unrest in 1968, and it was still misunderstood. The Basil Moore affair at Rhodes aroused interest at other campuses across the country, with protests emanating from NUSAS and other SRCs. Tucker contended that Council had “behaved as though they believed that authority was right simply because it was authority” and did not consider themselves answerable to students in any way. The Council had lost the respect of students by no longer recognising its moral accountability to them. Furthermore, Council, and the administration in general, had adopted an ideology of ‘might is right’, which permeated South African society.

In September 1969 the Staff Association requested Council, by 31 votes to 20, to rescind its decision to dismiss Tucker. Council, however, had already decided not to reopen the issue. Basil Moore applied once more for the lectureship in Systematic Theology when it was re-advertised, but was this time turned down in favour of another candidate who had a doctorate from Oxford. Moore received his own doctorate from Rhodes in 1971 but was banned by the government in 1972. He left the country soon after this.

The 1971 Disobedience Campaign and the Munnik Commission

The events of 1968 and 1969 left an indelible mark on the Rhodes administration. The more radical members of the student body had for the meantime been subdued. However, while the administration had won the battle, the war was not yet over. Student agitation for change continued in a quieter form. Two incidents during 1970 aggravated student resentment towards the administration. The first was Hyslop’s interference in the Rag Queen contest, which was an internal student matter. Hyslop had been anxious over the possible election of a Chinese student as the rag queen or one of the princesses. Ava Junkin had been chosen as a finalist, but after meeting with Hyslop her father withdrew her from the contest. Subsequent enquiry showed that the choice of a Chinese student as rag queen or princess would not have had any serious implications. Even the Minister of

111 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVI, MS 17 498 v.6, p. 280, 5 September 1969, min. 15.
the Interior stated that Chinese students at Rhodes enjoyed the same privileges as white students.\footnote{113} It appears that Hyslop had intervened because of the press publicity the so-called Ava Junkin Affair was getting in the Afrikaner nationalist media, in particular \textit{Die Beeld}, which reviled the possibility of a Chinese rag queen having to mix with whites at formal functions. Rhodes had enrolled Chinese students from 1963 and shortly afterwards admitted Indians as well. Hyslop’s involvement in this episode was brought on by anxiety over the public image of the university, not by government pressure. The second was the rustication of 27 students for being improperly dressed for a formal meal at the Smuts Dining Hall. This was handled by the Vice-Principal, Professor Rennie.\footnote{114}

In May 1971 frustration with the administration came to a head when students deliberately broke residence rules that they considered to be outdated and archaic. These included wearing formal dress to supper, the strict inter-visiting hours between the single sex residences and then only in the common rooms, and curfew. This became known as the Disobedience Campaign. On 3 May, the SRC presented to the Vice-Chancellor a list of 22 proposed reforms, backed by some 1200 signatures. The reforms called on the administration to treat students as adults and not as school children, as they felt the residence rules were oppressive and patronising. When the SRC approached the Vice-Chancellor on 5 May for an answer, Hyslop replied that he would not give into what he considered an ultimatum and that the authority to change rules lay not with him but with Senate. The SRC had become dissatisfied with the proper channels because they had always led to delays or rejection. This had been the situation for several years now.

Having received the answer they expected from Hyslop, the SRC addressed a student meeting and initiated a disobedience campaign in an attempt to render inoperable the university’s disciplinary procedure, which would not have been able to cope with hundreds of students breaking the rules all at once. However, Hyslop had seen this coming and had met with and instructed the residence wardens to fine offenders R10 for every rule they broke following a prior warning. The campaign continued up to the night of 7 May. Male students did not wear their ties or jackets to supper, and visited their

\footnote{113} “Rag Queen Fracas Taints Rag”, \textit{Rhodeo}, 26 March 1970, p. 1.
\footnote{114} “Reaction to Rustications”, \textit{Rhodeo}, 1 October 1970, p. 1.
female companions outside of the visiting hours and in their rooms. Students in general broke curfew and an air of blatant disregard for residence rules permeated campus. The SRC continually announced that the fines should not be paid while Hyslop sent out notices that they would, and that the fined students’ parents would be notified. Some 800 students were fined in three days.

At a Senate meeting on 7 May two sub-committees were set up, one to review the disciplinary code and residence rules, and the other to consider student rules and the 22 proposed reforms of the SRC. The latter sub-committee would include three sub-wardens. In the evening the new Vice-Principal, Professor Rob Antonissen, met with the SRC and informed them of the recent decisions of Senate. He also informed them that the matter of the fines would be decided on by the Vice-Chancellor. Antonissen added that he would support a sympathetic review of the fines and convey this to the Vice-Chancellor. With these guarantees the SRC agreed to call off the disobedience campaign, which came to a formal end at 10pm on 7 May. The SRC addressed a student meeting and announced “We have won”. This was a false claim as the proposed 22 reforms were only being submitted to another committee of Senate for consideration. A further notice from Hyslop on the next afternoon informed the students that a Council committee of enquiry would be appointed to investigate the disobedience campaign and that it would decide on the question of the fines. In the end Council left the matter of the fines to the Vice-Chancellor who reduced them by 50%. All except six students paid their fines. These six, all members of the SRC and including the president, John Whitehead, were subsequently rusticated.

The disobedience campaign was clearly viewed by the administration as a manifestation of student power. When Council heard Hyslop’s report on the unrest they referred to it as a “revolution” and considered whether it was purely local or instigated by NUSAS. Senator GJ van de Vyver, a government-appointed member of Council, reported that the Minister of Education had viewed the disobedience campaign as “only the start” and

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115 A sub-warden is a student who assists the warden of a residence and is paid for his or her services by the university.
116 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVII, MS 17 846/1, p. 191, 12 May 1971, min. 5 and attached report.
believed that the movers for student power were, in conjunction with the UCM, working through NUSAS to disrupt order and discipline on university campuses. Once again outside bodies were being brought into the fray as had occurred in 1968 and 1969. The administration was still unable to recognise that students had been unhappy with the residence rules. Instead it was believed that outside bodies must have incited this unrest. Council was not fazed by the large number of students who had participated, and agreed not to approve any moves that would relax the general tone and discipline in its Residences. Such a move would be likely to have an adverse effect on the reputation of the University and on student enrolment in the future.117

Council was again worried about the consequences instead of trying to understand the causes. The public image of the university seems to have been more important than the students studying there. Council still thought that parents sent their children to university, rather than school-leavers independently choosing which university to attend.

In his report to Council, Hyslop claimed that the disobedience campaign, which he termed “the recent student power movement at Rhodes”, had been planned for some months.118 A topic allegedly discussed at the 1970 NUSAS Congress was how to cause disruption at universities by doing exactly what had just occurred at Rhodes. At a Senate/Students Liaison Committee meeting soon after the Congress, an SRC member threatened student action because they could no longer tolerate old-fashioned residence rules. This was followed by an abortive attempt to disrupt dinner in all the residences on 19 March 1971, just two months before the campaign. Hyslop had even been warned by a senior official of NUSAS that a campaign was being organised to have residence rules changed. The failure to read these signs suggests that Hyslop was a poor leader. He underestimated the potential level of student discontent. The Vice-Chancellor appears to have forced himself into an uncompromising position once he missed his opportunity to negotiate with the SRC. The demands of the SRC and students were fairly mild. The

117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
petition requested the Vice-Chancellor “to consider these proposed reforms” and to “include SRC representation” on the Senate Committee into the disciplinary code.\(^{119}\) Hyslop regarded the demands as an ultimatum, which immediately closed him off from the students. He refused to negotiate with the students. Hyslop was only being asked to consider the proposed reforms and to justify his answer. But his position was intransigent.

Council supported the Vice-Chancellor in his handling of the disobedience campaign. Hyslop’s actions suggest that he did not take the students’ concerns seriously. Having received the 22 proposed reforms on 3 May, he only read them on 19 May just before attending the Senate Committee that was looking into them. In a further report to Council he dismissed many of the reforms as trivial, others as false and misleading, and one as having been considered three or four years previously before being turned down with the full support of the SRC. This says much about Hyslop’s attitude to students in general. He seems not to have grasped that the student body was dynamic and changing faster than in the past. Students’ demands changed from year to year. Hyslop and the administration viewed the student demands as manifestations of student power, as they had done in 1968 and 1969. He concluded his report:

> I hope that neither Senate nor Council will bow down before student power. If it does the University will be embarking on a downhill course, the end of which it is impossible to foresee. To student power I, for one, will not submit.\(^{120}\)

The extent to which the campaign actually made a difference is debateable. Senate may have set up a committee to look at the proposed reforms if they had been submitted via the regular channels. But this was not the objective of the campaign. Its aim was to pressure the administration into meeting the students’ demands and approving the proposed reforms.

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\(^{119}\) Ibid., and appendix B.

\(^{120}\) Ibid., p. 197, 11 June 1971, min. 5 and attached report.
The Hon. Mr Justice GGA Munnik, one of the government-appointed members of Council, was appointed Chairman of the Council’s committee of enquiry. He was joined by Mr AP Cole, Miss MG Richardson and Professor Hobart Houghton. This committee quickly became known as the Munnik Commission. It met 27 times, interviewed witnesses and considered written testimonials from others. Only 24 students were asked for evidence. In September the Commission finalised its fifty-page report. Copies of the report were circulated only to members of Council and Senate. A seven-page summary was compiled for release to the press and published in full in the Daily Dispatch. The summary contained only the Commission’s conclusions, leaving out evidence and substantiation. Its main conclusions were that: “the disturbances were not the result of a spontaneous outburst of unrest or rebellion on the part of the students in general against residential or other rules, but were engendered and fanned by student leadership at Rhodes”; and that “the ‘residence reform’ campaign was part of a preconceived programme of action adopted by NUSAS for one of its subsidiary organisations, NUSED.”

The Commission’s report began by stating, with a conspiratorial ring, that “In the whole matter of the disobedience campaign at Rhodes University…the voice was the voice of the SRC, but the hand was the hand of NUSAS.” The administration was still mistakenly identifying NUSAS as an external organisation that was interfering at Rhodes when in fact NUSAS was part and parcel of student life at Rhodes. All students at Rhodes were automatically members of NUSAS and among the student leadership were officers of the NUSAS national executive who also sat on the SRC. The link between Rhodes and NUSAS had existed for decades. However, NUSAS was at this time under close government scrutiny and was being investigated by the Schlebusch Commission. The government was keen to prove that NUSAS was a subversive and communist organisation so that it could be banned. The Munnik Commission’s conclusion that NUSAS was behind the unrest at Rhodes was probably politically influenced.

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121 Ibid., p. 193, 12 May 1971, min. 6.
124 “Munnik Commission report press summary”, p. 3. NUSED was the educational division of NUSAS.
125 Ibid., p. 1.
Furthermore, the administration had to portray to parents and the public that it had not done anything that might have led to the unrest. It also needed to absolve most of the students who had participated in the campaign by emphasising that they had been led astray by a subversive NUSAS plan to disrupt campuses across the country.

The Commission offered two recommendations. The first was that the Rhodes administration should restructure the halls of residence along the lines of the autonomous college system at Oxford and Cambridge. The second was to restructure the SRC in such a way that it comprise a number of constituencies instead of a single constituency. By dividing the students up into constituencies based on their halls of residence, the SRC would no longer be voted for by all the students collectively. It is clear that these recommendations were aimed at breaking up the student body so as to stamp out what was deemed to be student power. The Commission also expressed the view that the present SRC was being run by incompetent students. It did not criticise the actions of the Vice-Chancellor or administration, but did slate the student leadership. It found people and an organisation to blame, upheld the authority of the Rhodes administration, and protected what it saw as the good name of the university. In the long term both the residence system and the SRC were restructured as per the Commission’s recommendations.

Many students showed their disgust at the findings of the Commission. Its report became another source of discontent among students. A number of sit-ins and protests with placards occurred in the quadrangle outside the main administration block. The SRC passed resolutions refuting the Commission and its findings. It was particularly upset that the student leadership had not been provided with a copy of the report. But the administration was not a transparent one. Clive Keegan, editor of *Rhodeo* at the time, put it succinctly:

> The reaction was one of disbelief that the Commission failed so magnificently to understand the dynamics of either the revolt or the student politics of the time,

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and of the amazement that people of such stature could so delude themselves as to sign Munnik’s findings.¹²⁷

Ultimately, the disobedience campaign did assist in stepping up the pace of reform. The Senate Committee agreed to six of the proposed reforms and partially approved two more, which Council accepted and agreed to implement immediately.¹²⁸ The remnant leadership of the disobedience campaign, dissatisfied with this result, tried to incite reaction among the student body, but failed to make headway. Reform to rules would, however, come more quickly in the coming years.

At the Critical Tradition Colloquium at Rhodes in 2004, Kathleen Satchwell, who had succeeded John Whitehead as president of the SRC, described the campaign as “an explosion of volcanic proportions” but that it was “entirely parochial and without any broader political content”.¹²⁹ Whitehead did, however, have his passport confiscated the following year by the security police. Barry Streek, who had been the NUSED councillor at Rhodes and a member of the SRC, stated at the Colloquium that the Rhodes administration had “defended and embraced” the Munnik Commission’s report, that the administration had provided the security police with information from their university files, and that the SRC offices had been bugged.¹³⁰ Rhodes had in fact received a government grant of R100 000 in February. After the release of the Commission’s report, the Minister of Education, Senator JP van der Spuy, praised Rhodes for “keeping its house in order”. He announced at an NP congress: “The Commission found NUSAS to be agitators. The University Council stood firm and fined students who were found guilty. I appreciate the Council’s actions and the fact they stood firm. This is what the government wants.”¹³¹ Therefore, while the Rhodes administration refused to bow down to student power, it readily bowed down to government pressure.

¹²⁷ Interview with Clive Keegan, 29 October 2004. Keegan had been one of the students rusticated after the occupation of the Council Chamber in 1969. He was elected to the 1971-72 SRC.
¹²⁸ “Regulations for Rhodes students are relaxed”, Daily Dispatch, 16 September 1971, and RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVII, MS 17 846/1, p. 251, 10/11 September 1971, min. 6.
¹³¹ Ibid., p. 164.
Farewell to the ‘old guard’

The last few years of Hyslop’s Vice-Chancellorship were his most active.\(^{132}\) The domestic issues of 1968, 1969 and 1971 had concerned the students directly and were thus well supported. On 13 March 1972, after a string of government bannings, including one imposed on Basil Moore, some 400 students and staff marched down High Street in protest. When *Rhodeo* asked Hyslop about his absence from the march, he stated “I have shown that I am against banning, by signing the petition – that’s as far as I am prepared to go.”\(^{133}\) The SRC requested permission to host the 1972 NUSAS Congress, but was turned down by Council because of the dispute surrounding Rhodes’ hosting of the Congress in 1967.\(^{134}\) In 1973 the government again banned the president of NUSAS, Paul Pretorius. About one thousand students held a protest meeting in the Great Hall and organised a vigil over the banning.\(^{135}\) On 23 August 1975, just one week before Hyslop retired, eighteen students were arrested by the police. The students had been participating in a demonstration in front of the Drostdy Arch to protest the arrest and detention of the NUSAS president and two executive members under the Terrorism Act. The students were later released but faced disciplinary charges from the university administration and were each fined R20.\(^{136}\)

Things were beginning to change at the top at Rhodes, though. Hyslop retired, and other senior members of staff were doing the same, including members of the ‘old guard’ who had upheld conservative values. Domineering figures such as Professors WD Maxwell and JVL Rennie had already left Rhodes, but would be joined shortly by the likes of Chapman, Hobart Houghton and Gerber. On ending his term on Council, Professor Chapman

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\(^{132}\) Keeping in mind that Hyslop had not been present during both the 1968 and 1969 unrest episodes.

