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Varsity
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NUSAS NEWS

A PLAIN STATEMENT OF FACT

The past few weeks have seen a controversy at Varsity over the placing of boxes in which those who wish to withdraw from NUSAS could put objection slips. Apparently the main point of discussion was whether the procedure should not be reversed; boxes being made available for those who wish to JOIN NUSAS. A few facts should be all that is necessary to clear the air and show that the action of the SRC was not "undemocratic" as it has been called by some.

In the Past

First of all it must be pointed out that before 1940 the position at UCT was precisely as it is now—the SRC paid to NUSAS National Executive a sum of about £185 as affiliation fees for all NUSAS members—this was 2/- per registered student as against 1/- being paid to-day. By NUSAS members was meant all students, except those "who signed the lists on the noticeboards, thereby indicating that they no longer desired to be members of NUSAS (SRC letter to NUSAS, 26.4.40). Towards the end of 1940 (SRC letter to NUSAS 19.8.40), the SRC then in office passed the following resolution: "That on consideration of its financial position, this Council resolves that NUSAS fees again be collected amongst the students." It was made clear by the SRC and confirmed by a mass meeting of students that this did not mean a break from NUSAS, but only a change in the administration of fee-collecting.

What NUSAS is

The position has changed since then inasmuch as **NUSAS is a federation of Students' Representative Councils and its policy is now decided and directed by affiliated SRCs.**

Cape Town and Wits SRCs each have three votes on policy matters—this is more than any other University has.

It must be realised from the above that NUSAS is not simply another society, party or organisation at the University, but that our SRC is part and parcel of NUSAS.

The SRC Resolutions

It might be instructive to quote the resolutions passed by the present SRC at their meeting on 15th October, 1946:

"That—

(a) this SRC pay 1/- per annum for every student to the Central Executive of NUSAS except where a student objects to joining NUSAS.

(b) that ballot boxes for such objections be placed in all official centres during the first week of term and that the Election Officers be instructed to that effect.

(c) that 50 per cent. of the fees due to NUSAS thereafter computed shall be remitted by 30th April of every year, the balance to be paid before 15th August of every year."

"That objections be made on signed forms containing the names and registrations numbers of students not desiring to join NUSAS and that these objections must be lodged within two weeks."

The Boxes

That these boxes were only placed from 20th March to 3rd April was due solely to the rush and bustle at the beginning of term; but the delay gave even more time for students to make up their minds whether they wished to withdraw from NUSAS or not. The position was made clear in the NUSAS pamphlet issued at the beginning of term and abundantly so in the "Freshers' Bible."

The Present Position

The SRC is now a constituent part of NUSAS and decides NUSAS policy; the SRC also represents the students who elected it. As a majority of the SRC was elected on a ticket that included a promise of full support for NUSAS, one must logically assume that a majority of students at UCT is in favour of giving that support to NUSAS. Although therefore the SRC could have paid NUSAS fees automatically for every student, it has, being democratic, given that minority of students who do not wish to join NUSAS an opportunity to withdraw. It should be stressed that students are at liberty to withdraw from NUSAS at any time, the objection boxes having been placed for a specified length of time purely for administrative purposes.

In a Nutshell

To sum up: the SRC with a mandate from the student body to support NUSAS is simply carrying on the practice of its predecessors in paying 1/- for each registered student who does not object to belonging to NUSAS; by giving every student an opportunity and ample time to lodge such an objection, the SRC is acting in an absolutely democratic manner; no student is forced to belong to NUSAS or to any society or organisation at the University.