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# Wits at War

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

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**by:** Bruce Murray

**No.** 275

# WITS AT WAR

## I

The Second World War began as a European war on Sunday 3 September 1939 and ended six years later in the Far East with the Japanese surrender to the United States. In the history of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, as in the history of much else, the war was a watershed. The University became much more 'open' in its admissions policy, with blacks securing access to the medical school; war-oriented research, notably in radar, gave a new importance to the University as a centre of research; the war contributed significantly to a heightened political awareness among students and the beginnings of student activism at Wits; and the enrolment of thousands of ex-servicemen at the end of the war helped to make the University a distinctly more adult institution. The war also effected major transformations in the wider society, which in turn were to have a significant impact on the University's development. World War II, and South Africa's participation in it on the Allied side, greatly affected the economic, social, and political life of the country.

Economically, South Africa, and especially Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand, boomed as a consequence of the war. In the six years before the war a process of restructuring had begun within the South African economy, with secondary industry embarking on major expansion. The conditions of war served to speed up the advance of manufacturing. With the assistance of the Industrial Development Corporation, established in 1940, the manufacturing sector moved rapidly ahead as the country sought to produce the armaments required by the war effort and to provide local substitutes for imports. Between 1939 and 1945 the gross value of industrial output more than doubled, from £141 million to £304 million, enabling manufacturing to now surpass mining in its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product. The most dramatic growth was in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging complex, which by 1945 was producing almost half the country's industrial output. The importance of Johannesburg, the focus of the country's railway network, as a centre for the commercial distribution of goods for southern Africa as a whole grew correspondingly.

The war-time industrial growth hastened, in turn, the movement of peoples from the countryside to the towns, particularly among blacks. The decay of the rural economy in the Great Depression, and the growth of secondary industry thereafter, had already spawned a major process of urbanisation among blacks from both the reserves and the farms, and this was accelerated during the war. Blacks provided the greater proportion of the labour required by the expanding industrial sector. The influx of black workers and their families to the urban areas, and the inadequacy of urban black housing, were such that by the end of the war large squatter camps had grown up on

the outskirts of Johannesburg and several other major cities. By 1946, according to the official census, Johannesburg's population stood at 606 000, including 322 000 whites, about a third of them Afrikaans-speaking, compared to 479 000, including 256 000 whites, in 1936.[1] The statistics as to the black population at the end of World War II, however, were hopelessly inadequate, and in all probability Johannesburg's black population now outnumbered the white.

This overall economic and population growth, the University appreciated, could only increase demand for the education and training it offered, not only in the professional faculties as before the war but also in science and commerce as the industrial and commercial development of the Witwatersrand forged ahead. As the University predicted to the committee appointed in 1943 to enquire into its finances, with unskilled work left largely to 'Non-Europeans' in South Africa, an increasing proportion of the 'European' population would be seeking a higher education since "the doctors, engineers, etc. should be proportionate, not to the groups from which they are drawn, but to the total population they have to serve".[2] Most professions were still effectively closed to 'Non-Europeans', but during the war the breakthrough was made in providing for the training of black doctors at Wits. Underlying the breakthrough was government and business concern at the pervasive ill-health of the industrial labour force, and fear of the spread of diseases from the burgeoning black townships.

Politically, South Africa's entry into World War II as a divided country had a major polarising effect and served to open a new chapter in the history of Afrikaner republicanism and nationalism. Opposition among Afrikaners to the Smuts Government's participation in an 'imperialist' war against Germany gave a major new impetus to Afrikaner republicanism and provided the conditions from which a new Afrikaner nationalist alliance emerged under the leadership of the Herenigde (Purified) National Party. For a while the militaristic, pro-Nazi extra-parliamentary movement, the Ossewabrandwag, threatened the party's supremacy, but by the war's end the HNP was firmly in control of political Afrikanerdom. Committed, among other things, to promoting Afrikaner advance in the professions, and to establishing the full range of professional faculties, including medicine and engineering, at the Afrikaans-medium universities, the HNP was always hostile to Wits; the University's support of South Africa's war effort, its substantial Jewish population, and the opening of its medical school to blacks, made it a particular target for Nationalist attack, led by Dr H.F. Verwoerd's

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1. Union of South Africa: Population Census 7 May 1946 (UG 51 of 1949), table 8.

2. Memorandum of Evidence, Commission of Enquiry into the University Finances, 1943, University Archives 015

Transvaler. In the very first issue of the Transvaler, which appeared on 1 October 1937, Verwoerd published a 6,000 word article on "the Jewish question", claiming that Jewish preponderance in the professions, commerce, and industry served as a major obstacle to Afrikaner advancement, and suggesting the introduction of racial quotas in various fields so as to enable Afrikaners to assert their leadership. In this scheme of things Wits was perceived as an "anti-Afrikaans university", whose Principal, a foreigner, was following a policy designed to discriminate against Afrikaners and to turn Wits into "a Jewish university with an appendage of Indian and native students".[3]

Participation in the war against Fascism also initiated a new chapter in left/liberal politics in South Africa. The sense that Fascism had to be combatted at home as well as abroad generated new activity on the left, producing attempts to construct a broad anti-Fascist front that would promote egalitarianism within South Africa. 1941 saw the formation of the Springbok Legion as "the soldier's trade union", committed not only to securing the rights of ex-servicemen and their dependents, black as well as white, but also to "working for a society based on the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity".[4] The Home Front League of the Springbok Legion was set up in the next year. While largely non-Communist, the leadership of the Legion included several prominent members of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and from the outset was regarded by the military authorities as "markedly subject to Communist influence".[5] Following Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, and the CPSA's switch to a pro-war policy, the Communist Party and its front organisations, the Friends of the Soviet Union and Medical Aid for Russia, asserted a major influence in left-wing politics in South Africa.

The 1930s had proved a difficult decade for the CPSA, which was reduced by purges to a small sect of a few hundred members, largely in Johannesburg. The Soviet Union's initial refusal to join the 'imperialist' war against Nazi Germany, and the CPSA's contorted attempts to support this stand and yet distance itself from the Nationalist opposition to South Africa's participation in the war, did little to bolster the party's wider appeal among whites, though through its association with the developing African trade union movement it began to expand its African membership. The situation was transformed by Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, and the CPSA's consequent pro-war policy. Among the black working class, the CPSA now sought to curb strike

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3. Transvaler, 30 October 1941 & 8 March 1944

4. Constitution of the Springbok Legion of ex-servicmen and women, SADF Archives AG (3) 154/696.

5. Brigadier-General R.D. Pilkington Jordan, Adjutant General, to Secretary for Defence, 22 February 1942, Ibid.

activity, and in white circles it achieved a new respectability, gaining access to a growing progressive white constituency, including the Wits campus, by linking itself to broader anti-Fascist and anti-racist movements; many essentially liberal whites were attracted to it as the only anti-segregationist political party available in South Africa.

Altogether, some two hundred thousand South Africans served in World War II, fighting in East Africa, Madagascar, North Africa, and Italy. Nearly nine thousand lost their lives. To this war effort, Wits made a not inconsiderable contribution, and in some areas an important one. According to the University's own statistics, of the six thousand degree students registered during the war, approximately fifteen hundred volunteered, the large majority interrupting their studies in order to serve.[6] Eighty three staff members, from typists and caretakers through to full professors, also volunteered. In all ninety Wits students lost their lives on active service, as did seventy five graduates of the University, and one member of staff, J.F. Knowles, a laboratory assistant in chemistry. Although the Department of Defence made no systematic attempt to harness the University's research facilities for war-related work, Wits played a leading role in South Africa's most significant scientific achievement during the war, research into radar, and University personnel were prominent in founding the Army Education Service, which provided lectures for troops and promoted their 'ideological' awareness.[7]

II.

South Africa's commitment to the Allied war effort was never 'total'; the political divisions over the country's involvement in the war precluded that. There was no conscription, and no compulsion even for members of the Permanent Force to serve beyond South Africa's borders; the South Africans who fought in World War II were all essentially volunteers. At Wits, in turn, there was never any question of the University being fully mobilised for war. The position of Wits was that while it gave active support to South Africa's war effort, this was not at the expense of its own fundamental interests. From the outset, the University moved to protect its student enrolments by averting a mass exodus of its male students to the battle front; Wits was heavily dependent for its revenue on income from fees, and as the

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6. Star, 5 March 1945; speech by S.C. Newman at the unveiling of the Wits War Memorial, 20 November 1970, University Archives 139.

7. For an overiew of the University's contribution to South Africa's war effort, see Brian D. Jacobs, "Wits 1939-1945: A University at War in a Divided Society" (unpublished BA Hons dissertation, History Department, University of the Witwatersrand, 1989).

Principal, Humphrey Raikes, pointed out to heads of departments, even a small reduction in student numbers would cause major financial complications.[8] Furthermore, in allowing academic staff leave for full-time war service the Council was always careful not to jeopardise the University's essential teaching services. From the standpoint of the service leagues and the 'patriotic' sections of the English-language press, Wits consequently emerged as nothing more than a 'funk hole', providing shelter for young men intent on evading their duty to fight for their country.