\(^{133}\) “400 in March of Protests at Bannings”, *Rhodeo*, 16 March 1972, p.1.


\(^{136}\) *Rhodeo*, n.d. (c. 1975), pp. 1 & 2. These were the president, Karel Tip, Glenn Moss and Gerry Mare. Shear, *Wits*, p. 53.
warned Council of the ‘accelerative thrust of change’ being experienced at the University, and not for the better. He referred particularly to the future of the residential system at Rhodes University, and urged Council to stand firm in any matter involving maintenance of standards of behaviour and decorum generally in the University’s residences.\footnote{RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVII, MS 17 846/1, p. 339, 10 December 1971, min. 24.}

Cloete announced his wish not to have his term of office as Chairman of Council extended when it expired at the end of 1975. He had been Chairman since 1963 and on Council since 1958.\footnote{He is Rhodes University’s longest serving Chairman of Council and the only one with a portrait in the Council Chamber.} Six other members of Council were also coming to the end of their terms. They included one of the government-appointed members, Dr JP Hartman, who had been on Council since 1954.\footnote{RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIX, MS 17 846/3, p. 82, 13 December 1974, min. 20.} Munnik also bade farewell to Council, which he had sat on since 1966.\footnote{Ibid., p. 1, 25 October 1974, min. 4(2).}

The conservativism of Rhodes began to ease. Senate and Council discussed the possibility of mixed dining halls, that is, females and males eating together; relaxing residence inter-visiting rules; and reviewing the dress code for staff and students in accordance with international trends. In 1974 Council approved the accommodation of black delegates in university residences for the South Africa and 1820 Settler Association conferences.\footnote{RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVIII, MS 17 846/2, p. 376, 19 April 1974, min. 6.} Senate, backed by Council, enquired of the Minister of Bantu Education about the possible admission of African students for higher degrees at Rhodes. This followed the Rand Afrikaans University seeking permission to do the same.\footnote{Ibid., p. 302, 14 December 1973, min. 11.} The reply was that only those with ministerial approval could attend Rhodes; in 1974 there was one African student registered for a PhD in Theology.\footnote{Ibid., p. 378, 19 April 1974, min. 17 and attached letter. This was TSN Gqubule, who graduated in 1978.} In 1975 Senate proposed that the rules for applications for academic posts at Rhodes include the phrase: “Rhodes University does not consider relevant the race, colour, creed or sex of applicants when making appointments.” However, Cloete pointed out to Council that while the university would like to be able to adopt such a policy the law prevented it. Senate’s proposal was

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\footnote{RU-C, Cory Library, Council XVII, MS 17 846/1, p. 339, 10 December 1971, min. 24.}
\end{flushright}
defeated eleven votes to four, with seven abstentions.\textsuperscript{144} Council was not yet ready to make such a commitment, but the appointment of Rhodes’ first permanent black lecturer would come barely a year later.

Hyslop also had to deal with a new movement that was asserting itself at Rhodes: black trade unionism. In 1972 two black grounds staff from Rhodes, Alester Maxegwana and Philemon Pekana, attended a workshop in Johannesburg on how to run a trade union. On returning to Rhodes they established the Black Workers Union (BWU).\textsuperscript{145} The administration refused to recognise this organisation and objected to the word ‘Union’ in their name, preferring ‘Association’. As a conciliatory gesture, Council set up the Black Workers Liaison Committee,\textsuperscript{146} but this was purely window-dressing. When the BWU organised and held a large gathering on the Great Field, the event resulted in a media frenzy. Hyslop retorted by ordering that the BWU only be allowed to meet indoors. A black member of staff in the Department of Bantu Languages, Mr Sydney Zanemvula Zotwana, who was a permanent instructor, became vigorously involved with the BWU and its activities. He was called to order by Hyslop, who felt it was inappropriate behaviour for a member of the academic staff.\textsuperscript{147} However, before this could all be resolved, Hyslop retired at the end of August 1975. It was left to the new Vice-Chancellor, Dr Derek Henderson, to handle the matter.

In August 1975 \textit{Rhodeo} published a small, out of the way paragraph wishing “Dr J (some students are a nuisance but basically they’re nice people) Hyslop… a happy retirement”.\textsuperscript{148} In the same edition an article on Dr Derek Henderson announced “Rhodes…A New Vice-Chancellor: let’s hear it for the good guy”.\textsuperscript{149} In contrast, Council expressed tribute to Hyslop, thanking him for maintaining “the high, uncompromising standards which had always been the hallmark of Rhodes University” and for his “wise

\textsuperscript{144} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XIX, MS 17 846/3, p. 122, 25 April 1975, min. 5(3) item 9.
\textsuperscript{145} Referred to as the Non-White Workers Union in Council minutes.
\textsuperscript{146} Referred to as the Non-White Workers Liaison Committee in Council minutes.
\textsuperscript{147} “Black Workers Union 5 year of friction”, \textit{Rhodeo}, n.d. (c.1977), p.2.
\textsuperscript{148} “Editorial – Dr Hyslop”, \textit{Rhodeo}, n.d. (c. 1975), p. 3.
\textsuperscript{149} \textit{Rhodeo}, n.d. (c. 1975), p. 3.
and diplomatic guidance at all times”. ¹⁵⁰ Hyslop most certainly lived up to the first attribute, and may have been diplomatic with Council, but definitely not with the students.

Dr Derek Henderson’s arrival at Rhodes signified an opening up of debate. Senate began to discuss contentious issues which had been stifled under Hyslop. Henderson, who described himself as politically liberal but morally conservative, had to deal with the implications that came with having free debate. This included “conjuring up fig leaves of non-confrontation” to appease the government. The gap between the administration and academics began to close. There was a general shift in the university’s view of academic freedom, moving away from its 1950s connotation that academic freedom rested on asserting university autonomy. It was rather viewed as a universal human freedom, not one only applicable to universities.

Henderson recalls that when he arrived there was an institutional fear of the government among members of the Rhodes administration. For example, Council was anxious that the government would not support Rhodes’ move to establish a branch in East London and instead promote a branch of UPE there. Progressive members of staff suspected that this fear was manifested under false pretences such that other members of staff could hide behind it to protect their politically conservative positions. Henderson did not think that the government would be as capricious as many believed. Having a background in industrial and public relations, Henderson was more suited to dealing with the government. Henderson arrived at Rhodes at the same time as the conservative old guard were retiring. He brought with him a fresh outlook conducive to the requirements of a

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1 “‘I’m not on anyone’s side’”, *Rhodeo*, May 1987, p. 3.
2 Interview with Ian Macdonald, 6 December 2006. Henderson was prepared to openly debate why he had made a particular decision, which was previously unheard of for a vice-chancellor. Satchwell, “Students at Rhodes under Apartheid”, p. 176.
3 Interview with Derek Henderson, 8 September 2006.
4 *Ibid*.
5 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXI, MS 17 846/5, p. 105, 27 April 1978, min. 78.37. Rhodes East London was opened in 1981 and was transferred to the University of Fort Hare in 2004.
6 Interview with Ian Macdonald, 6 December 2006.
7 Henderson had worked for IBM and been Harry Oppenheimer’s personal secretary at Anglo-American, as well as Professor of Computer Science and Dean of Science at Wits.
university in need of reform. Over the next 21 years, Henderson led Rhodes through the
most violent and transformative stage of twentieth century South Africa. His early years
as Vice-Chancellor saw the implementation of significant changes at Rhodes. However,
he grew to become fairly conservative as the 1980s progressed.

In 1976 the Rhodes administration appointed its first permanent black lecturer. Nadasan
Naidoo, a pharmacy graduate of Rhodes, had been a part-time lecturer and was reading
for his PhD. Rhodes did have two black professional assistants in the department of
African Languages, Sydney Z Zotwana and Ephraim AS Lesoro, and a black technician
in pharmacy, Santylal Daya. However, Naidoo was Rhodes’ first black academic. He
would be followed by Moosa Motara, appointed as a zoology lecturer in 1979. Pharmacy
appointed more black lecturers, such as AR Fassihi, in the mid-1980s. Zotwana and
Lesoro were only promoted to lecturer in 1985. While there was no law prohibiting the
appointment of black lecturers, the government’s treatment of UCT’s appointment of
Archie Mafeje in 1968 had been a case in point. The appointment of Naidoo signified not
only a change at Rhodes, but also, in its failure to respond, a relaxation of government
policy.

Also in 1976 students at Rhodes voted to disaffiliate from NUSAS, becoming the only
English-medium campus to do so. Students had come to be divided between those who
supported affiliation to NUSAS and those who opposed it. The latter position was
dominated by the predominantly conservative white Rhodesian students, some 30% of
the student body. The student body would undergo momentous change in the next
decade.

9 The Rhodeo stated that this was the first appointment of such a kind in a white university. It is likely this
means the appointment of a black lecturer outside of African Languages as UCT had four black lecturers in
that department in 1976. However, this is debateable as Natal might already have had Indian lecturers.
10 Motara later left Rhodes, returning in 1992 as Dean of Students; he retired in 2006. S Daya was later
promoted to chief technician, left Rhodes, returned in the 1990s and is currently professor of
pharmacology. African Languages was headed by a black professor, Peter Mtuze, from 1988.
11 “NUSAS Out”, Rhodeo, 7 April 1976, p. 2. Out of a poll of 83%, the vote was 723 to 474; and Interview
with Kirk Helliker, 11 December 2006.
Racial integration at Rhodes: the admission and accommodation of black students

Prior to Henderson’s arrival Rhodes had admitted Chinese students since 1963 and in more recent years a tiny number of Indian students. Black students required the permission of the minister to attend a ‘white’ university, and only for courses not offered at their ‘ethnic’ university. If the law was flouted they, not the university, would be punished. Indian students had gained ministerial permission to do pharmacy at Rhodes, which was not on offer at the University of Durban-Westville, the ‘ethnic’ university for Indians. Chinese students, on the other hand, were considered to be honorary whites and could live on campus. Indian students were not allowed to stay in university residences, and lived in the ‘Indian section’ of Grahamstown. In 1976 Henderson made a representation to the Minister of National Education, Piet Koornhof, for Rhodes to admit all students of all races based on academic merit. Both Senate and Council had supported Henderson with this endeavour, in particular because the Vice-Chancellors of Wits and UCT, Dr GR Bozzoli and Sir Richard Luyt respectively, had already made similar representations and it was “felt that there [was] room for guarded optimism in this particular area.”

Koornhof promised to look into the matter but had explained that it would take up to three years to change government policy.

However, ministerial permission for the admission of black students to white universities was coming more readily, although students still could only register for courses not on offer at their ‘ethnic’ universities. Proclamation 434 of 1960, which had prohibited the admission of black students to certain courses in ‘white’ universities, was repealed in 1971 when the Extension of University Education Act was amended to widen the powers of the Minister of National Education in permitting black students to attend ‘white’ universities. The Rector of RAU, Professor Gerrit Viljoen, asserted in 1972 that he was in principle in favour of admitting postgraduate black students. The following year both RAU and Potchefstroom agreed to admit limited numbers of postgraduate black students.

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12 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XX, MS 17 846/4, p. 88, 26 November 1976, min. 17.
13 Shear, Wits, pp. 34-36, 77-76.
who were recommended by their ‘ethnic’ universities, at which they would remain registered, while they visited the ‘white’ university to further their studies. They would have to find their own accommodation and could not participate in non-academic activities.\textsuperscript{15} By 1977 there were nearly 2000 black students at ‘white’ universities,\textsuperscript{16} more than there had been in 1960, and by 1978 only the University of Pretoria had not admitted black students.\textsuperscript{17} State policy, as rigid as it appeared on paper, was in practice being relaxed. To this end some black students received ministerial permission to study at Rhodes for undergraduate courses in journalism, pharmacy and translation, as well as read for higher degrees, and were admitted on academic merit.

The first intake of black students at Rhodes in 1977 comprised nine Africans and fifteen coloureds: the first since the 1950s. They joined eight Indian, 54 Chinese and 2568 white students.\textsuperscript{18} In 1980 new students included 778 whites, 40 Indians, 30 Coloureds and eight Africans. Most were undergraduates.\textsuperscript{19} For the five years after 1977 black students were a tiny minority, especially African students. In 1982 the number grew to 135 African, 78 Coloured and 109 Indian students, with 2879 white students.\textsuperscript{20} Rhodes had not independently begun to admit black students but did so in line with the other formerly ‘open’ universities. Black student numbers at UCT and Wits had declined after the 1959 legislation. UCT only had three African students in 1969.\textsuperscript{21} From 1967 Wits had admitted a few black students to engineering, after they had done a BSc at an ethnic university; but their education was often so poor that they took up to seven years to graduate. There was a steady trickle of black students at Wits in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{22} UCT and Wits admitted larger

\textsuperscript{15} The Academic Freedom Committees, The Open Universities and Academic Freedom, pp. 23-24.
\textsuperscript{16} Of which a large number, over 600, were at the Natal medical school.
\textsuperscript{20} IA Bunting, “Rhodes University 1960-1983: Some Analyses of Trends”, Cory Library, Pamphlet Box 143, p. 6, Table 5. Chinese students were no longer classified separately but included as white students.
\textsuperscript{21} Saunders, Vice-Chancellor on a tightrope, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{22} Bozzoli, A Vice-Chancellor Remembers, p. 102.
numbers of black students than Rhodes, especially from 1977. In 1981 UCT had 104 African, 230 Indian and 959 Coloured students;\(^{23}\) Wits had nearly 1300 black students.\(^{24}\)

Henderson, however, went a step further and began to accommodate black students on campus. He had heard of a case between the government and the Mother Superior of a Catholic Convent in Wynberg (in the Cape) who had accommodated black scholars at her school. When the government chastised her actions she managed to defend them through cleverly evading the topic by redirecting the government’s attention elsewhere.\(^{25}\) This gave Henderson, a practising Catholic, the courage to do the same. In 1977 Coloured and Indian students at Rhodes sought permission from the Department of Community Development to live in residence. When no response was forthcoming the Rhodes administration agreed to let the students live in residence pending a reply. By the end of the year there had been no response from the government. In Henderson’s words, “It seemed to be the way the government was going to play it.”\(^{26}\) In 1978 about fifty black students were living in residence. One of these was Stanley Kidd House, for male students, which consisted of one main building and a few annexes. The students dined together for meals, but black students lived in one building and white students in another. Henderson explains that this was to divert any unwanted attention to the illegal accommodation of black students on campus. However, in other residences this was not the case. Zubeida Jaffer, a Coloured student studying journalism in 1978, lived in Winchester House together with white students. She was one of five black girls there.\(^{27}\)

Henderson recalls that the media attempted to publicise his actions. When he heard of the *Sunday Times’* plan to have a full-page article on the recent integration and accommodation of black students at Rhodes, he quickly called up the editor, Tertius

\(^{23}\) Saunders, *Vice-Chancellor on a tightrope*, p. 113.  
\(^{24}\) Shear, *Wits*, p. 67.  
\(^{25}\) The Mother Superior had reminded the government that South Africa’s very few friends in the world included Chile and Argentina, Catholic countries, which would have been upset to hear of the government’s maltreatment of a Catholic Convent school. Interview with Derek Henderson, 8 September 2006.  
Myburgh. Henderson informed Myburgh that should the article go ahead, he would have dozens of black students suddenly without university accommodation because the publicity would provoke the government to react. The editor was reluctant to cancel the article but in the end did. The black students continued their stay in Stanley Kidd undisturbed.28 DJ ‘Sonny’ du Plessis, Vice-Chancellor of Wits, was not so lucky, and received bad publicity from a local Johannesburg newspaper which referred to his “almost obsessive preoccupation with the affairs of Blacks.”29 For Wits, negative reaction to integration came more from the prejudiced local white community than from the government.

