



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
OF FORT HARE  
FINAL CEREMONY  
OF 1959

28th October, 1959

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Cape Province,  
South Africa.*



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PROFESSOR D. D. T. JABAVU, MR. K. A. HOBART HOUGHTON AND DR. ALEXANDER KERR.  
(Photo by Olivier and Watson, East London).

## Final Ceremony of 1959

Addresses by Dr. T. Alty, Dr. Alexander Kerr, Professor H. R. Burrows, Miss Darroll, Prof. Z. K. Matthews and Mr. J. M. Majola

Appendix A Bibliography

Appendix B Rhodes Protest

*The final Assembly of the University College of Fort Hare under the régime of the Department of Education, Arts and Science and as an affiliated Institution of Rhodes University was held in the College Assembly Hall on Wednesday 28th October 1959.*

*The academic procession assembled around the lawns of the quadrangle and moved to the Hall led by Dr. Alty (Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University and Chairman of the Council of the University College of Fort Hare), the Principal, Deans of Rhodes University, Members of Council and Senate and Staff of Rhodes and Fort Hare, and every student of the College.*

*After the singing of Gaudeamus Igitur and Amici usque ad Aras and a Scripture reading and prayer by the Reverend E. L. Cragg, addresses were delivered. The Assembly closed with the pronouncement of the Benediction by Archdeacon H. P. Rolfe and the singing of Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika, and Morena Boloka—two National Anthems of the Bantu Peoples.*

*Address by Dr. T. Alty, Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University.*

We meet this morning at this ceremony to mark the end of a chapter in the history of Fort Hare. After 44 years of development and service to the African peoples, the College faces a great crisis in its affairs leading to a future which is at this time by no means clear. What is clear is that the known and tried ways of the past are to be disrupted, that the day of the Governing Council, representing the many varied interests supporting the College, and elected by them—is over, and that the association with Rhodes University is at an end. I therefore speak to you this morning in two capacities : as Vice-Chancellor of your University and as Chairman of your Governing Council and in both capacities I speak with sadness.

As Vice-Chancellor I view with sorrow and regret the forcible separation of the College from the University. This regret becomes all the more pronounced when I review the long connection between the two institutions. Long before the days of affiliation, leading scholars from Rhodes had served Fort Hare as representatives of the University of South Africa on your Council. In this connection I mention the names of Professors Dingemans, Kidd, Ewing, Varder, and Dr. Smeath Thomas, who, between them, served on the Council throughout its life from about 1920 and devoted much time to the advancement of the College's interests. When Rhodes became a separate University in 1951 this College became an affiliated College of the University and in consequence the relationship between us became much closer than before. Since that time, graduates of this College have been Rhodes graduates, holding Rhodes degrees and enjoying full membership of the Convocation of the University. During the eight years of affiliation I think we shall all agree that the College has made great progress. Numbers have increased, for the first time the College has been subsidised on the same basis as the other universities and, in consequence of the increased Government grant, many long planned developments could be carried out. The result is the College as you see it today, an institution of which we can all be proud.

And now the College faces a great change on being taken over by the Ministry of Bantu Education. Many of us have had serious doubts as to the possibility of forwarding university education successfully in the conditions of rigidity and isolation which seem to threaten, and all of us associated with the College have striven to make clear the difficulties inherent in such a scheme. We have however not been successful in these efforts and the changes we have tried to prevent are now upon us. We must hope that the weaknesses and difficulties which we have detected in the organisation of the new College may in practice prove to be less harmful than many friends of Fort Hare have feared. I cannot find words to say very much on this score today, but I speak to you with sympathy for the difficulties involved in adjustment to the new régime and with personal good wishes to each and all of you.

This is probably the last occasion on which the Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University will address the staff and students of Fort Hare as members of an affiliated College. All of you students here this morning will be entitled, if you so wish, to take the examinations of Rhodes University. Your successors will not have that option; but as we approach the parting of the ways, I wish to give both to you and to

your successors and to your College, the heartiest good wishes and encouragement of the University.

I now wish to say some words of thanks in my capacity as Chairman of the Governing Council. First to my fellow members on the Council for their support and their great interest in all the activities of the College. Secondly I would like to thank all the members of the staff for their unstinted efforts to advance the quality and status of the College. The Council, and the College, has always been well served by a competent and loyal staff and it is a matter of the greatest regret to us all that that staff should be facing such unforeseen difficulty as a result of the transfer of the College. I thank each individual member of staff for his past help and, whether he is to remain with the College or not, I wish him in the future every happiness and success.

Finally I come to the three men who have been most intimately concerned with the growth, development and management of the College. Dr. Kerr who came here as a young man and devoted his whole life to the College, Professor Dent who served with him for so many years and succeeded him as Principal, and Professor Burrows who took charge when the shadow of change was already lying over the College and whose untiring efforts on its behalf have inspired us all. I know that the Governing Council would wish me to offer its special and grateful thanks to all three of them.

In conclusion I wish to express the hope that, despite present anxieties and uncertainties, Fort Hare will continue to merit, and to receive, the loyal support of its sons and will continue to be the outstanding centre for the higher education of the African people.