In fact, student enrolments kept up remarkably well during the war, and there was no fundamental check to the overall pattern of growth in student numbers. The full-time enrolment of 2269 for 1940 was well up on the previous year's 2081. Following the end of the period of 'phoney' war in mid-1940, when the Nazis suddenly swept through Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries, and France, there was a substantial exodus of students, including 122 engineers, for whom the University had made special arrangements to complete their final year course in half the normal time. In 1941 full-time enrolments levelled off at 2251, rising to 2397 by 1943, and increasing substantially in the last two years of the war, when an Allied victory became assured and the first of the ex-servicemen resumed their studies. Total student enrolment in 1945 was 3147, 2645 full-time, as against a total of 2544 in 1939. Significantly, the student body became much more of a social mix as students who before the war would not have come to Wits, now enrolled; these were students who previously would have shunned Wits for an overseas training, notably in medicine and dentistry, or else would have been excluded. The war years produced a marked increase in the number of students with private school backgrounds, while the opening up of the medical school made for a definite black presence at the University. By the war's end, there were some 150 black students at Wits, more than half of them in medicine. Exiles from countries that had been over-run by the Nazis, including Prince Nicholas of Yugoslavia, added to the mix.

The dental school, which remained the only one in South Africa, architecture, which became an independent faculty in 1941 following the building and architectural boom in Johannesburg in the late 1930s, and the medical school provided the main growth points. Between 1939 and 1945 the number of students in medicine jumped from 740 to 1016, constituting roughly forty per cent of the full-time student population; in dentistry the enrolment more than trebled from 57 to 187; and in architecture it doubled from 100 to 210.[9] Together with engineering, they had all been major

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8. Raikes to heads of departments, 28 June 1940, University Archives 138.3

9. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Annual Report, 1939 and 1945.

growth points in the decade before the war; during the war enrolments in civil engineering continued to climb but there was a fall off in mining engineering as war conditions led to declining profitability in the gold mining industry; the inflationary rise of working costs put a severe squeeze on mining profits. Total enrolment in engineering in 1945 was 658, ahead of arts with 629, commerce with 228, science with 184, and law with 35. Medicine, dentistry, engineering, and architecture constituted the core of the University; they were the professions for which the greatest demand existed in South Africa. In 1940, at the University's behest, the Department of Defence issued instructions banning the recruitment of students in the four faculties who were in their third year of study or beyond. They were deemed as qualifying for work of 'national importance', and were expected to complete their degrees before enlisting. Students who had completed four years of medicine, or who were in the final year of engineering, were later positively prohibited from enlisting.[10]

At the outbreak of war, Raikes, who had served with the Buffs and the Royal Flying Corps in World War I, instantly took charge of shaping the University's policy towards it. Since coming from Oxford to Wits as Principal in 1928, the somewhat shy and aloof Raikes had struggled to make his mark on the University; his touch was uncertain and he still seemed very much of an alien transplant in South African conditions. Through his attempts to identify Wits with South Africa's war effort, Raikes not only provided more of a lead within the University but also gained a new prominence in a South African context. Although the Transvaler constantly reminded its readers that Raikes was an import from England, it was for South Africa's interests in the war that Raikes worked.

Despite Raikes' traditional insistence on the political neutrality of the University, and his refusal to allow students to stage a 'political' debate on South Africa's entry into the war, he seems to have seen no contradiction in throwing the University's support behind the Smuts Government and the prosecution of the war. In his address to students at the beginning of the 1940 academic year, he stated that democratic government was essentially majority rule, and that once war had been declared by a majority decision in Parliament, it was the duty of every citizen to assist the Government of the day.[11]

Raikes consequently saw to it that Wits rallied in support of

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10. Raikes to Secretary for Defence, 7 December 1939, Raikes to Minister of Education, 18 April 1940, and Adjutant General circular, "University Training Corps", 24 March 1941, SADF Archives CGS/60/13;; Raikes to Col. C.G. Werdmuller, 12 March 1940, and Captain F.R. Chamberlain to Raikes, 14 June 1940, File D2/4; Star, 13 June 1940

11. Star, 3 March 1940

South Africa's war effort. The University devised schemes for speeding up courses and exams so as to free students to enlist; Raikes took a personal lead in urging the Department of Defence to establish a training corps at Wits and to exploit the University's research potential; and it was at the initiative of Professor R.F.A. Hoernle that Wits academics helped devise a pilot-scheme for educational services to the troops, leading to the establishment in 1941 of the Army Education Service. In all this, Raikes saw Wits as taking "its full and legitimate share in the country's war effort".[12] From the standpoint of the Nationalists, the Englishman Raikes turned Wits into a recruiting ground for the armed forces, and a support base for Smuts' United Party.[13]

While anxious to support the war effort, Raikes was nonetheless also determined to see Wits maintain its enrolments and produce the qualified men and women that post-war South Africa would desperately require. His own oft-stated position was that while the demands of the war were considerable, it would be fatally short-sighted to ignore the perhaps even greater demands of post-war reconstruction; without an adequate supply of trained manpower the country would simply cease to be a 'going concern'. The disaster that had beset Britain in the first World War, when "the flower of the young brains of the country was killed", needed to be avoided. South Africa's supply of young people of real university quality was small, and the country could not afford to squander it. The role of the universities was consequently to ensure they produced an adequate number of trained specialists, whether doctors, dentists, engineers, and architects, or teachers and scientists. As the head of a university which identified with the war effort, Raikes was also anxious not to allow "the abandonment of the University field to the ill-disposed".[14]

The maintenance of the University's teaching functions meant that Wits could not afford to lose too many of its academic staff to full-time war service. The Council's policy with regard to staff volunteering for war service was to grant them leave when this could be done without jeopardising the University's essential teaching. As Raikes explained Council's standpoint to heads of departments in a memorandum of 7 June 1940, "So long as the present policy of keeping the University going is maintained it is essential that we should have an adequate teaching staff." Suitable substitutes for members of staff leaving on active service had to be found from among "men over military age or unfit for active service or else women", and such persons were not easy to find in the Union.[15] Even where substitutes were

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12. Memorandum to heads of departments, 7 June 1940

13. Transvaler, 6 March 1944.

14. Raikes to Werdmuller, 12 March 1942, File D2/4.

available, Council was reluctant to see departments largely denuded of permanent staff. Council consequently fell back on a selective policy. In the Department of History, Eric Axelson was granted leave in 1940 to undertake full-time war service as an information officer, but Arthur Keppel-Jones was denied it.[16]

Of the 83 members of staff given leave for full-time war service, whether in fighting abroad or undertaking war-related work within South Africa, the large majority were administrative, technical and part-time academic staff; a third were full-time academics. They included five full professors: R.G. McKerron in law, who was taken prisoner of war after the fall of Tobruk; J.P. Dalton in mathematics, who joined the Cipher Department of Military Intelligence; W.G. Sutton in civil engineering, who served for four years in the Department of Defence as general manager of the Central Organisation of Technical Training; J.M. Watt in pharmacology, who was seconded to the South African Medical Corps to control medical supplies; and A.D. Stammers in physiology, who joined the Special Signals Services, taking up a command in Cape Town. In 1944 Stammers was court-martialled. The conviction was removed on appeal and he was restored to his command, evidently having been the victim of mistaken identity or a frame-up.[17]

For those granted leave, the University undertook to maintain their pension contributions and pay half their normal salary, in the case of men with dependents, or quarter salary for men without dependents, provided their total war-time income did not exceed their regular university income.[18]

The ban on recruiting restricted groups of students caused considerable irritation among those in charge of recruitment, and served to fuel public criticism of the universities as 'funk holes' for young men who should be fighting for their country. More than any other university in South Africa, Wits became the target for such criticism, much of it acquiring an anti-semitic edge with the claim that the University, and particularly its medical school, was crammed with Jewish students. Even before the war, the proportion of Jewish students in the medical school was 42 per cent, and an increasing Jewish enrolment during the war prompted pro-war 'patriots' and Afrikaner Nationalists alike to demand the imposition of quotas limiting the number of Jewish students.[19]

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15. University Archives 138.3

16. Council minutes, 27 June 1941

17. Council minutes, 15 September 1944

18. Council minutes, 27 May 1940 and Misc.C/44/40

19. Under the headline ‚Oorheersing van Jode aan Mediese Skool' on 31 March 1944, the Transvaler calculated that of the 823 white students in the medical school, 442 or 54%, were Jewish. A letter

The most persistent critic of Wits as a 'funk hole' was Arthur Barlow, the maverick United Party politician and newspaper editor, who sought in his Weekly to "shame the shirkers into service", and even recommended the closure of the universities for the duration of the war.[20] When at the beginning of the 1943 academic year Wits students came out in protest against a twenty per cent increase in fees, Barlow was totally outraged, denouncing the 'funk-holers' for "squealing about higher fees, inadequate accommodation and other quibbling matters while the war was being fought for them". Barlow printed his editorials as 'red letters'; the forceful response of the editors of the Wits student newspaper, WU's Views, to his allegations was printed by him as a 'yellow letter'.[21]

Mounting criticism of Wits as a 'funk hole' greatly disturbed Raikes. While he throughout insisted that the University was not a 'recruiting sergeant', and while the University provided figures to indicate there was no real evidence that it was being exploited as a 'funk hole' by men free to enlist, the Principal's tone in speaking to students about their duties in regard to the war became distinctly more strident with time. In his annual address to students in 1940, when Raikes was anxious to encourage students to complete their degree studies before signing up, he stressed the need for them to prepare themselves for the task of reconstruction after the war. In his 1942 address, when the large majority of students at Wits had registered since the outbreak of war and at a juncture when Colonel G.C. Werdmuller, the Director of Recruiting, was giving vent to his irritation and the obstacles in the way of recruiting university students, Raikes

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published in Arthur Barlow's Weekly on 24 June 1944 contended that seventy percent of Wits medical students were Jewish: "Now this doesn't seem quite fair especially in war-time when all our man-power is needed, so I would like to suggest a scheme whereby a fair distribution is brought about and the number of students is curtailed--namely a quota system based upon population i.e. say 55 per cent Afrikaans-speaking, 40 English-speaking and 5 per cent Jewish." In response to this kind of criticism the University took a census of its male student population which indicated that 45 per cent of male medical students were Jewish. Out of a total male student population in June 1944 of 2136, 814 were recorded as Jewish, giving an overall proportion of 38 per cent. The proportion for each faculty was Arts 25%, Science 36%, Medicine 45%, Engineering 34%, Commerce 47%, Law 39%, Dentistry 45%, Architecture 21%. University Archives 211, Statistics.