However, towards the end of 1978 Rhodes received a letter from the government refusing permission for black students to live in residence, even those that had been living in residence. Henderson personally received a letter from the Minister of National Education censuring him for having accommodated black students on campus. Henderson wrote back asking for an explanation. Nearly eighty black students had applied for the next year and Henderson had to give them an answer regarding accommodation. Rhodes was about to appeal the government’s decision when it received permission to accommodate only the returning black students – five Indians and ten Coloureds.30 This was a minor reprieve but it forced Henderson to look into alternatives to accommodate the growing number of black students applying to Rhodes without openly defying the government’s decision.

Henderson temporarily accommodated fifteen Coloured and 24 Indian students in Prince Alfred and Adamson Houses, which had been closed for refurbishment and were technically no longer official residences. This manoeuvre worked, even if the students had to live in buildings in dire need of repair. Jaffer, however, recalls that this decision was made without consulting the black students. She said that

28 Interview with Derek Henderson, 8 September 2006.
29 Shear, Wits, p. 78.
30 Interview with Derek Henderson, 8 September 2006.
When we first heard that we would be without accommodation, we held a series of meetings to discuss what we would do. At no stage did the university administration indicate to us that they would stand by us, that they would not accept their students be treated in this cavalier fashion….When we marched on the administration and held a meeting with the V-C, there was no acknowledgement of our feelings. There was no statement of outrage. There was no protest from the highest echelons of the university.31

On returning to Rhodes Jaffer was appalled to find that two, separate residences had been set up specifically for black students. She recalls that

I just could not see myself accepting apartheid accommodation. This was not discussed with us. We were told of the university decision…. [But] we decided that we did not have an option, that we had nowhere else to go….We did not ask for it. It was forced upon us.32

The government was, though, more explicit in stating that Rhodes could only admit African students if they did not live on campus. Sixteen African students were accommodated in part of the nurses’ home at the abandoned Prince Alfred Infirmary, which was close to campus and where African students had been accommodated since May 1978.33 When the police questioned this, Henderson pointed out that the Infirmary did not lie on university property and the police would have to approach the Cape Province Administration which owned the land on which the buildings stood. This diverted the police’s attention and no further enquiry was made.34 Council followed a similar policy of evasion. When a letter from the Minister of Community Development was received insisting that Rhodes build residences for its Indian students in the ‘Indian section’ of Grahamstown, Council agreed to “thoroughly investigate the practicability of the government’s attitude from every conceivable angle”, because “by the time such an investigation was completed the government’s policy could well have changed.”35 Council also affirmed its support for Henderson’s actions and “urged black students not

32 Ibid., p. 181.
33 Interview with Derek Henderson, 8 September 2006. Previously African students had lived in the ‘location’, but on complaining to the administration about their appalling living conditions, they were moved to the old military infirmary, which now forms part of Nelson Mandela Hall at Rhodes.
34 Interview with Derek Henderson, 8 September 2008.
35 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXIII, MS 17 846/7, p. 28, 30 August 1979, min. 79.75.
to provoke incidents…lest these be brought to the attention of the Ministers concerned…forcing them to take appropriate action.”

True integration began at Rhodes in 1980 when black and white students began to live together in the same buildings. Rhodes was the first university in the country to do this. UCT followed shortly in 1981. Black students at the ‘open’ universities had organised themselves into societies. At Wits there was the Black Students Society. At Rhodes the Black Students Movement (BSM) was formed. One of Rhodes’ first black students, Devan Pillay, who registered for Journalism in 1980, recalls that “Being housed together…had the effect of creating a strong sense of solidarity amongst black students, and accelerated the political conscientisation of new students.” Integration also raised racial tension on campuses. Right-wing students at Wits organised themselves into the Moderate Students Alliance. At Rhodes a similar Moderate Students Organisation was formed. Its membership consisted mostly of white Rhodesian (hereafter Zimbabwean) students. Ihron Rensburg, a black student, moved into Thomas Pringle House where he was verbally abused and intimidated by white Zimbabwean students. Racial tension also arose in Graham House. Rhodeo quoted an anonymous black student living there who said that the “reasons blacks were integrated in residence was not a liberal gesture by Admin, but a way of splitting up the ‘violent, trouble-causing’ black students”.

However, white students generally reacted indifferently to the sudden influx of black students. Initially there were not enough black students to make an impact on campus, but this changed as their numbers grew. The black students invariably approached life on campus with caution, taking some time to adapt to a white environment with colonial trappings. Peter Mtuze, who arrived at Rhodes in 1978, recalls that while he lived in

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36 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXII, MS 17 846/6, p. 168, 8 March 1979, min. 79.6.5.
38 Saunders, Vice-Chancellor on a tightrope, p. 97.
40 Interview with Kirk Helliker, 11 December 2006. Rensburg is now Vice-Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg.
residence with black students, all other facilities were shared with white students on campus, such as the cafeteria, classrooms and toilets. He remembers how black students wanted to be treated the same as white students, and that there was no discrimination from the white lecturers. Race was forgotten, there were no signs of favouritism or affirmative action, and no special remedial classes for the black students.42

In 1981 Gerrit Viljoen, formerly Rector of RAU, became Minister of National Education and sought to eradicate the system of ministerial permission which was causing red-tape in the department. In 1983 he introduced legislation to amend the 1955 Universities Act shifting the responsibility for the admission of students to the universities. However, this would come with strict government-imposed quotas. The white universities would only be allowed to admit a small number of black students per year relative to the size of the student body. This would ensure a majority of white students. At Rhodes, the quota system was rejected as racist by the Academic Freedom Committee. In May, some 400 students, mostly black, marched to the Vice-Chancellor’s office to demand that he refuse to implement it.43 Henderson, however, saw the quota system as the first step back to full autonomy, as the new law allowed the university to admit black students on its own accord and was less problematical than the permit system.44 Council released a press statement that it “was committed to striving for full restoration of autonomy in respect of student admissions…[and] was to take all reasonable steps to counteract any possible ill-effects of the proposed quota regulations…[but] that to refuse to implement the quota system…would be counter-productive.”45 However, after the amendment was passed in August, Viljoen decided not to implement the law as a result of the strong opposition from the ‘open’ universities and international pressure.46

In the same year Henderson met with Viljoen and other senior officials in the Department of National Education to discuss the accommodation of black students on campus.

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44 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXVI, MS 19 315/3, p. 197, 5 May 1983, min. 83.35.
Viljoen had been sympathetic to the university and had suggested that Rhodes consider building a hostel for the black students in the ‘Indian section’ of Grahamstown. Henderson undertook to report this to Council as “the suggestion could not be ignored…The university would have to be seen to be giving its attention to the matter.”\(^47\) Henderson was “to hold exploratory discussions with interested parties without committing the university in any respect.” At a follow-up meeting it was noted that “because of the financial constraints it would be a long time before anything concrete emerged.”\(^48\) Henderson had managed again to evade a government directive and had the added bonus of being on friendly terms with Viljoen. They had known each other since their student days, and this allowed Henderson to negotiate with Viljoen.\(^49\) The accommodation of black students continued illegally at Rhodes until 1989 when the government allowed university councils to decide on the accommodation of all students on campus. Formal application could be made to receive exemption from the Group Areas Act. Rhodes complied and received ministerial approval in 1990.\(^50\)

**Student activism in the aftermath of Soweto, 1977-1982**

In 1977 the Albany constituency voted in Jaap Olckers of the NP as Member of Parliament. The UP had declined in power during the 1970s due to a division between the centrist and right-wing elements of the party. The Progressive Federal Party (PFP), led by Colin Eglin, was the new official opposition with just seventeen seats in Parliament to the NP’s 135.\(^51\) The Prime Minister, BJ Vorster, had called the election eighteen months early, specifically because the opposition was in such disarray: the UP had split into three new parties. The election was also necessary to take the white populace’s mind off the

\(^{47}\) RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXVI, MS 19 315/3, p. 394, 22 September 1983, min. 83.68.5
\(^{49}\) Henderson recalls playing rugby against Viljoen at intervarsity between Rhodes and Orange Free State University College, where Viljoen studied. At one match Henderson knocked Viljoen’s teeth out. People would jest that Henderson was the only vice-chancellor to have knocked the minister of national education’s teeth out when Viljoen was minister. After university Henderson dealt with Viljoen when bringing computers and computer technology to South Africa. Viljoen had been the first Principal of RAU, 1967-1978, and chairman of the Broederbond. Interview with Derek Henderson, 8 September 2006.
\(^{50}\) RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXXIII, MS 19 407/2, p. 21, 1 December 1989, min. 89.85; and p. 58, 22 February 1990, min. 90.1.07.
worst economic recession in the country in forty years and the failure of détente. In the face of international opposition to South Africa, the NP called on patriotic support and made strong electoral gains in areas traditionally UP strongholds, including Albany. However, the 1976 Soweto uprisings had struck fear into the white populace and there was a surge of support for the Nationalist government, from Afrikaans and English speaker alike.\(^{52}\)

On 18 August 1977 Steve Biko was arrested outside Grahamstown and later died in Pretoria as a result of police brutality. On 19 October 1977 eighteen Black Consciousness organisations were banned, including SASO, and 47 Black Consciousness leaders were arrested. Hundreds of people were arrested and detained under the Terrorism and Internal Security Acts over the next year. By the end of 1977 some nineteen are known to have died while in detention. Grahamstown was not immune to these events. Some detainees were held in local prisons; others died under suspicious circumstances in nearby Port Elizabeth; and cases dealing with deaths in detention were heard in the Grahamstown Supreme Court.\(^{53}\) These events created an acute awareness of the brutality of the apartheid state among both staff and students at Rhodes, the more radical of whom felt called to respond to them. Kathy Satchwell, working in the Cory Library at the time, initiated a system of support for detainees, and several Rhodes staff donated their time and some of their pay. In 1977 a small group of Rhodes students and staff were part of the 15 000 people who attended Biko’s funeral in King William’s Town. However, in September 1977, when over one thousand Fort Hare students were arrested for holding a memorial service for Biko, Rhodes students failed to express any solidarity with them.\(^{54}\)

In September 1978 Rhodes students planned a memorial service to pay tribute to Steve Biko on the first anniversary of his death. This had been organised by the Radical Society (Radsoc). The service went ahead but not without first rousing action by the Security Branch. Shortly before the service the police picked up the chairperson of Radsoc, Chris Watters, and took him back to his room in Graham House, which was promptly searched.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., pp. 429-432.
\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 94.
The SRC offices were also raided and nearly 500 pamphlets commemorating Biko’s death were confiscated. The police had wanted to question the SRC president, Izak Smuts, but could not locate him. The police also raided a student digs where Rob Rees and Guy Berger were living. Rees and Berger were members of Delta, which Berger had founded.\(^{55}\) Berger was also a member of Radsoc. Their domicile was searched and some publications were confiscated. Another student’s residence room was raided a week later and banned books by Biko were removed. One of the policemen involved in the raids was Warrant Officer Ignatius van Jaarsveld, a part-time BCom student at Rhodes. The SRC planned to summon Van Jaarsveld before its disciplinary board for interfering in the affairs of a student society. However, this fell through as no support came from the university administration. Henderson did hold a private meeting with Van Jaarsveld but took no subsequent action.\(^{56}\) Later a first-year journalism student came forward and reported to \textit{Rhdeo} that he had been approached by the police in East London to be an informer at Rhodes. Albert van Oortmerssen had been offered a lucrative monthly stipend to spy on the activities of the more radical students and societies. Students on campuses across the country were spying for the police. The offer of a paid university education was not easily ignored by some students.\(^{57}\)

In May 1979 about forty students constructed a mock squatter camp in the main quadrangle as a symbolic protest against the forced removals of black people and in particular those that had been relocated to the Glenmore settlement camp in the Ciskei. Monty Roodt, a student who took part in it, described what became known as the “quad squat”:

> With a group of likeminded members of the hedonist left (as our particular group was known), we snuck into the main admin quad in the early hours of the morning, through the majestic arches designed by Sir Herbert [Baker] himself and erected a squatter camp on the beautiful green lawns. We used old corrugated iron and tents, and also set up numerous carefully prepared notice boards outlining our concern with the Eurocentric and irrelevant content of the university curriculum.

\(^{55}\) Delta was a student society that published an irregular newspaper for black readership called the \textit{Grahamstown Voice} as well as ran self-help development projects in the resettlement camps in the Ciskei.\(^{56}\) D. Forbes, “Security Crackdown: Rhodes Shudders”, \textit{Rhdeo}, 13 October 1978, p. 2.\(^{57}\) “Student Informer?”, \textit{Rhdeo}, 13 October 1978, p. 3.
We stuck banners and posters around campus advertising our protest squat, and when the university awoke from its slumber, there we were encamped and ready for action. The mode of operation was to hand out pamphlets to passing students and staff and to engage them in debate about the merits of studying romantic English poets while people were being forcibly removed from their homes and relocated to Bantustan resettlement camps such as Glenmore on the Fish River near Grahamstown. In fact the impetus for the Quad Squat was provided by another Journalism Department survey amongst students, where one bright young spark when asked about…Glenmore…said he thought that it was a Scottish biscuit!58

The reaction to the “quad squat” was mixed. A few left-wing lecturers held their classes in the quad in open solidarity with the protest and the more liberal professors showed their approval in the press. Conservative students threatened to destroy the camp and attacked it with water-bombs. Five law students staged a counter-demonstration alongside the camp in support of colonialism.59 Henderson took no action against the protest but did not support it either. The “quad squat” was viewed by some as a mere gesture in comparison to the solid action that had been taken by others. For instance, the Glenmore Action Group, composed of mostly liberal Rhodes academics, had done valuable work in publicising the removals and had organized food aid for the affected. In hindsight Roodt agreed, stating that most of the “hedonistic left” involved in the “quad squat” had left South Africa, although some had remained in Grahamstown and at Rhodes.60

Grahamstown was struck with acute township violence in 1980 and 1981. Thousands of children boycotted the schools and hundreds of workers went on strike. Those that refused to participate or tried to preach peace became victims of mob violence and many died. To curb the violence white policemen, in armed vehicles, were sent into the township and this resulted in further deaths from police brutality. In particular, police were dispatched to disperse crowds attending the funerals of the fallen, which were

59 They pretended to be playing a game of bowls dressed in bashers and blazers, reclined in deckchairs and sipped tea brought by ‘African’ servants in white uniforms.
regarded as political mass meetings. The police killed at least one person attending a funeral, only to disperse the crowd at that person’s funeral a week later, killing another, and so creating a vicious cycle that would repeat itself for weeks at a time. While the police entered the township during the day, members of the South African Defence Force executed covert operations at night.  

The dire situation in the township did not go unheeded at Rhodes. In August 1981 Rhodes voted to re-affiliate with NUSAS after a six-year absence.  

While re-affiliation came by a narrow margin, it was partly a reaction to the situation in the country at the time. The growing presence of black students on campus, together with integration in the residences, had assisted in reducing the silent majority of students, who were generally conservative and typically indifferent, and created a student body that became more liberal in outlook. Some students had become more radical – students such as Guy Berger and Devan Pillay, who were both arrested in July 1980 for possessing banned material and accused of being members of and furthering the aims of the banned ANC. After seven months in detention their widely publicised six-week trial took place in Port Elizabeth. While in detention Berger had apparently confessed to his involvement with the ANC but had done so under duress. He had been subjected to the security police’s torture methods.  