*Address by Dr. Alexander Kerr, M.A., LL.D., D.D.*

*Principal of Fort Hare 1916-1948*

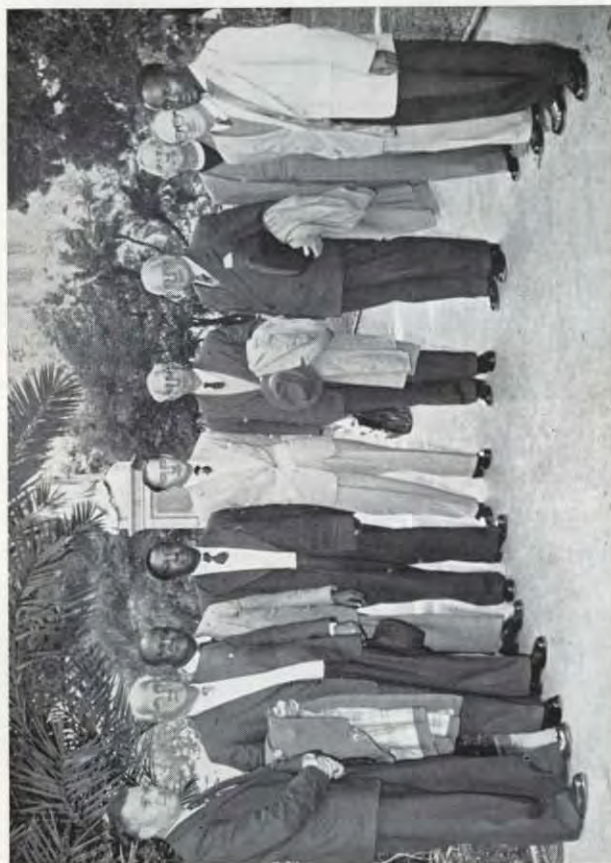
*Vice-Chairman of Council of the University College of Fort Hare.*

The history of this College, so far, resolves itself into four phases. The first phase covers the period from 1905 to 1915, from the time, that is, of the first Convention of delegates held at Lovedale in December 1905, through the protracted and sometimes tedious years of preparation, propaganda and finally persuasion, when, in January 1915, the Union Government of General Botha decided to support here a College for the higher education of Natives, and instructed the Department of Union Education to place a modest sum upon its



estimates as subsidy. The second phase may be taken as lasting from 1916, when the College was formally opened by General Botha as Prime Minister and Minister of Native Affairs, till 1937, when the development of Native Secondary Schools throughout the Union had proceeded to such an extent, and the enrolment of post-matriculation students at the College had so increased, that the Council decided to discontinue secondary teaching and concentrate upon degree courses of the University of South Africa, and certain diploma courses of its own. The third phase lasted from 1937 till 1951, at which latter date the remaining constituent colleges of the University of South Africa attained full university status, the University itself became an examining body for external students, and by Act of Parliament, Fort Hare, for purposes of degree examinations, became affiliated to Rhodes University. The fourth phase has covered the years from 1951 till this year of grace, 1959, after which the Fort Hare Transfer Act comes into force, and the entire control of the College passes to the recently created Ministry of Bantu Education.

Nothing is to be gained by overlooking the fact that, while the previous steps in the development of the College were taken in the natural course of its history, and on its own initiative, the step that is now projected has been taken, not upon any educational principle, or upon any alleged professional deficiency, but solely in consonance with an over-riding political theory. It is but simple truth to say that none of the functional entities of the College, Council, Senate, Student Body, or the University to which the College is affiliated, has been consulted on, or has consented to, the transfer of allegiance or connections thus compulsorily imposed upon it. On the contrary, the opposition of all these bodies is on record, marking a struggle waged, not through faction, but through well-grounded conviction that the operation is not in the interests of those who have been, who now are, or who are likely to be, its alumni. In any account of this striving of many to maintain what they firmly believe to be true and universally recognised principles, the chief credit must go to Principal Burrows, who not only by his courage, resourcefulness and experience of university organization, marshalled the defence, but also by his sympathetic understanding and sense of history has so completely grasped the ideals and principles underlying the foundation of this particular College. He has accomplished this and much more in the short space of two years, and at the normal conclusion of a term of service when he had the right to expect relief from day-labour. He may be assured that he



ARRIVAL AT CAPE TOWN OF FORT HARE WITNESSES, JUNE 9TH 1959.  
(SELECT COMMITTEE ON FORT HARE TRANSFER BILL)



DR. ALEXANDER KERR ADDRESSING THE ASSEMBLY



MISS DARROLL ADDRESSING THE ASSEMBLY

has earned the gratitude and respect of all within these walls and of a host of those outside.

Briefly, what is it in this change that we object to? In regard to our relations to Government, we regret that, in so far as Government exercises administrative direction over Higher Education through the Union Department of Education, Arts and Science, this College, and others like it, are now to be withdrawn from its care. By this Act we are disjoined from association with other teaching universities, a disjunction which entails penalties, the full extent of which is not as yet visible, but that they are likely to be grievous is already only too obvious. These disabilities will affect conditions of service, admission of students and equality of subsidy.

In regard to the change in the University connection, it is sufficient to say that the College is now to be disjoined from Rhodes University which is within an hour-and-a-half's distance and within earshot, and is to be attached to another with headquarters in Pretoria, 600 miles away when consultation will be both costly and time-consuming. Nor is it only a recent connection with Rhodes which is thus being severed, but one which has existed for 40 years, the period that Rhodes has been continuously represented on the College Council. To Dr. Alty, the present vice-chancellor who has been chairman, and to his colleagues and their predecessors who have been members of Council, the University College of Fort Hare is deeply indebted and correspondingly grateful for their comradeship. We are sorry that a link forged so long ago has been so unnecessarily broken.