20. Arthur Barlow's Weekly, 17 January and 7 February 1942, 18 March, 8 April and 27 May 1944.

21. Ibid., 27 March and 17 April 1943.

asked Wits students to examine their motives for attending the University while others were fighting. In 1944 he made what the Star described as a "vigorous distinction" between those who had the right to be at the University and those who by rights should be serving in the Army, warning that the latter would forever have stamped upon them "the indelible mark of Cain".[22] In his final war-time address to students in March 1945, Raikes confessed his disappointment that not more students and graduates of Wits had volunteered. According to the figures he gave, only one in four of the University's degree students, and only one in five of those who had graduated since 1939, had joined the forces. In the age group from 19 to 25, he doubted whether the University's record was as good as the 'nation' as a whole, and he feared Wits had "failed our country and her Allies in the time of crisis".[23]

Raikes' pessimism was in response not only to outside criticism of the University as a haven for slackers, but to a marked falling off in student enlistments in the last years of the war. Even the University Training Corps found its membership flagging; out of about 600 first-year men who registered at Wits in 1944, only 43 joined the corps, which now numbered no more than 130 in total.[24] This pattern, repeated at other universities, was put down by the army authorities to the fact that students joining the UTC were obliged to take the general service oath, binding themselves to enlist after completion of their studies.[25] In mid-year the President of the Wits SRC, Ian Bransby Welsh, who was in his sixth year as a medical student, sought to shake his fellow students out of their apathy by writing personally to Smuts for permission to enlist. "My enlisting", he told the Prime Minister, "would certainly cause junior students to consider their positions very seriously, and I honestly believe that many first, second, third and fourth years would be encouraged to do likewise."[26] Smuts duly granted Welsh permission to join the 6th Division, and following Welsh's challenge to his colleagues to follow suit another twenty medical students applied for enlistment, much to Raikes' chagrin. From his standpoint, medicals were students who should complete their studies before enlisting.[27]

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22. Star, 3 March 1940; 9 March 1942; 6 March 1944; for Wrmuller see Jacobs, "University at War", p.16, and Raikes telegram to Hofmeyr, 7 March 1942, University File D2/4.

23. Star, 5 March 1945.

24. Star, 5 March 1944.

25. Report by the Deputy Chief of Staff on the annual UTC conference, 14 April 1944, SADF Archives CGS 60/13

26. Welsh to Smuts, 8 July 1944, SADF Archives CGS 60/13

In the final analysis, in the light of his own consistent concern to ensure that Wits continued to produce the professionally trained men that South Africa required, and in the absence of conscription and a planned allocation of manpower, it was absurd for Raikes to suggest the University itself had somehow 'failed' the country in World War II. As he himself correctly pointed out, it was not part of the University's function to recruit for the army, and from the outset he had likewise correctly warned against ignoring the needs and claims of post-war South Africa. The statistics produced by the University in 1942 indicated that the large majority of male students at Wits belonged to various categories prohibited or dissuaded from enlisting; they were either under the age of nineteen or older students qualifying in areas deemed of 'national importance'.[28] Of the twenty three per cent of male students who did not fit into these categories, a significant proportion were either medically unfit or had political objections to South Africa's participation in the war. As the editors of WU's Views put it to Arthur Barlow, whatever disagreements one might have with the Afrikaner students fundamentally opposed to the war effort, they most certainly could not be classed as 'funks'. For those who were at Wits largely because they were looking for a haven to escape military service, or because they were intent on 'stealing a march' on their contemporaries in the armed forces, there was little the University could do to frustrate them, short of closing its doors for the duration of the war. Nor could the University prescribe to its graduates. It was only left to Raikes to express his disappointment that a mere 360 out of the 1900 Wits graduates produced since 1939 had joined the forces.

When war had broken out in September 1939, the University had responded immediately by providing special arrangements and concessions to free final year students to serve. All final year courses were terminated in early October, and the examinations brought forward so they could be completed before the end of the month. All other examinations remained scheduled for November; those students enlisting before these could be written might be granted passes on the recommendation of heads of departments. In those instances where passes were not awarded, special examinations were to be arranged on demobilisation.[29] In the next year, to further assist enlistments, all faculties provided in mid-year for special concessions to students repeating courses; on enlisting they might be granted passes for individual courses they were repeating or, in the case of final year

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27. CGS staff conference, 16 August 1944, SADF Archives CGS 60/13

28. "Full-time student numbers analysed", 11 August 1942

29. Notice to students, 8 September 1039, File 138.3

students, credits in the major subjects they had previously passed. In other words, they were no longer required to pass all their majors simultaneously, but were permitted to split them.[30] To meet the war-time demand for engineers, the Faculty of Engineering also provided for accelerated final-year courses concentrated into six months.[31]

By July 1940, following the fall of France, the University, in consultation with the Department of Defence, had worked out its standing policy in regard to students and war service. All students under the age of nineteen, and all students who had reached the third year of study, were to remain at the University, and no student was to volunteer without first consulting the Principal. In these consultations, Raikes tried his "utmost" to persuade good students to complete their studies before joining up; those he believed would make better soldiers than university students he encouraged "to go to the war, with the certain prospect they would be welcomed back again at the conclusion of hostilities".[32] During 1940, some 305 students left the University for full-time military service.[33]

To cater for recent matriculants whose strategy was to begin their university studies and then enlist on reaching nineteen, and for older students committed to completing their degrees before joining up, a training corps was started on campus in May 1940. At first Raikes was dubious whether the Department of Defence would allow for military training within the University, but after prolonged negotiations it was agreed to set up an Officer Training Corps at Wits as a cadet unit; in July the OTC was reorganised as an AFC unit of the Witwatersrand Command, and later renamed the Rand University Training Corps.[34] As urged by Raikes upon the Department of Defence, the creation of a university training corps would not only save students from having to disrupt their studies to attend ACF camps during term, but would also facilitate the utilisation of their special qualifications.[35] It perhaps went without saying that it would help keep students at university.

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30. Notice to students, 5 July 1940, File 138.3.

31. Faculty of Engineering minutes, 7 August 1940.

32. Raikes circular to members of staff, 25 June 1940, File 138.3; Raikes to Werdmuller, 12 March 1942, File D2/4 T.

33. "Students on Active Service, 1940 ", 30 June 1941, Misc. S/117/41.

34. For a full account see Jacobs, "University at War", pp.39-42.

35. Council minutes, 20 October 1939.

The Rand UTC catered for students at Milner Park; the medical students had already been given their own training unit, the No. 2 Medical Officers' Training Ambulance, undr the command of Professor Raymond Dart, later supplemented by the 25th Field Ambulance as a mobilisable unit.[36] The training corps at Milner Park comprised artillery and engineering sub-units, for engineering and science students, an infantry sub-unit, primarily for arts and commerce students, and later an air squadron. During term volunteers normally received five hours of training a week, including a parade on Saturday mornings; continuous training was provided at camps held during the July vacation. Membership of the training units required a commitment to full-time service on the completion of studies; volunteers attested that they would serve anywhere in Africa, but on the understanding that they would not be required to serve until they had completed their academic courses.[37] The service oath nonetheless restricted recruitment to the training units. By 1942 the University's various training units included 814 students; of these 177 were deemed to be 'free to enlist students'.[38] The medical units never attracted more than a third of medical students.[39]

For the male members of staff who remained at the University, the training units provided the opportunity to involve themselves directly in the war effort; the officers in the training corps were drawn overwhelmingly from the academic staff. The senior officers were all veterans of World War I; the junior officers were recruited from the younger members of staff. At the establishement of the Rand UTC Raikes was made commanding officer with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, and Professor G.E. Pearse second-in-command with the rank of major; Professor W.G. Sutton was appointed officer in command of the engineering unit, Professor C. van Riet Lowe of artillery, and Professor H.H. Paine of infantry.[40]

Bedevilled from the outset by lack of equipment, the Rand UTC was not designed to produce units that might be mobilised; rather the intention was to provide the students with "a certain amount of military knowledge" before they presented themselves for full-time service. The Rand UTC was essentially a token of

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36. For a full account see Jacobs, "University at War", pp.34-39.