State witnesses at the trial included a RAU professor, a National Intelligence Service official, and an ex-Wits SRC member who had been an undercover spy and now worked for the security police. Neither Berger nor Pillay were members of the ANC and were innocent of all the charges laid against them. The state built a case based on concocted evidence and false witnesses. Initially Berger and Pillay pleaded not guilty, but in the face of an invincible prosecution, changed their plea. All other charges

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63 This included sleep deprivation, all-night interrogations, threats of being beaten while naked, refusal to see a doctor when ill, and threats that his loved ones would be detained.  
64 Professor Stoffels van der Merwe, who later became deputy minister of information; the NIS official is unnamed; and Captain Craig Williamson, who had been involved with the ANC while an undercover spy at Wits.
were subsequently dropped. Terence Beard and Nancy Charton from the Rhodes department of political studies provided character references for Berger and Pillay as mitigating evidence. The magistrate, JB Robinson, sentenced Berger to seven and Pillay to four years in prison, but suspended each of their sentences by half. Guy Berger was released from prison in 1983 after serving more than two years.

Amid the repression and violence of 1981 the Nationalist government celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the republic. Students at Rhodes rallied to show their disapproval. At a mass meeting in May the students passed a motion condemning the republic as a travesty, and refused to take any part in the celebrations. UCT students also refused to participate in the festivities and the administration denied the use of its facilities and grounds for the anniversary, coming under government fire for this. The Minister of National Education, Viljoen, warned that

> the government cannot accept that universities, as public institutions very substantially financed by the government from public funds, refuse to make available their facilities for national events, and that they fail to exercise effective discipline against students who wilfully insult and degrade national symbols of great emotional value.

Stuart Saunders, the UCT Vice-Chancellor, stood firm. The Wits and Natal administrations also took stands against the celebrations. Viljoen responded by holding private meetings with each of the three universities attended by their Vice-Chancellors and Chairmen of Council, together with Finance Minister Owen Horwood. Rhodes, however, was absent because it had not taken an official stand. The students protesting the republic festivities were not supported by the administration as at UCT, Wits and Natal.

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65 Berger and Pillay were also charged with, among others, furthering the aims of the SACP. Interview with Terence Beard, 11 December 2006.
68 Saunders, Vice-Chancellor on a tightrope, pp. 117-118.
69 Horwood had been Vice-Chancellor of Natal.
Meanwhile, Henderson came under fire for providing the Security Branch with personal information on eight students from the university’s files. When confronted on this issue Henderson explained that he had done so in order “not to cause problems for the security police as black students were living illegally on campus, and their position could have been jeopardised.”71 Any provocation of the government would have destroyed the unspoken agreement between it and Henderson, who did not want the campus swarming with the police as was occurring at other universities. Henderson had to refrain from making a fuss over the security police’s inquiry but also had to risk the bad publicity from the student press. Henderson did, however, gain respect from the students for explaining his position to them at a mass meeting.72 When twelve students were briefly detained in October 1981, this served as a reminder of Henderson’s collusion with the security police.73 In a representation to Council the Academic Freedom Committee proposed a policy to guide the Vice-Chancellor in releasing information on students and staff to the police and other authorities. It was accepted that student records were confidential, that the Vice-Chancellor may be compelled by law to discharge this information when provided with a warrant or subpoena, and that the Vice-Chancellor would have to utilise his discretion in the best interests of the university. Council endorsed Henderson’s actions regarding the matter so far, but also adopted the policy.74

The 1981 white election resulted in a surprising victory for the PFP in Albany. Errol Moorcroft, the PFP candidate, was voted in as Member of Parliament by just 139 votes. Henderson’s wife, Thelma, had a lot to do with rallying former UP supporters behind the new opposition party. The students also assisted in swinging the vote. Students were registered to vote where they studied and the local branch of the PFP worked tirelessly to ensure that students voted in the elections and that the alumni who had not re-registered elsewhere voted by post. These election campaigns resulted in the student vote carrying a lot of weight in Albany.75 Countrywide the PFP, led by former Rhodes sociology lecturer, Frederik van Zyl Slabbert, managed to garner ten more seats totalling 27 in

72 Interview with Ian Macdonald.
74 RU-C, Council XXIV, MS 19 315/1, p. 420, 3 September 1981, min. 81.56.9.
parliament, although this was still tiny in comparison to the NP’s 142. The only other party in parliament was the New Republic Party, which had been formed by the more right-wing members of the former UP.76

With the advent of 1982 violence in Grahamstown declined but events elsewhere continued to rally student activists at Rhodes, such as the death in detention of Dr Neil Aggett in Johannesburg on 5 February, which sparked widespread condemnation.77 This occurred amid racial tension on campus and accusations that the administration was practising racial discrimination in allocating residence accommodation and in awarding bursaries. Black students tended to come from less affluent homes and struggled to afford university fees. An element in the BSM expected to be shown preferential treatment and wanted immediate affirmative action. As the number of black students was low they had no representation on the SRC; thus the BSM became their vehicle for change. The black students identified strongly with the oppressed and heightened awareness of the liberation struggle on campus, winning round a few white students to their cause. Many of them had previously studied at an ‘ethnic’ university, most at Fort Hare. In May 1982, the police clamped down heavily on Fort Hare students protesting against the proposed transfer of the control of the university to the Ciskei government. Ciskei had received ‘independence’ in 1981. At Rhodes black students (with some white students) held a two-day sit-in to show their solidarity with their brethren at Fort Hare.78 The students condemned the government’s easy control of the ethnic universities, which were often closed for lengthy periods as a means to end student unrest, whereas the ‘white’ universities maintained a sense of autonomy.

78 “Students Stand Together”, Rhodeo, 27 May 1982, p. 3.
Student activism rejuvenated: the watershed years of 1983 and 1984

At Rhodes 1983 began with what is light-heartedly referred to by veterans as “the great censorship debate”.79 This was over the censorship of student publications and in particular Rhodeo. Rhodeo had from time to time been censored by the government, proudly displaying its blotted out passages and carrying the footer, “this article has been severely restricted and may be misleading”. From 1977 Senate had decided to waive the compulsory censorship of the newspaper whereby the editors had been obliged to provide a Senate advisory board with a draft for review. However, the first uncensored issue of Rhodeo in 1977 included content that alarmed Henderson. These were a frontal picture of a nude woman, albeit shady and unfocused, and accusations that the Kimberley Hall Warden, Michael Oelschig, had been biased and unfair when disciplining students. The issue was promptly ‘banned’ by the administration. The editors of Rhodeo were called to account and ordered to make a public apology to Oelschig in the next issue, which they did. However, Senate continued to waive censorship year by year, stipulating that the advisory board was available for the editors to consult should they wish to.80 Henderson’s intervention had not been well received by students, but he had been willing to explain his morally conservative position to them. In contrast, the Vice-Chancellor of Wits, GR Bozzoli, who retired in 1977, had learnt from his visits to overseas universities during the student unrest of 1968 that he should never tangle with the student press.81 However, even Bozzoli had had to intervene, under enormous government pressure, when the Wits Student published a cartoon insulting the Prime Minister in 1972.82

In December 1982 Senate decided to reinstate the compulsory submission of Rhodeo to the advisory board. This had been on the insistence of Henderson, who viewed Rhodeo as getting out of hand and possibly provoking the government. Rhodeo was becoming a more radical newspaper. However, Senate added the condition that the editors remained free to disregard the advisory board’s advice. Professors Michael Whisson of

79 Interview with Ian Macdonald, 6 December 2006.
81 Bozzoli, A Vice-Chancellor Remembers, p. 171.
82 Ibid., pp. 188-189. The incident was of the lavatory bowl cartoon.
Anthropology and Andre Brink of Afrikaans/Nederlands were among the few opposed to Senate’s motion, which was passed by 43 votes to 8.\(^{83}\)

Reaction from students came swiftly. The first quarter of 1983 was filled with mass meetings and a vociferous campaign against Senate’s imposition of censorship. In March an issue of *Rhodeo* was published without consulting the advisory board and the two co-editors were summoned to attend a disciplinary hearing the next month. In the interim Senate met and no less than 38 members indicated their wish to review their decision for compulsory submission. At the request of the student body, Senate, in an unprecedented move, allowed one of the co-editors, Alan Williams, to address them. He stated the objections of the SRC and *Rhodeo* and the unfortunate consequences of censorship. He also presented Senate with a petition signed by some 820 students. The debate that followed split Senate. This created some heat because Henderson was leading the pro-censorship camp. Professors Gledhill and Beuthin proposed a motion that Senate confirm its previous decision. Professors Terence Beard, Andre Brink, Malvern van Wyk Smith and Ian Macdonald expressed their discomfort at the consequences arising from the decision. Van Wyk Smith and Beard moved an amendment that Senate rescind its previous decision and allow for voluntary submission to the advisory board. This was adopted 27 votes to 22, and the final motion carried 30 votes to 19.\(^{84}\) Ultimately, the anti-censorship camp won because the imposition of censorship was seen to be mimicking the actions of the government in restricting freedom; and if Rhodes was to be a truly liberal university, as it presented itself, it had to allow freedom of the student press.

The government’s move to amend the Universities Act to implement the quota system diverted student attention, as did the Defence Amendment bill, which came in the midst of the first conscientious objector’s trial. Peter Hawthorn faced up to 22 months in prison but as many as six years if the bill was passed.\(^{85}\) Objection to compulsory national service (conscription), which had been in effect since 1972, was not accepted by the

\(^{83}\) RU-S, Cory Library, Senate XXXVII, MS 19 316/5, p. 7, 13 December 1982, min. 82.104.


government if it was on moral or political grounds. In later years even objection on religious grounds was rejected. In support of conscientious objectors the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) was formed in July 1983. It grew rapidly in 1984 and 1985, and provided objectors with legal assistance and support. By the late 1980s hundreds of young men were refusing the call up to national service. The ECC was a target of state repression. By 1987 meetings were banned, 98 members were in detention, 25 had been banned, and the ECC offices were often raided. The ECC received a significant amount of support in Grahamstown and among Rhodes students, many of whom would object to national service.

Rhodes failed to react to a more immediate event. In May 1983 Fort Hare came to a complete standstill when it was closed following widespread protest. The students had heard rumours that the President of the Ciskei, Lennox Sebe, was to receive an honorary degree and become the university’s Chancellor. This would be the final step in Fort Hare’s transfer from the control of the South African government to the Ciskei government. The students reacted by boycotting lectures and turning to violence. The Principal, Professor JH Lamprecht, called in the police who arrested and detained 22 students. When this did not stop the mass rioting the power was cut off, the university closed and nearly 2000 students evicted. In response UCT offered to accept some students whose studies had been disrupted and employed a lecturer who had resigned from Fort Hare. Rhodes, however, about a hundred kilometres from Fort Hare, was so engrossed in the domestic debate over censorship of Rhodeo that these events passed them by. As the student body was still overwhelmingly white, the focus of student activism was on ‘white’ issues: the quota system pertained to ‘white’ universities and conscription to white men.

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86 “Buddha saves”, Rhodeo, September 1986, p. 7. The first conscientious objector to be granted the right not to do military service on religious grounds was Dave Hartman, an ex-Rhodes student, in 1986. But new legislation would overturn it.
87 As a lawyer Kathleen Satchwell, SRC president 1972, often represented objectors.
89 Saunders, Vice-Chancellor on a tightrope, p. 138.
90 Out of a staff of 30 on Rhodeo only three were black.
The principal event of 1983 was the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in August. Its main initial concern was to promote opposition to PW Botha’s new tricameral constitution. Very quickly organisations such as NUSAS, the BSM and the ECC affiliated to the UDF. The UDF’s immediate aim was to encourage a boycott of the 1984 tricameral elections, in which Indians and Coloureds would vote for their houses in parliament, the House of Delegates and the House of Representatives respectively. Some students at Rhodes came out in support of the UDF. While the number of African students had been growing, the majority of black students were Indian or Coloureds. In the run-up to the elections, a growing number of Rhodes students stood in solidarity with other students across the country protesting the racist policies of the government as well as its use of force against the oppressed. Before the end of 1983 Rhodes students had reacted to the forced removals of Africans to the Ciskei and their appalling living conditions there; to the detention of more students at Wits; to the trial of a UCT student similar to that of Berger and Pillay’s; and the students had provided over a thousand signatures for a NUSAS petition against the new constitution.91

Student activism was heightened at the start of the election year by the trial of eleven Port Elizabeth men for treason at the Grahamstown Supreme Court, at which Rhodes’ former Chairman of Council, Dante Cloete, presided as Judge President of the Eastern Cape. One of the most significant speakers to address Rhodes on the liberation struggle was Mosiuoa Patrick ‘Terror’ Lekota, who spoke to a packed Great Hall in February 1984. As a leading figure in the UDF, Lekota preached a peaceful end to conflict.92 In August the ECC held a poll at Rhodes on conscription. The result showed that 58% of the students rejected conscription while 39% supported it.93 While there was still a conservative element within the student body, it was now in the minority. Gone were the days of the silent majority. The majority was now loud and animated.

91 Various articles in Rhodeo, October 1983.
92 “Treasons Trial in Grahamstown” and “Lekota tells about an end to conflict”, Rhodeo, March 1984, pp. 3, 6.
93 “Conscription rejected”, Rhodeo, August 1984, p. 3.
The election for the Coloured House of Representatives was held on 22 August 1984. The night before a few hundred students at Rhodes held a vigil on campus as part of the nationwide UDF campaign to boycott the election. Over forty policemen arrived and dispersed the crowd, arresting 24 students. The students were released the next day when the university paid their bail. But the news of what had happened spread across campus and angered students. There was a call to boycott lectures and a protest march was organised to condemn the police action on campus as well as the election. When the march of about 400 students reached the Drostdy Arch, the police were waiting for them. Eighteen students were arrested and detained under the Internal Security Act for holding a peaceful demonstration. Those detained included the SRC president, Alan Williams, and the co-editor of *Rhodeo*, Olivia Forsythe, who was in fact a police informer. The students were not detained for long, but the police action provoked greater student activism on campus. The election for the Indian House of Delegates was held on 2 September 1984, although Rhodes students did not engage in protest this time.

The UDF had succeeded in persuading enough Indian and Coloured voters to abstain. The official figures stated that 30% of Coloureds and about 20% of Indians had voted. The UDF’s own calculations, though, showed that it was as little as 18% of Coloureds and 16% of Indians that had voted. The protest against the elections continued with a string of stay-aways, boycotts and mass-action that started in the Vaal Triangle and spread across the country. While the chairmen of the new Coloured and Indian houses of parliament, Allan Hendrickse and Amichand Rajbansi, were appointed as ministers to the central cabinet, the first blacks to be so, power still rested with the NP. On 5 September PW Botha became the first executive state president of South Africa under the new constitution.

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94 The Drostdy Arch forms a border between campus and the public roads, High Street and Somerset Street. Between it and the main administration building lie the Drostdy Lawns, which made for a perfect focal point for gatherings.
The new constitution affected Rhodes directly in two ways. The first was that the four government members on Council had been appointed by the state president, a position that had not carried executive power but now did so. Council decided to maintain the status quo until such time as the Committee of University Principals agreed to amend their university acts to shift the power of appointment from the president to the Minister of National Education. The second was that the tricameral parliament had also created ministerial councils within each house such that the Indian house would deal with Indian affairs, the Coloured house with Coloured affairs. While the central government retained a Department of National Education, the white House of Assembly also had a Department of Education and Culture. White universities fell under both departments, but historically National Education held sway.