Of other new disabilities looming ahead, I mention only two. The first two students enrolled at this College were two Basotho, one from the Free State and the other from Basutoland. They were able to come because the administration of that country was one of the African territories which, together with the Transkei and the Glen Grey District, proposed from the first to contribute towards its foundation. Until recently the student body has always had a representation of the Basotho nation, and many excellent students have gone back there after their training. But lately, restrictions have been imposed upon students from beyond the Union borders and both the stream of students and the subsidy have ceased. The Basotho were followed by others from the African Territories, from Bechuanaland, Swaziland, both Rhodesias, Nyasaland, Kenya and Uganda, men and women who are now serving in the administrations, schools, and hospitals of their own countries, who have lived and played with their fellows from



all four provinces of the Union and South-West Africa, and who, if honourably regarded, might be the best ambassadors for South Africa. They also brought into the College glimpses of the outside world and of the various regions of this our continent, and by so doing compensated in some degree for the restrictions imposed by local social and political taboos. On the foundation of the home languages represented in such a student body, a beginning had been made in building up a department of comparative Bantu Languages, which promised to be one of the best anywhere in Africa.

Oblivious of the fact that, when once a certain stage of education has been reached, distinctive local cultures can only draw strength and enrichment from wider contacts, the government proposes to restrict enrolment at this College to one Bantu-language group—the Xhosa—the only result of which, in any foreseeable future, will be the intellectual impoverishment of the students and their segregation from the available sources of world-culture. This also entails the exclusion of the minority groups of Coloured and Indian students who have been participants in the College life from the beginning, and have enriched it in various ways, not least by their activities in the sporting and cultural student societies. So a College, which began by being hospitable to those people of all colours who could not obtain education, of the standard they desired, anywhere else on this continent at the time, can hardly be expected to enjoy the prospect of being compulsorily confined to one tribal group.

The other disability which I cannot avoid noting is that, for examination purposes, this College is to be subordinated to the University of South Africa. I do not wish to enlarge upon the effect of a change of allegiance away from a teaching university to one which only examines external students, a useful enough occupation in its way. Elsewhere I have shown that the former University of South Africa played a useful part in the development of Fort Hare, and, in association with it, this College had arrived, in spite of some anomalies, practically at the status of a Constituent College, and was receiving appropriate treatment befitting such a status. But the present University of South Africa cannot escape the limitations of its legal organization. By virtue of its restriction to external students, presumably in the interests of the eight teaching universities, it can have no basis for examining any practical subject, so that the whole battery of experimental sciences, Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, Psychology and Geography, all of which are well developed here, are outside its function, and indeed compet-

ence, to examine. This is also true of practical courses, such as those preparing students for the teaching profession as a career, which are largely attended. It applies also to many post-graduate courses such as might be studied by future lecturers at non-European colleges. The plain fact of the matter is that the implications of the Government policy which are gradually being disclosed have not been properly examined, nor have the legitimate aspirations and interests of the non-European people been decently regarded. In any event, the return to purely external examinations is twenty years behind the times, so far as Fort Hare is concerned.

I say nothing here about the disruption of the theological courses that has been caused by the taking over of the hostels. In course of time these might have demanded some re-organization, upon a pattern that has recently been successfully applied at Rhodes. But any such re-adjustment and expansion would have been at the initiative of the Churches themselves, and not at the dictation of a government department. Churches are kittle cattle to constrain, as governments have found out before now! But I do no more at this point than register my conviction that the neglect of Biblical Studies, or their extrusion from the most advanced educational institutions, is against the trend of modern thought and current practice in these matters.

The question I now wish to ask is: What attitude should teachers and students adopt in view of the application of a particular government policy to this College? But before doing so, I must record my conviction that the dismissal of former staff members which has been carried out by the Minister, before the Council he has nominated to advise him on the working of the College has held any meeting, without making an inspection of the institution, or allowing the officers concerned an opportunity of meeting allegations made against them, is an act which must have shocked every university man in the country. It is moreover a strange method of commencing a change of régime to withdraw any vestige of guarantee of security of tenure from staff members.

It is common knowledge that there are many unfilled vacancies in staff posts, and rumours are current of resignations pending, and indeed actual. What are conscientious officers to do in such circumstances? In matters of conscience no one finally can give advice to another. Each man or woman must determine his action by his own inner light. But to any in any such dilemma, I would advance this consideration: it is a cardinal principle in university and indeed in all



educational work, that the interest of the student must be paramount. We observe this principle in making changes in regulations, or syllabuses, or examination procedures, but it extends far further than merely to those. It is axiomatic that education be provided for all people, and what is just as important, that it must be acceptable. But it cannot proceed if there are no teachers. I therefore believe, though I speak as one who is *emeritus*, but after much dispassionate reflection on the whole situation, that there is a duty on every staff member to ask himself first, whatever may be his private sentiments, whether there is not a call to stay at his post and to put no obstacle in the way of any qualified person who wishes to give service here. And I would remind some here that many of us who have worked here, and have given of the best we had, have done so under conditions that seemed to us hard. If I may draw an example from the past, I should say that the most difficult period in the history of the college, so far as internal organization was concerned, occurred when the staff were called upon to teach both pre-matriculation and post-matriculation classes. I honour especially the men and women of that time, because if they had not been willing to undertake such double duty, I question if the later history of this College would have been possible. So I should say to present members of staff: stick to your students and your post, unless there is some principle which you regard as inviolable and which overrides what appears to me to be plain duty.

To students present and future I would say: remember it is you who make or mar the College. It is the response you make to your teachers that determines what you can learn from them, and even if you disagree with their instruction, as you sometimes ought, you can still learn from them if you disagree as a rational being, and not as an irresponsible hooligan. And to both students and staff I would say it is the relation between teacher and taught that is all-important: Councils and Senates and Students' Representative Councils loom large in the Calendar, and behind all is the Government Department, but the only essential thing in a College is that conversations between teacher and student should continue, even if sometimes the teacher is only another student.