37. Establishment--Officers Training Corps: W.W. Rand University, Adjutant General, 21 June 1940, SADF Archives DC 3116.

38. Raikes to Werdmuller, 12 March 1942, File D2/4 T; Star, 18 September 1942.

39. See Jacobs, "University at War", p. 38.

40. Progress Report on Witwatersrand University OTC, July 1940, SADF Archives CGS(2) Box 281 File G 392/4.

the University's commitment to the war effort, though its critics perceived it as a mechanism by which selfish students were able to justify their continuation at university. The official South African War Histories volume on South Africa at War was entirely dismissive of the UTC scheme, categorising it among the projects "which, in retrospect, appear to have been singularly profitless except in so far as they influenced otherwise totally self-interested or singularly unpatriotic people to give thought to matters military".[41] This assessment not only ignored the commitment of UTC volunteers to serve on graduation, but also underestimated the value of some of the training provided at Wits, particularly in artillery. Van Riet Lowe's ideal for his battery was that it should provide "a source of material capable of undertaking specialist jobs", and the gunners produced by the Rand UTC were evidently snapped up by the Army.[42] Otherwise, Raikes was outraged by the nonchalant way in which the armed forces, and particularly the Engineer Corps, received recent Wits graduates after all the efforts the University had gone to in order to hasten their enlistment and prepare them for service. In 1942 he complained that although the University had accelerated its final-year engineering course by nearly six months, and had provided its engineering graduates with a measure of military training, the Engineer Corps treated them as if it did not have "any real use for them".[43]

In addition to preparing men for the armed forces, another area in which Wits academics who remained at their posts became directly engaged in the war effort was in providing 'ideological' lectures to the troops. In this the lead was taken by R.F.A. Hoernlé, the Professor of Philosophy and one of the dominant figures in the University. It was out of his initiative that the Army Education Service (AES) emerged in 1941; as Dr. E.G. Malherbe, who became Director of Military Intelligence and Chief of the Army Education Service, acknowledgd, Hoernle was the true 'father' of the AES.[44]

Soon after the outbreak of war a number of Wits academics, including Hoernle and Dr H. Sonnabend, a lecturer in the Department of Social Studies, volunteered to lecture to the troops in their free time. Their experiences convinced them that the men in the training camps were largely ignorant of the

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41. H.J. Martin and N.D. Orpen, South Africa at War (South African Forces World War II, vol. 7, Cape Town, 1979), pp. 304-5

42. Van Riet Lowe to Col. Adler, 6 February 1941, SADF Archives CGS 392/7.

43. Raikes to Secretary for Education, 26 May 1942, SADF Archives DC 3116.

44. E.G. Malherbe, Never a Dull Moment (Cape Town, 1981), p. 215, and Malherbe's obituary for Hoernle in Ic Digest, 1943.

ideological issues of the war, and the reasons for South Africa's involvement; consequently they devised a scheme for providing the troops with 'ideological' lectures to help make them aware of what they were fighting for. In September 1940 they set up an 'unofficial' committee in Johannesburg, encompassing teachers, clergy, and professionals as well as Wits academics, to assist the armed forces in creating the machinery for the provision of education facilities for the troops. As chairman of the organising committee, Hoernle approached military propaganda and intelligence, and also the Minister of Education, Jan Hofmeyr, with their proposals, and in early November got the go ahead from the Department of Defence for an experimental scheme of lectures for troops in the Transvaal. In the event of the lectures proving successful, the scheme would be extended throughout the country and would "follow the troops to the North".[45]

Between 18 November and 17 December Hoernlé's team gave over a hundred lectures to some twenty five units at Roberts Heights and the Premier Mine camps on the general theme "How the War began and What it is about". At the follow up meeting on 20 December between Hoernlé, Hofmeyr, Malherbe, and the military authorities, it was decided to proceed with the establishment of a full-time education unit within the armed forces staffed by trained information officers. The notion of creating a corps of officers specifically trained for the task was the brainchild of Leo Marquard, then of the South African Military College, who had put his scheme to Malherbe in October.[46] The AES was subsequently set up in 1941 with Malherbe as its chief, Marquard as his main assistant, and with an initial complement of thirty officers. Hoernlé's committee was reorganised as an ACF unit, the Johannesburg Committee for Organising Lectures to the Troops; it assisted in training information officers and offered lectures to troops in the Wiwatersrand-Pretoria-Sonderwater-Potchefstroom series of camps.

As envisaged by Hoernlé, the lectures to the troops were to serve a distinct propaganda function and also help relieve boredom in the training camps. His original lecture programme on the causes and consequences of the war was designed to ensure that the armed forces were made "fully conscious of the cause for which they were fighting" and to keep them in touch "with the trend of modern thought". For liberal and left-wing intellectuals, the concentration of large numbers of whites in an army mobilised to combat Fascism offered in fact a marvellous opportunity to re-educate white South Africans. Under the influence of Marquard, a founder of the National Union of South African Students and a socialist in his thinking, the information

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45. Hoernlé circular, 15 September 1940, File D2/11

46. Malherbe to Marquard, 1 November 1940, and "History of Army Education Services", 30 September 1945, Marquard Papers, University of Cape Town Library Archives, BC 587.

officers recruited by the AES were often left-wingers, and the AES itself became a major channel for conveying 'progressive' political and economic ideas to the troops. The first complement of information officers included only one Wits academic, Dr Eric Axelson of the Department of History; on completion of his training he was assigned to the 3rd South African Infantry Brigade.

In addition to Hoernle and Sonnabend, Wits academics who participated in the training of information officers and lecturing to the troops in the local camps included Professor Leo Fouche and Arthur Keppel-Jones from History, Professor C.M. Doke from Bantu Studies, Dr Simon Biesheuvel from Psychology, and Julius Lewin from Native Law and Administration. They lectured about what was at stake in the war, and reconstruction after the war, particularly as it concerned South Africa's 'native policy'. To begin with their audiences were captive as the lectures were made 'parades', at which attendance was compulsory, though it soon became apparent that such a strategy might prove counter-productive. "Now we are going to hear another lot of bloody tripe, eh", was the remark once overheard by Keppel-Jones on his way to lecture.[47] In revising the programme of lectures offered by the Johannesburg Committee in late 1941, Hoernle consequently sought to cater more for a range of interests and tastes, and advised commanding officers that the committee preferred voluntary attendance at most lectures. Only lectures on the war, and its political causes and consequences, should remain compulsory.[48]

As Raikes impressed on the Department of Defence at the outbreak of war, research was a key area in which Wits might make a major contribution to South Africa's war effort. The University's major research institute, the Bernard Price Institute of Geophysics, was indeed immediately drafted into defence research, abandoning its geophysical work for research into radar. At Smuts' behest, the BPI's director, Basil Schonland, formed a special unit within the South African Corps of Signals, the Special Signals Services, which undertook this research, and it effectively re-invented radar. In order to provide early warning against attack from the air, the British had secretly been developing Radio Detection Finding devices since the mid-thirties, but nothing of the kind existed in South Africa. All that Schonland had to begin with was a virtually unreadable photocopy of the British RDF Manual, hurriedly made in Durban from the copy that the New Zealand scientist, Dr Ernest Marsden, was taking back to his country. Initially, it was intended that Schonland would use the manual to train people to operate British radar when it became available. Instead, he set up a research team to develop South Africa's own radar equipment.

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47. Keppel-Jones, 'Memoirs'

48. Revised Programme of Lectures to the Troops, 1941, File D2/11.

The team he recruited comprised his chief assistant at the BPI, Dr P.G. Gane, Dr G.R. Bozzoli of Wits, W.E. Phillips of Natal University, and Noel Roberts of UCT, all in light electrical engineering, later joined by F.J. Hewitt, a physics graduate from Rhodes University. After raiding the local radio shops for vacuum tubes, the team constructed in a few months South Africa's first radar transmitter and receiver; the first echoes were received on Dingaan's Day, 16 December 1939. Thereafter BPI sets, known as JBs, were installed along South Africa's coastline and sent as far afield as East Africa in 1940 and the Sinai Coast in 1941, where they were linked into the RAF system until new British equipment became available.

The original sets constructed at the BPI, the JB1s, were mobile affairs with two antennae; the transmitter and its antenna were loaded in one truck, the receiver with its antenna and a display unit in another. The final version, the JB4, possessed a single antenna, and provided a range of 150km on bombers and 30km on small ships. These serviced the network of twelve radar stations installed along the South African coast until late 1943, when they were replaced by British sets. Thereafter the Special Signals Services reverted to the role originally envisaged for it, becoming predominantly an operational and training unit.[49] Schonland, in the meantime, had been recruited to assist with British war research, becoming Superintendent of the Army Operational Research Group in the War Office in 1942.

Radar represented the only major war-related research undertaken at Wits; for the rest, Raikes' vision that the University would serve as an important research centre for the country's war effort was never realised. Instead, particular individuals were seconded to the armed forces to assist with war-related research.

In addition to the development of a radar network, another research contribution made by Wits personnel to the defence of South Africa's coasts was in meteorology. Immediately on the declaration of war, Stanley Jackson, who as a lecturer in the Department of Geography had already established his reputation as South Africa's foremost climatologist, was recruited by the Royal Navy as a meteorologist, and his first major task was that of compiling and assessing the meteorological data required for the air and sea defence of South Africa's coastline; this resulted in a five-part study Weather on the Coasts of Southern Africa. Later in the war Jackson became head of the Meteorological Planning Section in the headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander in South East Asia, Lord Louis Mountbatten. Two others seconded for war-time research were G.B. Lauf, lecturer in surveying, who carried out work on geoditic computations for radar precision bombing for the United States 8th Army Air Force,

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49. For a fuller account of the work of the Special Signals Services see G.R. Bozzoli, "Radar in South Africa--the past", Pulse, January 1983.

and Simon Biesheuvel who developed aptitude testing techniques for the South African Air Force. The success of his work led to the creation at the end of the war of the National Institute for Personnel Research, housed in buildings on the Wits campus, with Biesheuvel as its director.

In the main, for the duration of World War II anti-war sentiment on the Wits campus was muted. By comparison with some other campuses, where antagonisms between pro and anti-war factions ran deep and bitter, the atmosphere at Wits remained relatively calm, even though the University posssed more of a mix of English and Afrikaans-speaking students than any other South African university. At the outbreak of the war some six to seven hundred students, or roughly twenty per cent of the student population, were Afrikaans-speaking, and the organisation that claimed to represent them, the local branch of the Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond (ANS), was strongly anti-war. The ANS, however, was banned from operating on campus because of its 'racial' exclusiveness, and it made no real effort to stir up a systematic anti-war campaign on the campus itself. In the early years of the war some Afrikaans-speaking students taunted their English-speaking, and especially Jewish, counterparts about the Allied setbacks, but a pervasive sense of conflict was absent. Raikes, fearful of loosening "political sectionalism or strife" on campus, simply blocked any attempts by students to stage meetings on the war.