The State of Emergency, 1985-1986

In the aftermath of the UDF campaign against the 1984 elections, the state increased its repression of the extra-parliamentary opposition. This was the “total strategy” developed by Defence Minister Magnus Malan, alongside Botha’s “total onslaught” theory that South Africa was being attacked from all side by Marxist enemies. At Rhodes the digs and residence rooms of students were raided by the police. Numerous documents, diaries and books were confiscated. In particular the BSM and its president, Thabiso Ratsomo, were targeted.

At the university rag in April 1985 the BSM demonstrated alongside the procession of floats. This was partly because of their resistance to rag. Ashwin Desai, a black student, was quoted in Rhodeo as saying that rag “thwarts our struggle for liberation from the shackles of apartheid and capitalism”. He added that rag was an excuse for white students to revel, showing that their involvement in raising money for charity was only superficial. Very few white students did any more for charity other than participating in

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98 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXIX, MS 19 315/6, p. 93, 6 March 1986, min. 86.13.
rag, and only 29 cents of every rand actually went to charity. The BSM utilised rag to make a political demonstration. On 21 March the 25th anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre had been commemorated. At a march in Uitenhage police fired on a peaceful crowd and killed 26 people.\textsuperscript{102} At the rag the police used teargas and batons against protesting students. Three students were detained and many had been injured by the police’s brute force.\textsuperscript{103} Tension had been rising on campus. Shortly before rag the BSM had marched on a private lunch between the Vice-Chancellor and the British ambassador, P Moberley. Henderson was shocked when about 150 black students forced their way into the private lunch and demanded that the ambassador make a public statement condemning the violence in South Africa. Not surprisingly the ambassador declined, stating that he did not have the authority to do such a thing, and on the stern request of Henderson the students grudgingly left.\textsuperscript{104} So as not to exacerbate the situation Henderson did not take disciplinary action against the students.

Thabiso Ratsomo was one of those detained at rag. On 17 May about 250 students marched to show solidarity with him. The march had been called by the Crisis Committee, which had been formed by the black students on campus. A member of the committee stated in \textit{Rhodeo} that “We did not want people to see Thabiso’s detention in isolation from the ongoing repression in South Africa.”\textsuperscript{105} Whereas the police had only used teargas and batons at the Rhodes rag, they had shot at demonstrating students at Fort Hare. In the Grahamstown township mourners at a funeral had been shot at, some being killed.\textsuperscript{106} The vicious cycle of deaths and funerals that had occurred in 1980 and 1981 returned with the increased presence of the police in the township in June 1985. Violence had erupted across the country between those that supported the ANC and UDF, and those that supported the Azanian People’s Organisation (AZAPO) and National Forum (NF). Whereas the ANC and UDF pursued the struggle in co-operation with all races,

\textsuperscript{102} “Massacre at Uitenhage”, \textit{Rhodeo}, April 1985, p. 7. Unofficial estimates were 33 dead.
\textsuperscript{103} “Teargas, Beers…And Boys in Blue”, \textit{Rhodeo}, April 1985, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{104} “Ambassador chokes on reality”, \textit{Rhodeo}, April 1985, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{105} “Solidarity with student”, \textit{Rhodeo}, June 1985, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{106} “Mourners shot at funeral” and “Campus shooting”, \textit{Rhodeo}, June 1985, p. 7.
AZAPO and the NF were suspicious of ‘non-racialists’.107 AZAPO had been formed in 1978 following the banning of Black Consciousness (BC) movements.108 The NF was formed in June 1983 as a challenger to the UDF, but never grew to be as big.109

Botha declared a partial state of emergency, effective from midnight on 20 July 1985, and imposed martial law, which granted the police extraordinary powers and consented to the use of the SADF to curb the violence that was crippling the country. This was a tactic to destabilise and weaken the UDF. Thousands were arrested and detained. The UDF leadership, including Archie Gumede and Albertina Sisulu, were accused by the government of having conspired to overthrow it with the ANC and SACP. The first trial against them failed. The second trial, in Delmas, included the accusation that they were responsible for the deaths of five councillors as a result of the Vaal Triangle uprising the year before. Among the accused in the Delmas trial was Rhodes student Thabiso Ratsomo, along with Popo Molefe and Mosiuoa Patrick ‘Terror’ Lekota. By 1987 about three-quarters of the estimated 30 000 in detention were members of the UDF or its affiliates. State repression had also resulted in the deaths or disappearances of numerous activists, such as the Cradock Four: Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkonto and Sicelo Mhlauli. While the UDF was not banned outright, for fear of provoking a popular reaction (the UDF had about two million members and 600 affiliated organisations), the severe repression of its leaders and banning of its meetings made it difficult for the UDF to function.110

Like all the English-medium universities, Rhodes did not go untouched by this.111 A number of employees and students were detained. Those detained included Sue Lund, who worked for the Rhodes Academic Skills Programme and was a fieldworker for the Grahamstown Rural Committee; Roland White, who was a master’s student and on the Labour Research Committee; and Olivia Forsythe, formerly a co-editor of Rhodeo but

107 This was a distinction between accepting that race exists (multi-racialists) or that it didn’t (anti-racist). After all, it was argued, multi-racialists could still be racists because they recognised race.
108 Such as the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and the Azanian Students Organisation (AZASO).
110 Ibid., pp. 451-452.
111 “UCT Students Teargassed on Campus”, Rhodeo, August 1985, p. 3.
also on the SRC and involved in NUSAS as a police informer. Three students had been released – Paco Prince, a third year BA student; Gugile Nkwinti, a first year BComm student; and Zalisile Mkhontwana, an HDE student. The state of emergency imposed censorship and Rhodeo had to drop numerous articles or blot out whole paragraphs and sentences. The details of arrests and detentions could not be printed. In response NUSAS organised a day of protest against the state of emergency, but only 150 students attended the gathering at Rhodes. The police were watching the students, taking photographs or videos. Black students approached Henderson and demanded that he make representations to the government about the state repression of black students at the ‘ethnic’ universities, especially at the Turfloop campus of the University of the North. They also queried the awarding of bursaries, which appeared to discriminate on grounds of race. Henderson replied that he would look into both matters but did not.

On 4 September students at Rhodes organised a protest march to condemn the banning of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS). About 300 students and some academics marched from the Kaif Lawns to the Drostdy Arch carrying banners proclaiming “COSAS Banned: We shall fight on”, “Why ban democratic education” and “Solidarity with detainees”. At the arch about forty policemen were waiting for them and had formed a barrier to prevent the march from going into the street. The police warned the marchers to disperse within ten minutes. They were ignored and the crowd began to sing Nkosi Sikelele iAfrika. After thirty seconds the police charged the crowd. They surged onto the drostdy lawns and hit students and academics with quirts and sjamboks. Injured students fell and those who came to their aid were also hit by the police. When the chaos subsided the police had arrested 22 people, including two lecturers. In response about 500 students gathered outside the Kaif and sang protest songs. At the same time the academics that had been in the march held a meeting on how to aid those who had been arrested. Another march was organised for the next day and all members of staff were to be informed by word of mouth to show their support by attending it. Students and academics then marched to the quadrangle where they demanded to see Henderson.

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112 “Students detained”, Rhodeo, August 1985, p. 3.
114 “Turning their backs on Racism”, Rhodeo, September 1985, p. 3.
Instead the Vice-Principal, Professor JW Brommert, met with a delegation of two academics and two students. The crowd in the quad dispersed after they were told that their continued gathering was hampering the release of those who had been arrested. In the evening of 4 September the annual Academic Freedom Lecture was given by Allister Sparks in a packed Great Hall. The students and lecturers in prison were released at 8.30pm and entered the Great Hall at the conclusion of Sparks’ lecture to a standing ovation. The gathering then passed a motion, almost unanimously, condemning the police brutality at the march earlier that day.

The next day over 1500 students and staff marched on campus to protest the police’s attack on the peaceful demonstration the day before. Henderson and about a hundred academics took part. This was by far the largest demonstration to have ever occurred on campus. The march stopped in front of the Drostdy Arch and the police were once again waiting. The students sat down on the lawns and were addressed by various figures, including Professor Andre Brink, who pointed out that the police, by their attack, were saying more about themselves than about the people they were attacking. The police were within hearing distance. The majority of staff watched the proceedings from their position in front of the clock-tower, a safe distance away. Tension hung in the air as the police watched keenly from the street side of the arch, flexing their quirts and recording the protest on camera. At the conclusion of the speeches, the crowd sang Nkosi Sikelele iAfrika and dispersed peacefully. The solidarity shown by so many students served to destroy a lot of misconceptions that the BSM were a “bunch of racist radicals who were a threat to the security of white students”. It also served to revive mass protest on campus. The attack of the police on students and staff on university property put Rhodes on a par with UCT and Wits, although the latter universities had experienced this more often. Rhodes was finally joining the ‘open’ universities in protesting against the government’s policies.

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115 Vice-Principal 1978 to 1986.
116 “Police brutality becomes reality”, Rhodeo, September 1985 (special), back page.
The ECC had been very active at Rhodes and became even more so at the beginning of 1986 when a student fled the country to avoid national service. Jan Gewald had been refused deferment by the SADF even though Rhodes had submitted proof that he had been accepted to do honours in African history. This was unprecedented as national service was usually delayed if the individual called up was engaged in tertiary education. However, the SADF was no longer being utilised only in Namibia and Angola, but was also being deployed in the townships. This required more troops and the government took a hard line on those men who tried to avoid national service.

In March and April 1986 a NUSAS delegation met with ANC representatives in Lusaka. No student from Rhodes was part of this delegation, but the meeting re-established NUSAS as a relevant organisation in the liberation struggle. At the meeting it was agreed that “NUSAS has an important contribution to make within its constituency and as part of the national democratic movement.” This had a significant effect at Rhodes, where NUSAS had a strong hold on the white students. Kirk Helliker, who had been a student at Rhodes from 1978 to 1981 and a lecturer in sociology from 1984, recalled that there had been a great change in the intervening years. By the mid-1980s there was an “upbeat and euphoric mood” on campus. A definite change had occurred in the level of student activism. This was due to the community mobilisation and organisation that had occurred under the auspices of the UDF, the increase in progressive student activists – most of whom were black – and the ongoing national stay-aways and boycotts taking place across the country. Helliker noted, though, that while there was a “heightened state of political activism on campus”, it “drew the wrath of an ambivalent university administration”. He does, however, admit that the administration did not interfere in academic matters, and radical discourses, such as Marxism, were freely utilised in the teaching of students.

Helliker notes that student activists at Rhodes were by no means homogeneous. Some were “exclusive radical individuals” preoccupied with “backbiting” and “sexual politics”, whereas before the 1980s, when Helliker was a student, there had been a “cohesive and

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118 Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini, *The Struggle*, p. 468.
120 Interview with Kirk Helliker, 11 December 2006.
homogeneous radical body that hadn’t yet matured into different tendencies”. Helliker also recalls a drug culture among the students, of which some were known as the “bungee left” – cannabis smokers who liked to drop into radical protest meetings.\textsuperscript{121}

On 12 June 1986 Botha declared a second, national, state of emergency that would last until 1990. He also announced that a white election would take place in May 1987. State repression of extra-parliamentary opposition groups continued. On 31 July an emergency mass meeting was held at Rhodes to deal with the detention of staff and students. The General Lecture Theatre was filled to capacity. Henderson and the administration were criticised for the poor assistance they offered to detainees. SRC member Daryl McLean claimed that the “Immediate concern at Rhodes seems to be to protect the interests of the university rather than those of the detained students, unlike other varsities which have been far more supportive in their attitudes to detainees.”\textsuperscript{122} Mclean was, however, a police informer and was acting as a \textit{provocateur}. The university had taken measures to ensure study rights for the detained students and obtained permission to provide them with study materials. This did lag behind the pro-activeness of Wits, UCT and Natal, all of which had secured study rights for their students as soon as they had been detained. They also released strong press statements condemning the detentions and state of emergency. Henderson explained that he had not because the university’s legal advisors had advised him to be cautious. He did, however, accept that the state of emergency had been “disruptive” and that the security legislation was “draconian”. He saw to it that staff in detention would be regarded as in good standing and credited with their usual salary and benefits.\textsuperscript{123} Members of the Rhodes community in detention included Bridget Hilton Barber, Melissa de Villiers, Karen Thorne, Roelien Theron, Colm Allan, Dave Sandi, Ntseki Sandi, Andre Roux, Louise Vale, Priscilla Hall, Jean Burgess and Julie Scott. However, not all the names of those detained were available to \textit{Rhodo}.\textsuperscript{124} One of the instigators behind the string of detentions affecting Rhodes was Security Branch Lieutenant, Lloyd Edwards. He had been a student at Rhodes and, with his brother Karl,

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{122} “Missing”, \textit{Rhodo}, August 1986, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{123} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXIX, MS 19 315/6, p. 227, 3 July 1986, min. 86.48.
\textsuperscript{124} “Missing”, \textit{Rhodo}, August 1986, p. 3.
had been an informer. With the assistance of Gustav Roller, a spy on campus during 1985, Edwards ordered the detentions that plagued Rhodes during 1986. Shortly before his wife was detained, Professor Peter Vale, and his friend Bill Davies, bumped into Edwards in a Grahamstown pub. They were so incensed that Edwards was enjoying himself while dozens of people were being detained at his word, that they insulted him and were promptly thrown in prison for the night.125

In September 1986 the Grahamstown Supreme Court was packed at the trial of Andre Roux and Tim Bouwer, who had been in detention for ten weeks. Both were members of the Grahamstown Democratic Action Committee (Gradac) and seeking release from detention. The Vice-Chancellor and Registrar were also in attendance. Others seeking release included De Villiers, Thorne and Burgess, all students; and Louise Vale and Anne Burroughs of the Black Sash. Julie Scott, a student, had been released at the start of the month.126 By now another, more publicised, trial was going on in Delmas. This was the so-called Treason Trial of various UDF leaders, including Rhodes’ ex-president of the BSM, Thabiso Ratsomo, who had been in detention since April 1985. Rhodes students rallied on campus to show their solidarity and to call for his release.127 Gestures of support for detained students continued on campus right up to the November examinations. Karen Thorne was released and spoke to Rhodeo about her 71 days in prison. As she was released the police arrested and detained another student, Bongani More. Students in Stanley Kidd House, where More had resided, established a fund to support him in prison. A vigil was also held for all the detainees, although the coming exams prevented a large attendance.128

Amid this came the unpopular decision to appoint Jan K Coetzee as the new Professor of Sociology. All four staff members in the Sociology department voiced their concern over Coetzee’s appointment and a significant number of sociology students signed a petition

125 “So you think it’s funny…”, Rhodeo, September 1986, p. 3.
126 “Seeking release”, Rhodeo, September 1986, p. 3.
128 “71 days in a cell”, “Skidd Fund” and “Vigil for detainees”, Rhodeo, October 1986, pp. 2, 3, 4.
calling on the administration to review its choice.\textsuperscript{129} Fred Hendricks recalls that the mid-1980s was a period of intense political mobilisation and that the classroom was used to this end. Helliker too recalls a tradition of radical and critical thinking in the Sociology Department. Coetzee’s research was not in the areas Rhodes sociologists had been focussing on, and his own theoretical position was seen as out of date to the recent developments in the discipline.\textsuperscript{130} Coetzee had also been educated at the conservative University of Pretoria and had been employed at the University of the Orange Free State. It was thus viewed as a retrogressive step to employ Coetzee. However, Hendricks acknowledges in hindsight that the fracas was unwarranted because Coetzee turned out to be a diligent manager of the department and an amicable colleague.\textsuperscript{131}