And mention of the Government leads me to remind you of two things that in our disappointment might easily be forgotten: first, that no school for secular instruction can be established in South Africa for non-Europeans without being registered by Government; and secondly, that no modern university, especially if a new foundation, can exist

without substantial financial aid from governments. The aid required from Governments all over the world is seldom less than 50% of income. In South Africa it varies from 61% of the income for the larger universities to 80% for the smaller. In recent years the government subsidy of this College has been more nearly 80% than 61% of its income. In older countries this large share of the income does not entail any lessening of the inner freedom of the university, and special measures are adopted to secure that it does not. But one must be fair and recognise that when a College is dependent to such an extent upon the state, there is a constant temptation to a government to seek more than its proper share of influence in determining the ends that the university should serve. Should, however, it do so, it would lay itself open to the charge that it is impairing the usefulness of the very institution upon which it is spending so much of the people's money. As one who for long years in charge of this College had to live upon the crumbs that fell from the rich universities' table, I cannot help looking to the future with apprehension, lest the system of grants and related regulations which has done so much for universities since the adoption of the Holloway Report be no longer applicable to this College. There is a clear call for some statutory relation between the amounts available for European and non-European university education.

In conclusion it must be frankly admitted that in the struggle to maintain some semblance of the *status quo* we have been heavily defeated. But in my view one purpose stands out in stark relief. The College must be maintained in being. It is for the Bantu, and for all the Bantu, a National Monument. It enshrines principles which are dear to the hearts of all free men. Oblivious of the stratification of races and classes outside, it has, within the limitations of the purpose of its founders, received all qualified students of good character. It has, perhaps in advance of its time, observed the equality of the sexes. It has made no distinction in status or emoluments between white, black and brown on the same grade. It has endeavoured to treat every student as a *Person* entitled to all the social privileges appropriate to his station as a student. In doing so it has believed that it was being true to the Christian Ethic and to the spirit of the New Testament. It still believes that only on that foundation and with that spirit can justice and peace be the lot of this sub-continent. This makes a demand of faith upon everyone, and it is to illustrate the need for such a faith in the future, that I venture to leave with you a little parable, the source of which may surprise you.



One Saturday afternoon many years ago, in the Principal's House at Fort Hare, I received a call from a gentleman whom I did not know by sight. He turned out to be a friendly soul, and was keen to hear all he could about Fort Hare, which he was only passing through. On such an afternoon the campus was deserted except for the Sports Field, and realising this, my visitor expressed a wish to see the men at play, and together we mingled with the crowd on the touch line. I am not now sure whether "Commando" had at that time been published, but I knew that Colonel Denys Reitz had been a cabinet minister in the government of General Smuts, and that he was still a member of Parliament. Everyone knows now the story of his voluntary exile at the end of the Anglo-Boer War, in which as boy and young man he had fought against the British and had experienced the bitterness of complete and seemingly irrevocable defeat. He himself has told, how, against his inclination, he was induced through the influence and care of General and Mrs. Smuts to come back to his country, and we know that he lived to hold high rank in the British Army and to command a Scottish regiment in the first world war. To me the remarkable thing is that one who was so completely flattened out by overwhelming power, within fifteen or sixteen years became a member of the Government of the Union, and was later to hold one of the most important posts in the cabinet—that of Minister of Native Affairs. And so, for me the moral is: in South Africa it is never prudent to abandon hope, or to accept defeat.

*Address by Principal H. R. Burrows.*

The length of my address should perhaps be proportionate to the time I have been here, i.e. one sixteenth that of Dr. Kerr's, i.e. about one minute! In spite of this handicap, however, we must find time to pay a tribute to all those who laboured to found our college, particularly Dr. Alexander Kerr and the late Professor Jabavu, to whom its growth is largely due. Both of them were present at the Graduation Ceremony this year. So too was Mr. K. A. Hobart Houghton who in the early years of this century toured Southern Africa seeking support for this college. We are very sorry to learn that he is ill in hospital instead of being with us today. May I propose that we send him a word of sympathy, best wishes for an early recovery and our very grateful thanks for all that he did towards making this college a reality.

The Churches who brought Christianity and education to the Bantu, and who later provided college hostels and wardens (thereby paying

half the cost of housing our students) are to be rewarded by being turned out. We at Fort Hare have valued the links with the Churches and the friendly care of the hostel wardens. They have greatly enriched our life, and their influence is woven into the enduring traditions of our college, guaranteeing religious as well as racial harmony. But now, not only will we lose some of our friends but our theological courses will be disrupted.

We must also pay a warm tribute to the Council, staff and students of Rhodes University, for their friendly interest in our welfare, and particularly to the University Deans who have helped us to keep on the straight and narrow path of academic integrity and who have come to take a colourful part in our ceremony to-day.

Another pleasant duty is to convey the sincere appreciation of this College to our Council, and particularly to its Chairman, Dr. Alty, for the untiring and loyal help given to beleaguered Fort Hare. But, with one lonely exception, this Council, one of the most representative and distinguished bodies in the University world, is being summarily liquidated.

It is also my duty to say a few words about our Senate which is the body responsible for promoting the academic prestige of our college. I should remind you that it has included all heads of departments, together with the hostel Wardens, two members of Council and a representative of the Lecturers' Association. Here, different racial groups have always sat together in friendly discussion. Unfortunately, as you know, there have been casualties during the last few days. Twelve members of staff have either been dismissed or not re-appointed, of whom eleven were members of Senate. They had been selected after world-wide advertisement and keen competition, and Council continued to place every confidence in their competence and integrity. There may be other members of staff who may on principle decline to accept re-appointment. Moreover, as a result of the confiscation of the Church hostels, our well-loved wardens who are also members of Senate, are being ousted. Further, and apart from these losses, the Senate as we have known it will soon be replaced by a dubious, deflated and double-jointed shadow of the real thing.

