

# STUDENTS ISSUE CHALLENGE TO PRIME MINISTER

## Prove statement of friction at mixed Universities

**I**MMEDIATELY after the Fort Hare Students' Representative Council decided this weekend to rejoin the National Union of South African Students the two bodies issued a joint declaration—the first in five years—condemning a recent “onslaught” on the universities by the Prime Minister, Mr. J. G. Strijdom, and challenged him “to point to any incidents resulting in racial friction at the open universities.”

Commenting on the Fort Hare decision, taken on Saturday night, Mr. E. M. Wentzel, President of N.U.S.A.S. states: “This is a particularly significant move since there has been no contact whatsoever for five years. N.U.S.A.S. now looks forward to renewed co-operation with the Fort Hare students.

“The decision to rejoin also proves the Prime Minister's statement to have been quite wrong. Indeed, it proves quite the opposite, namely that there is no conflict between European and non-European students. It is also significant because it represents one of the few reversals of the separation trend since 1948.”

### Disapproval

The joint student statement, signed by Mr. Wentzel, Mr. N. Rubin, president of the Cape



MR. E. M. WENTZEL

Town University S.R.C., and Mr. A. M. Makiwane, president of the Fort Hare S.R.C., declares:

“We have considered the statement of the Prime Minister, Mr. J. G. Strijdom, at the graduation ceremony of the University of the Orange Free State, and express our strongest disapproval of this further Government onslaught on the South African universities.

“The Prime Minister claimed that a major reason for separate universities for non-Whites is that Europeans would be outnumbered at open universities in the course of time.

“The University Apartheid Bill, however, provides not only for the compulsory segregation of the open universities but also for the placing of Fort Hare and the Natal Medical School under Government departments although they are already segregated.

### Racial prejudice

“This is an attempt to exploit the racial prejudice of the White population, and displays a deplorable lack of confidence in the capacity of Europeans to continue to play a part in the future intellectual life of this country.

“The open universities regard academic merit as the only relevant basis for admis-

sion to universities, and their policy is to maintain their multi-racial character

“In any event, the effects of the Bantu Education Act, which is designed, in the words of Dr. Verwoerd, to “train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life,” would be to diminish the number of Africans academically qualified to enter an open university.

“We believe that this Act means that only those Africans chosen by Dr. Verwoerd to receive Higher Education will receive a schooling which would qualify them for admission to a university.

### No compulsion

“The Prime Minister further claimed that just as there are universities for English and Afrikaans-speaking students, there should be universities for White and non-White. There is no compulsion on any of the existing universities to limit their students to other language groups. There are, in fact, substantial numbers of Afrikaans-speaking students at the English-medium universities and vice versa.

“We fear that this statement is an indication by the Prime Minister of the Government's intention of compulsory segregating even English and Afrikaans-speaking European students, as is envisaged in the policy of Christelike Nasionale Onderwys.”

“In challenging the supporters of university freedom to state whether they claim the right to influence students on the lines of communism,” Mr. Strijdom showed a lamentable lack of understanding of the aim of a university education.

### Claim resented

“The universities as at present constituted exist to serve no political ideology, whereas tribal colleges are designed for political indoctrination.

“We resent the claim that mixing results in racial clashes. We challenge the Prime Minister to point to any incidents resulting in racial friction at the open universities.

“It is our experience that contact leads to inter-racial co-operation and understanding, and we have joined together to oppose the Government move to thwart progress in this direction.”

(News by M. Holmes, 19 Baakens Street, Port Elizabeth).

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