Some members of staff were suspected of pro-Nazi sympathies, and one, Dr G. Eloff in the Department of Zoology, was evidently a member of the Ossewabrandwag. Allegedly a Chief-Commandant in the OB, he was interned on 1 July 1942 at Koffiefontein on suspicion of subversive activity; he was supposedly implicated in setting fire to the pavillion at the Zoo Lake. After taking legal advice, the University's Council deemed that Dr Eloff's contract of employment terminated on the day of his internment, in that he was thereafter unable to perform his contractual services, and it also refused to pay him for the leave which he claimed was his due. To maintain his wife and four children, his Provident Fund policies were returned to him, ex-gratia payments of half his salary were made to Mrs Eloff for two months, and the Department of Social Welfare undertook to pay Mrs Eloff the maximum of £9 per month.[50] Another Wits academic interned during the war was John Kerrich in mathematical statistics; his hosts were the Danes, following the Nazi invasion of Denmark, where he had been on study leave, and he likewise lost his salary cheque. However, his wife joined him in internment, and the University maintained his Provident Fund payments. With no technical books at his disposal, but with plenty of time on his hands, Kerrich embarked on a statistical survey to discover the average ratio of 'heads' and 'tails' in a prolonged series of coin throwing. The

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50. Council minutes, 19 June, 7 August, 11 Septembeer, & 23 October 1942

end result was his book, An Experimental Introduction to the Theory of Probability, published immediately after the war.

III.

In student politics, both nationally and on the Wits campus, the war years were also something of a watershed. The war itself contributed greatly to the injection of national issues and political activism into student affairs at the English-medium campuses. Even before the war, the Afrikaans-medium campuses had become highly polticised, resulting in their breakaway in the 1930s from NUSAS, the National Union of South African Students, to form the ANS, the Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond, which was linked to the Afrikaner Broederbond. South Africa's participation in the war intensified the politicisation of the Afrikaans-medium campuses, with Wits' neighbour, Pretoria University, becoming a stronghold of the Ossewabrandwag. Among English-speaking students it had generally been held prior to the war that partisan politics had no place on campus or in the affairs of NUSAS; the ANS was upbraided for having brought politics into student affairs. The war effected a substantial change in attitude. Student politics on all campuses mirrored the political divisions in the wider society over South African entry into the war, and even English-speaking students became conscious of being part of the politics of the country. Although neither the Students' Representative Council (SRC) at Wits nor NUSAS ever aligned themselves with a political party or movement, they fully supported the Smuts Government in the war against Fascism and Nazism, and regarded the opponents of the war as pro-Nazi. Student politics, furthermore, ceased to be the particular preserve of the SRC and NUSAS, and became a matter of mass involvement. On the important student issues of the war years, meetings in the newly completed Great Hall were crowded to overflowing.

As perceived at Wits, the basic division among students on all campuses was between those who were pro-war and anti-Nazi, and those who were anti-war and pro-Nazi. This was a sense of division that somewhat muddied the waters for both the SRC and NUSAS. Within the pro-war, anti-Nazi front there was a basic fracture. For some, the contest against Fascism and Nazism was a fight against racialism as well as totalitarianism, and that meant combatting racialism at home as well as abroad. That, in turn, meant inviting Fort Hare Native College to join NUSAS. For others the war required that a premium be placed on promoting a sense of unity among all white students, Afrikaans as well as English-speaking, who were somehow anti-Fascist, and that entailed avoiding such divisive issues as the admission of Fort Hare to NUSAS. In the event, the divide betweeen the primarily English and Afrikaans-speaking campuses was widened. The split between NUSAS and the ANS was deepened by their adoption of rival stances towards the war, and at the end of the war it was cemented when NUSAS finally admitted Fort Hare.

The stand by the Wits student body in favour of the admission of Fort Hare to NUSAS, together with the opening up of the Wits medical school to blacks, served to make Wits a distinct 'liberal' flag-bearer among South African universities, and at the expense of its relations with the Afrikaans-medium universities, who broke all contact with Wits students for the duration of the war. On campus, although the SRC remained deferential rather than assertive in its dealings with the University administration, the war years produced, for the first time, a series of clashes between students and the administration, and witnessed the first suggestions of a student revolt, over the fee increase in 1943. The latter years of the war also saw the emergence on campus of an organised radical left in the form of the Federation of Progressive Students (FOPS). Strengthened at the end of the war by the return of radicalised ex-servicemen, the left thereafter developed into a major pressure group in University and national student politics.

The outbreak of war in Europe, and the formation of the Smuts Government to take South Africa into the war, produced instant reactions among Wits students, who since the late thirties had evidenced a deep concern in international affairs. The large majority were stunned by the news of war over Poland, but were nonetheless clear that South Africa should join Britain and France in the struggle against the Nazi menace. A minority believed the struggle had nothing to do with South Africa. On the Afrikaans-medium campuses resolutions to this effect were passed by mass student meetings, and according to the Transvaaler, the mouthpiece of the National Party, there was a strong groundswell for neutrality on the Wits campus.

In this situation, the President of the Wits SRC, Brian Bunting, a son of one of the founders of the Communist Party of South Africa, called for a general meeting of students to express their opinion on South African participation in the war. Raikes, anxious to avert the divisive impact of such a meeting, immediately prohibited it. On Wednesday 6 September, the day South Africa formally declared war, the SRC met to determine whether they should issue a statement on behalf of the student body. After a 'fierce' debate over the question of whether the SRC had any right to express a political opinion in the name of the general student body, it was finally resolved to hold a referendum on student opinion. The referendum was likewise prohibited by Raikes. At first the SRC resolved to appeal to Senate, but the executive, evidently advised that they were acting ultra vires, backed down and accepted Raikes' decision as final. This was ratified by the full SRC at their meeting of 25 September, but it was further decided that they take legal advice as to the SRC's status.[51]

In the next year, the SRC formally endorsed South Africa's

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51. SRC minutes, 6,7 & 25 September 1939; WU's Views, 8 September 1939.

war effort by accepting the NUSAS statement on war aims. The consensus at the annual NUSAS Council meeting in July 1940, was that it was simply impossible to remain officially neutral in what was perceived as a struggle between freedom and democracy against Fascism. As E. Newman put it to the Council in his presidential report, while he thought it would be a great mistake for NUSAS to declare itself a political organisation, they would be failing in their duty to their country and the principles for which they stood if they did not support the Smuts Government and the country's war effort. The Council subsequently adopted a statement supporting the Union Government in the war against Fascism and urging that at the end of the war a just peace be concluded that upheld democratic rights "in the victorious nations and defeated countries as well as in the various Colonies".[52]

The responses of the Wits SRC and NUSAS to the onset of the war went far to help set the agenda for Wits student politics for the duration of the war. The clash between the SRC and Raikes over the referendum drove home that the SRC possessed neither legal standing within the University nor any mechanism for negotiating conflicts with the University authorities. These were deficiencies they were thereafter to seek to redress. The war, furthermore, was endorsed by NUSAS and the Wits SRC not as a war against the German and Italian peoples but as a war of liberty and democracy against Fascism, and this had profound consequences for the content of student politics. The question was whether NUSAS would now become a militantly liberal, anti-Fascist body in South African student affairs. The answer was largely in the negative. Although the ANS was denounced as 'racialistic' and represented as a Fascist organisation for its links with the Ossewabrandwag, the NUSAS leadership in the main declined to embark on an aggressive propaganda campaign against it. More importantly for many Wits students was that NUSAS refused to invite Fort Hare to become a member. For many at Wits, Fort Hare was the test of whether NUSAS itself was truly liberal and non-racial, and it failed the test. The price paid by NUSAS was its virtual demise on the Wits campus for the duration of the European war, and the emergence there of FOPS to counter "Fascist elements and tendencies in the student life of South Africa".[53] The cost for Wits students for their stand on Fort Hare was the severance by the SRCs of Pretoria, Potchefstroom, and Stellenbosch of all relations with Wits.

The issue of Fort Hare's admission had hovered over NUSAS for much of the 1930s. It had first been raised in 1933 by the Wits delegation to the annual meeting of the NUSAS Council, and although the matter had then been deferred it had provided the

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52. President's report and minutes, 16th annual NUSAS Council meeting, July 1940, UCT Library Archives BC 586.

53. Star, 2 September 1943

SRCs of the Afrikaans-medium campuses of Grey University College in Bloemfontein, Potchefstroom University College, and Pretoria University with one of the main ostensible reasons for seceding from NUSAS and forming the ANS. Assertive Afrikaans nationalism, together with a general mistrust of the 'liberal' tendencies in NUSAS, provided the basis for the secessions in 1933 and the formation of a purely Afrikaner student body. In 1936 the Stellenbosch University SRC likewise seceded from NUSAS to join the ANS. Its suggestion that the NUSAS constitution be amended to prohibit "native, coloured or Asiatic" membership had not been taken up. On the contrary, the small number of black students who were admitted to Wits and UCT were accepted as automatically becoming members of NUSAS, and at the 1937 conference Council ruled that they might attend the academic, though not the social, functions at NUSAS conferences.[54] Liberal opinion among white English-speaking students, while still shunning any notion of social integration, reacted against the passage of the Hertzog 'native' bills in 1936, and the removal of Cape Africans from the common voters roll, by affirming that educated Africans should be brought into the mainstream of academic life.[55]

It was in this spirit, and also as a statement against the forces of Fascism and racialism that South Africa was supposedly fighting against in World War II, that the question of Fort Hare's admission was revived at the NUSAS Council meetings of 1940 and 1941, with the initiative again coming from the Wits delegates. As the opponents of the proposal perceived it, the issue was whether NUSAS should give priority to incorporating black students in its ranks or to conciliating the Afrikaans-medium campuses. The decision taken was for the latter.