Given time, it would be possible to list all the distinguished people who have given lectures or addresses in this college. This would include Prime Ministers, Ministers of Education, eminent scholars, university administrators and very many others. Incidentally, a

selection from the lectures given by guests of the college during the last two years is at present being printed. We shall always be grateful to our visitors for their kindly interest in our existence.

In my opening address on March 4th I said that none of us can avoid being influenced by political and racial cross-currents which from time to time drift into our college from the outside world. I suggested that one way of protecting our college from political prejudices was to prove that we were serious and hard-working students, and also that the more we kept our words and actions dignified, the more influential would they be. Unfortunately, political storms have assailed us, and our College has become a political football.

Taking all this into account, staff and students must be complimented on facing threats and tribulations with probably far more patience and dignity than would have been shown by any other University institution accorded the same treatment as has been imposed on Fort Hare.

Our Senate and Council did all that was possible to pilot our college through troubled political waters, and devoted much thought, energy and time to the defence of Fort Hare. Although Council, staff and students *all* failed, for the time being at any rate, permanent memorials of their endeavours are enshrined in a 400 page report of a Government Select Committee and in many pages of Hansard reports of discussions in the House of Assembly and in Senate.

Being naturally modest, we sometimes do not always appreciate our good points. Only a few days ago a distinguished American visitor said in Natal that Fort Hare was one of the very few real University institutions he had seen. Also, a few days ago, a University Vice-Chancellor affirmed that Fort Hare has employed more African staff than any University in Africa, and that in this way its achievement has been more outstanding than that of the others.

Also, a few months ago in reply to a cruel and incorrect attack on the quality of our staff and students, I obtained last year's degree examination results from *all* our South African Universities, and was able to show that Fort Hare's percentage of passes was the second highest—a highly creditable result.

Moreover, our College has made a notable contribution to education on the African Continent, if only because South Africa, the Protectorates and the Rhodesias have depended largely on Fort Hare for their Secondary School Teachers. In many ways therefore our college has

handed on the torch of learning entrusted to its care by the missionary and educational pioneers of last century. And yet only too clearly have we reached the end of a chapter in the distinguished history of the College.

Perhaps by combining prayer and prophecy the next chapter may be only a short one. This is why it is all the more important that some should remain here to maintain the traditions and hopes of the college. Certainly, Fort Hare cannot afford to lose many more of its dwindling defenders. May we also trust that faith will sustain those who stay here, either to teach or to study, and will lessen the stresses and strains of imposed changes.

Fort Hare, long supported by Church, State and Communities from Cape Point to the Zambesi, and at a cross-roads of contrasting cultures and environments, has long been a vital frontier post in the attack on ignorance and prejudice. But it has needed reinforcements of official goodwill and political understanding which, unfortunately, have not been forthcoming. It is clear that the attack on ignorance and prejudice must be carried out on a broader front than hitherto. Something must be done to repair the links and the partnerships which have been so valuable a feature of Fort Hare but which are now being seriously threatened.

Finally, in saying farewell, may I thank staff and students for their great kindness to an aged and temporary visitor from Natal.

*Address by Miss Darroll, M.A.*

It has been suggested that, speaking on behalf of the Lecturers' Association, I should talk about staff relationships. There is nothing better I would prefer to speak on, though I could never express all that the friendship here and the feeling of belonging has meant to me; I could not fully express it even though I continued for much longer than the ten minutes allotted me.

I had seen myself, before the present evil day threatened, retiring from the University of Fort Hare, and trying to make a speech of thanks at some farewell party to me, and talking there of the friendships, the united feeling of the staff. But the tragedy is that Fort Hare is retiring now, and I must speak at the farewell to Fort Hare as we know it.

Fort Hare as we know it has been unique: and one of its most remarkable aspects has been perhaps just this unity of the staff. Considered ethnically, we might have served as an anthropologist's happy



hunting ground. Apart from four African "ethnic groups." Coloured, Indian (I don't think we have had Chinese on the staff) two white South African (or three, if we count French descent) there have been four from the British Isles, at least three from the European continent, two from America, and Jewish. What a diversity in one we have been—what a university! But we never considered ethnic groups—that was a subject for anthropology or relegated to the museum where it belongs.

Among us there has been neither white nor black—nor pink nor brown nor yellow—and even greyness might have received only a relatively increased respect. Neither bond nor free—not even male or female for at the time when I attended Senate as Warden of Elukhanyisweni, Dr. Kerr still invariably addressed us all as "Gentlemen."

But we regarded ourselves as the most normal and healthy community in the abnormality and neuroses of our country. It was not that on any side we were trying to overcome any sense of difference; it was simply that we were unaware of "ethnic groups" in human relationships.

Friendships formed here seemed to have a quality found in no other community. Mental and spiritual stimulation, inspiration, come naturally in this atmosphere. One receives so much one has to give of one's best. As I look back over the past 14 years I know that, even with the shadow already on the last three, they have been the best of my life. Fourteen years ago, when I came, some of the patriarchs had already retired. The late Prof. Jabavu had gone, but there was much left of his contribution to the community. The late Professor Murdoch had gone, but his sayings replete with Irish wit, were current. But there were still giants in the land. And what a happy company we were; how closely united.

Fourteen years ago there was no Lecturers' Association. The total staff did not make a large number and almost all were either full or associate members of Senate. Besides me, there were, I think, only Mr. Mzamane and Mr. Phahle as lecturers who were not on the Senate. The small group was the more easily a cohesive company, but even as numbers increased, there has still been a feeling of oneness.

