

LETTERS

On November 23, 1987, the Board of the ASA passed a resolution condemning the Universities Act of the South African government (see ASA News, vol. XXI, No. 1, January/March 1988). A copy of the resolution was sent to the South African ambassador to the U.S. and information about the ASA protest circulated to universities, newspapers, and government officials in South Africa and the U.S.

25 February 1988

Edna G. Bay
African Studies Association

Dear Edna

Thank you very much for your letter of 28 January together with a copy of your University's letter to His Excellency Pieter Koornhof, in support of our action in opposing Minister de Klerk's measures in restricting the subsidy of this University in certain circumstances.

It is encouraging to Rhodes University to know that we have friends in the outer world who are clearly concerned for our well-being.

Yours sincerely
K. S. Hunt
Registrar
Rhodes University

The President
African Studies Association

Dear Sir

I was interested in the copy of your letter of 13 January to the Ambassador of South Africa in Washington and of your Resolution on Academic Freedom.

Whether we agree with the conditions for the subvention of universities or not, I think we must get the record straight. There was no question of disciplining students and staff for *peaceful* dissent, and no attack on academic freedom. The intention was rather to protect academic freedom against the violent disruption of academic activities and scholarly dissent from the views of a militant minority on the campus.

Yours sincerely
Professor Theo van Wijk
Vice-Chancellor
University of South Africa

Mrs. E. G. Bay
African Studies Association

Dear Mrs. Bay:

Many thanks for your letter of 28 January 1988, in which you enclosed a copy of a letter sent by Dr. Nzongola-Ntalaja to the South African Ambassador in Washington DC, along with its accompanying Resolution on Academic Freedom. We are much gratified that your African Studies Association joins in protest with certain universities of this country against the recent further attempt of the South African Government on academic freedom and autonomy. All the arguments in Dr. Nzongola-Ntalaja's letter have our heartfelt agreement and support, as have the various positions in the Resolution, and we in this University are proud to stand (along with Cape Town, Rhodes, West Cape and Witwatersrand) as one of those academic bodies referred to in the letter as making their objections vocal—I would only add, in regard to the Resolution's penultimate paragraph, that when we call for the release of political prisoners, as we have done many times, we add the alternative demand that they be brought before a court of law to answer charges specifically made.

Ourselves not constrained from such confrontation, we have decided that the authority of the Minister's ukase should be put to the test of *ultra vires*. The universities of Cape Town and Western Cape, independently, made the same decision, and all three of us have the full backing of their Senates and Councils. I am happy to be able to tell you that the Supreme Court of Cape Province recently found against the Minister, an issue which gives me cause to feel sanguine about the outcome of our pending case before the Supreme Court of the Province of Natal. Whatever the finding, we shall continue to be watchful, and combative as necessary.

As Head of one of those objecting universities, and as the only one with half-a-century's continuous experience of supplying 'Black' tertiary education (with exactly the same curriculums, teachers and examinations as for the 'Whites,' and inside this nominally 'White' university), I should like further to say that we have some solid claims to be part of that 'democratic movement for the transformation of education in South Africa' mentioned in the Resolution. To that we are formally and solemnly dedicated.

At present under revision is a series of brochures setting out—in the words of the title of one of them—*Where We Stand*; and also the numerous aspects of our research and activity for those *underdeveloped communities* which send us these *disadvantaged students*, whose current plight we seek to redress through our rapidly expanding Student Support Service, affirmative action, and many outreach programs. I hope that you will permit me to send you copies of these when they are ready.

Kindly convey our sense of gratitude to your Association.

Yours sincerely
P De V Booyen
Vice Chancellor and Principal
University of Natal