

**STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE
COUNCIL AND STAFF OF THE
FEDERAL THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY, ALICE, C.P.**

We, the Council and Staff of the Federal Theological Seminary, are gravely disturbed by the request of the University of Fort Hare to purchase our land and buildings, in view of the fact that universities have the legal right to expropriate land required for development. We are convinced, after thorough investigation, that the request is both unreasonable and unjustified.

We welcome the growth of Fort Hare, and recognise that the position of the Seminary on the boundary of the Fort Hare campus makes it a convenient direction for the expansion of the University. But there are other facts to be taken into consideration.

March, 1973

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The Seminary is not the only direction in which expansion might take place. Fort Hare already possesses considerable land. The present campus is approximately 180 ha and Honeydale Farm (which Fort Hare already owns) about 582 ha. We believe that the University is also negotiating for the purchase of about 184 ha from the Bantu Presbyterian Church and 158 ha of Lovedale Mission land. This totals nearly 1104 ha (about 1259 morgen or 2729 acres), and would make Fort Hare adjacent to Bantu Trust territory, some of which could surely be made available. In the light of these facts the 94 ha of the Seminary is not a very significant amount. Moreover, the cost of purchasing the developed Seminary land and buildings would absorb a great deal of money which we believe could be better spent. For example, it might go towards the establishment of a university branch in the Transkei, which has already been asked for in official quarters.

Against the convenience to Fort Hare of taking over the Federal Seminary must be set the considerable damage to the Seminary itself and the Churches which it serves. It is less than ten years since the Seminary opened its doors. Before this its Colleges suffered a number of removals caused in each case by government legislation, and were involved in a long search for a suitable site. The present site was selected and its development undertaken only after assurance of security of tenure had been received from the Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development in the presence of the Ministers of Bantu Administration and Development and of Bantu Education. Further removal at this stage would involve not only the abandonment of buildings and grounds developed with care over a decade, but also the disruption of a community which, for all its shortcomings, has great value for Church and people in South Africa. It would destroy what confidence there may be in the worth of government assurances, and would thus do further harm to the Church-State relationship in this country.

It should not be forgotten that the land on which the Seminary is built was given by the Church of Scotland, and forms part of the area granted by the Xhosa Chief Tyhali, son of Ngqika, and in 1855 was set aside for the work of the Christian Church. With the ending of the missionary era at Lovedale Training College, it is more than ever appropriate that a small portion of Tyhali's gift should continue to be used for this purpose.

The Fort Hare authorities have stated that they are only interested in purchasing the total area of land specified in the third paragraph. They have provided no adequate explanation why the small portion owned by the Seminary is considered essential. In the absence of such an explanation we may be excused for suspecting that other factors than the need for expansion have influenced the decision. Is it, in fact, the case that the

Seminary must be moved because its non-racial community is an embarrassment to our neighbour?

We acknowledge that there have been misunderstandings between Fort Hare and the Federal Seminary. This should not obscure the advantages of our being next to one another. Throughout the world theological seminaries are being placed close to universities. We at this Seminary have enjoyed the friendship of students and staff members at Fort Hare, and many at Fort Hare have enjoyed contact with an ecumenical community. It is of great importance that future clergy should be in touch with the young intellectuals who are the leaders of tomorrow, and equally that these leaders should develop their thinking in association with future Christian ministers. The loss of such mutual benefits must be set against the material convenience of taking over a neighbouring piece of land.

The Fort Hare authorities have claimed that the purchase would be in the interests of the Xhosa people. The expansion of university facilities would certainly be in their interests, but this is not the same thing as the removal of the Seminary. The Federal Seminary serves the interests of the whole South African people: Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho, Tsonga, Venda, Pedi, Coloured and Indian are among its students, and most of the participating Churches also have white members. We believe that the training of the Christian ministry is of paramount importance to this country and that unnecessary interference with it should be avoided.

We are not convinced that Fort Hare needs to purchase the Federal Seminary. We profoundly regret that the request to purchase was ever made, and we deplore the veiled hints that 'other means' are available should a negotiated settlement prove impossible. These are already leading to unnecessary tension and resentment. Abandonment of the request would be to the ultimate benefit of all concerned.

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