By 1940 the NUSAS leadership had effectively given up all hope or desire of securing a rapprochement with the ANS itself, but nor were they inclined to wage an aggressive campaign against the ANS. Rather they hoped to make an appeal to 'moderates' on the Afrikaans-medium campuses and in this way to become truly 'national' again. In the NUSAS perception, the 'racialist' ANS, in its opposition to the war against Nazi Germany, had itself become distinctly pro-Nazi and consequently less representative of student opinion on the Afrikaans-medium campuses, thereby opening up the opportunity for a NUSAS advance. Beyond that calculation, the majority of NUSAS delegates were extremely reluctant to be saddled with any responsibility for widening divisions within the white student community in time of war.

At the annual NUSAS Council meeting at Wits in July 1940 the motion for Fort Hare's admission was sponsored by two of the Wits delegates, Brian Bunting and Rudy Bemmin. Their contention was

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54. For NUSAS in the 1930s see Martin Legassick, The National Union of South African Students: Ethnic cleavage and ethnic integration in the universities (Los Angeles, 1967).

55. Interview with Sydney Kentridge

that NUSAS should act on the principles separating it from the ANS by admitting Fort Hare. The majority view was that the moment was inopportune. As argued by another Wits delegate, Rex Welsh, later a prominent lawyer, whose studies at Pretoria had fully alerted him to Afrikaner opinion, the proposal was premature and divisive of white South African student opinion at a critical juncture when everything possible should be done to promote "a spirit of true nationalism". The inclusion of Fort Hare in NUSAS, he continued, "would alienate the sympathies of every Afrikaans-speaking student as well as a large number of English-speaking students in South Africa". The motion was defeated by 19 votes to 7.[56]

For the 1941 Council meeting, again held at Wits, the SRCs linked to NUSAS were asked to determine their stand on the admission of Fort Hare. The decision of the Wits SRC, now under Welsh's chairmanship, was to refer the matter to a general meeting of the student body. On the motion of Dennis Etheredge, SRC secretary, a member of the NUSAS local committee and later a prominent businessman, the meeting voted by the margin of 168 to 54 to recommend that Fort Hare be invited to join NUSAS, and this served as the brief for the Wits delegates to the Council meeting. The delegation from the Durban campus of Natal University College, which housed a 'Non European' section, was similarly briefed. The opposition to the motion for the admission of Fort Hare, sponsored by Wits, was led by th University of Cape Town and Rhodes. Speaking for the UCT SRC, J.R. Wahl contended that the admission of Fort Hare would lead to the destruction of NUSAS and with it all hopes of securing unity between English and Afrikaans students. G.H.L. Le May, later Professor of Local Government at Wits, stated that the views of the Rhodes SRC were the same: "NUSAS should strive first for co-operation between English and Afrikaans before attempts were made to bring the non-Europeans into NUSAS." On the loss of the motion it was resolved that NUSAS should not again discuss the question of Fort Hare until after the war and Fort Hare itself had requested admission. In the meantime NUSAS was to "make very real and energetic attempts to gain the co-operation of Afrikaans students and make our organisation truly national".[57]

It was over the Fort Hare issue that the major divisions on the Wits campus were acted out, and the most heat generated. For the proponents of Fort Hare's admission to NUSAS it was essentially a statement against Fascism and racialism; for its opponents it was an inherently anti-Afrikaner move. In a front-page report on the Wits student meeting, the Transvaler represented the outcome as a victory for the negrophilists over the Afrikaans-speaking students at Wits, and claimed that Welsh

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56. Minutes of the 16th annual NUSAS Council meeting, 1-3 July 1940.

57. Minutes of the 17th annual NUSAS Council meeting, 30 June-2 July 1941.

as chairman had not allowed Afrikaans students to put their point of view.[59] The notion that Wits students had voted against Afrikaners was actively canvassed by the Wits branch of the ANS, which operated on the margins of the campus. Consistently denied recognition by the SRC on the grounds that it was an exclusive 'racialist' organisation, the Wits ANS now had its revenge by calling upon the neighbouring Afrikaans universities to boycott Wits in sport and other fields "until the status of the University of the Witwatersrand has risen to Afrikaner heights".

Already in 1939 contacts between the Wits and Pretoria SRCs had been jeopardised when Pretoria refused to correspond with the secretary of the Wits Law Students' Society on the grounds that he was an Indian; now both the Pretoria and Potchefstroom SRCs threatened to break off all relations, indicating that they felt "insulted" by the decision of Wits students for closer co-operation with Fort Hare. The SRC of Pretoria University declared itself compelled to end all connections with Wits, including sporting events, unless Wits could demonstrate it had been given the wrong information; the Potchefstroom SRC asserted that it no longer felt disposed "to hold an Intervarsity with students who stand in open and vicious enmity towards the Afrikaner, and prefer connection with the native rather than with the Afrikaner".[60]

Even though the last rugby intervarsity against Pretoria before the war had proved an ugly, brawling affair, with the Tucs cheerleaders hurling anti-semitic insults at the Wits crowd, the prospect of losing intervarsity was not taken lightly at Wits, and the extraordinary meeting called to consider the Tucs ultimatum was consequently packed out. So far from retreating, the meeting voted by 538 to 182 to reject any outside interference in the University's affairs and to upbraid Pretoria and Potchefsrtoom for intruding "political differences into the field of sport".[61]

Although NUSAS, in the name of promoting white student unity, declined to invite Fort Hare to join it, this did not avert a complete breach between the Pretoria and Wits SRCs and an end to all sporting contacts between the English and Afrikaans-medium universities for the duration of the war.[61] Following the

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58. ,Hewige Stryd Aan Randse Universiteit: Oorwinning vir Negrofiliste', Transvaler, 12 June 1941. Apparently one student was told to sit down by Welsh when he addressed not his fellow Wits students but his fellow 'wit-studente'. Interview with Sydney Kentridge.

59. WUs Views, 20 June 1941.

60. Star, 21 June 1941

61. The annual athletics intervarsity for the Dalrymple Cup was suspended for the years 1942-5, with the Afrikaans-medium universities forming the Studente-Atletiekebond together with

decision of the NUSAS Council at its July 1941 meeting, the Wits SRC duly invited Fucs to an intervarsity in Johannesburg for the end of August. It was in response to this advance that Pretoria severed all relations with Wits. On 9 August the Pretoria SRC issued a proclamation which broke off relations "until the intolerable liberal policy of the Witwatersrand has been so modified that it opens the door for the restoration of normal relations".[62] Thereafter Potchefstroom and Stellenbosch also put an end to formal relations with Wits.

Anxious to appease the conservative, rugby-playing elements in its constituency, the Wits SRC initiated attempts to restore relations with Pretoria in each remaining year of the war. In June 1942 Raikes, at the request of the SRC, got Jan Hofmeyr as Minister of Education to agree to call an inter-university conference of Wits, UCT, Pretoria, and Stellenbosch in the attempt to reach a modus vivendi. While the Pretoria SRC rejected the involvement of UCT and Stellenbosch, it indicated it was prepared to negotiate with the Wits SRC provided that a duly constituted general meeting at Wits apologised to Pretoria "for insulting expressions made with regard to Afrikaans Universities during 1941", and that Wits modified its 'liberal' policy so as to make negotiations with the Afrikaans universities possible. These pre-conditions the Wits SRC declined to meet, with the result that in 1942, and again in 1943, negotiations with Pretoria failed to get off the ground.[63]

Developments at both Wits and Pretoria in 1944 cleared the way for a settlement in the next year. The question of insults was resolved when on 12 June 1944 an extraordinary general meeting of Wits students accepted an SRC motion apologising for a remark allegedly made by a black student at the 1941 meeting that "the Afrikaans universities are opposed to the natives and it would be better for NUSAS to work with a hundred native students than with a thousand students from those Universities who are opposed to NUSAS."[64] The question of Wits' 'liberal' policy remained, with the Pretoria SRC insisting that at a minimum intervarsities should be entirely all-white affairs, for spectators as well as players. On this even a fairly

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some teacher training colleges to compete in an annual athletics competition. See Arrie Joubert, The History of Inter-varsity Sport in South Africa (SA Universities Athletic Association, 1985), pp. 57-8.

62. WU's Views, 20 August 1941

63. SRC minutes, 6 October 1942 and 12 March 1943; WUs Views, 10 June 1943.

64. Minutes of an extraordinary general meeting of students, 12 June 1944. The remark had been reported in the Transvaler.

conservative Wits SRC, under the chairmanship of I. Bransby Welsh, refused to budge. At a joint meeting between the Pretoria and Wits SRCs at the Halfway House Hotel on 28 June, negotiations collapsed when Wits declined to give a guarantee that Tucs students would encounter no blacks when competing at Wits.