Much of this happy relationship was due to those first two of the staff, Dr. Kerr and Dr. Jabavu. That was where the union began. But on this day and with reference to staff relationships I want to pay

tribute to the memory of the first Mrs. Kerr whose grave is on Sandile's Kop. If we were a family, she was our Mother. In those last years when I knew her, she was often ill, but she insisted on her welcome to the Staff at the beginning of an academic year. I can see her now, going around the company, drawing us out with her grace and charm and lively humour, setting the solitary firmly in the family of the Fort Hare staff. In her presence it seemed as if discord or disunion could not exist.

And now we come to this moving occasion. I use 'moving' in the literal as well as the emotional sense. Some of us have already moved elsewhere—the Mokoenas, the Radebes, the Stuarts and others. It is perhaps significant that we think of them in that way—not as Mr. Mokoena or Professor Stuart—because in these happy relationships wife and children were as much involved as lecturer or professor.

Some have already gone. Some will soon be going. The old relationships are being broken geographically even though friendships remain.

And so this is an occasion of deep emotion as we look back on a past that has been extraordinarily satisfying, which, even while we were experiencing it, we knew to be good. Let me quote Browning:

"Well, it is gone at last,  
Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow;  
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,  
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.  
Never to be again! But many more of the kind  
As good, nay, better perchance: is this your comfort to me?"

The Principal quoted Tennyson at the Reunion, but it was noticeable that he stopped short with—

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new—" He did not give the next line!

But as I think of what will remain in the hearts and minds and spirits of those of us who are here now, I must go on with Browning, even though many declare he is too optimistic:

"There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;  
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound. . . .  
All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;  
Not its semblance, but itself."

*Address by Professor Z. K. Matthews, M.A., LL.B.*

It was with very great reluctance indeed that I agreed, at the persistent request of Professor Burrows, to step into the breach here this morning when it became apparent that Mr. Tsotsi was not going to be able to come. He was going to speak, on this last occasion when we meet as the University College of Fort Hare as we have known it, on behalf of the generations of students that have passed through these walls. I do not know what Mr. Tsotsi was going to say; it was going to be no small task for him to try to put into a few words (and I am told I have only got a few minutes) the feelings of the hundreds and hundreds of students that have passed through Fort Hare and who are scattered throughout the length and breadth of this country and of other countries beyond. I do not know what he would have said, but I do feel that possibly there is one thing which he would have mentioned, and that is that we are deeply indebted to Fort Hare (to the passing Fort Hare) for having endeavoured to teach us a broad South Africanism in the years that the College has existed. Right here, within the boundaries of South Africa, not in some island just off the mainland, but right within the boundaries of South Africa, Fort Hare has striven to show during the last 40 years that it is possible for people of different racial backgrounds, different cultural backgrounds, of different political affiliations and of different racial faiths, to live and work together in amity. I believe that this unhappy country will not become a happy country until that lesson is learnt throughout the length and breadth of South Africa. But I feel that sooner or later the lesson must be learnt or South Africa will come to disaster. And when it is learnt, and when that day does come, I think due credit will be given to Fort Hare for having pioneered the way and been among those who have shown that it is actually possible for this thing to happen.

Now as you know we are going into a new chapter in the history of Fort Hare. Some of us have been very long associated with the old Fort Hare. In my own case, my association with the old Fort Hare goes back to 1918, when the College was only two years old, and throughout the history of the College I have been closely associated with it: as student, ex-student, member of the staff and in different ways; and I must say, in spite of what my former Principal and colleague has said that it is the plain duty of those who can to stay, that some of us will find it impossible to do so. I find that it will be impossible for me to learn to be part of a new Fort Hare, so much have I been a part of the old Fort Hare.

I feel that, on behalf of the old students of Fort Hare, I want to say this word of thanks to the Founders of Fort Hare, the various members of Council and the members of staff who have laboured here, for all the lessons that they have tried to teach us and that we have tried to live out in our lives after we have left the walls of the College. And on this possibly the last occasion that I myself shall address an assembly of this College, I want to say that all the generations of students that have gone before thank you, Sirs, for what you have done for us.

*Address by Mr. J. M. Majola, Chairman, Students Representative Council.*

Now as we all know the change has come, and what has been like a dream to many of us has come true. What has been one of the most controversial bills in Parliament has now become an Act of Parliament amidst vigorous and well reasoned opposition not only from Fort Hare, but from the intellectual world as a whole. In spite of all the opposition the Bill has become a Parliament Act.

We are assembled in this hall this morning on a very solemn occasion. We are assembled here to mourn the tragic and very sudden end of the most happy and most prosperous era in the history of Fort Hare. We are assembled here to mourn the ruthless destruction of all that we have cherished as our precious possession as a free institution. Indeed, this is a very sad occasion.

This might sound a little exaggerated. It might sound too pessimistic and we might be blamed for painting the picture too dark. Such criticisms have already been levelled against us. We have from time to time heard from Government circles that we shall lose nothing and that the change-over entails no destruction but that it ushers in an era of happiness and prosperity. I doubt it. As I say I doubt it, and I don't believe it.

The recent events have proved beyond doubt that the change-over has nothing in store for us but unhappiness, retrogression and perhaps, unfortunately, some chaos. Our affiliation to Rhodes University from which both institutions have benefited so much, has already been legally abolished.

Our very right to register here as students has been forfeited by us. We have no more the right to register as students of Fort Hare, an institution that is our own, and the only institution in the country that caters for the non-White section of the population. I am expected to



go to Ngoya, whether I like it or not, I have no right to register at Fort Hare. It is only a privilege that the Government can withdraw at any time.

We have already lost men and women of integrity on the staff—we have already lost men and women of the highest calibre and men and women who have always shown the keenest interest in the welfare of every individual student. We have already lost them. Now does this mean that the new regime ushers in any prosperity?