**Student protest in 1987**

The BSM was particularly vociferous at Rhodes throughout 1987. It called for students, black and white, to boycott the April graduation ceremonies, which it viewed as elitist, contrary to the idea of ‘people’s education’ and a “farce under the present education crisis”.\textsuperscript{132} The issue of bursary allocation was again raised when statistics showed that out of 127 bursaries awarded in 1987, only thirteen had gone to black students even though black students now made up 22% of the student body. On 27 March the BSM executive committee gathered in the main administration building to hand Henderson a memorandum on reforms regarding bursaries and sport at Rhodes. Firstly, the BSM called for the bursary application procedure to be restructured to meet the needs of black students, so that they be guaranteed financial support before being admitted to Rhodes. They also wanted two BSM-appointed students to sit on the Bursaries Committee. Secondly, up to now black students at Rhodes had formed their own sports teams and played most of their matches in the township. However, this denied them any official support from the university. The BSM recommended that the Sports Union be restructured so that black sports teams were granted equal status to the official, white

\textsuperscript{129} “Students slam new socio head”, *Rhodeo*, October 1986, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{130} Such as the Marxist discourse as propounded by Legassick, Wolpe and Johnstone.
\textsuperscript{131} Interviews with Fred Hendricks, 8 December 2006; and Kirk Helliker, 11 December 2006. Hendricks was a sociology lecturer at Rhodes from 1985-1988. He is now Dean of Humanities.
teams in terms of finance, facilities and equipment. The BSM expected an answer from Henderson by 1 April.133

Neither Henderson, nor the Vice-Principal, Professor Roux van der Merwe, was available to receive the memorandum. Only the Registrar, Dr Keith Hunt, was available. At lunchtime the BSM executive entered the Registrar’s office unannounced. They asked Hunt to attend a meeting in the Great Hall to hear the BSM’s grievances. Hunt contacted the Acting Principal, Law Professor Alexander Kerr, who promptly arrived at Hunt’s office to consult with the students. A number of black students were also in the passageway and had started to sing. The BSM executive explained the urgent need for Hunt and Kerr to address the students at a meeting because the students in the passageway were likely to become unruly. Hunt and Kerr agreed to meet with the students in the general lecture theatre and the administration building was vacated. The meeting was chaired by the BSM vice-president, Chule Papiyana, who pointed out that the meeting was not to discuss or negotiate the reforms, but to present them to the administration. Papiyana also noted that the BSM were frustrated and angry and that if the reforms were not met they would take stronger measures.134

On the evening of 1 April, Henderson addressed a meeting of the BSM in connection with their memorandum. He explained the university’s position but made no headway with the students present. The next morning Henderson was informed that the BSM were again meeting in the Great Hall and that they were then going to march on the administration building in an attempt to block him, the Vice-Principal and the Registrar from exiting. In view of this the offices were vacated and the female administrative staff were sent home. Soon after some BSM students arrived and occupied the building. Henderson moved into the quadrangle and was approached by the BSM executive. Henderson, however, refused to discuss anything with them until the building was vacated by the students, who had broken out into song, damaged three office doors and a portrait of the Chancellor. Henderson and the BSM executive came to an agreement that

133 Black Students’ Demands to Dr Henderson, 27 March 1987, Cory Library, PR 7457.
they would be allowed to meet with the Senate executive on condition that the building was vacated, which quickly occurred. The students then congregated in the quadrangle where they burnt an effigy of a graduate student as part of their protest against the graduation ceremonies.\footnote{Affidavit of Derek Scott Henderson, 24 April 1987, pp. 2-5, Cory Library, PR 8879, Folder 2 of 6.}

The occupation of the main administration building was viewed in a serious light as it disrupted the normal functioning of the university and would seriously disable the normal procedures of emergency management should a crisis arise. Henderson in particular took his responsibility for the physical safety of university employees seriously. Soon after the BSM occupation, wrought iron gates were erected around the administration quadrangle.\footnote{“The Gates of Admin”, \textit{Rhdeo}, August 1987, p. 2.} These were viewed with disgust by many who saw them as akin to the Nationalist \textit{swart gevaar} outlook.\footnote{Interview with Terence and Margot Beard, 30 October 2006.} Students also viewed the gates as a hazard because they cut off escape routes when there were clashes with the police.

After the BSM executive met with the Senate executive, a full Senate meeting was held on 3 April. Senate passed a resolution acknowledging that many students had experienced extreme social and economic deprivation; that there were inequities in the competition for places at Rhodes, as well as for scholarships and bursaries; and that many applicants could not attend Rhodes because of financial constraints. It added that as much as it understood the issues raised by the BSM, it found unacceptable the BSM’s ‘confrontational’ style and condemned its actions on 1 and 2 April. Disciplinary action would be taken for the wilful damage inflicted. However, Senate was happy with the conduct of the BSM at its meeting with members of the Senate executive. It decided to take steps to source more funding for bursaries; to investigate the procedure for bursary allocations; and to establish an \textit{ad hoc} committee to review sports bursaries and the Sports Union, on which three BSM executive students would sit.\footnote{Senate Resolution, April 3, 1987, Annexure C to Affidavit by Henderson, Cory Library, PR 8879, Folder 2 of 6.} To this end two members each of the SRC and BSM were allowed to sit as observers on the Bursaries Committee.
Protest against the graduation ceremonies continued with the burning of more effigies. The SRC condemned the BSM for these threatening and intimidating acts which were causing confusion and uncertainty among the student body, but noted that it was the individual student’s choice whether to attend graduation or not. The SRC did support the BSM’s call to abandon singing *Die Stem* at graduation.139 Council had in the previous year been made aware of the black students’ reluctance to attend graduation because of the singing of the national anthem. Senate had debated the issue and recommended that it be discontinued from 1987. However, Council did not accept Senate’s decision but agreed to reconsider the issue early in 1987, by 14 votes to 6.140 In 1987 a poll of students showed that a majority wanted the singing of *Die Stem* to be discontinued. The Chancellor, Ian Mackenzie, showed no objection. Yet Council insisted that it be sung at graduation, which only aggravated the black students. The issue of attending graduation divided the student body. A notice issued by the Muslim Students’ Association stated that “Having rejected graduation, it is imperative that we, the MSA, condemn any member, or past member or person who attends graduation.”141 At graduation the BSM handed out pamphlets addressed to parents highlighting their reasons for boycotting it. In the weeks after graduation the BSM saluted those who had heeded their call and posted lists of the students who had boycotted graduation around campus.142

As May approached student activism focused on the upcoming white general election. This was the first election under the new constitution. It was also held during a state of emergency. On 5 May, the night before voting, the SRC called an urgent student body meeting to discuss, among other things, the impending election in the context of state repression. Some 1200 students attended. The meeting carried a motion that lectures would be boycotted the next day and that there would be a peaceful protest march starting at 10.30am. The students also passed a motion requesting the administration not to discriminate against workers who would be participating in a stay-away, and to demand

139 Statement by the SRC on recent campus events, 9 April 1987, Cory Library, PR 8879, Folder 1 of 6.
140 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXIX, MS 19 315/6, p. 94, 6 March 1986, min. 86.16, and p. 150, 1 May 1986, min. 86.28.
141 MSA Rejects Graduation, Cory Library, PR 8879, Folder 1 of 6.
142 Dear Parents, Cory Library, PR 8879, Folder 1 of 6.
the release of detained students and staff. This was done in solidarity with NUSAS and SANSCO.\textsuperscript{143} Rhodeo released an election-special issue calling the election a white elephant, with messages from the Black Sash, UDF, Vice-Chancellor of UCT, Rhodes SRC president, NUSAS national, NUSAS Rhodes, ECC, SANSCO and the Rhodeo editors. It also reported that Henderson had stipulated that he was unable to take a stand on the election.\textsuperscript{144}

The protest march on 6 May was uneventful but closely watched by the police. Henderson released a press statement saying that “There was no direct confrontation between Rhodes University students and the police during the course of today’s events.”\textsuperscript{145} Students at UCT, Wits and Natal had clashed with the police. The march ended on the drostdy lawns. The police had informed Henderson that they regarded the march as an illegal gathering but had agreed to delay action if the students dispersed. When Henderson asked the marchers to disperse they did. A group of students assembled in the main quadrangle and Henderson addressed them outlining the steps taken to protest against the arrest and detention of students and the measures taken to support them in prison. Even though Henderson had advised the students not to re-gather on the drostdy lawns, some did, drawing in the police. Henderson intervened and stalled the police by calling for Errol Moorcroft, the MP for Albany and a member of Council, who attempted to defuse the situation. The students dispersed before the police could react.

On 7 May a meeting of over 700 students, workers and academics was held. Henderson was being called to account for his weak response to the events of the day before. Whereas UCT, Wits and Natal’s administrations had come out strongly on the side of the students and condemned the actions of the police, Henderson had stated that “on the whole, the police acted with restraint”. He was also quoted as having said, “I’m not on anyone’s side…The university, \textit{qua} institution, does not commit itself to any political stance.” The meeting carried a vote of no confidence in the Rhodes administration.\textsuperscript{146}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{143} Student Body Meeting, 6 May 1987, Cory Library, PR 8879, Folder 1 of 6.
\textsuperscript{144} “White elephant”, \textit{Rhodeo} (election special), May 1987, pp. 2, 3.
\textsuperscript{145} Statement by Dr DS Henderson, May 9, 1987, Cory Library, PR 8879, Folder 1 of 6.
\textsuperscript{146} “‘I’m not on anyone’s side’ “, \textit{Rhodeo}, May 1987, p. 3.
\end{flushright}
Henderson could have joined the vice-chancellors of UCT, Wits and Natal in speaking out, but as a reserved figure, was not one to bring publicity on himself.

Following the election protests, students rallied to the cause of sociology lecturer Kirk Helliker, who was to be deported. In 1986 Helliker had been picked up by the security police while walking in town and taken to the Security Branch’s offices in High Street where he was interrogated and his passport removed. As a Canadian Helliker had applied for permanent residence in South Africa but in April 1987 was informed by Home Affairs that his application had been denied and that he had to leave the country by the end of May. Senate debated this issue and made representations to the authorities, managing to delay Helliker’s departure by a month. However, before the end of June Helliker was deported.\textsuperscript{147} Helliker had been a strong proponent of NUSAS. His deportation resulted in a groundswell of support from both staff and students at Rhodes and the other English-medium universities. Henderson, however, was lukewarm.\textsuperscript{148} Senate had adopted a resolution that

\begin{quote}
In light of Rhodes University’s commitment “to guarantee the right of participants in the opportunities and privileges made available by belonging to a university” (1987 Calendar p. 11) Senate requests the Vice-Chancellor to place its extreme concern for the rights of Mr Kirk Helliker, who is under immediate threat of being required to leave the country, personally before the Minister of National Education.\textsuperscript{149}
\end{quote}

At its meeting Council supported the decision taken by Senate, adding its “deep disquiet that the personal circumstances of a member of the university should have been thrown into such confusion, and that his professional career…should be so disrupted, with no opportunity being granted to ascertain the reason for such drastic administrative action”.\textsuperscript{150} However, these rather tame representations to both the Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of National Education came to nil. When Professor Ian Macdonald requested the Vice-Chancellor to personally make a direct complaint to the government,

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{147} Interview with Kirk Helliker, 11 December 2006; and “Sociology Lecturer deported”, \textit{Rhodeo}, August 1987, p. 2.
\footnote{148} Interview with Fred Hendricks, 8 December 2006.
\footnote{149} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXX, MS 19 315/7, p. 189, Decisions of Senate, 12 June 1987.
\footnote{150} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 157, 2 July 1987, min. 87.39.
\end{footnotes}
Henderson’s response was that it would not make a difference. The change in the Minister of National Education from Gerrit Viljoen to FW de Klerk may also have played a part: Henderson was not as friendly with De Klerk as he had been with Viljoen. Stuart Saunders, Vice-Chancellor of UCT, echoed his wariness of De Klerk.  

In the months following the election three students and two workers were detained. The students were released but the workers, spokesmen for the black service staff, remained in prison. The number of Rhodes students and staff in detention now totalled thirteen. The students were Jonathan Godden, Mangaliso Mahlaba, Bongane More, Paco Edwin Prince, Sizwe Mayoli, Sam Mkhabela, Glen Thomas, Mzinqaba Mabenge and Sue Lund. The staff were Ashwin Desai, a sociology lecturer; Henry Nyiklana, a zoology lab assistant; Melvin Roberts, an electrical assistant; and David Nzonzeka, a chemistry assistant. Mkhabela, a law student, was later transferred to Bethel in the Transvaal and faced trial for treason.

The outcome of the election saw a drop in the support for the white opposition and an increase in support for the ‘white right’. While the NP had dropped from 142 to 123 seats, the Conservative Party (KP) had gained 22 seats. The PFP had dropped from 27 to 19 seats and its election ally, the New Republic Party, had dropped from 8 seats to 1. The decline in support for the PFP was partly because of an anti-voting campaign from some sectors that equated voting with betraying the opposition. A significant number of young voters abstained and this proved a setback for the PFP. In Albany, Johannes van der Vyver of the NP became MP by a majority of 844 votes over the PFP.

152 “Out of sight, but not out of mind”, *Rhodeo*, May 1987, p. 3; and Detention/One, June 8, 1987, Cory Library, PR 7457, Folder 1 of 1.
154 In Afrikaans: *Konserwattiewe Party* (KP).
The subsidy crisis

The last issue to affect Rhodes in 1987 was the so-called subsidy crisis. Rhodes University, like other publicly funded institutions, had come to rely heavily on the government subsidy. By the 1980s as much as 85% of its funding came from the state and this put it in a precarious position because even a slight reduction would acutely affect it. Since 1977, as a result of the economic recession, Rhodes’ subsidy had been cut – first by 2.3%, some R103 000, which put a lot of strain on the university – and then by further, smaller cuts. Like the sword of Damocles this hung over the university administration and in part can explain its general submissive behaviour to the government.