Once the war in Europe was finally over, with the German surrender in April 1945, student leaders at Wits and Pretoria moved rapidly to restore sporting relations not only between themselves, but among all the white South African universities. In June 1945 the Pretoria SRC, taking the negotiating initiative for the first time, proposed that the two executives meet to discuss the desirability of convening a conference of all South African universities on intervarsity sport. The Wits SRC, under the presidency of Ken Weinbren, himself a member of the first rugby fifteen, endorsed the meeting and the principle of the conference. The executive was nonetheless instructed that Wits' internal policy was not to be interfered with by any university and that "our non-European students be in no way discriminated against at Inter-Varsity sporting arrangements". The attempt by the left to further instruct the executive to include Fort Hare in the conference was rejected by a single vote, 9 to 8, on the ground that such a move would prevent reconciliation at the outset. The proponents of the motion, led by J.N. Singh, one of the two first black members on the SRC, contended that as the Pretoria proposal referred to "all student councils of our land", Fort Hare should be included.[65] In a dramatic gesture, the Wits executive met their Pretoria counterparts in the Pretoria General Hospital, where the Tucs President was lying ill, and it was duly agreed to convene the proposed conference.

The conference, held at Wits in August and representing all the major white campuses, except Rhodes, resolutely confined its attention to sporting arrangements, and after much manoeuvring succeeded in restoring sporting relations among the white universities. On the central issue of segregation at intervarsities the conference approved the Natal University College motion that no black should be included in an intervarsity team without the permission of all the universities in the competition, and that visiting teams were entitled to insist on strict segregation at their matches. Wits alone recorded a dissenting vote. As Weinbren, heading the Wits delegation, explained, their mandate from the SRC forbade them to discriminate against any Wits student, white or black, and they therefore could not endorse any segregationist motion. Nevertheless, he made it clear that the Wits Principal had prohibited mixed sport at Wits, and he gave the assurance that Wits would abide by the majority decision. The Wits motion that each university safeguard the future of intervarsity sporting relationships by pledging themselves not to interfere in the internal affairs of other universities was ruled out of order as

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65. SRC minutes, 18 June 1945.

having nothing to do with sport.[66] NUSAS in the meantime, at its annual conference in Bloemfontein in July 1945, had finally agreed to admit Fort Hare.

The NUSAS Council decision to admit Fort Hare occasioned no long debate. The war was over, Fort Hare itself had applied for admission, and the general sense on the Council was that the policy of attempting to 'appease' the Afrikaans-medium universities had got NUSAS nowhere. The two Wits councillors, Arnold Klopper and Benny Sischy, made it quite clear that Wits would no longer tolerate the exclusion of Fort Hare. As Klopper put it, Wits believed in a fighting body, and if NUSAS did not stand by its principles, Wits was finished with NUSAS.[67]

The fact of the matter was that NUSAS had gone into a massive decline during the war years, nowhere more so than at Wits among the English-medium universities. On the Afrikaans campuses, so far from advancing, a NUSAS branch survived only at the former Grey University College, which had now become the University College of the Orange Free State. On the English-medium campuses the attitude of the vast majority of students towards NUSAS was generally apathetic. The war itself, by putting an end to the NUSAS overseas tours and otherwise curbing its activities, was partly responsible for this apathy, but the causes went much deeper than that. Organisationally, NUSAS had become divorced from the student populations it claimed to represent. When founded in 1924 NUSAS had been a federation of SRCs, but as a consequence of the reorganisation necessitated by the secession of the Afrikaans SRCs, control in NUSAS had shifted to the local committees, themselves often in the hands of narrow cliques. Peculiar to Wits was the organised antagonism of the left towards NUSAS for its rejection of Fort Hare. In 1942-3 the left at Wits broke from NUSAS to form two new 'progressive' organisations, the Students' Labour League and the Federation of Progresssive Students.

The Students' Labour League, constituted at the end of 1942, sought to encourage students "to take an active part in bringing about a Socialist South Africa".[68] While the League's refusal to abandon its socialist clause led to the loss of its SRC recognition in June 1943, it continued to function, and in the 1944 municipal elections outraged sitting members of the City Council by running Arnold Klopper, a medical student, as a socialist candidate in Ward 12, the Booysens-Fordsburg constituency. The programme issued on his behalf by the Students' Labour League called for "progressive, decent municipal government", and his opponent was M.J. Green, the Labour Party boss on the City Council. Both Green and the members of the

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66. WUs Views, 31 August 1945.

67. Minutes of 21st NUSAS Council meeting, 3-5 July 1945.

68. SRC minutes, 4 November 1942

dominant Ratepayers' Party on the City Council denounced Klopper and other Wits students of 'extreme Left wing views' for "bringing the Council into disrepute" and adopting unfair election tactics by suggesting that the existing Council was somehow corrupt. At a meeting of the City Council, Green and J.S. Fotheringham, the leader of the Ratepayers' Party, joined forces in decrying 'gutter' tactics, and councillor Swartz commented "that it was astounding that among university students Communism was allowed to breed in a way that served to undermine public confidence".[69] Green kept his seat, and Klopper later became president of NUSAS.

The sectarian nature of the Students' Labour League, and its loss of SRC recognition, led to the formation of another 'progresssive' student organisation, the Federation of Progressive Students, or FOPS, which was designed to make a broader appeal. As a rallying point for 'progressive' students, FOPS was not simply a product of campus developments; it was part and parcel of wider movements in left/liberal South African politics, including the foundation in 1941 of the Springbok Legion, to bring into being a broad 'popular front' to combat Fascism and promote egalitarianism. The Communist Party of South Africa was actively involved in these movements in the effort to expand its support base, and FOPS was soon widely regarded as a Communist front. The first chairperson of FOPS, Violaine Junod, was a radical student disenchanted with NUSAS, but its membership included a number of activists who were then members of the Young Communist League or who were to join the CPSA's Johannesburg West branch, which included a university group. Among them were Ruth First, Benny Sischy, and two radical Indian students from Natal, Ismael Meer and J.N. Singh.

The opening for FOPS on the Wits campus was provided by the sense that NUSAS had become totally ineffective, and it was this that the founders of FOPS sought to capitalise on. A sustained campaign against NUSAS was initiated at the beginning of 1943 by the student newspaper WU's Views, which had adopted an altogether more serious, political tone since establishing its editorial independence of the SRC three years previously. Under the editorship of Boris Wilson, a mature medical student and member of the Labour Party, it declared NUSAS moribund, and fit only for the dissecting hall.[70] In September FOPS was founded with great enthusiasm, and an initial membership of a hundred, for the specific purpose of supplying the 'progressive' leadership that NUSAS had failed to give. Incorporating those students who somehow identitified with the 'left', except for the residue of 1930s Trotskyites, most prominently Benny Kaminer, who shunned it, the design of FOPS was to politicise the wider student body, chiefly on racial and trade union issues, and to maintain an

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69. Star, 16 February 1944; Auricle, 25 February 1944

70. WU's Views, 12 March 1943.

organised body of student activists to assist 'progressive' movements in the wider community.

In July the next year FOPS staged a major conference on education, which ended with the adoption of an Education Charter calling for free and compulsory education for all children, regardless of race or colour, from six to sixteen. In addition to FOPS, the Charter was subscribed to by the Young Communist League, the Zionist Socialist Youth Party, Hashomer-Hatzair, the Youth Section of the Jewish Workers Club, the Progressive Asian Club, and the African Youth League.[71]

At the end of 1944 FOPS went further and participated directly in Wits student politics, manoeuvring, in the view of its critics, to gain control of the SRC. The feature of the elections for the SRC in October 1944 was the endorsement by FOPS of a number of 'progressive' candidates. In a major expose on FOPS in March 1945 WU's Views, now under the editorship of Edna Linney, a Trotskyite, denounced the organisation as "a branch of the Communist Party with Red Hilda for its typist", and accused it of forming a controlling caucus on the SRC after having manipulated the October elections. It listed eleven of the twenty-three person student governing body as members of FOPS, including the President, Ken Weinbren, Messrs. Willem Boshoff, Anthony O'Dowd, A.I. Limbada, Sischy, and Singh, and Ruth First. "Students", the newspaper warned, "Fops are in power. Wits slept and Fops, in the murk caused by their pseudo-cultural screen, organised and pinched the votes."[72]

WU's Views was forced to apologise for its accusations about rigged elections, and a number of the individuals it named were never in fact members of FOPS, notably Weinbren, who emerged as an outstanding president of the SRC, with a considerable reputation for integrity and judicious leadership. The WU's Views expose nonetheless highlighted a new development in Wits student politics with the first attempt to organise a left-wing pressure-group on the SRC. The purpose of the FOPS presence on the SRC was not to provide that body with a highly politicised agenda, but to help ensure that it adopted a 'progressive' stand on student and university issues and that it again became an instrument for promoting a 'progressive' outlook in national student affairs. Assisted by Weinbren's own diplomatic, persuasive qualities, the last SRC elected during the war generally saw liberals and radicals acting together to provide the student body with a 'progressive' leadership. Weinbren's SRC was duly insistent on the admission of Fort Hare to NUSAS, and in a more controversial move threw its support behind the NUSAS campaign against Nationalist proposals in Parliament for segregated universities. For some students this was an instance of the SRC making an illegitimate foray into politics, with the result that the motion

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71. Star, 26 July 1944; WU's Views, 23 August 1944.

72. WU's Views, 13 March 1945

in support of NUSAS at the general student body meeting on 19 March 1945 was hotly contested, finally passing by the margin of 583 to 344 votes.[73] The issue that revealed the gap betwen liberals and the FOPS caucus on the SRC was J.N. Singh's motion to include Fort Hare in the negotiations for the restoration of itervarsity sport. On the wider campus, FOPS continued an active propaganda campaign, staging lunch-time meetings on the front steps of the Central Block, and selling a variety of pamphlets.