We have already said farewell to our wardens. As we all know, they have been the pillars of this institution, people who have devoted all their time to the welfare of every student in this College and people who have, apart from their religious duties, devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the cause of the African people in this country.

We already know that we have to part with our Coloured and Indian friends. We have been a very happy community indeed and we have never experienced that alleged racial prejudice that we often hear of from Government circles. We have never experienced any racial conflict here. But now even the African group itself is to be split up into small little groups; Ngoye, Turfloop, and so forth. Which means we are now parting as friends. I cannot go into any details of what we have gained from our associations as students from almost every section of the population in this country. That will take up too much time. But I must say that we have gained a lot from our associations.

It is only the Xhosas now who have the right to register at Fort Hare as students. If I am not mistaken the Xhosas are very few in this College, which means that the numbers will be brought down in such a way that our hopeful dream that Fort Hare would soon attain a full University Status has been made very remote.

The point I am trying to drive home is that enough has happened already to prove to us that the change-over is a tragedy.

We have no reason to believe that we shall not lose the little that we still have. We have had the right to express our views openly and frankly without any intimidation from any staff member. We had the right to manage our own affairs with the minimum external control and that has given us very good experience, and a very good training for our future tasks. That very management of our own affairs without external control has been a very good thing to us. It has given us the feeling that our staff members had confidence in us. It has given us the feeling that they are prepared to give us the liberty to gain in the

fullest possible way in our College life. Now we fear for such liberties. We have had a Student Representative Council that was perfectly autonomous, managing all the student affairs independently and we fear for our College traditions that we cherished so much.

We have been in contact with many other Universities in this country and from time to time we have sent delegations to various S.R.C. conferences, and all this was done without interference on the part of the authorities. We have been affiliated to NUSAS and we fear that this change might force us to sever our relations with NUSAS.

In conclusion I wish to stress the point that we have not lost our hopes. We have already realised that the policy of apartheid contains the seeds of its own destruction. We have already realised that there is only one brick to be knocked off and the whole tower of apartheid shall tumble down like an ash pillar. We fully know that the destiny of a nation is not in the hands of another but in the hands of God. And it is God who knows our destiny better than our oppressors.

It was on this very soil where our forefathers surrendered to the invaders, and paradoxically our liberty, our freedom and our pride as a nation shall be restored by people prepared and trained on this very soil.

A Plaque with the following inscription has been placed in Livingstone Hall.

#### THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FORT HARE

In deep gratitude to all who between 1905 and 1959 founded maintained and administered this College at Fort Hare and in remembrance of all who between 1916 and 1959 taught and studied here in association with the University of South Africa and Rhodes University.

*Laus Deo.*

## APPENDIX A

The following published Memoranda on the Fort Hare Transfer will be of interest.

1. *Comments by Council and Senate January 1959.*
2. *Report of the Select Committee on the Fort Hare Transfer Bill* (13 May 1959 to 12 June 1959). 415 pages plus appendices.
3. *House of Assembly Debates*  
No 5 Feb. 1959 Pages 1552-1568  
No. 12 April 1959 Pages 4442-4652  
No. 21 June 1959 Pages 8914-8927 ; 9038-9051 ; 9185-9252
4. *Senate Debates*  
June 1959 No. 15 Pages 5283 and 5316 to 5319

The Comments can be obtained from the University College of Fort Hare and the other reports from the Government Printer, Pretoria.

It is intended to publish a short history of the University College of Fort Hare (with numerous photographs). Owing to the limited number of copies to be printed, names of those interested should be sent to the Lovedale Press, P.O. Lovedale, C.P.



COLLEAGUES FROM RHODES UNIVERSITY,  
28TH OCTOBER, 1959



FAIR SUPPORT FROM RHODES





COLLEGE PROTEST, 4TH MARCH, 1959

## APPENDIX B

### UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY

*By Dr. T. Alty, Ph.D., D.Sc., D.C.L., LL.D.,*

*Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University,  
Chairman of the Association of Universities of the British  
Commonwealth,  
Chairman of the Committee of Principals, S.A. Universities,  
Chairman, Fort Hare Council.*

### ADDRESS TO MEETING OF PROTEST AGAINST UNIVERSITY BILLS

4th APRIL, 1959

We are assembled here this morning to protest against the provisions of two Bills at present before the Union Parliament. Despite this interest in parliamentary business, however, this is not a political protest, and that should, I think, be emphasised. Universities are very specialised institutions with very specialised rights and privileges which have developed during past centuries. They have so developed because such privileges have been found necessary for the proper execution of the work of the university. For the same reason these privileges of freedom from external control and the right of the university to control its own affairs carry with them the traditional duty of the University to remain aloof from the stresses and strains of day-to-day politics, to remain as far as it may within its ivory tower and to devote all its energies and attention to its own special duties—the pursuit of scholarship and research, and the intellectual training of the leaders of the next generation.

Here at Rhodes, we have endeavoured always to maintain this position and it is our intention to continue to do so.

The two Bills at present before Parliament however leave the Universities no option but to protest most vigorously against their provisions. What is here involved is not an interference of the universities in the affairs of government, but a drastic interference by the government in the domestic affairs of the universities, and it is our duty to make sure that the consequences of such interference—for the universities and for the country itself—should be fully appreciated before action is taken.

These Bills contain three main provisions :

- (1) the establishment of new university colleges for non-white students
- (2) the removal of such students from the existing white universities and
- (3) the disaffiliation of Fort Hare University College from this university and its demotion to the status of a tribal college.

There are very serious objections to all three of these proposals.