The so-called subsidy crisis that affected all the English-medium universities in the late 1980s can be traced to the Minister of Education and Culture, Petrus ‘PJ’ Clase. In 1985 Clase had sent a letter to all the universities referring to the accelerated rate at which they were accepting black students. He stated that even though Viljoen, as Minister of National Education in 1983, had not implemented the quota system, it did not give the universities an unrestricted right to admit black students. Henderson was in particular told that he should have sought ministerial permission before accommodating black students. Henderson believed that no other university principal had been told this and was annoyed that Clase had raised issues thought to be in the past. He acknowledged receipt of the letter and indicated to Clase that the matter was being investigated. In 1986 the Committee of University Principals had written to Clase recommending that student enrolment should be the decision of the Council of each university. Henderson had sent his own letter indicating that he believed Rhodes to have observed proper procedure in its admission of black students and had not breached government policy. He pointed out that the Director of University Affairs in the Department of National Education, Dr Louw, had visited Rhodes in 1984 and was aware of the university’s difficulty in finding and

156 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XX, MS 17 846/4, p. 190, 10 February 1977, min. 16.
157 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXIX, MS 19 315/6, p. 10, 6 December 1985, min. 85.92.
affording suitable sites for black residences. Henderson hoped this would silence Clase.\textsuperscript{158}

Following the widespread campus unrest of 1987, the principals and chairpersons of council of the ‘white’ universities had met with De Klerk and Clase in August. Subsequent to this meeting Clase sent a letter to each university council stating under what terms he might exercise his power to withhold a portion of or a university’s entire subsidy.\textsuperscript{159} Clase was concerned that universities were allowing their students to run riot on campus, and that this was wasting taxpayers’ money. He set conditions that universities should discipline their students to subdue unrest on campuses or face subsidy cuts as penalties. Council responded to Clase with a six-page letter, stating that

Council wishes to place on record its views that the conditions laid down in your letter make serious inroads into University [sic] autonomy and academic freedom as currently understood, and what are conceived to be the normal functions of the university in the Western tradition. The stated intention of reducing financial support to ensure that universities comply with government regulation is viewed with great concern and is to the detriment of the healthy relationship between State and University [sic].\textsuperscript{160}

The letter went on to quote long passages from the Student Disciplinary Code to illustrate that the university already had a means to deal with misconduct on campus. This was a polite way of informing Clase that he should not be telling a university how to run itself. Furthermore, the conditions set out by Clase were contrary to the free spirit of enquiry that was fundamental to a university. Council pointed out that a university could not be expected to ensure the security of the state. Some of Clase’s conditions were ridiculous, such as the expectation of the university to discipline its staff and students for offences committed within a two kilometre radius of the university. Senate followed up with a similar, but lucid reply.\textsuperscript{161} Henderson also wrote a letter to parents to assure them that Rhodes was functioning as normal:

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 90, 6 March 1986, min. 86.06.2.
\textsuperscript{159} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXX, MS 19 315/7, p. 161, 2 July 1987, min. 87.48, and p. 213, 20 August 1987, special meeting.
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 216, Letter to the Honourable Minister PJ Clase, 24 August 198.
Rhodes accepts that it cannot be sheltered from the stresses and strains which are present in the larger society…. Freedom of speech, argument, heated debate and even protest are inseparable from the total University experience. Rhodes has always defended such freedoms…. Along with other universities, we have entered a strong plea that the proposed measures be withdrawn, as they would seriously jeopardise the essential independence without which we cannot fulfil our task.162

In October Clase responded to the universities with modifications to the conditions he had initially proposed. But Clase still asserted his authority to reduce university subsidies if the conditions were not fulfilled. Clase rejected any further submissions from the universities and the conditions came into effect. Council had agreed that “nothing would be gained by overreacting to the Minister’s letter”.163 It became apparent that Clase was trying to wrest power from the Department of National Education. The Minister of National Education, FW de Klerk, was also Chairman of the House of Assembly’s Ministerial Councils, and thus Clase’s immediate superior. By this stage of the 1980s the NP was not a homogenous body, split by Botha’s reforms. This is evident in the break-away Conservative Party’s success in the 1987 election. Clase’s threat to cut university subsidies was merely part of the bickering within the NP. Professor Ian Macdonald recalls that Clase was not taken seriously.164 Even though Clase was drawing on a section of the Universities Act of 1955 that granted him extraordinary powers, a university’s subsidy was calculated according to student numbers and could not be affected by the conditions Clase had stipulated, as it would have financially crippled a university.165

However, De Klerk did nothing to stop Clase.166 As a result the Universities of Cape Town, Natal and the Western Cape (UWC) took legal action against Clase. Rhodes chose to wait for the outcome before taking legal action itself. By February 1988 UCT and UWC had won their court cases on the premise that Clase had exceeded the powers

163 Ibid., p. 296, 16 October 1987, min. 87.68 and Annexure A.
164 Interview with Ian Macdonald, 6 December 2006.
165 Interview with Ian Macdonald, 6 December 2006.
166 Or, if he did, he has not ever mentioned it. This whole episode is missing from his autobiography.*
granted to him by the Universities Act.\textsuperscript{167} Clase withdrew his conditions for subsidisation in July 1988, but mentioned the possibility of amending legislation. He agreed that mutually acceptable courses of action would naturally be desirable and thus discussion with the universities would continue.\textsuperscript{168}

\textbf{On the eve of fundamental change}

At the start of 1988 the government banned seventeen anti-apartheid organisations, most prominently the UDF and most of its affiliates, such as SANCO and Gradac, to which many Rhodes students and staff belonged. However, many of these organisations continued to meet in secret. On 3 March about one thousand students and academics protested the bannings on campus, but received no support from the administration. Council had met on the same day and released a carefully worded statement to the Rhodes community:

\begin{quote}
We are concerned that, should members of the university wish to act in opposition to these proclamations, the university may stand to be penalised...unless it takes steps which may alienate it from its own members...[placing] the university in a painful dilemma which is not of its own making.\textsuperscript{169}
\end{quote}

Students also protested the detention of Edgar Chule ‘KK’ Papiyana, president of the BSM, who had been detained in November 1987. Sam Mkhabela had been released on bail.\textsuperscript{170} The singing of \textit{Die Stem} at graduation in April caused a furore on campus. Members of Council were still managing to garner enough votes to overturn Senate’s decision to discontinue the singing of the national anthem.\textsuperscript{171} In mid-1988 Professor Peter Vale, Director of the ISER, had his passport seized. Vale had made himself unpopular by speaking out against the United States’ continued financial investment in South Africa even though the apartheid regime was committing human rights abuses. His wife, a

\textsuperscript{167} Saunders, \textit{Vice-Chancellor on a tightrope}, p. 201; and RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXX, MS 19 315/7, p. 370, 4 December 1987, min. 87.81.12.
\textsuperscript{168} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXXI, MS 19 315/8, p. 109, 15 September 1988, min. 88.43 and Annexure C7.
\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 11, 3 March 1988, min. 88.12 and Annexure C10.
\textsuperscript{170} “Protest” and “BSM president detained”, \textit{Rhodeo}, March 1988, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{171} “ ‘Die Stem’ causes grad controversy”, \textit{Rhodeo}, May 1988, p. 10.
member of the Black Sash, had been a victim of this when she had been detained. However, the university administration remained silent.172

Young men from Rhodes continued to object to national service. Eight Rhodes students were hailed for their courage at refusing to undergo military service in the face of prosecution. They were Paul Wessels, Glenn Bownes, Andrew Roos, Ray Hartley, Paul Teeton, Andre Oosthuizen, Patrick Tandy, and Darryl Maclean – a police informer.173 The success of the ECC in supporting conscientious objectors was dealt a blow when it was banned in the latter half of the year.174 However, some 771 people had refused to serve by 1989, including 48 from Grahamstown.

Detentions continued with the detaining of Vincent ‘Pebo’ Masango. This raised the number of students in detention to six: SS Manona since June 1987; KG Matiso since April 1988; SE Mayoli since May 1987; EC Papiyana since November 1987; and Janet Small since June 1988. Small was released on 16 September but promptly restricted to Cape Town. Manona and Mayoli were released in October. However, Mcebisi Jonas, Mvuso Mbebe, Vuyo Poswa and Mbuso Tali were detained shortly after their release.175 In November all the Rhodes students in detention were released. But then the BSM was banned in December.176 This had become the practice of the government: to release detained persons but to severely restrict them by banning them or the organisation they belonged to. One such student was Sidwell Mokgothu, studying theology, who had been released from detention but given banning orders.177 A Rhodes committee to investigate student detentions was finally formed in 1989.178

At the end of 1988 Rhodes received another of Minister PJ Clase’s letters, this time concerned with the growth of undergraduate numbers. Clase had informed the

173 “Rhodes Eight refuse to serve”, Rhodes, August 1988, p. 3.
174 “Alternative service”, Rhodes, October 1988, p. 5.
175 “Young Christian detained”, Rhodes, August 1988, p. 3; and “Student Nappers”, Rhodes, October 1988, p. 3.
177 “Released into a larger prison”, Rhodes, May 1989, p. 3.
178 “Student action around detentions bears fruit”, Rhodes, May 1989, p. 3.
universities in 1987 of the government’s decision to spend more money on primary education. This would require the freezing of undergraduate numbers to save on tertiary education expenses, which amounted to 1.2 billion rands. Other than Rhodes, which as a small university had managed to comply, universities had continued to admit growing numbers of students. Clase’s plan was to force them to restrict their numbers by basing the next five years of annual subsidy on the student numbers of 1987 with a growth rate of 1% for each year. It would only be reviewed in 1992. This affected Rhodes financially. In 1988 Rhodes received a government subsidy of 83%. Under the new formula that would drop to 66% in 1989. Clase was either compensating for the government’s huge financial losses because of South Africa’s declining economy, or he was utilising the new subsidy formula as a justification to prevent ‘white’ universities from accepting more black students.

In early 1989 Rhodes held a memorial service for alumnus David Webster who had been assassinated by government secret operatives for anti-apartheid activities. The service was well attended and speakers hailed Webster’s bravery in standing up to apartheid. Rod Dixon, the SRC president, was part of a delegation that met with the ANC in Lusaka. Henderson caused some commotion among students when he released a pamphlet stating that Rhodes was a “normal university in an abnormal society”. He added that “The university should provide an impartial market place where concepts and ideas can be proposed and criticised.” Students viewed him as the last vestige of Rhodes’ conservative heritage.

Conservative elements still existed in the student body. In August students rallied to protest against the disciplinary hearing of three BSM students. A week before, the Moderate Students’ Organisation had invited two conservative British youth leaders, Glendenning and Smith, to address a meeting. The meeting had been disrupted by a number of students speaking out against the youth leaders who were known to have been

179 RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXXI, MS 19 315/8, p. 158, 2 December 1988, min. 88.81 and Annexures C19 and C19.1.
181 “Dixon in Lusaka”, Rhodeo, August 1989, p. 3.
turned away by other universities because of their racist views.\textsuperscript{183} The organiser of the meeting complained to the vice-chancellor and an investigation identified three students, even though there had been more. All three students were past presidents of the BSM. The rules of the SRC stated that it was an offence to disrupt the meeting of a society and thus the students were summoned to face a disciplinary committee. As the hearing progressed some two hundred students occupied and chanted in the foyer of the main administration building.\textsuperscript{184} This quickly became a media event. The students were fined R150 each. The administration viewed seriously any attempts to disrupt freedom of speech on campus.\textsuperscript{185}

These internal issues did not hinder student activism. When Rhodes students planned a rally to commemorate the UDF’s sixth birthday, the local authorities banned the event. Not easily beaten, about five hundred students met to hold a prayer service, disguising a political gathering as a religious one. While this was obvious to the police no action was taken.\textsuperscript{186} However, after Chule ‘KK’ Papiyana was detained for a second time, as well as a black worker, all except the Rhodes administration marched. In mid-September, as many as 2500 students, workers and academics marched through campus and town to the police station in New Street. There the police handed bunches of flowers to the marchers to ease their image in the media, and the march returned to campus where a service was held in the chapel. However, the march, probably the biggest in Rhodes’ history, was undermined by the absence of the administration. Initially the administration had declined to participate because the march had not yet received permission from the local authorities. It released a statement that it “supported the sentiments of legal protest which takes the form of a negotiated peaceful procession, and the view that each member of the university should decide individually if they wish to participate.” Yet when the march received the legal nod, the administration’s absence remained conspicuous. In the weeks

\textsuperscript{183} The two youth leaders had been expelled from the British Conservative Party for being radical.\textsuperscript{184} “Students reject trial with...songs of defiance”, \textit{Rhodeo}, August 1989, p. 2.\textsuperscript{185} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXXII, MS 19 407/1, p. 202, 14 September 1989, min. 89.48.\textsuperscript{186} “Defiance rally banned – students pray”, \textit{Rhodeo}, August 1989, p. 3.
that followed groups of students protested in the main quadrangle to express their dissatisfaction with the administration’s absence at the march.187

Henderson had been away but *Rhodeo* managed to get an interview with Vice-Principal Roux van der Merwe. He explained that by the time legal permission had arrived for the march, members of Council had already left Grahamstown. He added that Council had been supportive of a march but only if it had been a march for peaceful change and not just to call for an end to the state of emergency. When questioned why Council did not wait for the outcome of the application for legal permission, Van der Merwe replied “we had no idea the march would be taking place so soon. Everything happened so fast.” Considering that 2500 students, workers and academics participated, the administration must have known. When questioned about how the administration could have missed the posters and meetings all over campus, Van der Merwe replied “you’ll just have to accept in good faith that we had no idea.” However, Council had in essence decided at its meeting before the march that it would not participate in it either way.188 The Vice-Principal went on to explain the difference between a peaceful march and a march for peace; that he did not want to get into a debate on the need for an end to the state of emergency as a precondition for peace; and that marches had become fashionable. When queried why the administration had released a press statement on Papiyana’s detention during the vacation when very few students would have seen it, Van der Merwe answered that statements would be released to the students if there was a crucial issue. *Rhodeo* pointed out that Papiyana’s detention was a crucial issue, but van der Merwe evaded the question: “Well, you have a point there…but in the time we live detention is not that unusual is it?”189

The Vice-Principal’s attitude typified the administration’s stance at this time. While it was dealing with the issues at hand behind the scenes, a little publicity and greater communication with the student body would have boosted its image. Henderson had

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187 “Rhodes leadership detained” and “Students, Workers and Academics march in Unity against Apartheid”, *Rhodeo*, October 1989, p. 5.
189 “I would be less than happy about marching”, *Rhodeo*, October 1989, p. 3.
participated in the 1500-strong march to protest the police action on campus in September 1985. The administration’s evasion tactics continued in 1990 when Rhodeo interviewed the Vice-Chancellor. Henderson had prepared answers to the questions, which he had been given the day before the interview. When asked what he thought about the crisis of education in the country, Henderson lingered on what was meant by the word ‘crisis’. Concerning the future of the university Henderson stated that “Our main aim is to maintain our existence as a small university of quality…if we change too fast and too hastily we could turn into a bush campus. If we only focused on disadvantaged students we would become a bush campus.” The interviewer defined ‘bush’ campuses as universities that maintained segregated education with poor standards and facilities as well as repression of the students. To this Henderson replied, “What, are the students handcuffed for the night?” When told that students are beaten and killed on these campuses and that these incidents had been documented, Henderson replied, “Really, I would be interested to see that information.” The student press may have been quoting Henderson out of context, turning his words against him, but he did acknowledge that there were “deep-seated and intractable problems that will take years to mend” in education. His definition of a crisis was typical of his engineering background: “To me a crisis means all hands to the pump before the ship sinks.” Henderson’s views were not well received by the student body.

In January 1989 PW Botha suffered a stroke and resigned as party leader of the NP. He had intended to remain State President, while the next leader of the NP would act as his Prime Minister. Botha openly favoured Finance Minister Barend du Plessis. However, at the NP’s caucus election in February the vote went to FW de Klerk by just 69 votes to Du Plessis’ 61. Not content with Botha’s idea of a president and a prime minister, which was not provided for in the 1983 constitution, De Klerk convinced a meeting of the NP Federal Council in March that it would be in the best interests of the party that the Hoofleier occupy the office of State President. Botha was obliged to comply and grudgingly called an election for September and resigned shortly before it. The NP won

191 “The education crisis is not just an ‘empty slogan’”, Rhodeo, April 1990, p. 2.
the election but at a considerable loss. It lost 17 seats to the KP and 12 to the Democratic Party (DP), which had formed when the PFP merged with other minor parties in April. The NP won 93 seats, the KP 39 and the DP 33. De Klerk was sworn in as State President but it was clear that South African white politics had moved into a new era.\footnote{D O’Meara, \textit{Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994} (Athens, Ohio, 1996), pp. 388-393, 399-401.} De Klerk, the son of an NP cabinet minister (Jan de Klerk), younger brother of the editor of \textit{Die Transvaler} (Willem de Klerk), and nephew of JG Strijdom (Prime Minister 1954-1958), was considered to be a conservative. However, De Klerk was, unlike Botha, an educated man and did not subscribe to the arrogant leadership style that Botha had imbued. On 2 February 1990, De Klerk surprised the country when he announced the end of the state of emergency, the lifting of the ban on the ANC and PAC, the legal recognition of the SACP, and the release of Nelson Mandela, who was freed nine days later. De Klerk had done this without consulting the NP caucus. In 1992 de Klerk called a referendum to ascertain if he had the white populace’s support. He received positive support from 68\% of the voters.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 404, 410.} On 27 April 1994 black and white South Africans voted together in the first democratic election.