At the end of the war the ANS also sought to reassert itself, and something of a propaganda war developed between the two extremes on campus; in the complaint of WU's Views Wits became a battle ground between "the Kremlin and the Kruithoring". In June 1945 the ANS began producing Spore as the "own paper" of Afrikaans students at Wits, and it immediately provoked a storm. Edited by R. Coertse and H.G. van der Hoven, it protested against the presence of black students at Wits and denounced the "Jewish negrophilists" in student politics.[74] In October 1945 the SRC, on the motion of First and Sischy, condemned the "racialistic policy" propounded by Spore, and a general meeting of students called on the Principal to ban its sale.[75] This Raikes declined to do, and thereafter Spore adopted a less provocative tone.

Raikes' refusal to act against Spore marked a break from the policy he had followed during the war itself, when he moved rapidly to censor anything he considered potentially divisive or offensive. In time of war particularly, Raikes insisted, he had full discretionary powers in controlling student meetings and other events on campus. Not only had he prohibited a general student meeting or referendum at the outbreak of war, but in 1942 he had prohibited a Debating Union discussion on "the arming of the native" in time of war and a Commerce Students' Society debate on "whether the gold mines should be closed during the war", objecting to the way in which the subject for debate had been framed.[76] In 1943 he banned the Dramatic Society's production of "The Russian People", which was to have been staged in support of the Medical Aid to Russia Fund. After consulting Professor J.Y.T. Greig of the English Department, Raikes ruled that the play was unsuitable for performance by a university society on university premises; its proper place was in the commercial theatre.[77]

Raikes' autocratic actions clearly rankled the SRC, which sent a series of deputations to him, but there was no sustained

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73. SRC minutes, 19 March 1945; WU's Views, 11 April 1945.

74. 'Die Toenemende Rasse-Vraagstuk aan Wits', Spore, August 1945.

75. WU's Views, 12 October 1945.

76. SRC minutes, 2 June 1942.

77. WU's Views

conflict. Although WU's Views declared there was a "crisis at Wits" following the banning of the gold mines debate, the SRC was very circumspect in its dealings with the Principal. The extraordinary general meeting of students that was summoned on 15 June 1942 was firmly told by the SRC President, Bert Cohen, that it was not a protest meeting; its function was to provide constructive suggestions. The upshot was that the SRC prompted Raikes and the Senate to agree to the creation of a joint Senate/SRC committee to regulate the activities of student societies. This committee was not even consulted when Raikes banned "The People of Russia".

The issue that gave rise to by far the greatest tension during the war years, both as among students and as between students and the University administration, was the twenty per cent increase in fees that came into operation in 1943. Passions ran high, meetings at both the medical school and the Great Hall were packed out, the first forays were made into organising a student boycott at Wits, and a vote of no confidence was passed in the SRC for its inability to stand up to the University administration.

The tight margins many families existed on, galloping war-time inflation, and the belief among students that fees at Wits were already outrageously high, made fee increases a highly sensitive issue, particularly among full time students for professional degrees. The centre of the storm was the medical school, where fees for the last three years of the MB.BCh went up from £55 to £66 pa, and where the shortage of teaching staff and the generally overcrowded conditions had already generated discontent among students. After the delegations sent to Raikes by the Students' Medical Council (SMC), under the presidency of Len Stein, had been given "courtesy but no satisfaction", a general meeting of medical students in February 1943 voted unanimously to boycott the new fees and pay at the old rate. From the medical school the revolt spread to Milner Park once its academic year got under way. But Milner Park proved a disorganised and disunited ally, and by the end of March some 70 per cent of students there had paid the new fees. In this situation the SRC, under its President, Alec Gonski, himself a medical student who had paid at the old rate, resolved to advise the remaining Milner Park students to pay the new fees for the first term under protest, but otherwise to support the medical students. The SRC also resolved to organise all students to pay the old fees in August, though it had no clear idea how this was to be achieved.[78]

Thereafter the SRC, in defiance of a resolution of a mass meeting of the student body, backed off completely in the face of the 10 April deadline set by Raikes for the payment of fees in full and his announcement that Council had requested the Minister of Education to appoint a commission to investigate the

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78. WU's Views, 12 April 1943; SRC minutes 30 March 1943.

University's finances.[79] Parents were advised by letter that their sons and daughters would be excluded from the University if the new fees were not paid by 10 April, and that produced a rush of payments. The core of the SMC, led by Nochem Feldman, the moving force behind the fees boycott, nonetheless attempted to hold their ground, and in so doing challenged the SRC. On Friday 9 April a general meeting of medical students reaffirmed their decision to pay the old fees, and demanded the resignation of the medical school representatives on the SRC. Gonski immediately resigned as SRC President, and so too did Len Stein as SMC President and six of his colleagues. They reckoned they could no longer continue to lead the medical students in terms of the resolution adopted; too many students had paid the fees to make the resolution meaningful.[80] The remaining twelve on the SMC pledged themselves to continue the struggle, electing Feldman as President. Feldman's immediate challenge was to the SRC for having wrecked student solidarity on the fees question.

Excitement at the University was now at fever pitch. Two thousand students crammed the Great Hall for the extraordinary general meeting on 12 April, WU's Views put out a special edition giving the SRC and SMC positions, and the University published the figures for fee payments, indicating that 89 per cent of all students had paid the new fees. Returning medical and dental students were the only major holdouts; 37 per cent of the former, and 30 per cent of the latter, had not paid their fees in full by the 10 April deadline. On Feldman's motion a vote of no confidence in the SRC for having "rescinded what the student body instructed them to carry out" was passed, and the next day the SRC resigned. In the subsequent elections, the large majority of them were again returned, and Gonski was able to resume his presidency.

The fees crisis of 1943 was itself resolved the day after the no-confidence vote when Raikes and the SMC negotiated a compromise agreement, which was immediately ratified by a general meeting of medical and dental students. The students agreed to pay their full fees without further delay, and Raikes undertook to provide a review of the whole question of fees in the light of the findings of the commission into the University's finances and in consultation with the student body. A joint SRC /Council standing committee was to be created to discuss all matters influencing University policy towards students.[81]

A disorganised SRC, and a student body that voted with one hand not to pay fees while paying with the other, ensured the ultimate failure of the fees boycott. As perceived by Raikes, as he told William Cullen in London, the ultimate aim of the fees

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79. SRC minutes, 6, 7 & 9 April, 1943

80. Interview with Dr Len Stein.

81. Star, 18 April 1943

boycott had been to force the Government's hand, and oblige it to increase the University's state subsidy: "Naturally however I could not accept this point of view and had to take fairly vigorous steps to ensure that the fees were paid."[82] For critical outsiders, including the Star and Arthur Barlow's Weekly, the fees protest of Wits students smacked of unpatriotic behaviour at a time when many people viewed South Africa's crowded universities askance.[83] The students, in return, insisted that their chief goal was to ensure that higher education in South Africa was not reserved for the rich.

For the remainder of the 1940s fees served as a highly sensitive issue for Wits students. In 1944 the issue resurfaced, with the medical school again taking the initiative. This time the discontent was specifically directed not at the University, which had reduced the fee increase from 20 to 10 per cent for all students in their third year of study or later, but at the Government for the way it had treated the findings of the committee of enquiry into the University's finances. By way of protest, the medical students proposed to organise a two-day abstention from classes, and in mid-March the annual general meeting of students voted by 355 to 102 to put the proposal to a student referendum on 24 April. The referendum was to be binding on the SRC. In the event, it was never held. Raikes, who personally attended an SRC meeting to explain the constitutional position, insisted that an abstention from classes was illegal, and in the face of this the SRC and the student body finally backed down. At an extraordinary general meeting on 18 April, addressed by Raikes, it was decided by 1008 votes to 571 not to hold the proposed referendum.[84]

As had happened when Raikes banned meetings and plays on campus, the fees issue left the SRC looking impotent. It had led the retreats, not the advances. A large part of the problem was structural weakness. Existing purely by permission of the Senate, the SRC possessed no legal standing or rights in the University, no representation on Senate or Council, and no institutionalised mechanisms for communicating student views to the administration. The solution suggested by Raikes was that the SRC obtain statutory recognition. "It will not give you the right to abstain from studies," he told the students, "but it would legalise the SRCs position and that of the Joint SRC-Council Committee and the SRC-Senate Committee both of which have been set up tentatively in recent years but have no statutory existence."[85] The conclusion reached by WU's Views was that the

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82. Raikes to Cullen, 4 May 1943, University Archives 138.5

83. Star, 10 April 1943

84. Star, 16 April 1944

85. Ibid.

SRC needed to go much further and secure representation on Senate and Council. "There have been many misunderstandings between the student and the authorities", it asserted of the war years in an editorial of 2 June 1944. "These misunderstandings could easily have been avoided, if responsible students had been present on the Senate, and we go further, on the Council to adequately represent student opinions and needs. The war, too, has altered the outlook of most students. The urge to be serious about matters inside and outside the University; and the urge to do constructive things for society is pre-eminently before them."

The proposal that the SRC seek representation on the ruling bodies of the University was by no means new. It had first been put forward in 1927, and was again sanctioned in 1941, following the SRC's review of its legal status subsequent to Raikes' banning of the war referendum. But, with the war accentuating the general lack of continuity in SRC leadership, it was not until the close of the war that the SRC set its mind to working out a long-term strategy for securing such representation. The first step was to gain statutory recognition, and in March 1945 Weinbren's SRC concluded that this should be undertaken in conjunction with the other English-medium universities. It consequently requested NUSAS to take up the question of statutory recognition of SRCs. Thus began the long campaign for statutory recognition. The ultimate purpose was to gain representation on Senate, and thereby enable the SRC to play an active role in the making and implementation of University policy regarding student affairs. The inherent danger, as critics warned, was that statutory recognition would be used to impose statutory limitations on the powers and activities of the SRC. That, in the end result, was what happened.