The avowed object of the first, viz. the provision of additional university facilities for non-Europeans, is one of which all would approve, provided the arrangements for their institution were satisfactory. But in the opinion—practically unanimous—of the university world the proposals for the conduct of the new colleges are *not* academically satisfactory. The colleges are to possess none of the traditional freedom of self government normally associated with a university. They are on the other hand to be placed under the direct and absolute control of a Cabinet Minister who is to appoint Principals, Councils, and Staffs, to control the work they do, to transfer or dismiss members of staff, and at his discretion to abolish the Colleges themselves. We who have experience of the university world are convinced that an institution run in accord with these proposals can never be a university institution and that although it may be designated as a university college in the Bill, it is extremely improbable that it will ever receive general recognition as such, or, at least, not until its organisation is completely revised and liberalised.

The second matter dealt with in the Bills,—the closing of the 'open' universities to non-white students—is one affecting the established rights of our existing universities. At present, each and every South African university has the right to decide for itself what students shall be admitted to it, and it is a right which in our opinion can best be exercised by the universities themselves. We hold it to be dangerous in itself, and a most dangerous precedent, that the traditional freedoms and autonomy of the universities should be so diminished.

In our own university we have, for our own reasons, admitted relatively few non-Europeans, but none the less, we are jealous of our right to decide these matters for ourselves. Also we sympathise with our sister-universities who are to have limitations placed on their freedom of selection of students.

We also feel that the 'white' universities are the only available

training ground for the non-white staffs of the proposed new colleges. To exclude all non-whites from our older universities inevitably increases the staffing difficulties of the new colleges, and places a large and additional premium on their failure.

The third main point before Parliament is the future status of our own College of Fort Hare. This College, founded in 1916, was for many years the only separate university institution for Africans in Southern Africa. From small beginnings it has developed to its present status as a full university college, with very much the same freedoms and responsibilities as the white universities. Rhodes University has undertaken the task of supervising its academic standards and ensuring that the degrees obtained there are awarded exactly on the same basis as they are here in the university itself.

In terms of the present Bill all this will cease, and the College will be forcibly separated from the University. There has been no suggestion that the University has in any respect failed in its duty to the College. The two institutions are 60 miles apart so that even the demands of apartheid would seem to be satisfied. Nevertheless all connections are to be severed and in spite of its forty-three years of development and progress, the University College of Fort Hare is to be degraded to the rank of a tribal college and treated on exactly the same basis as the other non-European,—and as yet non-existent—colleges envisaged in the Bills.

We feel deeply this disastrous blow to our affiliated College. We had hoped and expected that the link between our two institutions would eventually be broken by the attainment of full university status by the College. We greatly regret the quite different forcible separation facing us at present.

In registering our protest against the proposed legislation we do not stand alone. On the questions of the organisation of the new colleges and the future status of Fort Hare, informed academic opinion in the Union is almost unanimously opposed to the proposals. As regards the closing of the white universities to non-whites, all the institutions at present admitting them wish to continue to do so, and all bitterly resent what they consider to be a totally unwarranted encroachment on the established rights of the universities to decide for themselves who may be admitted.

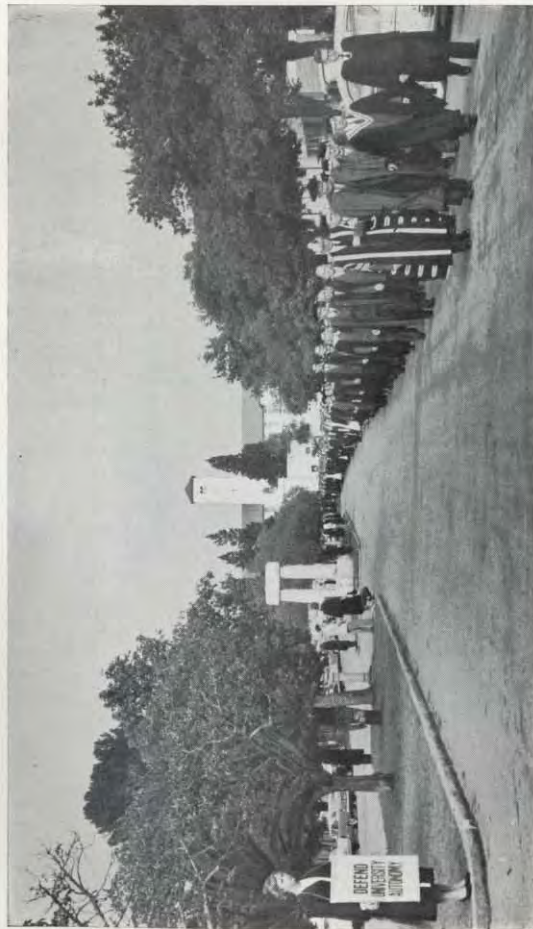
Outside the Union, the universities of the whole western world have roundly condemned the proposed measures. Eminent scholars and



scientists have expressed their grave concern not only at the measures themselves but also at their effect on all our universities, and on their reputation in the world outside the Union. Indeed we find ourselves in a unique position in which it is proposed to force through Parliament measures which are apparently not actively desired by any university, which are opposed by responsible opinion in all the universities concerned, and which are condemned in no uncertain terms by the whole university world of the West.

It is for these reasons that we are gathered together this morning—to reaffirm our belief in the academic freedoms won during past centuries, our belief that only in this atmosphere of free discussion can a university succeed in its work, and our conviction that external controls are unnecessary and may easily become disastrously harmful. We also most solemnly protest against measures which we are convinced are contrary to the best interests of all the Universities of the Union, and indeed contrary to the best interest of the Union itself.

We must trust that, even at this late hour, wiser counsels may prevail.



PROCESSION OF PROTEST LEAVING RHODES UNIVERSITY

*The Lovedale Press*