**Conclusion**

The significant changes and events at Rhodes during this period were part of the great change occurring throughout the country. While there was a considerable amount of conflict between black workers and the university administration, Henderson had placed all the black employees on the same pension and provident funds as those of white employees. Before Henderson arrived the black service staff had received their wages in cash twice a month. Henderson implemented a salary system whereby the workers would be paid more, and had bank accounts opened for them. He also set about providing university assistance for home and building loans for the black workers by sourcing outside funds for this purpose.\footnote{Interview with Derek Henderson, 8 September 2006.} His wife, Thelma, began the Community Service Development Centre at Rhodes, as a means of involving the university more with the
local community, in particular with development projects in the township. Henderson recalls that the matter of his wife being too involved in projects with black people was once raised in Council, a member taking the view that it was inappropriate for the wife of a vice-chancellor.\textsuperscript{195} Henderson retorted that his wife was not an employee of the university and had every right to do what she wanted. The issue was never raised again.

Nevertheless Henderson’s administration was on occasion accused of being racist. From the black students there came allegations that racial discrimination was practised in the allocation of residence rooms, in the recognition and financing of sport, in the awarding of bursaries, the appointment of sub-wardens, among other issues. A few of the first black academics at Rhodes also complained of being neglected. Henderson’s response was similar to that of Saunders’ at UCT: the opposite of enforced segregation is not enforced integration. Henderson was disappointed that he received so much criticism from the left when he had gone to great lengths to assist them in the first place. But Rhodes was not alone in this regard. Black students at Wits, UCT and Natal also protested against their administrations. The admission of black students not only increased activism against the apartheid government but also against university administrations, which were often viewed as conservative. Black workers raised issues of workers’ rights that had emanated from the formation of trade unions in the aftermath of the relaxation of labour laws in the 1970s. To this end Henderson hired Professor Roux van der Merwe as vice-principal (1986-1991); he had been Professor of Industrial Relations at UPE and before that worked for Volkswagen South Africa.

Henderson’s time as vice-chancellor of Rhodes is noteworthy for two things. The first was the rejuvenation of student activism. The second was the university administration’s reluctance to speak out against apartheid when others did so. Henderson was responsible for both. He admitted and integrated black students into Rhodes, which radicalised activism on campus; and his descent into conservatism created an administration that appeared to be aloof. It appears Henderson became conservative in later years because of the critical situation of the 1980s and what he saw as rabble rousing on campus. In this

\textsuperscript{195} Henderson was not sure but he thought it was a government-appointed member.
sense his decision to admit and integrate black students led to the radical activism that haunted him. While Henderson is attributed with some of the landmark decisions that changed Rhodes, he made them cautiously. Although he was the first to test the waters by accommodating black students on campus, Rhodes had been criticised for not having accepted more black students during the 1980s like the other ‘open’ universities. The legacy of this is that today (2007), Rhodes is targeted as one of the least transformed universities in the country.196

However, Henderson saved Rhodes from the financial calamity that has since befallen the universities that accepted black students in their droves. When Henderson arrived in 1975 the university was in the middle of a ten-year building programme that was sapping its resources. Henderson managed to get Rhodes’ accounts into the black and keep them there, especially as the government subsidy decreased substantially from the late 1980s. Black students were accepted at Rhodes in as much as they could afford the fees. Rhodes assisted as much as it could with bursaries and loans. Ultimately Rhodes did not find itself in the red because it had not accepted black students who were unable to pay their fees, as the other universities had.197 In this instance Henderson’s engineering background assisted him in planning for the long term.

As with any public figure, he had the tricky job of pleasing everyone. He often got more support from the right than from the left. The swift changes he implemented mostly occurred in the years 1975 to 1981 when he was still young, adventurous and new to the job. Thereafter Henderson became more and more reticent. He retired in 1996 after being Vice-Chancellor for 21 years.

196 Black students made up 50% of the student body for the first time in 2001. Only 16% of the academic staff was black in 2005. Statistical Digest, Academic Planning and Quality Assurance Unit, Rhodes University, 2004 and 2006.
197 Interview with Paul Walters, 19 October 2006. Walters is HA Molteno Professor of English.
Rhodes University has commonly been referred to as a liberal university. More specifically, it is referred to as an English liberal university. In post-apartheid South Africa this adds lustre to the university because of the perceived dichotomy between the Afrikaner and English universities and their reactions to the apartheid government. Afrikaner universities may have obediently followed the government’s every word,¹ but this does not imply that the English universities did not. They too are guilty of collusion and acquiescence, not only to the government, but to the general prejudices of white society, which they reflected. The English liberal tradition, as well as the criticism of and resistance to apartheid that emanated from English-medium campuses, are useful smokescreens to hide behind. The English universities were the first to accept black students, but the discrimination these black students faced on overwhelmingly white campuses, and the university administrations’ fears of being swamped with black students and academic standards dropping, are often marginalised in preference for the liberal and ‘pro-struggle’ narrative.

The reality has been revealed more and more by recent writings, but the English universities will not easily dispose of the image of a liberal university, which makes for a great marketing tool. In 1957 UCT and Wits released manifestoes calling their institutions “open universities”.² In time all the English-medium universities began to refer to themselves collectively as open universities. After the 1959 act, ‘open’ came to mean universities that had admitted black students in the past and were openly speaking out against apartheid. But there was a clear disparity in the usage of the term. Wits, as an institution, resisted apartheid. Conservative and racists elements did exist within Wits, but the Council, Senate and the SRC often stood together. At Rhodes it was a small number of students, with a small but growing number of academics that opposed apartheid. Rhodes did not speak with one voice in the same style as Wits. Recent

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¹ Notwithstanding the exceptions of Afrikaans academics that did speak out against apartheid.
² The Open Universities in South Africa (Johannesburg, 1957)
discourse has shown a move to referring to the English-medium universities as “so-called open universities”, although still lumped together. Mervyn Shear states that the English-medium universities were the “so-called ‘open universities’, UCT, Natal, Rhodes and Wits, whose doors were, at least in theory, open to all who were academically qualified for admission”.

Comparatively the most liberal universities in South Africa during apartheid – and by liberal is meant open – were not the universities where English culture and heritage thrived, namely Natal and Rhodes, but the larger city universities of UCT and Wits. The latter were more cosmopolitan, fed by large city populations of English-speakers, Afrikaners, Jews and immigrants, who were not exclusively upper class. Wits, situated in the industrialised and business-orientated city of Johannesburg, proved to be the most liberal. Unlike Cape Town, Grahamstown, Durban and Pietermaritzburg, the city of Johannesburg had not been founded by colonial settlers, but by miners and businessmen looking to make a profit on the gold mines. Wits itself had grown out of a school of mining. Wits had initially faced some strong internal opposition to the admission of black students and those that were admitted experienced discrimination and were socially segregated from white students. This attitude changed in the late 1950s when Wits affirmed its belief in academic freedom and university autonomy. But the 1959 act significantly reduced what black students Wits had and very few were admitted thereafter. The growing number of black students from the late 1970s, though, created a highly politicised and active campus. By 1990 Wits had more black students than the entire Rhodes student body, some 4600.

UCT, also in a large urban centre, drew on the Cape liberal tradition. In the same city as the seat of parliament, UCT was on the doorstep of the apartheid government, which exposed it to a lot of extra-parliamentary groups based in Cape Town, such as the Black Sash. UCT experienced similar resistance to the admission of black students as Wits did, but was the first ‘white’ university to admit a black student. Racial discrimination and

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3 Shear, Wits, p. xi.
4 Ibid., p. 79. Rhodes had about 4000 students.
social segregation were not as problematic as it had been at Wits because the black students at UCT were predominantly Coloureds, who were generally more socially acceptable to whites. However, UCT did not accept black students as readily as Wits, and by 1959 had fewer numbers than its fellow open university. As with Wits, UCT became more outspoken against the apartheid government after the 1950s. It was the site of intense white student activism during Verwoerd’s and Vorster’s terms of office, more so than Wits. In 1981 UCT was the second university to integrate black students into its residences. The student activism of the 1980s, led by the increasing number of black students, was on par with that of Wits. However, student confrontations with the police were often defused at UCT, whereas at Wits intense student activism ended in clashes with the police, which have added to the mythology of liberalism at Wits. UCT was the first university to award Nelson Mandela with an honorary doctorate in the very same year he was released.\

Natal avoided the problems of social segregation by choosing to academically segregate black students from white students. To what extent this was a better option is debateable and Malherbe admits in his memoir of his own misgivings. But Natal is referred to as an ‘open’ university nonetheless. In particular, Natal’s resistance to the 1959 legislation succeeded in the preservation of the medical school for black students, which for a time was the only place black students could study medicine. It is from this medical school that the likes of Steve Biko came. Under Horwood, student activism at Natal was stifled, and took a long time to reach the levels when Malherbe had been vice-chancellor. Disparity also existed between the two white campuses, where students at the Durban campus adopted a more conservative outlook compared to the traditionally ‘liberal’ students at Pietermaritzburg. In the meantime the black medical school, where Black Consciousness was conceived, kept up a voice of opposition. In 1965 there were 297 black students studying medicine.\n
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5 Saunders, *Vice-Chancellor on a tightrope*, p. 222.
of black students at Natal when numbers at UCT and Wits were dwindling. The 1980s saw student activism increase as black students were admitted to the university proper; but Natal, divided between its various campuses, did not oppose apartheid like UCT and Wits.

Rhodes, by comparison, was the most conservative of the ‘open’ universities. There were some radical students and staff, but the university never, as an institution, spoke out against apartheid. The Council, Senate, the SRC and the staff, hardly ever saw eye to eye. Domestic issues often preoccupied them. This left Rhodes vulnerable to attack from the government. Under Alty, Rhodes as an institution only protested when it needed to, such as when the government legislation of 1959 infringed upon university autonomy and academic freedom in a most forthright manner. Academics were allowed to have political views, but preferably not practise them. Students had little to do with politics and were mostly indifferent to apartheid. Yet before the 1959 legislation Rhodes had, of its own accord, chosen to severely restrict the admission of black students. Protest was symbolic and had no political nature. Under Hyslop, Rhodes never protested as an institution. Hyslop’s attitude of an apolitical university resulted in the condemnation of students and staff that practised their political views. Academics, such as Terence Beard, were banned by the government and received very little support from the university administration. Other academics were dismissed outright for their political involvement, such as Basil Moore and Dave Tucker. Students were preoccupied with domestic issues, such as the ban on a mixed audience at their rugby matches and the 1971 disobedience campaign. The failure of the Rhodes SRC and NUSAS to adequately deal with the forced segregation of the 1967 conference highlighted the impotence of their liberalism. Under Henderson, a new era was born in which everything would change. Politically liberal but morally conservative, Henderson would encounter moments when these two ideals clashed, such as the ‘great censorship debate’. Initially liberal change came swiftly, such as the integration of black students into residence, but clashes with the administration began as soon as the government became more stringent. By the mid-1980s the student body was more politicised, with a significant number of supportive and outspoken academics, but faced an increasingly aloof administration that failed to mirror the liberal
actions of the administrations of UCT, Wits and Natal. Rhodes students and staff had the freedom to practise their political views, but the failure of the university to protest apartheid as an institution, with one voice, has forever undermined its so-called liberal image.

Rhodes has undergone huge changes in its leadership, staff component and student body since 1990. In a post-cold war world universities have fallen prey to neo-liberalism and become hubs of managerialism that view the students as customers. These students have become disillusioned with or indifferent to politics, but have become more morally liberal. Academics also have little to do with politics and suffer from the ‘publish or perish’ syndrome. In a post-apartheid society, historically white universities, such as Rhodes, have undergone transformation in an effort to create some degree of equity in the student body and in the workplace. Rhodes lags behind in this process with comparatively few black academics. In 2006 the first black vice-chancellor, Dr Saleem Badat, was appointed. Black students only constituted half the student body for the first time in 2001, but the first black SRC president was elected in 1995, followed by four more consecutive black presidents. Student activism subsided somewhat after 1994. It has regained some momentum, although not as intense, and has been preoccupied with domestic issues, such as safety and security on campus, and dominated by health activism in the struggle against HIV/AIDS. The odd campaign to protest the violation of human rights in Zimbabwe has resulted in an occasional march. Ironically this demonstrates how the tables have turned with regards to the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean students at Rhodes, who during apartheid held conservative views and backed up the silent majority.

Apartheid reached into every facet of society, and it would have been surprising if Rhodes had escaped it. While many opportunities to stand up to apartheid were lost, it is comforting to know that some staff and students at Rhodes did not abide apartheid, such

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9 See forthcoming PhD thesis in Higher Education on discourses of transformation at Rhodes and other Eastern Cape higher education institutions by Anne Knott at Rhodes University.
10 See unpublished History Honours dissertation by Elizabeth Baron at Rhodes University on a comparison of student activism at Rhodes from the 1980s to 2006.
as those the Critical Tradition Colloquium paid homage to in 2004 and who are remembered in this thesis. But these are too few to justify naming Rhodes a liberal university, and an investigation into its role during apartheid reveals too many skeletons in the cupboard. Rhodes was a university during, and of, the apartheid era. This is a reality that needs to be confronted and not forgotten.
APPENDIX

STUDENTS ON SENATE AND COUNCIL

In 1977 Senate reaffirmed its 1969 decision to accept the SRC as a statutory body of the university and that the Rhodes University (Private) Act be amended accordingly. In 1969 the decision had come amid the Basil Moore Affair and student power movement and had been ignored by Council. In 1977 the administration was still unwilling to allow student representation on Council, though, and students who sat on Senate would be subject to strict conditions. Initially three students nominated by the SRC would be observer members on Senate until such time as the amendment of the Rhodes Act gave them full membership.\(^1\) They would not have voting rights on Senate and the agenda for Senate would be divided into restricted and non-restricted matters, the former for which the students would be excused from.\(^2\)

However, full membership of students on Senate hit a snag in 1978 when the Universities Advisory Council declined to recommend amending the Rhodes Act to the Minister of National Education.\(^3\) The Advisory Council’s reason was that no university in South Africa had such a provision in their act or statute and that, as far as the ministry was aware, only UCT and Natal, as a concession, allowed two or more students to serve on boards of faculties as observers and on unrestricted matters. In this regard Rhodes was the first university to allow students to sit on Senate, albeit only with speaking rights and only on non-restricted matters. Over a decade later, in 1988, Council agreed to student observers attending the unrestricted matters of Council meetings.\(^4\)

In 1990 the tide turned in favour of full student representation. Wits had applied to the Minister of National Education to amend its act to allow students full membership on its senate and council. Rhodes decided to await the outcome before making its own application. Meanwhile debate in Senate and Council centred on whether the students

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\(^1\) RU-C, Cory Library, Council XX, MS 17 846/4, p. 403, 15 September 1977, min. 17.2.item 8.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 492, Decisions of Senate, 27 October 1977, mins. 3 and 6.
\(^3\) RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXI, MS 17 846/5, p. 320, 31 August 1978, min. 78.100 and Annexure A(1).
\(^4\) RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXXI, MS 19 315/8, p. 110, 15 September 1988, min. 88.44.
should be allowed to attend their entire meetings, including restricted matters.\textsuperscript{5} Finally, in 1993, legislation was passed amending the Rhodes Act such that five students could sit on Senate and two on Council with full membership, voting rights and access to restricted matters.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{5} RU-C, Cory Library, Council XXXIII, MS 19 315/8, p. 172, 9 August 1990, Senate/Student Liaison Committee and Annexures SSL.1 and SSL.2.
\textsuperscript{6} Rhodes University (Private) Amendment Act.
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