AND SO GO "MEN OF MODERATION"

I witnessed a typical South African political event in Alice, Eastern Cape, this week.

About 100 students - non-Whites from Fort Hare and Whites from the English-language universities - met to pay tribute to Professor Z.K. Matthews, one of South Africa's most distinguished Native educationists. They spoke of his contribution to South African affairs in glowing terms and presented him with an inscribed briefcase - from the National Union of South African Students.

While this took place - in the hall of the Lovedale Theological School - Special Branch detectives peered through the windows and took notes ostentatiously. Before the ceremony, detectives trailed students to the Theological School - driving behind in a big, black, weather-beaten car with its lights extinguished.

ACCustomed.

Admittedly, students in South Africa, especially at Fort Hare, are accustomed to this sort of thing. Admittedly, too, political words were spoken at the presentation, and at the end of the ceremony the students began an impromptu meeting.

All this does not alter the fact that Professor Matthews is a distinguished person and a respectable citizen.

Many White South Africans recognise this and they treat Professor Matthews accordingly. They respect and even honour him. The Government, on the other hand, treats him as though he were a criminal. The contrast in these attitudes is of profound political significance. It illustrates the wide gulf between the two political outlooks.

ADmiration.

The National Union of South African Students admires Professor Matthews sufficiently to arrange a presentation ceremony and to ask him to become its honorary president; the University of Cape Town invites him to deliver the third T.B. Davie memorial lecture; Rhodes University confers an honour on him; distinguished visitors solicit his views on race relations.

What does the Government do?

In 1953, when Professor Matthews returned from the United States, detectives
met him and turned out his pockets and his wallet, displayed interest in
books he had, like Toynbee's The World and the West (probably because it
had a red cover, Professor Matthews suggested) and Bertrand Russell's
Impact of Science on Society.

NO PASSPORT.

In 1954, when Professor Matthews was invited by the University of Chicago
-surely not a subversive institution? to attend a conference on race
relations, the Government refused to give him a passport.

In 1956 when the melodramatic pre-down swoop was made, he was one of
the 756 people arrested on a high treason charge, which collapsed sub-
sequently. Professor Matthews was among the first to be detained in the
state of emergency last year, and spent 4½ months in cells.

Today at the age of 60, practicing as an attorney in Alice, he is
watched by the police. Why? Professor Matthews admittedly, believes in
equal rights for all, but this view, even if it is not shared by many White
Whites in South Africa, is commonplace in 1961. It does not mean that
Professor Matthews is a dangerous revolutionary.

MODERATION.

Professor Matthews's whole background is one of moderation and tolerance.
He was the first Native student to graduate from Fort Hare (B.A. degree);
he was the first Native headmaster of the Amanzimtoti (Adams) College; he
took an LL.B. at the University of South Africa and an M.A. at Yale; he
took a post-graduate course in anthropology at London University and he
became research fellow of the International Institute of African Languages
and Cultures, London. He was made head of the Department of African Studies
at Fort Hare in 1936. In 1946, he became a professor, and later he was
appointed vice-principal and acting principal.

When he resigned from the college in 1959 in protest against the
takeover by the Nationalist Government he forfeited £7,000 (R14,000) in
pension and other rights.

He served on the Royal Commission on African Education in East Africa
in 1936 at the invitation of the British Government.

This is the man who is arrested for treason, detained in the emergency,
and hounded by the police.
VOTE DENIED.

In spite of his impressive academic record, he does not even have a vote - a right possessed by every White citizen over 18, even if he or she is an illiterate ducktail.

Professor Matthews is well known to many Whites in South Africa. They vouch for the fact that he is a "man of moderation." But where has this moderation taken him?

The question was asked by two young Native students at the presentation ceremony in Alice. Professor Matthews, they agreed, was moderate and reasonable, a man who had offered negotiation as a method of solving the race problem. But the Nationalist Government had rejected the offer of negotiation, they said, and consequently, the "era of moderation" was coming to an end.

The two students spoke frankly: the new generation of non-Whites, they said, were being forced to "take up a position." If there is no room for negotiation with men like Professor Matthews - and one of the students described Chief Luthuli as another "man of moderation" whose era was passing then what hope is there of solving the race problem peacefully?